

First Year Writing

ENGL 1A

Spring 2026 Section 10 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 02/03/2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Liam Leslie

Email: liam.leslie@sjsu.edu

Class Meeting Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00-10:15 Clark Hall 243

Office & Office Hours: FOB 213 Tuesdays 10:15-11:15 (Or via Zoom by request)

Course Information

Welcome

Hello, my name is Liam Leslie, and I will be your English 1A instructor this semester. I am looking forward to getting to know you all as students, community members, and people over the course of the next 16 weeks. You are entering this semester with plenty of skills and abilities, and I am eager to learn from and with you.

I have three main goals for us this semester: 1) to increase our understanding and sensitivity to our own language usage 2) to introduce and prepare you for writing within academic settings and 3) to begin to imagine the types of writing you will be doing in your near and far future. To accomplish these goals, we will have to do some work (you and me both!). But we will also be sure to have a lot of fun too (you and me both!).

It is a privilege to be your writing instructor this semester and I don't take that privilege lightly. It is also a privilege to be an on-campus resource for you too. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you think I might be of some help or provide some direction as you navigate your collegiate experience. You have my email address and my office hours are posted above. If you cannot attend my office hours, please reach out and we will set up a Zoom meeting. Again, I can't wait to encounter your writerly and humanly talents!

Attendance and Participation

Please come to class every day ready to participate. To make this class as productive, enriching, and enjoyable as possible for everyone, we need your presence and attention. I understand that there will be times when you're stressed, distracted, frustrated, disinterested, etc. and that's okay, me too! But I ask that you bring a positive attitude and even a selfish one—come with the intention of gaining something valuable for yourself: composition skills, community membership, or an opportunity to get out of the house. We're in this together, which means we must literally be in class together! Plus, you cannot make up in-class discussions, activities, or peer reviews, which compose a major portion of your grade.

Communication

Please communicate with me frequently. I love hearing from my students. It means they're thinking about class! Which is cool, because I am too. If you learned something cool, let me know. If you are confused, let me know. If you have to miss class, let me know. I will be responsive and considerate. My priority is to help you succeed. Part of helping you succeed is being available. Send me an email, visit my office hours, it's my job! With that said, please be mindful that I also have a life outside of class and that there are boundaries. I will email you back within 48 hours.

Respect

I'll keep this really short—I will respect you, please respect me. Your classmates will respect you, please respect your classmates. No bigotry, discrimination, or aggression will be tolerated. Sometimes the topics may be serious, tense, or even contentious. But we're here to think and write and make our world the way we want it. I think we can all agree that we want our classroom to be a safe place. So, hey, let's just be cool!

*And if something has gone awry, let me know. We'll discuss and address these matters together. However, please understand that I am also a mandatory reporter. Please review the other SJSU resources to discern if it's best to visit someone else.

Phones

Here's the deal, your phone is a tool. It can absolutely aid the learning process. When we're in class, use it for learning please. If you are waiting for an urgent message or life is happening, that's okay too. Step outside the room, handle it, no questions asked. Otherwise, please respect your own learning, your peers learning, and my teaching. Please also keep your phone silent during class😊

AI & Plagiarism

Same as above, AI is a tool. It can absolutely aid the learning process. However, when misapplied, it can do some damage—in many ways. But I am not naïve to AI's current significance and have therefore developed a way to integrate AI practice into our curriculum. You will get to use it and experiment with it and consider why or why not you might want to employ it in the future. So, here's the deal, please only use AI when I am asking you to. Please do not use AI otherwise. If we can agree on that, life's good for all of us!

Should you use AI and present it as your own work (AKA you don't acknowledge that you used AI to complete an assignment), that will be considered plagiarism. Similarly, if you present another person's work (intellectual property) as your own without acknowledging its original source, that too will be considered plagiarism. Here's the heart of the matter—copy and paste and generative AI seem like they're going to save you time and effort, however the consequence of plagiarism is your own learning and critical thinking skills. And that is without mentioning that should it be discovered that you are plagiarizing or using AI outside of the scope of our course ethos, you will receive a failing grade on the assignment and potentially face a time and labor-intensive review from the university. Trust me, none of us want that. Let's just commit to learning and honesty!

Accommodations

If you need accommodation for your learning, please reach out to me. I will make adjustments to my own teaching practices to best help you. I will also refer you to other resources that can further aid your learning experience at SJSU

Other Available SJSU Resources

The University provides all students several resources to help us successfully learn in this course. The services provided include counseling and psychological care, mentoring and tutoring, access to food and housing, to technology, and writing support.

Accessible Education Center

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Peer Connections

SJSU Cares

Spartan Food Pantry

Student Technology Resources

Writing Center

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

ENGL 1A Course Content

Diversity: SJSU is a diverse campus. As such, our course is designed to include an emphasis on a diverse range of voices and viewpoints. We will engage in integrated reading and writing assignments to construct our own arguments on complex issues that generate meaningful public discussions.

Writing: Writing is at the heart of our class. Our exploration of writing will allow us to prepare ourselves and each other for academic and real-world writing scenarios. Assignments give students repeated practice in all phases of the writing process: prewriting, organizing, writing, revising, and editing. Our class requires a minimum of 8000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form. More specific descriptions and instructions will be distributed for all major assignments in class.

Reading: There will be a substantial amount of reading for our class, some of which will come from texts I select (listed below) and some of which will be from sources you locate.

Final Experience: We will compile a portfolio at the end of the semester that includes selected examples of your writing produced for our class, as well as materials from your RCW Canvas course. We will talk more about the portfolio later in the semester.

Time Commitment

Success in ENGL 1A is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Final Examination or Evaluation

In ENGL 1A, our learning culminates in a digital Reflection and Portfolio Assignment. In this assignment, we will gather samples of our writing that demonstrate our learning; we will write a reflection essay that explains what we have learned, how we learned it, and how we will use it in future learning; and we will

submit our portfolio for consideration to other people in the first-year writing program. This is our chance to identify and articulate what we've learned and what we'll take forward with us into future learning/writing experiences.

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on the Canvas Learning Management System course login website. You're responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU to learn of any updates. For help with using Canvas see Canvas Student Resources page.

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 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

All course reading will be available for free. They will be available online via Canvas or provided by me in class. If, for any reason, you temporarily do not have access to Canvas, contact me and we will find another way to get you the materials. Although the list looks long, it is all within the range of 3-15 pages. The readings are as follows:

- Chapter 5—Literacies (*Writing About Writing*, Wardle & Downs)
- “Should Writers Use Their Own English?” (Vershawn Ashanti Young)
- “Reflecting on Literacy Identities Through Writing Personal Narratives” (Ruth Li)
- “Art of Reading a Journal Article” (RV Subramanyan)
- AI Writing Toolbox (SJSU Writing Center)
- “Creating Easy-To-Read Paragraphs” (SJSU Writing Center)
- “How to Develop a Working Thesis Statement” (SJSU Writing Center)
- “Grammar, Rhetoric, and Style” (Craig Hulst)
- “The Human Cost of Global Warming in 2024” (The New York Times)
- “Understanding Discourse Communities” (Dan Melzer)

*These are subject to change as needed for the purposes of time and student need

Because the core of our class is writing, you should always have at least one writing utensil and medium in class. You will also need a device compatible with word processing software and Canvas.

- Laptop/Tablet

- Notebook (removable paper preferred)
- Pen/Pencil

If you need to borrow laptops, iPads, and more, please contact

Student Computing Services. If you need software training, contact Student Technology Training Center.

Library Liaison—Our library liaison is Peggy Cabrera. She is available to help you find resources to do your work in this course. She has set up for students a library resource page for the Department of English and Comparative literature. The tutorials on this page will help you to understand academic research processes and tools, and they will help you to develop an eye for the most valuable resources for your work. You will find Peggy Cabrera's contact page by clicking on this link. (I will speak more about this resource during Unit #2)

Course Requirements and Assignments

Assignment	Points	Learning Outcomes
Participation (Participating in Discussions, Quick Writes, Classroom Activities, etc.)	100	1, 2, 3, 4
	50+50=	1, 3, 4
Unit Reflections/Content Responses (2x)	100 Total	
Peer Review (3x)	66+67+67 = 200 Total	1, 2, 3, 4
Literacy Narrative	150	1, 2, 3
Argumentative Research Paper	150	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Discourse Analysis Paper	150	1, 2, 3, 4

Discourse Analysis Presentation	75	1, 3, 4
Final Reflection (Portfolio)	75	1, 4
Total Points Possible: 1000		

Participation:

Being an engaged member of our classroom community is essential. I ask that you participate in all class activities sincerely. Communicating with me and your peers during each class session will not only enrich your development as a writer but will also help your classmates develop—as well as help me be a more effective educator. Your attention and attitude are instrumental to making the course activities beneficial/productive for all. Be involved, be intentional, be present, and you won't have to worry about this aspect of your grade. Conversely, regularly missing class without a university excused absence or without notifying me (better to notify me as far in advance as possible) will impact your grade as you will not be able to make up activities, quick writes, and/or discussions.

Mid-Unit Reflections/Responses:

A reflection will be assigned to you twice this semester. The reflections are exactly that—you will communicate your reactions, takeaways, disagreements, surprises, applications, confusions, curiosities, etc. in these assignments. These reflections will be based on our readings, discussions, activities, and informational presentations. The guidelines are not strict/firm. I want to know what you think and how your thinking is evolving. Each reflection should be approximately 400 words. A more thorough assignment guide will be distributed and discussed in class and will always be accessible on Canvas too.

Peer Review:

Since writing is an act of communication, it is important to understand its effects and effectiveness. You will be instructed on how to conduct a productive, diplomatic peer review with your classmates. The purpose is not only to receive feedback on your work that you can use to strengthen your piece, but also to practice identifying effective writing maneuvers that your brilliant classmates are employing (this is called Givers Gain Theory). Actively participating in Peer Review Day is mandatory and comprises 20% of your grade. Be involved, be intentional, be present! A more thorough assignment guide will be distributed and discussed in class and will always be accessible on Canvas too.

Literacy Narrative:

We all have many writerly voices. The intention of this assignment is to investigate what informs and influences the ways that you write, communicate, and engage with the world. In this assignment, you will compose a narrative that documents your personal, professional, and academic literacy heritage. This assignment centers you as a complex, multifaceted individual with a diverse background of interests, ideas, and inheritances. My hope is that this assignment will increase your sensitivity and awareness of the countless ways that language and literacy manifest in your life on a daily basis. Because this is a major writing assignment, there is a minimum word count of 1,000 words. A more thorough assignment guide will be distributed and discussed in class and will always be accessible on Canvas too.

Argumentative Research Paper:

This assignment will initiate and introduce you to the standard academic composition conventions. While it is likely that you are familiar with argumentative research papers, I will spend the unit connecting those classic terms (like thesis) to higher education practices and expectations. The goal is to equip you with the skills and knowledge that you are likely to use throughout your collegiate careers. By the end of the unit, you will have composed an evidence-based argumentative paper. You will be taught to compose a strong thesis statement, organize your paragraphs, locate and integrate outside research (minimum 4 sources), and cite your sources. Because this is a major writing assignment, there is a minimum word count of 1,500 words. A more thorough assignment guide will be distributed and discussed in class and will always be accessible on Canvas too.

Discourse Analysis Paper:

Not all writing is created equal and there is no such thing as writing in general. For this inquiry-based assignment, you will investigate the genres, styles, conventions, rhetoric, and expectations for writing within your discipline; that is, your field of study/intended career. During this unit, you will learn to critically analyze written documents that you may be asked to compose in future classes. The goal of this assignment is to familiarize you with different modes and purposes of writing in and outside of academia, but more importantly within your vocational aspirations. This is an opportunity to explore your field of study and begin to envision some of the compositional tasks that may be coming your way soon. Because this is a major writing assignment, there is a minimum word count of 1,000 words. A more thorough assignment guide will be distributed and discussed in class and will always be accessible on Canvas too.

Discourse Analysis Presentation:

This assignment will be a genre transfer activity. You will make decisions on how to take a major written assignment (your Discourse Analysis Paper) and convert it to a different medium: a 5-minute presentation. While this assignment will provide you with practice communicating your writing, it will also introduce your classmates to various writing tasks outside of their own disciplines. As a result, we will all begin to consider

genres, styles, conventions, rhetoric, and expectations for writing outside of our own disciplines. A more thorough assignment guide will be distributed and discussed in class and will always be accessible on Canvas too.

Final Reflection Paper AND Portfolio:

This assignment will be a comprehensive reflection paper on the semester's work. You will reflect on how your writing, reading, and thinking has been changed, reinforced, or challenged by the course's topics, activities, discussions, and assignments. The objective is to reflect on how your notion of writing has evolved and how your own writing practices have been impacted by the course. You will also communicate some of the decisions that you made in your writing and what informed/influenced those choices. This is the final major writing assignment and there is a minimum word count of 500 words. Additionally, the department requires that you submit the Critical Essay you wrote for the Reflection on College Writing, the last Major Assignment that you produced in ENGL 1A, and the aforementioned Self-Reflection Essay to a Canvas page that will be made available to you later in the semester. A more thorough assignment guide will be distributed and discussed in class and will always be accessible on Canvas too.

Minimum Grading Policy:

In the spirit of fairness and reducing the punitive nature of grades, I am instituting a policy where the minimum score that you can receive on an assignment is 50%. Initially, this may seem unfair: Student A did the work and earned 100% and Student B did not do the work and still received 50%. However, 50% is still a failing grade. Conversely, if the student received a 0% on the assignment, the 0% weighs much more heavily on their grade and unfairly increases the work required to attain a passing grade overall. See this [video](#) for a mathematical breakdown.

Life happens, sometimes you miss a class or must work late to pay rent and subsequently you miss an assignment. I don't want a 0% grade to cause a student in a situation like that to give up because their grade isn't recoverable. Besides, a missed assignment wouldn't exactly be an accurate reflection of the student's understanding and progress anyway. At the same time, students who consistently get the work done and at a high level still receive the recognition they deserve for their effort. Here's another short [video](#) breaking this approach down more thoroughly.

Late Work Policy:

All major assignments must be turned in to pass the course. The major assignments are the Literacy Narrative, Argumentative Research Paper, Discourse Analysis Paper, and Final Reflection/Portfolio. You will have until the end of the semester to turn all these assignments in. However, please understand that

turning in a major assignment after the deadline will result in the loss of a full letter grade. In other words, if your paper receives 97% but you turn it in late, the best score you can achieve is 87%.

The same policy is applied to the Mid-Unit Reflection/Responses.

The Peer Review and Discourse Analysis Presentation cannot be made up without previous arrangements with me.

✓ Grading Information

A=1000 to 940 points; 100% to 94%

A minus= 939 points to 900 points; 93.9% to 90%

B plus=899 to 870; 89.9% to 87%

B=869 to 840; 86.9% to 84%

B minus= 839 to 800; 83.9% to 80%

C plus=799 to 770; 79.9% to 77%

C= 769 to 740; 76.9% to 74%

C minus= 739 to 700; 73.9% to 70%

D plus= 699 to 670; 69.9% to 67%

D=669 to 640; 66.9% to 64%

D minus=639 to 600; 63.9% to 60%

F= 559 to 0; 59.9% to 0%

☰ University Policies

Per [University Policy 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) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

CALENDAR Course Schedule

Date	Topic & Activity	Homework
1/22 Week 0	Peer/Professor Introductions, Community Expectation Setting, & Everyday Rhetoric Activity	Introduce yourself on Canvas Discussion Board
1/27 Week 1 Start of Unit 1	Introduction to 1A, Writing, Rhetoric: Why Does It Matter Anyway?; Activity –Why Are You Here, the Rhetoric of College Marketing · Quick Write #1	Read Chapter 5 by 1/29—Literacies (Writing about Writing, Wardle & Downs, Located on Canvas!)
1/29 Week 1	Introduction to Literacy Narratives // Narrative Writing & Structure; Thinking/writing time; Mini-narrative sharing activity · Quick Write #2	Read Vershawn Ashanti Young “Should Writers Use Their Own English?” By 2/3 (Located on Canvas!)
2/3 Week 2	Activity—Reading Like a Writer: Personal Narrative Style w/ Hua Hsu, Joan Didion, James Baldwin, Andrea Levy, & More	Read Li’s “Reflecting on Literacy Identities Through Writing Personal Narratives” (Located on Canvas!)

2/5		Literacy Narrative Draft Due Next Period Before Class
Week 2	Introduction to Peer Review: How We Do It, Why We Do It, & A Question of Ethics; Review Professor Example; Writing Time Quick Write #3	
2/10	PEER REVIEW DAY	Consider, Revise, Edit for Literacy Narrative
Week 3		
2/12	Applying Personal Narratives: Scholarships Quick Write #4	Consider, Revise, Edit for Literacy Narrative
Week 3		
2/17	Introduction to Academic Composition; Introduce Argumentative Essay; Activity—What Do We Know, And What Might We Be Punished for Not Knowing? Quick Write #5	Consider, Revise, Edit for Literacy Narrative Read Subramanyam's "Art of Reading a Journal Article" (Located on Canvas!)
Week 4 Start of Unit 2		

2/19 Week 4	Developing and Evolving Research Questions; Crash Course to the Databases/Library Finding & Evaluating Sources—All the Stuff they Never Told You · Quick Write #6	LITERACY NARRATIVE DUE SUNDAY, 2/22 11:59 PST Explore WC's AI Writer Toolbox (Link on Canvas!)
2/24 Week 5	Alright, Let's Talk About It—Artificial Intelligence & Writing; Discussion; Activity: Is it Alive? · Quick Write #7	Read WC's "Creating Easy-To-Read Paragraphs" and "How to Develop a Working Thesis Statement" (Link on Canvas!)
2/26 Week 5	Introductions, & Theses: What are they? How do we do them?; Writing Time	TBA
3/3 NO CLASS Week 6	Research Question, Introductory Paragraph, and Thesis Assignment Due 3/5 at 11:59 PST	See Canvas
3/5 NO CLASS Week 6	Reflection #1 Due to Canvas by SUNDAY, 3/8 11:59 PST	See Canvas

3/10 Week 7	Developing Evidence Based Arguments, Body Paragraphs, Integrating Sources, & Synthesis; Writing Time	Read "Grammar, Rhetoric, and Style" (Located on Canvas!)
3/12 Week 7	Your Favorite C's: Conventions, Conclusions, Citations—Yes, How We Do Them, But Also WHY We Do Them Quick Write #9	TBA
3/17 Week 8	Un-Blurring Paraphrasing and Plagiarism (WC); Writing Time	TBA
3/19 Week 8	Rhetorical Triangle & Others; Identifying Rhetorical Moves: Counter Arguments	Argumentative Essay Draft Due Next Period Before Class
3/24 Week 9	PEER REVIEW DAY	Consider, Revise, Edit for Argumentative Research Paper
3/26 Week 9	In Class Revision Time; Writing Conferences	ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY DUE SUNDAY, 4/12 11:59 PST

3/31	NO CLASS SPRING BREAK	
4/2	NO CLASS SPRING BREAK	
Week 10 4/7 Start of Unit 3	Introduce Unit Assignment; Introduction to Genre; Discussion; Genre Scramble Activity · Quick Write #10	For Next Class— Read “Understanding Discourse Communities” (Located on Canvas!)
4/9 Week 10	Evolution of Discourse; Discussion; Activity: Whose Discipline Anyway? · Quick Write #11	Reflection #2 Due to Canvas by SUNDAY, 4/12 11:59 PST Locate an Article Within Your Discipline for Next Class
4/14 Week 11	Exploring Your Prospective Field: Who Are They? What do They Write? Why Do they Write? · Quick Write #12	
4/16 Week 11	Activity—Analyzing Genre for Your Major	Discourse Analysis Draft Due Next Period Before Class

4/21	PEER REVIEW DAY	For Next Class— Read NYT “The Human Cost of Global Warming in 2024”
Week 12		
4/23	Audience and Genre Transfer Activity	
Week 12		
4/28	From Paper to Presentation: A How To; Writing Time	Revisions; Presentation Preparation
Week 13		
4/30	In-Class Revision Time and Writing Conferences	DISCOURSE ANALYSIS PAPER DUE SUNDAY, 5/3 1159 PST
Week 13		
5/5	DISCOURSE ANALYSIS PRESENTATIONS	Practice & Prepare for Presentations
Week 14		
5/7	DISCOURSE ANALYSIS PRESENTATIONS	Practice & Prepare for Presentations

5/12	NO CLASS	FINAL REFLECTION & PORTFOLIO DUE MAY 19 th 11:59 PST
------	----------	---