

Writing and the Young Writer Section 01

ENGL 109

Spring 2025 Hybrid 4 Unit(s) 01/23/2025 to 05/12/2025 Modified 01/03/2025

Course Information

This course is designed to strengthen participants' writing skills in both creative and expository genres and to develop participants' knowledge and skills as future teachers of writing.

Course Description and Requisites

Emphasis on workshop approach to improve creative and expository writing skills and to transfer knowledge gained as a writer into practice as a prospective teacher of writing.

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

Participation Through Dialogue and Active Listening. This course seeks to promote an active learning process through individual and shared writing, collective inquiry, dialogue, interaction, and engagement. In this course we will delve into some difficult and sometimes controversial themes. Some discussions, readings, and assignments may evoke strong convictions, emotions, or experiences. It is important to me that the classroom community is a safe space for us to share these. All of us are responsible for our role in creating this space by approaching course topics and one another with honesty, sensitivity, and thoughtful inquiry.

Expectations for class participation include careful, attentive listening to peers, active engagement in class, a respect for the privacy and confidentiality of others, and a willingness to explore new or controversial concepts as you evaluate and/or relate to ideas in the readings to class discussions. *Your voice is valued.*

Class Preparation. Please stay current with the reading assignments. All readings are due on the dates listed in the class schedule. Please complete the reading before class and come prepared to participate. Bring a digital or print copy of the reading to class with you.

Please also come to every class ready to *write*-- to journal, to explore or connect ideas, to analyze sources, to respond to others' writing, and to workshop drafts of your different assignments.

Shared Writing & Writing Workshop. At various points in this class, we will read one another's writing with the same respect and care that we read any author who is listed on the syllabus. Sometimes

you may be asked to share small pieces of work anonymously. Sometimes you will be asked to share with partners or a small writing group. Sometimes you will be asked to share part of your work with me in a 1:1 conference. You are welcome to ask to share your work at any point in the class. From time to time, I may also share excerpts of my writing. The purpose is to build a community of shared writing, where we read and write in response to each other as we build the class conversation.

Writing is personal. For this reason, it is crucial that we are mindful of how we respond to one another's work. Our response or critique needs to be constructive, considerate, and careful in tone.

Technology Etiquette. Please avoid texting, emailing, websurfing and other tasks that keep you from being fully present in class. *The class will be its best if we are all having the same conversation.* Please remove ear buds and keep cell phones silenced and put away, and use your laptops only for in-class work and activities. *No social media, please!*

Attendance and Late Work. If you are absent, please email me so I can check in with you on class developments and send you any materials you missed. If you know in advance that you will be absent, please *email me as soon as you know.* Don't forget to check Canvas to see if there is something you missed.

There will be many in-class assignments and activities that will count towards your grade. If you miss a class, there is not an authentic way to make it up. Late papers are also discouraged. They will be marked down unless your absence is excused. This is intended not to punish you, but to be fair to other students who also have many things on their schedules.

Academic Integrity. [University Academic Integrity Policy F15-7 \[pdf\]](#) asks that you are honest in all of your academic coursework. This value is at the heart of all academic endeavors. While there are many ways to argue a position or ask others to engage with your views, the non-negotiable here is that your work is uniquely *yours*.

Course Evaluation. You will be asked to submit a formal evaluation of this course during the last class. However, please do not save feedback for the final evaluation form. You are welcome to share your comments as the course unfolds.

Program Information

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: english@sjsu.edu (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Goals

“The people who come to see us bring us their stories. They hope they tell them well enough so that we understand the truth of their lives. They hope we know how to interpret their stories correctly.”

- Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories*

“We should welcome certain kinds of errors, make allowance for them in the curricula we develop, analyze rather than simply criticize them. Error marks the place where education begins.”

- Mike Rose, *Lives on the Boundary*

“Actually, I’ve always considered myself a writer but I didn’t know what a writer was. Now I think a writer is just a person. Someone who goes through experiences and feels like people should know about them.”

- Nate, 11th Grade Student, East San José

This course is designed to strengthen participants’ writing skills in both creative and expository genres and to develop participants’ knowledge and skills as future teachers of writing.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Reflect on and describe their own writing process
- Demonstrate collaborative communication skills through participation in the writing workshop process
- Demonstrate facility in creative composition in a variety of genres
- Investigate and apply a variety of methods of prewriting, drafting, responding, revising, editing and evaluating
- Employ a variety of software applications to produce both print documents and multimedia presentations
- Recognize and use a variety of writing applications (short story, biographical, autobiographical, expository, persuasive)
- Demonstrate awareness of audience, purpose and context
- Recognize and use a variety of narrative and non-narrative organizational patterns
- Demonstrate and evaluate oral performance in a variety of forms

Course Materials

All required readings for this course will be on Canvas.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Journals: There will be **weekly, short, in-class opportunities for informal writing** that will relate to our readings, our identities as writers, our field work, and other topics we discuss. I will ask you to share these with me, and my response will always be non-evaluative. Their purpose is to help us think and build dialogue, and to create opportunities for us to share our stories, values, and experiences, so we can grow together as a community of writers.

All **out-of-class writing and field work opportunities** are noted below. The first two will include a draft that we will workshop in class. The drafting and workshop process will pose an opportunity for you to develop a deeper sense of your revision process. I will also ask you to reflect on each final piece of your work. Please make an office hours appointment with me if you would like additional support.

1. **Self-Reflections as a Writer** (15% of your grade)

This paper will ask you to write and reflect on your experiences and associations with writing (both in and out of school), and how these have shaped your views of yourself as a writer, and what it means to *be* a writer. What draws you to a class like this? What, to you, counts as writing? What larger conversations do you want to enter, and where do you want to belong? How might these and other questions inform any of *your* future work with students, or your sense of what they need to develop identities as writers?

2. Linguistic Identity & “Single Stories”: A Genre-Blend (15% of your grade)

This paper will ask you to blend your story with the voices of others we have read to this point in the course to explore the connection between language and identity. (You are also welcome to bring in authors from your reading outside of the course.) What is the significance of linguistic identity, and why does language tie so deeply to our ways of perceiving the world and ourselves? How does language shape *you*? What is your language story? You may discuss and share experiences with learning a language or losing a native tongue, linguistic racism, Standard English and “academic language,” Bay area lingo and the connection between language and *place*, or any way that language defines you or anywhere your story takes you.

3. Mini-Lesson (10% of your grade)

This is an opportunity for you to work in pairs (or trios) to create a 15-minute mini-lesson, based on your emerging inquiries into writing pedagogy, to initiate or integrate into one of our classes between weeks 10 and 15 (April 7 - May 12). You may choose any topic that you believe would be useful for the class and should create a rough lesson plan prior to the class period that you will share with us.

4. Multimodal Lesson (15% of your grade)

This paper will ask you to consider our conversations about analytical writing and multimodal literacies, and how we facilitate student literacy by focusing on the humanity of the work.

5. Writing Inquiry Portfolio (15% of your grade)

This semester you will need to observe a total of 5-10 hours of a class that is devoted to writing, in alignment with the 45 hours of “Early Field Experience” that are prerequisite for admission to the credential program. You can do this in a few ways. You might prefer to select your own teacher and site. You might also ask me for teacher contacts; I know some wonderful writing teachers who would welcome you into their classrooms. Additional options will be provided if we remain online as the semester unfolds.

- Classroom Observation Log (5%)

This is for you to think and reflect on the lessons you observe in your classroom observation, and connect them to ideas we discuss in our class.

- Portfolio Presentation (5%)

This presentation will occur on the final day of class in lieu of an additional research project. You will tie together course content and scholarly research with your field work and personal journey as a writer and writing teacher. The purpose is for you to provide us with insight into your inquiries into writing pedagogy over the course of the semester. Your presentation should be multimodal and include a visual element. More information will come at a later date.

- Portfolio Reflection (5%)

This reflection on your portfolio and your evolving thinking about writing throughout the course should include moments captured in your Writer's Notebook and other papers previously submitted, as well as moments observed in your field work. What does it mean to be a writer? What counts as writing? How have your views changed during the semester? More information to follow.

✓ Grading Information

Grade Determination. Requirements for particular assignments will vary, but in all cases your grade will reflect the quality of your writing and work. Student writing should be distinguished by organization, content, style, intentional and thoughtful grammar and punctuation, and APA formatting and style. For APA style guidance, check out the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html) at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html.

- "A" work is thoughtful, organized and well-developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the writing's purpose, written in a unique and compelling voice. It will show the student's ability to use language effectively with a solid command of grammar and mechanics.
- "B" work demonstrates competence in the same categories as an "A" essay, but it may not be as thoughtfully developed in one of these areas. It will respond to the purpose suitably and may contain some grammatical or mechanical errors.
- "C" work will complete the requirements, but it will be minimally developed. It may also miss opportunities for thoughtful development in grammar, mechanics, usage, or voice.
- "D" work will not meet all the requirements or may be superficial in its treatment of the topic and purpose. It will not show thoughtful development. It may contain grammatical, mechanical, and/or usage errors that interfere with reader comprehension.
- An "F" does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment.

Feedback on Written Work. I will offer feedback on your written work to help you process and apply what we learn and discuss in class, or to see and reflect on your "writerly" process. Feedback is intended to help you grow. It is best when it is a dialogue between us. You are welcome to share your thoughts in response to my feedback.

Due Dates. All major assignments should be submitted online via Canvas, ideally before the start of class. Please communicate with me if you need to extend a due date.

Participation. This will be based on your contributions to the learning we do together as a class each day, and it can take several forms, including journaling, active listening, discussion, peer and group work, and in-class activities. I invite you to participate and engage in all of these ways. The more you participate, the more you will grow.

Attendance cannot be used as a criterion for grading, but it's tough to participate if you aren't in class.

Calculating Your Grades. You will be graded according to the following breakdown.

Grading Component	Percentage of Course Grade
1st Writing Piece: "Self-Reflections as a Writer"	15%
2nd Writing Piece: "Linguistic Identity & Self-Stories - A Genre Blend"	15%
Mini-Lesson	15%
Multimodal Writing Lesson	15%
Writing Inquiry Portfolio & Presentation	15%
Journals, Writing Groups, & Participation	25%

You will receive a letter grade at the end of the semester, based on the following calculations:

93-100% A	83-86% B	73-76% C	63-66% D
90-92% A-	80-82% B-	70-72% C-	60-62% D-
87-89% B+	77-79% C+	67-69% D+	0-59% F

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

*Note: Assignments and due dates may change, depending on the shape things take once we get started. Any adjustments to the schedule or assignments will be communicated to you at least one class in advance.

Week 1

January 29	<p>Theme #1: A Writing Community in a Culture of Schooling - A Clash in Values</p> <p>In-Class Reading: Excerpts from Peter Elbow's "Writing for Teachers" & Writing Samples from Local High School Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are your associations with writing, both in and out of school? Do you, or have you ever, considered yourself a writer? What has influenced this? What does it <i>mean</i> to be a writer?• What is needed to build a community of student writers? What is the traditional model of "schooling," and how do the values clash?• What is the difference between writing for communicative versus evaluative purposes? Which do schools emphasize? Which do writers do?
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Week 2

February 5	<p>Read Before Class: Robert Yagelski, "Writing as Praxis"</p> <p>In-Class Excerpts: Paulo Freire, "The Importance of the Act of Reading"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is praxis? How are reading and writing deeper than academic skill sets? How are they <i>life</i> processes?• What is revision? Why is revision a potentially radical concept?• What are in-school and out-of-school literacies, and how can they connect? What does it mean to read, write, and revise the word-world?
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Week 3

February 12	<p>Read Before Class: Maja Wilson's "Why I Won't Be Using Rubrics to Respond to Students' Writing" & Nicole Sieben's "Building Hopeful Secondary School Writers through Effective Feedback Strategies"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the purpose of feedback, and what is its purpose?• What are different approaches to feedback? What kind of feedback is most helpful for developing students as writers?• How can feedback offer teachers a way to meaningfully <i>engage</i> and dialogue with students about their writing? How can we truly <i>listen</i> to what our students are saying?
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Week 4

<p>February 19</p>	<p>Theme #2: Writing & Identity</p> <p>Please bring hard/digital copy of draft of “Self-Reflections as a Writer” to class for writing groups and workshop time</p> <p>Read Before Class: Chapters 1 & 2 from Tom Newkirk’s <i>Minds Made for Stories</i></p> <p>In-Class Excerpts: Donald Murray’s “All Writing is Autobiographical”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the significance of “story” and personal narrative? • How do most K-12 writing curricula treat the narrative genre? How can we reconceptualize it in more purposeful and transformational ways? • How are our “minds made for story?” How does narrative underlie <i>all</i> written genres? <p>View in Class: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk, “The Danger of Single Story”</p> <p>Please submit your “Self-Reflections as a Writer” piece by Monday, 2-24</p>
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Week 5

<p>February 26</p>	<p>Read Before Class: Choose from Amy Tan’s “Mother Tongue,” Julia Alvarez’s “La Gringuita - On Losing a Native Language,” or Trevor Noah’s “Chameleon”</p> <p>Read Before Class: Zapata & Laman, “I write to show how beautiful my languages are: Translingual Writing Instruction in English-Dominant Classrooms”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is linguistic identity? What is <i>your</i> language story? • How do linguistic bias and privilege shape how we use language? • How can language be inclusive or exclusive? How do students use it to navigate social situations and cultural spaces? • What is translanguaging, and what classroom practices support it?
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Week 6

<p>March 5</p>	<p>Read Before Class: June Jordan, “No One Mean More to Me than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan”</p> <p>Excerpts in Class: bell hooks’ “Language,” from <i>Teaching to Transgress</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Standard English? Who sets the “standard?” • What is vernacular, and what about it is often misunderstood? • What is problematic about privileging “academic language” in a way that messages its superiority over other ways of speaking and writing? How is language interconnected with power?
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Week 7

March 12	<p>Read Before Class: For Reference: John Warner, "Our Writing Crisis" & "The Five-Paragraph Essay" from <i>Why They Can't Write: Killing the Five-Paragraph Essay and Other Necessities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What, exactly, is analytical writing? Why is it so difficult for many students, and how can we make it more accessible and engaging?• What about using "I" in academic writing?• What is the difference between "proof-of-performance" writing tasks, and writing that advances a position or contributes to a real academic conversation?
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Week 8

March 19	<p>Theme #3: Developing Student Writers - Practical & Radical Pedagogies</p> <p>Please bring hard/digital copy of draft of your Language Story or Single Story piece to class for writing groups and workshop time</p> <p>Read Before Class: Vasudevan, Shultz, & Bateman's "Rethinking Composing in a Digital Age: Authoring Literate Identities through Multimodal Storytelling"</p> <p>For Reference: Lalitha Vasudevan's "Looking for Angels: Knowing Adolescents by Engaging with Their Multimodal Literacy Practices"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are multimodal literacies? Why is it important to broaden the definition of "writing" and "literacy" to include visual, digital, and oral forms of communication?• How do we use writing and images to perform identity on social media? Why does social media writing count as "writing?" <p>Please submit your second writing piece by Monday, 3-24</p>
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Week 9

March 26	<p>Guest Speaker: Andy Robinson, Drama & Literature Teacher at East Palo Alto Academy High School, Sequoia Union High School District</p> <p>Read Before Class: TBD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can we write to heal? To transform our pain into power?• What is the potential transformative impact when students write and perform their own work?
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Wednesday, April 2 - Spring Break, No Class

Week 10

April 9	<p>Read Before Class: Chapters 4 & 5, "Why Me Revision" & "Revising Narrative Truth," from Bronwyn LaMay's <i>Personal Narrative, Revised: Writing Love and Agency in the High School Classroom</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why do our self-stories matter? What choices do we make about how we write ourselves as characters in our lives? What is self-story revision?• What is "writing love," and why does our definition of love matter? How does it tie to our sense of agency in a way that we play out in some form every day?
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Week 12 – *We will meet remotely this week. A Zoom link will be provided.

April 16	<p>Read Before Class: Nancy Sommers' (1982) "Responding to Student Writing"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is a writing conference, and why should it ideally be more facilitative than directive?• What is "metacognition," and how can a teacher facilitate and surface the acts of thinking that underlie student writing? <p>In-Class Excerpts: Chapter 3 from Asao Inoue's <i>Above the Well - An Antiracist Literacy Argument from a Boy of Color</i></p>
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Week 13

April 23	<p>Guest Speaker: Mike Tinoco, Teacher at Yerba Buena High School, East Side Union District</p> <p>Read Before Class: TBD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can writing help us teach and practice principles of nonviolence and nonviolent communication?• How can narrative and poetry writing help students cultivate empathy – for themselves, their communities, and each other?
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Week 14

April 30	<p>Read Before Class: TBD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do AI technologies change the game for students and teachers alike? What are its positive and negative implications?• What similarities and differences can you detect in writing by human authors versus writing by ChatGPT?• What are reasons why students would rely on ChatGPT for school writing? What are some reasons why they wouldn't? Where do you stand?
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Week 15

May 7	Final Presentations
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Week 16

<p>Wednesday, May 14 - Finals Week/No Class</p> <p>*Please set up office hours with me if you need to!</p> <p>Friday, May 16 - Please submit your final Writing Inquiry Portfolios by midnight!</p>
