

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

Spring 2026 Section 05 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/17/2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Jordan Zachary Ellis

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Office Location: Faculty Office Building(FOB) 118

or on Zoom by appointment

Office Hours: On Zoom by appointment

Class Times: Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:30am-11:45am

Classroom: Sweeney Hall 348

Course Information

Welcome to English 1A: First Year Writing! My name is Jordan Zachary Ellis, and I will be your instructor for this course. Much like yourselves, I am a student of writing here at San Jose State University, specifically I am in our Creative Writing Graduate Program with a focus in Poetry and a secondary focus in Fiction. I love writing, I have ever since I was a little kid and my parents would read me the rhymes in Dr. Seuss books. While I do not expect any of you to discover this same level of passion for writing, although you are definitely encouraged to, I do hope to make the process of writing at least a little less daunting and maybe slightly more enjoyable for each of you. At the same time, it is my intention to not only make this process less stressful but to also help you develop the writing skills you already have to give each of you the tools to write at the collegiate level. Every single one of you has the ability to write, I am simply here to help you hone those abilities that you already possess.

As Miyamoto Musashi wrote in his book, *The Book Of Five Rings*, "In any case, as human beings, it is essential for each of us to cultivate and polish our individual path." One fundamental way we can cultivate our individual path is by learning how to express ourselves through writing. This course is dedicated to making the process behind that just a little bit less scary and, hopefully, just a bit easier to understand.

Course Description and Requisites

English 1A is an introductory course that prepares students to join scholarly conversations across the university. Students develop reading skills, rhetorical sophistication, and writing styles that give form and coherence to complex ideas for various audiences, using a variety of genres.

Satisfies 1A. Written Communication I (Formerly Area A2).

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Reflection on College Writing

Grading: Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

On Electronics:

When it comes to the use of electronics(smart phones, tablets, laptops, etc.), I only have one rule: please do not use headphones or create sounds that may distract you or your classmates. I am okay with you using phones/tablets/laptops for personal use as long as you are not distracting yourself, your peers, or me as the instructor. Please be respectful of everyone in the room and I do not think that the use of electronics will be an issue. If a problem does arise, we will revisit this protocol.

On Being Respectful

While engaging with peers and assignments, students are to be respectful of the experiences and identities that make each of us who we are. In class, discussion is welcome and encouraged, but comments found to be intentionally offensive, disrespectful, or combative are not allowed. Likewise, in-class discussions, texts/readings/viewings, and projects/activities may include materials that can be contentious and even potentially upsetting to you or others. We may encounter materials that differ from and perhaps challenge our ideas, beliefs, and understanding of reality. Students are encouraged to discuss issues about such materials with me. If for any reason such material causes you alarm, I encourage you to speak with me directly at your earliest convenience.

Additionally, any student that needs accommodations or assistive technology due to a disability should work with the Accessible Education Center (AEC) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/>), and the instructor. If you have special needs or accommodations requests, see me as soon as possible. Failure to do so may result in interruption or slowing of accommodations process.

Program Policies First-Year Writing policies are listed at the following website:

<https://www.sjsu.edu/english/frosh/program-policies.php> (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english/frosh/program-policies.php>)



Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php) (<https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php>).

Course Goals

GE Area A2: Written Communication

Written Communication I courses cultivate an understanding of the writing process and the goals, dynamics, and genres of written communication, with special attention to the nature of writing at the university. A grade of C- or better designates that a student has successfully oriented reading and writing practice in English to support college level research and learning and to share learning with C- or better is a CSU graduation requirement.

GE Area A2 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area A2 course, students should be able to:

1. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the content, context, effectiveness, and forms of written communication;
2. perform essential steps in the writing process (prewriting, organizing, composing, revising, and editing);

3. articulate an awareness of and write according to the rhetorical features of texts, such as purpose, audience, context, and rhetorical appeals;
4. integrate their ideas and those of others by synthesizing, explaining, analyzing, developing, and criticizing ideas effectively in several genres; and
5. demonstrate college-level language use, clarity, and grammatical abilities in writing.

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 8000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area 1A: Written Communication I

Written Communication I courses cultivate an understanding of the writing process and the goals, dynamics, and genres of written communication, with special attention to the nature of writing at the university. A grade of C- or better designates that a student has successfully oriented reading and writing practice in English to support college level research and learning and to share learning with others. Area 1A is a prerequisite for Area 1B: Critical Thinking. Completion of Area 1A with a grade of C- or better is a CSU graduation requirement.

GE Area 1A Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area 1A course, students should be able to:

1. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the content, context, effectiveness, and forms of written communication;
2. perform essential steps in the writing process (prewriting, organizing, composing, revising, and editing);
3. articulate an awareness of and write according to the rhetorical features of texts, such as purpose, audience, context, and rhetorical appeals;
4. integrate their ideas and those of others by synthesizing, explaining, analyzing, developing, and criticizing ideas effectively in several genres; and
5. demonstrate college-level language use, clarity, and grammatical abilities in writing.

Writing requirement

Area 1A courses require a minimum of 6000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Course Materials

We will be using Canvas and the internet as our primary material for this course. All readings that are assigned will be available through a link both in this syllabus and in each individual discussion board relevant to that particular reading. Likewise, all homework assignments, rough drafts, final drafts, as well as any and all class activities, will be submitted online through Canvas. This means that access to either a laptop or a smartphone will be essential to passing this course. If you come to class without a laptop or phone, you are expected to bring materials to hand write your daily prompt responses and class activities with and will then be expected to type them out and submit them online after class. If there are any questions or concerns about this, please reach out to me so that we may work together to find a solution.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Daily Prompts

Welcome Writing Prompt

At the beginning of each class we will be responding to a short writing prompt in this discussion board. Alongside posting your own Welcome Writing Prompt response, you must also respond to one other classmate's post. Please be respectful of one another and the vulnerability of commenting on each other's writing, we can share our thoughts without insulting one another.

For each Welcome Writing Prompt, you should have one post containing your own response to the prompt and one comment responding to a classmate's post. That means you should have two posts and two comments each week. There is no word count or requirement for these, my only expectation for this is that you respond in full sentences.

P.O.P. Activities

You are probably wondering how participation is going to be accounted for, and that is what the Proof Of Participation(P.O.P.) Activities discussion board is for! Almost every class session, if not literally every class session, you will be doing some form of writing activity during class. In this discussion board, you will be typing out those activities(or copy and pasting them from your own word documents) as proof that you did them. For group activities, only one person needs to post the actual activity response in the discussion board, however the other members of the group must also comment with the names of each group mate to make sure that everyone gets credit within Canvas.

You are not required to comment on each other's P.O.P. Activities, however you are more than welcome to. Please be respectful of each other, we can share our thoughts with one another and not insult or attack each other. More details about the expectations of individual activities and prompts will be given in class when the activities/prompts actually happen.

Weekly Prompts

Reading and Responses

Due Sundays by 11:59PM on Canvas

These readings are *not* meant to be intensive readings. I am not expecting you to dive into these articles and break them down too deeply. They are meant to supplement the topics and ideas we discuss and practice in class. For the responses, all I am expecting is a typed out response of around 100 words(or more) in which you discuss your thoughts about the article and the questions I ask in relation to it. I want to see that you read and engaged with the article in some way. The focus here is to express your thoughts through writing in an academic setting, but these responses are about *your* thoughts on these readings.

Requirements:

- Response must be 150 words or more
- Response must directly address the reading and associated questions

Literacy Narratives

Due Thursdays by Midnight 11:59PM on Canvas

A literacy narrative is a way in which a person is able to express their experiences and journey with reading and writing in a unique way. Every week you will be asked to write a short Literacy Narrative of about 150 words. What will make your Literacy Narratives unique is that you will be using music to express them. Personally, I love music, I listen to it while I write constantly, and it plays a major role in my own journey with reading and writing. What you will do is find a song that seems to fit with how your experience with reading and writing is when you write them. You cannot use the same song twice. While the songs you choose do not have to be "family friendly," your Literacy Narratives do; it is possible to express thoughts and experiences that are not family-friendly while using language that is appropriate for an academic setting and I will gladly support you if you need help learning to do so. I want to know what the song title is as well as who the artist(or artists) is(are). I want to know what your experiences with reading and writing are and how the song is connected to them. Reading and writing is about a journey, and this is a space for you to be able to have some fun and express that journey. If you find yourself struggling to reach the word limit, do

not be scared to write a second song and have a week with two songs instead of one. The point here is to look at your own experience with literacy in a new way and express it in an academic setting. The final project of the semester will involve each of these Literacy Narratives that you write, and will involve having to cite your sources, so try to pick songs that you are able to find the publishing information for.

Requirements:

- Each response must be at least 150 words
- Must pick at least one(up to two) songs per narrative and be able to articulate what the song title is and who wrote or performs the song in the recording.
- Describe your current thoughts and experiences with reading and writing.
- Describe how the song relates to those thoughts/experiences.
- Each narrative must be given a creative and original title

Three Big Writing Projects

Astrology Essay

Rough Draft due February 13, Final Draft due February 27; both by 11:59PM on Canvas

More details and a more in depth prompt will be provided about this essay in class. This will be a 1000(or more) word essay in which you will take a look at your own astrological sign and see how its traits relate to your academic pursuits.

Person of Interest Essay

Rough Draft due March 20, Final Draft due April 3; both by 11:59PM on Canvas

More details and a more in depth prompt will be provided about this essay in class. This will be a 1500(or more) word essay in which you will research a person who inspires you and use the actual research to support what makes them an inspiring person.

Literacy Playlist

Rough Draft due May 1, Final Draft due May 14; both by 11:59PM on Canvas

More details and a more in depth prompt will be provided about this essay in class. This will be a 1500(or more) word writing project based on the Literacy Narratives you have written throughout the semester.

Reflection Portfolio

Later in the semester, around November, you will be given a separate Canvas course in addition to this one in which you will be submitting a Reflection Portfolio on your experience this semester in English 1A. This will involve three tasks, consisting of two short surveys and a portfolio that has three components in itself: a 500-600 word self-reflection on your progress and growth from the beginning of this semester to the end, your final writing project in my class(the How I Write Personal Essay), and the Critical Essay you wrote for *Reflection on College Writing* over summer. We will go over this in greater detail later in the semester when the Canvas course for the Portfolio is opened.

✓ Grading Information

These grading guarantees are tentative, meaning that they are subject to change. As the semester go on we may find that we need to come back to this and revise it as a class. If this comes up, we will sit down as a class and discuss what changes need to be made. Until then, you are guaranteed these grades based up fulfilling these requirements:

You are Guaranteed an A in this course if you:

1. Complete at least thirteen(13) or more Reading and Responses by the end of the semester
2. Complete at least thirteen(13) or more Literacy Narratives by the end of the semester
3. Turn in each completed Project Rough Draft by the appointed due date
4. Turn in each completed Project Final Draft by the appointed due date
5. Participate in, and/or submit work from, a reasonable amount in class discussions, P.O.P. Activities, and Welcome Writing Prompts

You are guaranteed a B in this course if you:

1. Complete at least twelve(12) Reading and Responses by the end of the semester
2. Complete at least twelve(12) Literacy Narratives by the end of the semester
3. Turn in each completed Project Rough Draft no more than one week late
4. Turn in each completed Project Final Draft no more than one week late
5. Participate in, and/or submit work from, a reasonable amount in class discussions, P.O.P. Activities, and Welcome Writing Prompts

You are guaranteed a C in this course if you:

1. Complete at least eleven(11) Reading and Responses by the end of the semester
2. Complete at least eleven(11) individual Literacy Narratives by the end of the semester
3. Turn in each completed Project Rough Draft by the end of the semester
4. Turn in each completed Project Final Draft by the end of the semester
5. Participate in, and/or submit work from, a reasonable amount in class discussions, P.O.P. Activities, and Welcome Writing Prompts

As an instructor, I commit to:

1. providing formative feedback on all assignments where revision is expected and providing feedback upon request for assignments where revision is not expected
2. engaging with and responding thoughtfully to student work in a timely manner, especially when revision is required;
3. providing clear and reasonable criteria for major assignments;
4. providing oral or written feedback to explain judgments of quality as necessary;
5. seriously reconsidering judgements of quality if requested as part of a one-on-one meeting (i.e., office hours or arranged meeting [in-person or Zoom]);
6. creating availability for meetings with individual students who want to confer on drafts;

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

In a perfect world with a perfect teacher, this is exactly how our week-to-week schedule would look. However, this is not a perfect world and I am not a perfect person, and so there may be changes that come to this schedule as the semester progresses. This is my *intended* schedule for our class with a brief "title" for each week to give you an idea of what we will be talking about. Things may need to change and move around as we get deeper into the semester, if this happens we will discuss the changes happening as a class. Until such a time, this is my Tentative Homework Schedule for our class:

Week One: Introductions & Brainstorming

Sunday, January 25

Reading Response 1 - "Brainstorming" by Jasmine Betka

<https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/Brainstorming.pdf>

(This first Reading Response is very short and will be due by Wednesday at 10:30am)

Monday, January 26

Wednesday, January 28

Literacy Narrative 1

Please also fill out the Introduction survey

Week Two: Thesis Statements

Sunday, February 1

Reading Response 2 - "Thesis" by Harvard College Writing Center

<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/sites/g/files/omnum451/files/writingcenter/files/thesis.pdf>

Monday, February 2

Wednesday, February 4

Literacy Narrative 2

Week Three: Essay Proposals

Sunday, February 8

Reading Response 3 - "Writing Essay Proposals" by Faolan Cole and Jennifer Dickieson

https://writingcentre.ecuad-theshow.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/93d0e-wc_handout_proposal_online.pdf

Monday, February 9

Wednesday, February 11

Literacy Narrative 3

Week Four: Revising Your Writing

Sunday, February 15

Reading Response 4 - "Writing Is Not Writing Unless It's Revising" by Josh Stevens

<https://jrstephens.medium.com/writing-is-not-writing-unless-its-revising-b65104539ce9>

Monday, February 16

Wednesday, February 18

Literacy Narrative 4

Astrology Essay Rough Draft due Friday, February 13, By Midnight

Week Five: What Is Purpose?

Sunday, February 22

Reading Response 5 - "Writing with Purpose: Making Every Word Count" by Alessandra Giugliano

<https://www.thesify.ai/blog/writing-with-purpose>

Monday, February 23

Wednesday, February 25

Literacy Narrative 5

Week Six: What Is Genre?

Sunday, March 1

Reading Response 6 - "Genres of Writing" by Duke University

<https://twp.duke.edu/twp-writing-studio/resources-students/genres>

Monday, March 2

Wednesday, March 4

Literacy Narrative 6

Astrology Essay Final Draft Due Friday, February 27, By Midnight

Week Seven: Research Tips

Sunday, March 8

Reading Response 7 - "How to Enjoy Writing Research Papers" by Concordia University

<https://www.cui.edu/studentlife/writing-studio/voice-paint-blog/blog/post/how-to-enjoy-writing-research-papers>

Monday, March 9

Wednesday, March 11

Literacy Narrative 7

Week Eight: Annotated Bibliographies

Sunday, March 15

Reading Response 8 - "Annotated Bibliographies" by Purdue OWL

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/annotated_bibliographies/index.html

Monday, March 16

Wednesday, March 18

Literacy Narrative 8

Week Nine: Audience Awareness

Sunday, March 22

Reading Response 9 - "Writing for an Audience" by University of Maryland Global Campus

<https://www.umgc.edu/current-students/learning-resources/writing-center/writing-resources/prewriting/writing-for-an-audience>

Monday, March 23

Wednesday, March 25

Literacy Narrative 9

Person Of Interest Essay Rough Draft Due Friday, March 20, By Midnight

Week Ten: Formatting

Sunday, March 29

Reading Response 10 - "MLA General Format" by Purdue OWL

- https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_general_format.html
- https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_in_text_citations_the_basics.html
- https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_works_cited_page_basic_format.html

Monday, March 30

Wednesday, April 1

Literacy Narrative 10

Week Eleven: Spring Break(No Class)

Sunday, April 5

Reading Response 11 - "Organizing Your Writing" by North Dakota State University

https://www.ndsu.edu/sites/default/files/fileadmin/cfwriters/Graduate_Student_Writing_Resources/writing_process/OrganizingYourWriting.pdf

Monday, April 6

Wednesday, April 8

Literacy Narrative 11

Person Of Interest Final Draft Due Friday, April 3, By Midnight

Week Twelve: Logical Fallacies

Sunday, April 12

Reading Response 12 - "Evaluating Online Information: Logical Fallacies" by University of Iowa

<https://guides.lib.uiowa.edu/c.php?g=849536&p=6077643>

Monday, April 13

Wednesday, April 15

Literacy Narrative 12

Week Thirteen: Does Grammar Matter?

Sunday, April 19

Reading Response 13 - "Why grammar doesn't matter" by Belinda Pollard

<https://smallbluedog.com/why-grammar-doesnt-matter.html>

Monday, April 20

Wednesday, April 22

Literacy Narrative 13

Week Fourteen: A.I. In Writing

Sunday, April 26

Reading Response 14 - "Artificial Intelligence In Education: Teachers' Opinions On AI In The Classroom" by Ilana Hamilton

<https://www.forbes.com/advisor/education/it-and-tech/artificial-intelligence-in-school/>

Monday, April 27

Wednesday, April 29

Literacy Narrative 14

Literacy Playlist Rough Draft Is Due Friday, May 1, By Midnight

Week Fifteen: What Is Context?

Sunday, May 3

Reading Response 15 - "The Danger Of A Single Story" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>

Monday, May 4

Wednesday, May 6

Literacy Narrative 15

Week Sixteen:

Monday, May 11

Final class together ='(

Literacy Playlist Final Draft Is Due Thursday, May 14, By Midnight