

Critical Thinking and Writing

ENGL 2

Spring 2026 Section 36 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/21/2026

Contact Information

Instructor:	Peter O'Sullivan
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Office Hours:	Tuesdays: 9:00 - 10:00AM Thursdays 10:00 - 11:00AM
Class Days/Time:	Mondays and Wednesdays 9:00 - 10:15AM
Classroom:	ENGR 303
Prerequisites:	Completion of GE Area 1A with a grade of C- or better.
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	GE 1B / Critical Thinking and Writing (Formerly Area A3)

Course Description and Requisites

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.

Satisfies 1B. Critical Thinking and Writing (Formerly Area A3).

Prerequisite(s): Completion of GE Area 1A with a grade of C- or better.

Grading: Letter Graded

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

Classroom Protocols

ENGL 2

This course is open to all students needing to fulfill GE Area 1B (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 multimodal assignments 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

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>).

AI Policy

There will be limited allowance of AI use in this classroom environment. We will be integrating graphics and sound into our projects, so the use of AI generation for sound or graphics will be allowed so long as the AI use is cited. Because this is a class primarily about the production of text, AI generated text will not be allowed. All text, unless you are citing from primary or secondary sources, must be your own. Inclusion of AI generated text will minimize the grade for that particular assignment until the assignment is revised with the author's wholly original text. The following are allowable use cases for text and AI.

- Brainstorming ideas
- Creating outlines
- Checking grammar and spelling

If you have an idea for the use of AI that I have not considered here, run it by me for permission before proceeding.

Communication Policy

Telephone: I only respond to telephone calls during office hours.

Email: This is my preferred communication method. For best results, use the messaging system on canvas. The messaging system sends directly to my email; it also tells me not only who you are but also which section of ENGL 2 you are in.

Response Time: If you ask me a direct question, I will get back to you by the next class day: e.g. if you email me on Monday, I'll respond by Wednesday, or if you email me on Wednesday, I'll respond by Monday. If you merely send me an informational email, such as letting me know you are not coming to class, I cannot guarantee a response.

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

In this course, we are going to learn the nuts, bolts, gears, and cogs of argument. We will learn first how to read, understand, and analyze the arguments of others before learning how to construct our own logical and persuasive arguments. We will learn the relationships between arguments and their intended audiences. We will also learn what argument is and is not for. The focus of this class is on horror and how, as a genre, it reflects the fears of society writ large, how it reflects the struggles of those often portrayed as "The Other," and how it offers us a healthy way to deal with the larger terrors of life. We will analyze what it means to fear, what we fear, and how we can exploit those fears to create something new and meaningful.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area 1B: Critical Thinking and Writing

Area 1B courses develop students' understanding of the relationship of language to logic. By engaging students in complex issues requiring critical thinking and effective argumentation, 1B 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 1A (Written Communication I) with a minimum grade of C- is a prerequisite for enrollment in Area 1B. Completion of Area 1B with a grade of C- or better is a CSU graduation requirement.

GE Area 1B Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area 1B 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 requirement

This class requires a minimum of 6000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Course Materials

Required:

King, Stephen. *Danse Macabre*

Course Requirements and Assignments

Major Assignments

There will be three major assignments using multiple modalities (multimodal) in their presentation. These assignments will include a mixture of writing, graphics, and sound. One of the focuses of this course is digital literacy. This course will help prepare you for that future. That said, we will not be skimping on the writing itself. Each major assignment will be scaffolded with a variety of process

assignments. These processes are building blocks for the major assignments. Since we are using process-based pedagogy in this class, the process assignments will be the majority of your grade, while the major assignments, the products, will reflect a smaller percentage.

Reading

Class will include the reading of book length work of non fiction and a myriad of external critical and analytical essays about horror and society. The reading of this material is required to get the full class experience. Reading will be assigned for **every** class and is due before class starts on that particular day. Not only must you read a lot of material, but also you must read deeply, beyond the surface, and understand the material. Failure to keep up with the reading will cause you to fall behind and seriously dent our ability to hold meaningful discussions in class.

Participation

In addition to quizzes, I will be measuring participation through discussions on Canvas. The online discussion forums are designed to inspire dialogue about the material, elicit questions about sections students find confusing, and even discuss the relationships between our readings and our assignments. Students get credit for participating in the discussions each week, but please don't let the potential for meaningful discourse go to waste. If students only participate for the grade, then they've let the discussions become nothing more than busy work.

Group Project

The last three weeks of class will be devoted to a group project. This project will allow you to take everything you've learned about the intersection of horror and society and use it to create a short horror film of your own. I have allotted class time for the groups to work, so as to accommodate students' busy schedules. This assignment will count toward our research requirement,

Final Assessment

Our final assessment will be in the form of a portfolio, due on the day of the final. This portfolio will consist of four part: your critical essay from Reflections on College Writing, a major assignment from this class, an annotated bibliography of your own work, and a reflective essay.

Assignment Word Counts and Learning Goals

Assignment	Word Count	GELO
Fear Analysis Process assignments	1000	2-3
Fear Analysis Final Draft	1000	2-3
Film Proposal Process Assignments	1000	2-4

Film Proposal Final Draft	1000	2-4
Film Process Assignments	1000	1-4
Film Reflection	1000	1-4
Reflective Essay	500	1-4

✓ Grading Information

Requirements for particular assignments will vary. Process assignments will all have specific rubrics that show how grades are assigned. Product grades will be based on how well you manage to stay on top of all of the process assignments. All assignments, quizzes, and exams are graded on a four point minimum scale. The lowest grade you can get for any assignment is 50%. The only exceptions to this rule will be group evaluations. If, in their evaluations, your group signals that you never showed up, you can receive a score of 0.

Extra Credit

There are limited opportunities for extra credit in this course.

Late Policy

All assignments have a listed due date. Anything turned in after the due date will only get a grade and no written feedback. If you want feedback on a late assignment, you must come to my office hours or make an appointment. The last day to turn in any outstanding work is May 11. After May 11, all assignments will lock down and I will not accept them.

Criteria

Type	Weight	Topic	Notes
Process	50		
Product	20		
Project	10		
Participation	10		
Portfolio	10		

Type	Weight	Topic	Notes
Total	100		

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

Spring 2026 Course Schedule.

All dates subject to change.

When	Topic	Notes
Introduction Monday: 1/26/2026		Introductions Sign up for Adobe Access
Lecture Wednesday: 1/28/2026		A brief history of rhetoric.
Reading	Danse Macabre	Skim Chapter 1 before class.
Reading Monday: 2/2/2026	Danse Macabre	Read Chapter 2 before class. Pay special attention to the three levels of fear.
Activity	Pathos	
Lecture		Three Levels of Fear
Reading Wednesday: 2/4/2026	Danse Macabre	Read Chapter 3 before class.
Reading Monday: 2/9/2026	Danse Macabre	Skim Chapters 4 and 5 before class
Video	Queer for Fear	We'll watch an episode of this documentary series about werewolf and vampire archetypes.

When	Topic	Notes
Reading Wednesday: 2/11/2026	Danse Macabre	Read Chapter 6 carefully. This is the longest chapter in the book. Give yourself extra time to read.
Activity	Political Horror	We're going to define five categories of Political Horror.
Reading Monday: 2/16/2026	Danse Macabre	Skim Chapter 7
Lecture	Logos	
Announcement 02/17/2026 12:00 AM - 12:00 AM	Add/Drop Deadline	This is the last day to add or drop classes without receiving a W.
Reading Wednesday: 2/18/2026	Danse Macabre	Skim Chapter 8 before class.
Discussion	Argument Structures	Moving beyond five paragraphs
Reading Monday: 2/23/2026	Danse Macabre	Skim Chapter 9 before class
Video	Queer for Fear	We're going to watch a second episode of this documentary series about iconic authors in horror.
Lecture	Apollonian and Dionysian	Last of our concepts from Danse Macabre.
Reading Wednesday: 2/25/2026	Danse Macabre	Skim Chapter 10 before class
Review	Danse Macabre	We're going to review the important concepts from Danse Macabre.
Discussion	Morality of Horror	We're going to discuss Chapter 10 and the concept of morality and horror.
Video Monday: 3/2/2026	Horror Noire: A Black History of Horror	We'll watch the first half of this documentary.
Video Wednesday: 3/4/2026	Horror Noire: A Black History of Horror	We will finish and discuss the documentary.
Activity Monday: 3/9/2026	Plagiarism	We're going to talk about plagiarism and practice how best to avoid it. This also includes a workshop on paraphrasing.

When	Topic	Notes
Activity Wednesday: 3/11/2026	MLA Works Cited	
Film Monday: 3/16/2026	Film: Sinners	We will watch half of the film Sinners, directed by Ryan Coogler.
Film Wednesday: 3/18/2026	Introduce the film project and form groups	We will finish the film Sinners.
Online Lesson Monday: 3/23/2026 and Wednesday: 3/25/2026	Sinners Response	I will be out this week. There will be a lesson and an activity online.
No Class Monday: 3/30/2026 and Wednesday 4/1/2026	Spring Break	
Activity Monday: 4/6/2026	Group Work	Goals for this week: • Plan Film
Activity Wednesday: 4/8/2026	Group Work	Goal for this week: • Finalize Plans
Activity Monday: 4/13/2026	Group Work	Goals for this week: • Begin filming
Activity Wednesday: 4/10/2026		Goals: continue filming
Activity Monday: 4/20/2026	Group Work	Check in: What obstacles have you encountered in your bid to create a film? How have you navigated them?
Activity Wednesday: 4/22/2026	Group Work	Goals: Finish filming
Activity Monday 4/27/2026	No Class	I am out this day.
Activity Wednesday 4/29/2026	Group Work	Goals: Editing
Discussion Monday: 5/4/2026	Portfolio	Discuss the final portfolio

When	Topic	Notes
Activity Wednesday: 5/6/2026	Group Work	Finalize Film
Activity Monday: 5/11/2026	Film Festival	We're going to watch all of the films produced by both of my classes. Bring popcorn and snacks! This is the last day to turn in any process or participation assignments.
Final Friday: 5/15/2026	Portfolio Due	Turn the portfolio into the English 2 Assessment portal.