College of Humanities and the Arts · English & Comparative Literature

Critical Thinking and Writing
ENGL 2

Fall 2025   Sections 12, 14   In Person   3 Unit(s)   08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025   Modified 08/19/2025

👤 Contact Information

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- Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:20-10:20 am in office / Wednesdays 12-1 pm (Zoom), or by appt.
- Class Meeting Time/Location: TuTh 12-1:15 pm / Boccardo Business Center Room 120

🕐 Course Information

ENGL 2

This course is open to all students needing to fulfill GE Area A3 (Critical Thinking). It is not open to students who have successfully completed ENGL 1B.
Prerequisite: ENGL 1A or Stretch English (with a grade of C- or better)

ENGL 2 COURSE THEME

Writing Ourselves: Gen Z, Technology, and the Search for Truth

In this course, we'll explore how Gen Z navigates a world shaped by algorithms, short-form content, and competing versions of truth. From viral claims to conspiracy theories, we'll investigate how digital media affects the way we write, think, and construct our identities—and how writing itself can be a tool for clarity, critique, and connection.

🖥 Course Description and Requisites

English 2 is a course that focuses on the relationship between language and logic in composing arguments. Students learn various methods of effective reasoning and appropriate rhetorical strategies to help them invent, demonstrate, and express arguments clearly, logically, and persuasively.

GE Area(s): A3. Critical Thinking and Writing

Prerequisite(s): Completion of GE Area A2 with a grade of "C-" or better.

Note(s): ENGL 2 is not open to students who successfully completed ENGL 1B.

Letter Graded

✳ Classroom Protocols

Classroom Expectations & Community Guidelines

Our time together is limited and meaningful. Let's commit to creating a respectful, focused, and supportive learning environment where everyone can grow as thinkers, writers, and collaborators.

Technology Use

- **Phones** must be silenced and put away when class begins. Please remove **earbuds or earpieces** unless otherwise approved for accessibility.

- **Laptops and tablets** are welcome for course-related tasks (readings, notes, assignments). Personal browsing, gaming, checking email, or using social media during class is not permitted.

Respectful Participation

- Be present. Listen actively. Contribute thoughtfully.

- Engage with both peer and published work with curiosity and care.

- Give feedback that is specific, constructive, and focused on helping the writer grow—never on tearing them down.

Professionalism & Courtesy

- Communicate with respect, whether in person, in writing, or online.

- Address your instructor and classmates appropriately. Keep emails and messages professional.

Disruptive Behavior

- Repeated disruptions, disrespectful behavior, or misuse of technology may result in being asked to leave class.

- We all have off days—just communicate if something is going on. We're here to support each other.

Our Classroom Community

We are a community of writers. This classroom is a space for exploration, honesty, and growth—not for harsh judgment. We honor confidentiality: what's shared in class stays in class.

We listen as thoughtfully as we speak. We ask questions that invite conversation. We approach each other's work—and our own—with curiosity and compassion.

Above all, we strive to hold one another to a standard of kindness.

Attendance Policy and Late Work

Attendance

Your presence matters. This class depends on discussion, collaboration, and shared engagement—and it's more meaningful for everyone when we're all here and involved.

That said, I understand that life happens. Illness, emergencies, or university-sponsored events (such as athletic travel) may occasionally prevent you from attending. If that's the case, please notify me as soon as possible, and we'll discuss how to handle any missed work.

Important: Sleeping in, skipping class, or general absences without cause don't fall into this category.

If you know in advance that you'll be missing class for a university-related commitment, reach out early so we can make a plan for staying on track.

Per University Policy F69-24:
"Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefits for all members of the class."

Frequent absences will impact your participation grade, and many in-class activities cannot be made up outside of class time.

Tardiness

Please arrive on time. Late arrivals miss key instructions and disrupt the flow of the class. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, you will be marked absent for the day.

If you do arrive late, enter quietly, sit near the door, and minimize disruption to your classmates.

Late Work

Assignments are due on or before the due date. You're welcome to turn in work early.

Late submissions will lose **10 points per day** unless you've arranged an extension in advance due to extenuating circumstances.

▦ 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

Course Content

Diversity: SJSU studies include an emphasis on diversity. You will engage in integrated reading, Writing, and oral assignments to construct your own arguments on complex issues (such as diversity and ethnicity, class and social equality) that generate meaningful public debate. Readings for the course will include writers of different ethnicities, genders, and socio-economic classes.

Writing: You will write a series of essays informed by research and articulating fully developed arguments about complex issues. Assignments emphasize those skills and activities in writing and thinking that produce the persuasive argument and the critical essay, each of which demands analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Writing assignments give you repeated practice in prewriting, organizing, writing, revising, and editing. This class requires a minimum of 6000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Logic: You will learn methods of argument analysis, both rhetorical and logical, that will allow you to identify logical structures (such as warrants, evidence, qualification, rebuttal; enthymemes and syllogisms) and distinguish common logical fallacies.

Reading: In addition to being writing intensive, ENGL 2 is also a reading course. You will read a variety of critical and argumentative texts to help develop your skills for understanding the logical structure of argumentative writing.

Oral: You will be presenting your arguments orally to class both as an individual and as part of a group.

📊 Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area A3: Critical Thinking and Writing

Area A3 courses develop students' understanding of the relationship of language to logic. By engaging students in complex issues requiring critical thinking and effective argumentation, A3 courses develop students' abilities to research and analyze important topics and to construct their own arguments on issues that generate meaningful public debate and deliberation. Courses include explicit instruction and practice in inductive and deductive reasoning as well as identification of formal and informal fallacies of language and thought. Completion of Area A2 (Written Communication I) with a minimum grade of C- is a prerequisite for enrollment in Area A3. Completion of Area A3 with a grade of C- or better is a CSU graduation requirement.

GE Area A3 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area A3 course, students should be able to:

1. locate, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize evidence in a comprehensive way, including through library research; and integrate research findings into oral and written arguments through appropriate citation and quotation;
2. use a range of rhetorical and logical strategies to articulate and explain their positions on complex issues in dialogue with other points of view;
3. identify and critically evaluate the assumptions in and the contexts of arguments; and
4. use inductive and deductive logic to construct valid, evidence-supported arguments and draw valid conclusions.

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 6000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

📘 Course Materials

Assigned Readings

There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, all assigned readings will be available on Canvas under the Modules section. You are expected to bring each reading to class—either as a printed copy or on a device—as we will be analyzing passages closely and engaging in guided discussions.

Grammar and Mechanics Lectures

Rather than using a grammar handbook, I will provide slideshow lectures on grammar and writing mechanics throughout the semester. These materials are required and should be treated as essential course texts. Reviewing them regularly will help strengthen your writing and ensure you're meeting the course's expectations.

Journal

You should maintain a dedicated journal—paper or digital—for:

- Class notes

- In-class writing and exercises

- Group work and workshop responses

This journal will also support your graded Journal Assignment, which is an important part of the course.

Device Access

You'll need regular access to a desktop, laptop, or tablet for reading, writing, and submitting assignments via Canvas. If you anticipate any issues accessing a device, please speak with me early in the semester so we can explore available campus resources.

≔ Course Requirements and Assignments

Major Assignments Overview

Over the course of the semester, you'll complete five major assignments designed to help you think critically, reflect personally, collaborate thoughtfully, and argue effectively about Gen Z's relationship with technology and truth. Each assignment builds toward our shared goal: engaging both public and academic audiences through clear, evidence-based writing.

1. Journal Writing & Reflection

Length: Approx. 2,000–2,500 words total (MLA format)
Type: Ongoing, individual

You'll complete **7 journals** and **3 reflections** throughout the semester to help you engage with course content, track your learning, and connect personal experience to broader cultural conversations.

- **Journals (7 total – 10 pts each):**
  Informal responses (200–300 words) that allow you to reflect on readings, class discussions, your digital habits, and current events. While grammar doesn't have to be perfect, thoughtful engagement is expected.

- **Reflections (3 total – 10 pts each):**
  Short reflective pieces (150–250 words) that prompt you to step back and consider your progress, challenges, and insights at key moments in the course.

2. Digital Media Diary + Reflective Essay

Length: 750 words (MLA format)
Type: Individual

Track your news and social media habits over the course of **7 days**. Then write a **personal-reflective essay** examining how your digital routines shape your understanding of truth, information, and bias in the digital age.

3. Fact-Check a TikTok

Deliverables: Group presentation (3–5 min) + slide deck + optional 150–250 word reflection
Type: Group or paired project

Choose a TikTok video that makes a factual claim. In a pair or small group, research the claim using a credibility checklist, then present your findings to the class. Your presentation should include visuals and clear evidence. An optional short reflection can be submitted individually.

4. Op-Ed / Public Argument

Length: 750–1,000 words (MLA format or real-world publication style)
Type: Individual

Write a persuasive op-ed on a topic related to Gen Z and technology. Your goal is to inform or persuade a public audience by using a strong voice, compelling evidence, and a clear structure.

5. Final Project + Presentation

Length: 1,200–1,500 words (MLA or APA format)
Presentation: 3–5 minutes in class
Type: Individual (format choice: traditional or multimodal)

For your final project, choose a specific benefit or harm of artificial intelligence and argue how it impacts Gen Z. You may choose between:

- A traditional research essay, or

- A multimodal project (e.g., podcast, video, blog post with visuals and a written script)

Your project should:

- Take a clear stance

- Integrate credible sources

- Address at least one counterargument

- Follow MLA or APA citation style

- Be accompanied by a brief in-class presentation summarizing your key insights

Reading Expectations

Reading is a core part of this course. Expect to read for every class—sometimes short articles, sometimes videos or TikToks, sometimes longer essays. These readings are selected to connect directly with your digital life and give you tools to write with insight and substance.

You are expected not just to read, but to read *closely and critically*. Skimming won't prepare you for discussion or writing. If you're ever unsure about a reading, bring your questions—we'll work through them together.

Participation

Participation in this course is about showing up, staying engaged, and contributing in small but consistent ways. That includes:

- Completing in-class freewriting prompts

- Joining in on group work and discussions

- Coming prepared and staying focused during class

Each week, I keep a simple tally to track your participation. You'll get a ✔ for meaningful effort, a for especially strong engagement, and partial credit if you're late, distracted, or minimally involved. At the end of the semester, those tallies are added up and converted to a score out of **50 points**.

This isn't about being the loudest voice in the room—it's about being present, prepared, and willing to think along with the rest of us.

Peer-Review

Peer review is a required part of the writing process in this course. For major assignments, you will participate in structured peer-review workshops where you exchange drafts, give written feedback, and reflect on revisions. These sessions are designed to help you see your work from a reader's perspective and strengthen your argument, clarity, and organization before final submission.

To earn full credit, you must:

- Submit a complete draft by the peer review deadline

- Provide thoughtful, specific comments on your partner's draft

- Write a brief reflection on the feedback you received and how you plan to revise

Peer review activities are graded for completion and engagement (10 points each) and cannot be made up if missed. Please treat your peer's work with respect and approach the process with care and honesty.

Final Writing Portfolio

At the end of the semester you will compile a portfolio of your writing that documents how you met the learning goals of the course.

Time Commitment

Success in ENGL 2 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 2, 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).

✔ Grading Information

Assignment Word Count and Learning Goals

ASSIGNMENTS	WORD COUNT	GELO

Reflective Essay: *Digital Media Diary*	750	1-4
Group/Paired Project: *Fact-Check a TikTok* (presentation + reflection)	500	1-4
Op-Ed / Public Argument + Peer-Review	750-1000	1-4
Final Argument Essay + Reflection + Peer-Review	1000-1200	1-4
Writing Journals and Reflections	150–250 words per entry × 10	1-4
Portfolio Self-Reflection and Bibliography	500	1-4

SJSU Academic Integrity Policy

A student's commitment to learning, as evidenced by his or her enrollment at San Jose State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy require all students to be honest in their academic course work. Faculty are required to report all infractions to the office of Judicial Affairs. The policy on academic integrity can be found [here (https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/SJSU-Academic-Integrity-Policy-F15-7.pdf)](https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/SJSU-Academic-Integrity-Policy-F15-7.pdf). The SJSU rules against plagiarism are set forth in the SJSU Catalog, which defines plagiarism as the act of representing the work of another as one's own (without giving appropriate credit) regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements.

Plagiarism at SJSU includes, but is not limited to: (1) the act of incorporating the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts thereof, or the specific substance of another's work, without giving appropriate credit, and representing the product as one's own work. It is the role and obligation of each student to know the rules that preserve academic integrity and abide by them at all times. This includes learning and following the particular rules associated with specific classes, exams, and/or course assignments. Ignorance of these rules is not a defense to the charge of violating the Academic Integrity Policy.

On Academic Integrity & AI Tool Usage

AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini are powerful and widely available. They can summarize information, help you brainstorm ideas, and even generate writing. But in this class—*Critical Thinking and Writing*—we're here to practice the hard, human work of thinking, analyzing, and articulating arguments for ourselves.

This course is not anti-AI. But it is pro-human. Pro-process. Pro-struggle. Learning how to express yourself clearly and originally is a skill no app can do *for* you. It's a skill that grows only through doing the work.

You're not being graded on how polished your work sounds. You're being graded on how you think—how you engage with ideas, respond to feedback, and express your perspective. That's something no app can do for you.

You Can Use AI to Help With:

- Brainstorm or outline ideas

- Summarize complex material

- Explore counterarguments

- Check grammar or clarity (e.g., Grammarly)**

It's Not Okay to Use AI Tools To:

- Write or rewrite assignments for you

- Bypass reading, thinking, or revising

- Submit AI-generated work without real input

- Replace your voice with something generic

Be transparent: If you use an AI tool, include a short note at the end of your assignment (e.g., *"I used ChatGPT to brainstorm counterpoints"*). This won't count against you—it shows integrity.

If you're unsure whether something is okay, **ask me**. I'd much rather have that conversation early than question your work later.

**A Note on Grammarly and Similar Editing Tools
You may use Grammarly or similar tools **only after completing a full draft on your own**. Use them to check spelling or grammar—not to rewrite sentences or choose alternate phrasing. You are responsible for accepting or rejecting each suggestion.

If you use Grammarly, you must:

- Keep your original draft for submission alongside the edited version.

- Be able to explain what changes you made and why.

Using AI in place of your own creative work undermines the purpose of this class and violates the University's Academic Integrity Policy; it will be treated as plagiarism.

To protect the integrity of your work:

- Keep a clear draft history for each assignment.

- Bring questions about "gray areas" to me before you submit your work.

Breakdown

Assignment	Points
Reflective Essay: *Digital Media Diary*	75 pts
Group/Paired Project: *Fact-Check a TikTok* (presentation + reflection)	110 pts
Op-Ed / Public Argument + Peer-Review	110 pts
Final Argument Essay + Reflection + Peer-Review	110 pts
Journal Writing and Reflection	100 pts
Final Portfolio	20 pts
Participation	50 pts
Total	575 pts

Criteria

The department's standard grading scheme consists of the following: "Requirements for particular assignments will vary, but in all cases essay grades will reflect the paper's effectiveness, which is broken down into three major areas: content (this includes maturity and sophistication of thought), organization, and expression.

- An "A" range essay is organized and well-developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment, written in a unique and compelling voice. It will show the student's ability to use language effectively with a solid command of grammar, mechanics, and usage.
  A "B" range essay demonstrates competence in the same categories as an "A" essay, but it may show slight weakness in one of these areas. It will respond to the topic suitably and may contain some grammatical, mechanical or usage errors.
  A "C" range essay will complete the requirements of the assignment, but it will show weaknesses in fundamentals, such as development. It may show weakness in mastery of grammar, mechanics, usage, or voice.
  A "D" range essay will neglect to meet all the requirements of the assignment or may be superficial in its treatment of the topic. It may lack development or fail to stay on topic. It may

contain grammatical, mechanical, and/or usage errors that interfere with reader comprehension.

An "F" essay does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment.

A+ (100-98); A (97-94); A- (93-90); B+ (89-87); B (86-83); B- (82-80); C+ (79-77); C (76-73); C- (72-70); D+ (69-67); D (66-63); D- (62-61); F (<60)

Your grade in Canvas is not representative of your grade in this course: I factor in overall performance (participation, professionalism, attendance, etc.). No grade haggling. I do not negotiate grades. If you are concerned with your grade (especially by midterm) and want to know how to do better in the future, I welcome appointments to discuss possible strategies for improvement.

🏛 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.

📅 Course Schedule

Schedule/Calendar below is subject to change. Always check Canvas for the most up to date information on assignments, readings, and due dates.

Week	Dates	Overview
One	Thurs August 21	• Week One Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-one-overview?module_item_id=16688137)
Two	Tues Aug 26 & Thurs 28	• Week Two Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-two-overview?module_item_id=16690201)
Three	Tues Sept 2 & Thurs Sept 4	• Week Three Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-three-overview?module_item_id=16690644)

Four	Tues Sept 9 & Thurs Sept 11	• Week Four Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-four-overview?module_item_id=16702057)
Five	Tues Sept 16 & Thurs Sept 18	• Week Five Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-five-overview?module_item_id=16702078)
Six	Tues Sept 23 & Thurs Sept 25	• Week Six Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-six-overview?module_item_id=16718339)
Seven	Tues Sept 30 & Thurs Oct 2	• Week Seven Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-seven-overview?module_item_id=16718341)
Eight	Tues Oct 7 & Thurs Oct 9	• Week Eight Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-eight-overview?module_item_id=16718342)
Nine	Tues Oct 14 & Thurs Oct 16	• Week Nine Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-nine-overview?module_item_id=16718343)
Ten	Tues Oct 21 & Thurs Oct 23	• Week Ten Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-ten-overview?module_item_id=16718345)
Eleven	Tues Oct 28 & Thurs Oct 30	• Week Eleven Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-eleven-overview?module_item_id=16721149)
Twelve	Tues Nov 4 & Thurs Nov 6	• Week Twelve Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-twelve-overview?module_item_id=16721150)
Thirteen	Tues Nov 11 & Thurs Nov 13	• Week Thirteen Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-thirteen-overview?module_item_id=16721151)

Fourteen	Tues Nov 18 & Thurs Nov 20	• Week Fourteen Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-fourteen-overview?module_item_id=16721152)
Fifteen	Tues Nov 25 & Thurs Nov 27	• Week Fifteen Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-fifteen-overview?module_item_id=16721153)
Sixteen	Tues Dec 2 & Thurs Dec 4	• Week Sixteen Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1610485/pages/week-sixteen-overview?module_item_id=16721154)