

Seminar in Composition Studies Section 01

ENGL 259

Fall 2023 4 Unit(s) 08/21/2023 to 12/06/2023 Modified 09/01/2023

Class time: TH, 4:00-6:45PM

Class location: Faculty Office Bldg (FOB), 104

In this course, we will engage with current approaches to studying and teaching writing. Specifically, we will examine perspectives about writing that inform its instruction: what writing is, how it is studied, how it is taught, how it should be taught, and whether or not it even can be taught. Our overarching goal will be to understand writing/composition as a complex, situated act in order to chart possibilities for developing and improving our work as teachers and scholars. The course will focus on situating issues associated with teaching writing in theoretical frameworks of rhetoric and composition studies, and we will discuss practical teaching issues, as well.

Course Description and Requisites

Study of current approaches to composition.

Prerequisite: Classified standing or instructor consent.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

This course can be demanding. The reading load is heavy, the material is challenging, and course requirements are substantial.

That said, COVID times continue to be what COVID times are, so we're going to need manage our expectations appropriately. We're going to try to be like wolves (*Canis lupus*)—we'll work together as a pack, leave no one behind, occasionally fight a Kodiak bear (*Ursus arctos middendorffi*).

During most class periods, we will discuss readings, do group activities, and hear presentations. I strongly encourage students to visit me in my office hours to discuss course materials and/or assignments throughout the semester—especially in the event that course expectations are overwhelming or confusing.

It's an English course, I know, but let's do some quick math. ENGL 259 is a 4-unit course. That means we are signing up to do a minimum of 12 hours of study per week just for this class. 2½ hours will be class time. The remaining 9½ hours a week, you will work on your own or with your peers to prepare for class and complete assignments. I have designed the work using this math to guide us. I will refer to it often to help you manage this workload over the semester.

Please note:

Sometimes projects and discussions include material that can be contentious and even potentially upsetting. 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. In class, discussion is welcome and encouraged, but comments found to be intentionally offensive, disrespectful, or antagonistic will not be tolerated.

Please also note:

If you have special needs or accommodations requests, see me as soon as possible. Failure to do so may result in forfeiting accommodations to which you're entitled. But even if you're not *formally* entitled to accommodations, talk to me anyway so we can make this an environment in which you can learn. My priority is a learning environment conducive to everyone's needs.

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](#)
- [Other Campus Resources](#)

Course Goals

- 1) explore and evaluate a range of approaches to studying and teaching writing
- 2) situate writing in relation to values and expectations that teachers, students, and outside influences bring to the scene of instruction

- 3) engage in productive discussions about teaching and studying writing
- 4) articulate theoretically informed goals and objectives for writing classrooms
- 5) practice modes of academic inquiry

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

How Does This Work Contribute to Your Graduate Studies in English?

Rhetoric & composition is one of the many sub-disciplines included in English Studies, alongside other prominent sub-disciplines such as literature and creative writing. This course asks us to develop and begin to apply expertise in rhetoric & composition as we contemplate how to teach and study writing. While this course is not explicitly about the content in the rhetoric & composition portion of the MA exam, it will be helpful for studying to pass that section for students who select it.

Looking at the English graduate program learning objectives below, it is worth asking how rhetoric & composition is like, but also not like, other elements of the program:

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the MA English program, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research
3. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to
 - a. organize and present material in a cogent fashion,
 - b. formulate and defend original arguments,
 - c. employ effectively the language of their discipline and
 - d. write under time constraints.
5. Demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.

Upon successful completion of the MFA in Creative Writing, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a high level of ability to propose and complete a publishable, full-length work of literature in a primary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
2. Demonstrate high level of proficiency to write works of literature in a secondary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
3. Demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.
4. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.
5. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to:
 - a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion;
 - b) formulate and defend original arguments;
 - c) employ effectively the language of their discipline;

d) write under time constraints.

Course Materials

Course Format

Technology Intensive, Hybrid, and Online Courses

It will be useful to have internet access in class for research purposes, but it will not be required without advance warning. Some software applications we might use include: Zoom, Canvas, SJSU Google Suite, a PDF reader, Discord, etc. If you need to borrow laptops, iPads, and more, please contact [Student Computing Services](#). If you need software training, contact [Student Technology Training Center](#).

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas](#). You're responsible for regularly checking messages through MySJSU to learn of any updates. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#).

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](#).

How Learning Works

Author: Susan Ambrose, et. al

Publisher: Jossey-Bass

ISBN: 9780470484104

Dynamic Activities for First-Year Composition

Author: Michal Reznizki and David Coad

Publisher: NCTE

ISBN: 9780814100936

Lives on the Boundary

Author: Mike Rose

Publisher: Penguin

Edition: Any

ISBN: 9780143035466

There are lots of editions of this book. It shouldn't matter which one you get, except that there may be some minor discrepancy in pagination.

Other Readings

Additional readings will be posted on Canvas and/or located by members of the class.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Assignment	Learning Outcomes
Teaching Portfolio	2, 3, 4
Professional Development Activities (6 total)	1, 2, 3, 5
Class Observation Report	1, 3, 5
Dynamic Teaching Showcase	3, 5
Reading responses (12 total)	1, 3, 4, 5
Participation / daily writing / in-class work	1, 3, 5

Reading Responses

Your reading responses are primarily reflective writing. The prompt is simple: "What value did you get from the readings and/or what did it echo for you?" Addressing this question could take an infinite number of forms, but the goal is to think with writers, scholars, and/or class community members in order for you to put yourself and your experiences in relation to the course materials, including those you might feel little to no interest in.

Please post your responses on Canvas by **11:59pm on Wednesday evening**. You will earn full credit for a good faith effort submitted by the deadline. By "good-faith effort," I mean the submission responds appropriately to the assignment and does not violate the academic integrity policy. A post that I judge to not be a "good-faith effort" may receive partial credit.

Professional development activities

There are 6 professional development activities [*How Learning Works* presentation, generative AI evaluation, midterm evaluation, re-mediation, microlessons for Early Start, final reflection]. We'll talk more about the rationales and goals for each throughout the semester.

FYC Observation

You will “visit” an experienced writing program instructor’s class (online or in-person) and produce a short (1-2 page) report describing what you learned (e.g., a teaching approach, activity idea, classroom organization/ management strategy, etc.). You are strongly encouraged to arrange a follow-up meeting with the instructor, and you will be expected to send a copy of your report to the instructor for their records. **Nota Bene:** This is a collegial activity, not a critical one. You’re not looking for things you think other teachers do poorly or that you think you could do better. You’re looking for things they’re doing well as a teacher that you can learn from.

Dynamic Activity Showcase

Each of you will choose one activity from Reznizki & Coad’s, *Dynamic Activities for First-Year Composition* to teach to the class. **NOTE:** You can adapt it, if you’d like! You have significant leeway in how to present/teach this, but in keeping with the goals of the book, it should be ACTIVE (i.e., not just you giving a lecture and showing some slides). Your presentation should be approximately 12-15 minutes long.

Teaching Portfolio

The major project in this class will be a teaching portfolio. It will include: (1) a teaching philosophy, (2) a teaching CV, (3) a writing course syllabus, (4) an active learning lesson plan, and (5) a final reflection. It may optionally include other materials, such as a writing assignment prompt, activity descriptions, or a daily class plan.

Final Examination or Evaluation

Faculty members are required to have a culminating activity for their courses, which can include a final examination, a final research paper or project, a final creative work or performance, a final portfolio of work, or other appropriate assignment. The culminating activity for ENGL 259 is the teaching portfolio described in course assignments.

✓ Grading Information

You are guaranteed a B if you:

1. attend class typically—generally arriving on time and not missing more than two weeks’ worth of classes;
2. meet criteria and due dates for all major assignments (i.e., Class Observation Report, Professional Development Activities, and Dynamic Teaching Showcase);
3. complete most discussion board assignments—not missing more than two—at least a baseline level of engagement;
4. participate in all in-class exercises and activities;
5. give thoughtful peer feedback during workshops and work faithfully with your group on other collaborative tasks (e.g., sharing papers, commenting on drafts, peer editing, on-line discussion boards, answering peer questions);

6. make substantive revisions when the assignment is to revise—extending or changing the thinking or organization—not just editing or touching up;
7. copy-edit all final revisions of main assignments until they conform to the conventions appropriate to the purpose, genre, and audience;
8. submit your Teaching Portfolio.

In this system, you can earn the grade of B entirely on the basis of what you do—on your conscientious effort and participation. The grade of B does not derive from my judgment about the quality of your work with the exception that your work must meet my expectations for the quality of “baseline” engagement. Grades higher than B, however, do rest on my judgment of quality. To earn higher grades you must complete the assignments at both a higher level of (1) effort and participation and (2) quality.

You are guaranteed an A if you:

1. attend class reliably—consistently arriving on time and not missing more than one week’s worth of classes;
2. meet criteria and due dates for all major assignments (i.e., Class Observation Report, Professional Development Activities, and Dynamic Teaching Showcase) at a high level of quality;
3. participate in all in-class exercises and activities;
4. complete all discussion board assignments at a high level of engagement;
5. give thoughtful peer feedback during workshops and work faithfully with your group on other collaborative tasks (e.g., sharing papers, commenting on drafts, peer editing, on-line discussion boards, answering peer questions);
6. make substantive revisions when the assignment is to revise—extending or changing the thinking or organization—not just editing or touching up;
7. copy-edit all final revisions of main assignments until they conform to the conventions appropriate to the purpose, genre, and audience;
8. attend conferences with the teacher to discuss drafts;
9. submit your Teaching Portfolio at a high level of quality.

You may earn a B+ if you meet all the criteria for a B at a level of quality that I judge in sum to be high, but you do not meet the criteria for an A. You may earn an A- if you meet all the criteria for an A but do so at a level of quality that I judge in sum to be not high.

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;
7. considering upon request extenuating circumstances to raise (but never lower) grades that do not meet students' expectations based on the above contracts
8. re-evaluating contract criteria in consultation with class members, if requested.

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

Calendar subject to change with fair warning

Readings listed should be read BEFORE class

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are on Canvas

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/24	<p>Before class: Read Alexie, "Superman and I"*</p> <p>Skinnell, "Reading as an Act of Insubordination"* (link)</p> <p>Sommers, "I Stand Here Writing"*</p> <p>Due: Bring an object to introduce yourself</p> <p>During Class: Introductions, syllabus/grading contracts, defining our intellectual task, what we bring to the task [literacy map]</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
2	8/31	<p>Before class: Read Hesse, "Teachers as Students, Reflecting Resistance"*</p> <p>Hesse, "We Know What Works in Teaching Composition"*</p> <p>Ball and Loewe*</p> <p>Chapter: "America is Facing a Literacy Crisis" (Babb)</p> <p>Chapter: "First-Year Composition Prepares Students for Academic Writing" (Branson)</p> <p>Chapter: "You Can Learn to Write in General" (Wardle)</p> <p>Chapter: "Some People are Just Born Good Writers" (Parrott)</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #1 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: Examining our beliefs, values, and expectations about teaching and writing; introduce Teaching Observation</p>
3	9/7	<p>Before class: Read Ambrose, et al., <i>How Learning Works</i>, Foreword & Introduction</p> <p>Rose, <i>Lives on the Boundary</i>, Preface + chs. 1-2</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #2 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: How Learning Works, and why it matters (aka, We're the weirdos), discuss <i>How Learning Works</i> <u>presentations + handout</u></p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
4	9/14	<p>Before class: Read Parker, "Where English Departments Came From"*</p> <p>Rose, <i>Lives on the Boundary</i>, Preface + chs. 3-5</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #3 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: A lil bit o' history; more <i>HLW</i> preparation/planning</p>
5	9/21	<p>Before class: Read Rose, <i>Lives on the Boundary</i>, chs. 6-8, epilogue</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #4 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: <i>HLW</i> presentations; our rich, complex, literate lives; literacy brokers/sponsors</p>
6	9/28	<p>Before class: Read Corder, "Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love"*</p> <p>Alexander and Rhodes, "Queerness, Multimodality, and the Possibilities of Re/Orientation"*</p> <p>Hart-Davidson, "Writing with Robots and other Curiosities of the Age of Machine Rhetorics"*</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #5 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: Love, Orientation, Robots: Generating Intelligence for Our Times; ChatGPT evaluation activity</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
7	10/5	<p>Before class: Read Matsuda, "Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity"*</p> <p>Royster, "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own"*</p> <p>Bloom, "Freshman Composition as a Middle-Class Enterprise"*</p> <p>Due: ChatGPT evaluation activity (initial draft); Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #6 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: The People We're Teaching Are People: A Revelation; peer review</p>
8	10/12	<p>Before class: Read Cedillo and Bratta, "Relating Our Experiences"*</p> <p>Young, "Should Writers Use They Own English?"*</p> <p>Alvarez, "Translanguaging <i>Tareas</i>"*</p> <p>Due: ChatGPT evaluation activity (revised draft); Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #7 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: Situating Ourselves, Situating Our Students</p>
9	10/19	<p>Before class: Read Williams, "Phenomenology of Error"*</p> <p>Brooke, "Underlife and Writing Instruction"*</p> <p>Due: Mid-Semester Evaluation; Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #8 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: Vive la Résistance!</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
10	10/26	<p>Before class: Read hooks, "Engaged Pedagogy"*</p> <p>Powell, "Learning (Teaching) to Teach (Learn)"*</p> <p>Kynard, "Teaching While Black"*</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #9 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: Teachers Are People, Too; teaching practice; praxis; material compositions; translating goals into activities and assignments</p>
11	11/2	<p>Before class: Read Oleksiak, "Queer Praxis for Peer Review"*</p> <p>Meeks, "Givers Gain Teaching Philosophy"*</p> <p>Meeks, "3 Feedback Design Lessons" (link)</p> <p>Hart-Davidson, "Describe-Evaluate-Suggest video" (link)</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #10 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: Peer review; taking stock of where we are; introduce re/mediation</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
12	11/9	<p>Before class: Read Elbow, "Grading Student Writing"*</p> <p>Blum, "Ungrading" (link)</p> <p>Stommel, "Ungrading: A Bibliography" (link)</p> <p>Paul, "Promising Approaches: Grading Scales and Equity in Physics" video (link)</p> <p>Due: Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #11 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: Ugh, grading</p>
13	11/16	<p>CLASS ACTIVITIES WILL BE ONLINE (ASYNCHRONOUS) THIS WEEK BECAUSE SKINNELL IS AT THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.</p> <p>Before class: Re-Read any reading or set of readings from earlier in the class to complete Discussion Board #12.</p> <p>Due: Re/Mediation (initial draft); Respond to Canvas Discussion Board #12 by 11:59PM the day before class</p> <p>During Class: [ASYNCHRONOUS, ON-CANVAS] peer review; micro-lessons for Early Start (choose any 2)</p>
14	11/23	<p>FALL RECESS, no class</p>
15	11/30	<p>Due: Re/mediation [revised draft]; Teaching Observation report due (to Canvas and to instructor)</p> <p>During Class: CV, teaching statement, etc.; introduce portfolio</p>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Final Exam	WED, 12/13 2:45- 5:00pm	Due (before class): Final Reflection (by the end of class): Teaching Portfolio During Class: Dynamic Activity Showcase; potluck