

Critical Thinking and Writing

ENGL 2

Fall 2025 Sections 01, 02, 03, 09, 83 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/24/2025

Course Information

Course Description: English 2 fulfills the general education requirement for critical thinking and writing and will give you opportunities to explore different writing styles and rhetorical strategies, as you develop your own writing voice. The semester will progress through three segments: Memoir writing, Inquiry writing, and Persuasive writing, with three essays assigned respectively; and we'll write almost every day, frequently sharing our work in class. We'll learn from important models, reading and discussing short texts together; but most of what you study in this course will be up to you, your personal interests and what you write about them supplying our primary content for discussion. I value honesty, curiosity, risk-taking, and fun (!); and the intellectual level of this course will depend entirely on the investment and engagement you bring to it. I cannot emphasize that point enough.

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

Important Class Policies:

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- LATE/MAKE-UP WORK - In-person peer review is a critical element of our course, so rough drafts must be on time and in class to receive full credit for the Otherwise, I'll accept late work... to a point.

Don't make a habit of it. I don't give written feedback on late work (come to my office hours to discuss), and I don't accept work by email attachment. All students are welcome to revise and resubmit any essay up until December 5th.

- **ATTENDANCE:** If absent or tardy, it's your responsibility to follow up with classmates for information and/or work you've missed, as well as keep up with our Canvas site. I don't discriminate between reasons for absences, and if you're **absent more than 9 times, you cannot pass the class**. Excessive lateness will accrue as equivalent absences. Otherwise, see our grading contract for attendance policies, which include attending the Digital Literacies Event on September 2nd and any classes held on Zoom due to unforeseen circumstances. **Check Canvas announcements daily to stay informed.**
- **CONTRACT GRADING:** In my ideal world, there would be no grades; students would come to class and execute assignments for the implicit value of learning. In the real world, however, I'm obligated to assign grades at the end of the semester. To accommodate that real world necessity, I've designed a labor-based grading contract. That means **your final grade will be based on the effort you put into course requirements listed above**. Labor-based grades not only accommodate the spirit of education I most value, they also circumvent endemic problems of grading rubrics – predominantly, that they tend to benefit upper-class white people more than any other group.
- **CELL PHONES (!!!) & DIGITAL DISTRACTIONS:** If you're too distracted by your screen to pay attention in class, maybe you shouldn't be in class..? Seriously. For 75 minutes, twice a week, you're expected to be *present* and aware that **your screen problem is everyone's problem...** because it takes you away from us. Since COVID, cell phone addiction has become so grim and out of control, I have to put my foot down. Of course, you MAY use phones/iPads/computers for appropriate in-class activities; and **if you need your phone for an urgent reason (family or work), just let me know ahead of time** – I'm not unreasonable. Otherwise, put your phone away. Doodle or draw, instead=).
- **PLAGIARISM (& A.I.)** is the presentation of work that is not your own: **using A.I.* or another person's ideas, words, or artistic/scientific/technical work without giving proper credit**. A student who copies or paraphrases published work (from the internet, print, or otherwise) without properly identifying their sources is committing plagiarism. A student who submits work generated by A.I. is committing plagiarism. In short, plagiarism is stealing and lying, and it's the quickest way to lose your self-respect. **Own your voice and be proud of your writing at whatever stage of growth. * 0% A.I. is acceptable for your Memoir Essay; <12% A.I. is acceptable for your Inquiry Essay; and <12% A.I. is acceptable for your Persuasive Essay. More than that will not be accepted.**

- **TRIGGER WARNING:** Sensitive topics may arise, personal or political, as we have open discussions about assigned texts and each other's writing throughout the semester. Every student should feel comfortable voicing their point of view, as well as **demonstrate tolerance and curiosity** for understanding the diverse point of views among us. Leave judgements at the door, and be kind. **No audio or video recordings are permitted without permission from the entire class.**
- **UNIVERSITY POLICIES:** Please refer to our **full "SJSU Official" syllabus on Canvas** for information about **learning outcomes, disability services and accommodations, Title IX, and more!**

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)

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.

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.

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.

Program Policies

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

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

[. \(https://www.sjsu.edu/english/frosh/program-policies.php\).](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

- Confidence in reading, thinking, writing and presentation skills
- Awareness of rhetorical devices and strategies
- Discrimination of information and its resources
- Advanced research skills: in library and on the field
- Appreciation for when to use A.I. and when not to use it
- Engaged and curious about your world
- "Happy" life values=)

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

Required Course Materials: an 8 ½ x 11" writing notebook and **blue or black** writing pen are required every class session; keep a pocket-folder devoted to English 2; occasionally, laptops will be required in class; otherwise, all course materials, texts, and videos are available on our Canvas site.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Course Requirements & Grades (%):

Detailed instructions with specific criteria will be provided for all assignments:

- PARTICIPATION & PREPAREDNESS (20%) – Energetic discussions are vital to our learning community, so come prepared and participate eagerly to earn a good grade. I may give pop quizzes, if students start slacking. See grading contract for attendance policy.
- JOURNALING (15%) – We'll write almost every day in class, answering to a number of prompts throughout the semester and occasionally completing the task as homework.
- MEMOIR ESSAY (15%)– Convey a meaningful personal story or experience (≈ 1000 words). 1st Draft Due Thursday, September 25th; 2nd Draft Due Tuesday, September 30th.
- INQUIRY ESSAY (15%) – Investigate a topic that interests you and bring something new to the table (≈ 1200 words). 1st Draft Due Thursday, October 23rd; 2nd Draft Due Tuesday, October 28
- PERSUASIVE ESSAY (15%) – Take a stand on an issue that's important to you. 1st Draft Due Tuesday, November 25th; 2nd Draft Due Tuesday, December 2nd.
- ESSAY PRESENTATION (5%) - Each student will give a five to ten-minute presentation on *either* their Inquiry Essay *or* their Persuasive Essay.
- MEDIA PRESENTATION (5%) - Each student will present a favorite song, TV show, video game, or other digital entertainment to the class.
- FINAL REFLECTION & PORTFOLIO (10%) – At the end of the semester, each student will submit a written reflection about what they've learned in English 2, along with a portfolio of their best work

✓ Grading Information

GRADING CONTRACT

REQUIREMENTS	A (+/-)	B(+/-)	C(+/-)
<p>PARTICIPATION & PREPAREDNESS</p> <p>20%</p>	<p>3 absences max.</p> <p>Almost always prepared and engaged</p>	<p>5 absences max.</p> <p>Often prepared and engaged</p>	<p>7 absences max.</p> <p>Sometimes prepared and engaged</p>
<p>JOURNALING</p> <p>15%</p>	<p>Missing no more than 2 assigned entries</p> <p>Content is mostly robust and meaningful</p>	<p>Missing no more than 4 assigned entries</p> <p>Content is often robust and meaningful</p>	<p>Missing no more than 6 assigned entries</p> <p>Content is robust or meaningful on occasion</p>
<p>MEMOIR, INQUIRY, & PERSUASIVE ESSAYS</p> <p>45%</p> <p>(15% EACH)</p>	<p>Requirements are fully satisfied</p> <p>Meaningful participation in <u>all in-class peer reviews</u></p>	<p>Most requirements are satisfied</p> <p>Meaningful participation in <u>at least two in-class peer reviews.</u></p>	<p>Some requirements are satisfied</p> <p>Participation in <u>at least one in-class peer review.</u></p>

ESSAY PRESENTATION 5%	Enthusiastic, well-prepared, & well-informed	Some enthusiasm, preparedness, & information	Little enthusiasm, preparedness, or information.. but you got up there
MEDIA PRESENTATION 5%	Enthusiastic, well-prepared, & well-informed	Some enthusiasm, good information & preparedness	Little enthusiasm, preparedness, or information.. but you got up there
FINAL REFLECTION & PORTFOLIO 10%	All requirements met; instructions followed vigilantly Reflection is specific and meaningful, illustrating lessons of English 2	Most requirements met; followed most instructions Reflection alludes to some specific and meaningful content from English 2	Some requirements met; many instructions missed Little substance to reflection about English 2

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

[COURSE CALENDAR \(Subject to change -- Follow Modules Carefully!\)](#)

[FALL 2025](#)

AUGUST

Thursday 21st [Class Introduction](#)

Tuesday 26th [Syllabus Review](#)

Thursday 28th Langston Hughes, "Salvation"
Ryan Van Meter, "First"
Journaling #1 (in class)

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 2nd ATTEND Digital Literacies Event,
Student Union Ballroom

Thursday 4th Jaquira Diaz, "Beach City"
"Memoir Essay" & AI (in class)
Journaling #2 (in class)

Tuesday 9th Jenny Lawson, "Stanley The Magical Talking Squirrel"
Tina Fey, "That's Don Fey"
Matthew Treacy, "She"
Journaling #3 (in class)

Thursday 11th Journaling #4

Tuesday 16th Lidia Yuknavitch, "Woven"
Romalyn Ante, "To My Leaver-Mother"
Journaling #5 (in class)

Thursday 18th David Sedaris, "Let It Snow"
Memoir Topics Due

Journaling #6 (in class)

Tuesday 23rd Philip Lopate, "On...Turning Oneself Into A Character"
Journaling #7 (in class)

Thursday 25th [Memoir Essay 1st Draft Due for In-Class Peer Review](#)

Tuesday 30th [Memoir Essay 2nd Draft Due via TurnItIn on Canvas](#)
Roko Belic, *Happy* (in class)

OCTOBER

Thursday 2nd "Inquiry Essay" & AI (in class)
Journaling #8 (in class)

Tuesday 7th Exposure Labs, *The Social Dilemma*
Amy Cuddy, "Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are" (in class)
Journaling #9 (in class)

Thursday 9th Choose ONE from list: [see Canvas, WEEK 8 Module](#)
Helen Fisher "Why We Love, Why We Cheat"(in class)
[Inquiry Essay Topic Due!](#)
Journaling #10 (in class)

Tuesday 14th Peer Reviewed Article Due
Journaling #11 (in class)

Thursday 16th Cultural Artifact Due
Journaling #12 (in class)

Tuesday 21st Field Research Due
Journaling #13 (in class)

Thursday 23rd [Inquiry Essay 1st Draft Due for In-Class Peer Review](#)

Tuesday 28th [Inquiry Essay 2nd Draft Due via TurnItIn on Canvas](#)
[+ ESSAY PRESENTATIONS](#)

Thursday 30th "Persuasive Essay" & AI (in class)
Journaling #14 (in class)

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 4th Laura Rowley, "As They Say, Drugs Kill"
Andrea Dworkin, "Why Women Must Get Out of Men's Laps"
Chuck Klosterman, "Monogamy"
Journaling #15 (in class)

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Thursday 6th Alice Walker, "Am I Blue?"
"Meanings of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos" (in class)
Journaling #16 (in class)

Tuesday 11th Veteran's Day – No Class Meeting

- Thursday 13th Scott Turow, "To Kill or Not to Kill"
Bryan Stevenson, TED 2012 (in class)
Persuasive Essay Topic Due!
Journaling #17 (in class)
- Tuesday 18th Primary Resource – Peer Reviewed Article Due
Journaling #18 (in class)
- Thursday 20th Supporting Resources Due
Journaling #19 (in class)
- Tuesday 25th. Persuasive Essay 1st Draft Due for In-Class Peer Review
- Thursday 27th Thanksgiving Day – No Class Meeting

DECEMBER

- Tuesday 2nd Persuasive Essay Final Draft Due via TurnItIn on Canvas
+ ESSAY PRESENTATIONS
- Thursday 4th LAST CLASS MEETING: Final Reflection & Portfolio Instructions
(in class), extra credit, make-up presentations, grades, and potluck=)

FINAL REFLECTION & PORTFOLIO, and all coursework must be submitted

no later than Monday, December 8th