

San José State University
College of Humanities and Arts
Department of English and Comparative Literature
ENGLISH 105, Seminar in Advanced Composition
Section 1, Fall 2018

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Dr. Cynthia M. Baer
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Office Hours:	TTh 12:00 – 1:15 p.m.
Class Days/Time:	TTh 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
Classroom:	BBC 130
Prerequisites:	Upper division standing, with 6 units of lower division writing.
Repeating a Course:	This course may be repeated with another instructor and department consent.

How You Will Access the Content of This Course

All coursework will be posted on and submitted to our course module in Canvas, the SJSU learning management system (see login below). You should plan to bring your laptop or a device with a keyboard to class every day. Computers are available to be checked out through Student Computing Services For details, see the section below on Other Materials You Will Need. Be prepared to submit work in MS Word format.

How We Will Communicate as a Collaborative Learning Community

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on the [Canvas Learning Management System](http://sjsu.instructure.com) course login website at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. I will communicate announcements and updates to our work through the Canvas announcements feature.

What We Will Study Together in This Seminar

A well-known writer got collared by a university student who asked, “Do you think I could be a writer?”

“Well,” the writer said, “I don’t know. . . . Do you like sentences?”

The writer could see the student’s amazement. Sentences? Do I like sentences? I am twenty years old and do I like sentences? If he had liked sentences, of course, he could begin, like a joyful painter I knew. I asked him how he came to be a painter. He said, “I like the smell of paint.”

*From Annie Dillard’s *The Writing Life**

“All I know of grammar is its infinite power. . . .” Joan Didion

Like the student in Dillard's anecdote, you may think of sentences as child's play. And, actually, they are. But when is the last time you played with one? No. Really played. When is the last time you rolled out a subject and verb into a thick noodle of idea, and then squished it to watch it ooze and expand and flatten to a ribbon of feeling and sensation, and then started to curl it here and crimp it there to create a rhythm of feeling and sensation and thought, to fashion it into the very textures and nuances of the subject you were trying to convey? When is the last time you played with the language like it was so much cosmic dough in your wee hand? When is the last time you rolled and squished and curled and crimped until you had experienced every texture of your subject, every rhythm, and every combination of rhythms and textures?

Wanna play?

This semester we are going to play with sentences—observe them, dissect them, transform them, imitate them, expand and contract them, set them spinning in paragraphs, and listen to them sound a subject in rhythmic sequence from first to last across the landscape of a poem, of a narrative, of an essay.

We are going to collaborate to study and discuss five writers. They all write about nature, but across several genres. We will work daily to observe how they work the doh and shape it into sentences. We are going to help each other see sentences and work them together. We are going to use the lenses other theorists provide us to inquire more deeply than our eyes and ears alone can take us, to see how the sentence adapts to the pressures of the complex of motivations alive in a human text: scientific and poetic, instrumental and rhetorical. And, all the while, you are going to forage for your own subjects in the natural world and experiment with bringing those subjects to life for your readers, sentence by sentence. I look forward to our work together.

The Texts You Will Need for This Study

The following texts are required and have been ordered for purchase at the Spartan Bookstore. You need not purchase them there, but they have been so ordered.

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

ISBN-13: 978-0-06-12332-6

Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of a Cell*

ISBN-13: 978-0-14-004743-3

Wallace Stegner, *All the Little Live Things*

ISBN-13: 978-0-14-015441-2

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*

ISBN-13: 978-0-671-69588-0

Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America*

ISBN-13: 978-0871568779

Wendell Berry, *New Collected Poems*

ISBN 978-1-61902-152-5

Virginia Tufte, *Artful Sentences: Syntax as Style* (Think of this book as your field guide to the sentence!)

ISBN-13: 978-0961392185

The following texts are related to our study this term, and you may want to use them as you expand your understanding of the sentence. (The first four are texts that I cut my rhetorical teeth on.)

Virginia Tufte, *Grammar as Style* (an earlier field guide to the sentence, now out of print)

Francis and Bonnie Christensen, *A New Rhetoric* (the generative sentence and sentence layering)

Scott Rice, *Right Words, Right Places* (a rhetorical handbook on grammar)

Weathers and Winchester, *A New Strategy of Style* (more close reading of sentence forms and effects)

Ellen Voigt, *The Art of Syntax* (sentences in poetry)

Martha Kolln, *Rhetorical Grammar* (a grammar textbook that focuses on form and effect)

Other Equipment and Resources You Will Need for Your Class Work and Writing

You will need access to a computer and basic word-processing software. You will produce your major project assignments as .doc files and upload them to Canvas. I will use MS Word Review features to comment on them. But the daily Canvas cache of discussion posts will be my inspiration as I prepare lessons for class: I can easily project your work from Canvas for our classroom conversations and activities.

For all this work in Canvas you will need access to a computer in and out of class. There are computer centers on campus to help you with that:

- [Associated Students Print & Technology Center](http://as.sjsu.edu/asptc/index.jsp) at <http://as.sjsu.edu/asptc/index.jsp> on the Student Union (East Wing 2nd floor Suite 2600)
- [The Spartan Floor](http://library.sjsu.edu/about/spartan-floor) at the King Library at <http://library.sjsu.edu/about/spartan-floor>
- [Student Computing Services](http://library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services/student-computing-services-center) at <http://library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services/student-computing-services-center>
- [Computers at the Martin Luther King Library](https://www.sjpl.org/wireless) for public at large at <https://www.sjpl.org/wireless>
- Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college

You will need to have access to both word processing and presentation software. Be sure to check out what is available on The Spartan Floor at the King Library, and ask about what you can download for free as a student using the SJSU licensing.

You will also need access to a natural site—that is, a place where nature happens, an environment; a backyard, a field, a garden, a park, a beach, a trail, a meadow, a sky, a creek, an ocean, a reservoir, a playing field, a campus. You should choose an accessible and convenient site for your observation of and rumination on all the little live things in that environ. This site will be the *situ* of your term writing project.

You will need to buy and keep a journal for daily writing exercises. Yeah, it could be your palm device or tablet—unless, of course, you want to actually feel the pencil carve the sentence into the pulp of old wood. I recommend a Ticonderoga and a Moleskine notebook—one with a cool string and button maybe, the kind one imagines Thoreau had with him at Walden, one that fits the palm of your hand and the small outside pocket of your backpack, and slips out handily when the muse descends in the field, or on the trail.

You may also find useful field books on the subject you choose to explore for the term: for instance, field books on the Monterey Bay ecosystem, its geology, geography, flora and fauna, and marine life, to help you explore the tide pools off of Dog Beach in Santa Cruz. Oh, and you might need waders, too, for that one.

Our department's library liaison is Toby Matoush. Her contact is toby.matoush@sjsu.edu. Or you can check out her webpage: https://libguides.sjsu.edu/prf.php?account_id=94999.

What You Will Learn as an English Major

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.

What You Will Learn to Extend Your Writing Capacity and Craft

Once you have completed this course, you will be able to:

- Recognize sentences and sentence parts.
- Take sentences apart and put them back together.
- Imitate sentences you read and mimic their effects.
- Forge new sentences out of old sentence scraps.
- Spin a single thought into at least 20 sentence variations.
- Think about and articulate how the guts of a sentence work.
- Make conscious and genre-appropriate choices about sentence forms as you revise.
- Articulate your own purposes, practices, and expertise with the sentence.
- Work from observation to reflection to composition to revision—and back to reflection.
- Observe and reflect on how you work from observation to reflection to composition to revision. . . .
- Wield a pencil while foraging in the field or on the trail (or write while gazing skyward).
- Impress your Facebook friends with a single period (140 characters? *!#^ Twitter!).

What You Will Do to Extend Our Collective Capacity to See Sentences

All of the reading and writing you do this term will be aimed at completing one individual term project: it can be a short story, a sequence of poems, an argument, a personal essay, a field guide. Whatever it is, it will be grounded in one place, one environ that you have lovingly explored and made your own. This is your project. Your learning.

Underlying this project is a course of study we share together as students of the craft—as writers of sentences. For this, we need to become a learning community: a reading and writing community of practice all working together to extend our capacity to see and appreciate sentences. This is our project, our shared learning. Together we will inquire into the sentence to extend our collective capacity to see and appreciate sentences, to think about the work they do, and to experiment as we craft them.

Reading. You are reading good stuff written by some great writers—masters of sentence form and eloquence. You should read at a slow pace, reading and rereading sentences that strike your fancy, logging cool sentences in your log book so that you can play with them later (GELO 1, 2, and 5).

Daily Observations and Writing (Log book). You will keep a log book of daily writing: This will include 1) field notes that will become sentences, 2) versions of sentences, 3) sentences from your reading that you want to play with. All of your daily play will go into this log book; it will feed the writing you do toward final project. When you turn in a project, I will ask that you make Xerox copies or scan images of pages so I can see the work that lead most directly to the writing you submit to me for mentorship. With these pages I can watch your process—and comment on it to help you perfect it. Writing you do in this log book will necessarily and ideally be highly experimental—and as you will see, in this course, we collectively value risk taking, and we reward it! (GELO 3 and 4).

Canvas Discussion and Exercises. I will post a discussion prompt in Canvas before every class period. The purpose of these daily discussion posts is to advance our collective capacity to see and appreciate sentence craft; they will help to focus our work together in class as we study how sentences work (GELO 1 through 5). You will come to class to present and discuss your post to your writing partner or group. The usefulness of your post to the class will provide you feedback on how effective the contribution is. These posts will not be evaluated and graded. Rather, each post you submit on time and present to your group in class will earn one point—so long as it is presented on time in Canvas, and in person during class.

Sentence Exercises and Presentation. As noted in the class outcomes above, you will extend your capacity to play with sentences in this class. Your log book will be your own private play space. But I have constructed as well some sentence exercises to structure your play as well. These more formal experiments in sentence writing will be structured by a series of 5 exercises, one based on each writer you read, and one collaborative transformation exercise (in groups you will turn an Edward Abbey paragraph into a Wendell Berry poem). (GELO 1, 2, 3, 4). I will post to Canvas an assignment sheet for each exercise. You will submit to me for mentoring. For each of these exercises you will submit as well a brief reflection on the exercise (500 words); your reflection essay will explain to me what you have learned about sentences by doing the exercise. The last of these exercises will also involve a quick—no more than 5 minutes—presentation to the class about your discoveries in completing the exercise. My comments on your work will help you to gauge your progress and assess the contribution your work is making to our collective study, but the main goal of my mentorship will always be to direct your study going forward. You will earn points for completing this work according to the terms of our grading contract.

The Three Phases of the Project. You will work this term to complete one project—a study of whatever environ you choose to explore—but you will work on this project in three phases (GELO 1-5):

- phase 1, exploring the intersection of instrumental and poetic prose
- phase 2, exploring the intersection of rhetorical and poetic prose
- phase 3, exploring the use of scientific writing in a short story or sequence of short poems (3)

Each phase will build on the reading and writing you have done to that point, to culminate in a short piece of writing (an essay, short story, or sequence of poems) that you will submit to me for mentorship. These pieces will be about 1000-1250 words (prose) or 75-100 lines (poetry). Each piece will be submitted for peer review in Canvas before being revised and submitted to me for mentorship. When you submit the piece to me, you will include with it the log-book entries, workshop drafts, and a brief reflection.

The reflection essay (at least 750 words) explains to the class your major take away from the work we did together to help you arrive at the final version you submitted: 1) how the sentences of the piece evolved from daily logbook doodles to a draft to the final version, 2) how you applied our work together in class to extend your sentence craft, and 3) the most important insight into sentence craft you take away from this phase of the

project. The goal of all your work in this course is to contribute to our collective learning. Writing that is not accompanied by log entries, drafts, and reflection will not complete the terms of our contract.

For these 5 assignments, too, my comments on your work will help you to gauge your progress and assess the contribution your work is making to our collective study, but the main goal of my mentorship will always be to direct your study going forward. You will earn points for completing this work according to the terms of our grading contract.

The Final Portfolio and Project. As your final in this class, you will submit to me a portfolio of your work, to include a final version of your project. A draft of your project piece—field guide, short story, essay, sequence of poems (or long poem)—will be workshopped in small groups. The final version will be the star entry in your portfolio, but the portfolio will also compile elements from the earlier phases that most directly demonstrate the evolution of the final project. The portfolio allows me to see (just as you will see) the process of exploration and composition you have engaged to complete the project and how you have applied the lessons of the course.

A final reflection essay (at least 800 words) will introduce your portfolio. The essay will explain to me and to your classmates the lessons you have learned through the composing process. This portfolio will thus demonstrate to me, as a culminating document for your work in the course, your ability to explain how you have achieved and will continue to develop the outcomes outlined above for this course of study.

What Happens When You Submit Work to Me for Mentorship?

I am encouraging you to take risks in this class. It makes little sense to punish you for an experiment gone bad, if you learned something from it and can articulate that learning in your reflection and can then carry the lesson forward to improve the project. When you submit work to me for mentorship, I will read it and make comments to help you realize your goals for the project—in other words, I will offer the suggestions of an experienced reader and reviewer. When commenting on student writing, my goals are 1) to help you to gauge your progress on the project, 2) to help you to assess the level of contribution your work is making to our collective study, and 3) to direct your writing studies to realize your goals for the project. I will not grade the writing you submit based on the quality of the writing itself. Rather, you will earn points for completing work according to the terms of our grading contract—namely, that all work you do advance both your own capacity and the learning community's collective capacity to see and appreciate sentences.

What Sort of Time Commitment Are You Making to This Four-Unit Course?

The [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf), Course Syllabi (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>) requires the following language to be included in the syllabus:

“Success in this course 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.”

This is a four-unit course. The message from the university that you just read describes a 3-unit course. Mathematically that means you will spend another 15 hours on this course over the 15 weeks of the course: $45 + 15 = 60$! That is a lot of hours. I trust you will spend them well as we work together to extend our sentence craft.

The reading and writing for this course are carefully integrated into a single inquiry that you share with your peers. The collaborative learning component of this seminar—its daily discussion posts in Canvas, its shared

reflections on daily work and on all writing assignments—adds a full unit of study (15 hours) to the basic work of reading and studying for your own learning. The learning you do in this course will be shared with the whole class—that is your added 1-unit commitment to the course. You will account for this component of your study in the final reflection and portfolio for the course.

A Final Examination of Our Learning Together

The culminating activity for our course—during the final exam period—will be a 3-minute presentation of your writing portfolio. In a brief informal presentation you will identify 1) the single most important thing you learned about writing sentences by engaging our collaborative work this semester and 2) the one writing strategy, technique, or tool you will carry forward as you read and write texts in your classes at SJSU.

How I Will Assess This Course: Our Grading Contract

The course will be graded by contract. The contract grading system requires that you regularly monitor and describe your own progress, culminating in the reading portfolio and final reflection essay. The goal of grading by contract is to emphasize the cumulative effect of a learning experience over individual artifacts of your learning: Your goal in a contracted learning community is to apprentice yourself within the community, to join its members as we engage in a designed learning experience guided by a faculty mentor. The contract spells out the terms of your work with the community, its norms and practices, expectations and standards. This agreement allows you to advance your own educational goals and measure your own learning outcome, but also contribute your learning to advance the learning of others.

The contract is not a unilateral document. In our first two weeks we will work together to establish the norms and standards of the group. Our bottom line will be defined by our common purpose: What advances our study together? What disrupts our collective progress? We will develop norms and standards for the work we do together measured against our common purpose. You will succeed in this system if, every time you begin, execute, and complete a task, you allow yourself to be guided by our shared purpose: How is the work I am about to do, am doing, have done contributing to the learning we are all doing in this class?

The default grade in a course graded by contract is a B.

You will earn a B in the course if

- You complete 85% of the daily discussions.
- You submit to the class all drafts and projects on time.
- You submit to the class the work requested by the assignment.
- You submit work completed in the spirit of our collaborative study—that is, work that contributes useful insights to our continued learning together.

Earning an A is the result of an exceptional contribution to our collective learning and your own.

There are two ways you can make an exceptional contribution:

- 1) Your presentations and essays provide the class with insights that are exceptional in their value to our growing capacity to read and write sentences rhetorically and to practice sentence craft.
- 2) Your reflection essay demonstrates a compelling achievement in a your personal capacity to engage such rhetorical study.

Students or the professor can nominate work for this exceptional status in the class. Students must present such nominations in writing. Students can self-nominate.

Earning less than a B is the result of failing to meet the terms of this contract.

If less than 85% of the daily discussions are submitted; if work is late; if documentation of the process is incomplete; if work does not meet collaborative expectations; or if work is missing, then the final course grade will fall below the B.

One norm we will find a way to observe together is timeliness: Work must be submitted on time to be useful to our shared learning. In general late work does not meet the basic term of the contract: that work be useful to the group. This is particularly true in the case of the daily assignments. Daily assignments submitted late will not earn credit. Drafts and essays submitted late will necessarily be less useful to the group and reduce points awarded by contract. We will work out together in class a points system for assignment grading that takes into account all the terms of the contract.

The full grading contract will be developed before the course drop deadline, by which time we will agree on the further norms and values that will help us to meet and to evaluate work using the contract.

Determination of Course Grades

- Your final grade in the course will be recorded as a letter grade, ranging from A to F. I will use + and – grades to refine the evaluation within the letter-grade categories.
- An F will indicate a failure to make any progress toward studying and crafting sentences.
- There are plenty of opportunities to learn defined in the work I have laid out in this syllabus. I can't imagine any of us having the bandwidth for extra credit!

How We Will Work Together to Get the Most Out of Our Collaboration

In class during the first two weeks, we will talk more about the grading contract, refine it, commit to it. As part of that exercise, we will discuss our expectations for participation, attendance, arrival times, behavior, safety, cell phone use. We will work together to define these norms of our community so that we can collaborate effectively. I look forward to our work together!

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

English 105. Seminar in Advanced Composition, Section 1, Fall 2018

Schedule of Daily Reading and Major Project Assignments

Note: Every day before class, you will post to a discussion as prompted in Canvas. These posts are due by 7 a.m. on the class day. The post will require you to apply what you have read.

Week	Date	Schedule of Readings and Project Deadlines
1	August 21	A Syllabus, Some Play-Doh, and a theory. (Beale on handout in Canvas)
1	August 23	Tufte, Noun Phrases (field guide pages, in Canvas; Beale continued)
2	August 28	Tufte, Verb Phrases; Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> , pages 23 through 26 (Beale continued)
2	August 30	Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> , pages 1 through 38; Tufte, Free Modifiers
3	September 4	Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> , pages 39 through 59; Tufte, The Appositive
3	September 6	Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> , pages 60 through 81. Submit to Canvas: Sentence-imitation exercise + reflection
4	September 11	Abbey, <i>Desert Solitaire</i> , pages 151 through 195, and 250 through 263.
4	September 13	Tufte, Parallelism
5	September 18	Submit to Canvas on September 17 by 8 a.m. a draft of instrumental-poetic essay. Review by class time the drafts assigned to you. (Peer review discussion of drafts in class.)
5	September 20	Submit to Canvas: Project, Phase 1+ Reflection. Be sure to submit selected prewriting as well: log book entries, reviewed drafts and revisions.) Berry, <i>Unsettling</i> , pages 1 through 48; Tufte, Dependent Clauses
6	September 25	Berry, <i>Unsettling</i> , pages 97 through 140; Tufte, Conjunctions & Coordination
6	September 27	Berry, <i>Collected Poems</i> , selections from <i>Openings</i> Submit to Canvas: Erasmus exercise + reflection
7	October 2	Berry, <i>Collected Poems</i> , selections from <i>Farmer's Handbook</i>
7	October 4	Submit to Canvas: Collaborative transformation exercise (turn the Abbey passage into a Berry poem); Dillard, <i>Tinker Creek</i> , pages 1 through 36; Tufte, Sentence Openers and Inversion
8	October 9	Dillard, <i>Tinker Creek</i> , pages 37 through 54, and 105 through 123. Class conducted via Canvas.
8	October 11	Class via collaborative Canvas activity.
9	October 16	Dillard, <i>Tinker Creek</i> , pages 149 through 183
9	October 18	Dillard, <i>Tinker Creek</i> , pages 265 through 283 Submit to Canvas: Sentence Combining Exercise + Reflection
10	October 23	Submit to Canvas by October 22 at 8 a.m. a draft of poetic-rhetorical prose. Review by class time the drafts assigned to you. (Peer review discussion in class.)
10	October 25	Submit to Canvas: Project, Phase 2 + Reflection. Thomas, <i>Cell</i> , pages 1 through 10
11	October 30	Thomas, <i>Lives of a Cell</i> , pages 11 through 46; Tufte, Cohesion
11	November 1	Thomas, <i>Lives of a Cell</i> , pages 96 through 140
12	November 6	Submit to Canvas: Imitation exercise + Reflection. Stegner, <i>All the Little Live Things</i> , pages 3 through 12

Week	Date	Schedule of Readings and Project Deadlines
12	November 8	Stegner, <i>All the Little Live Things</i> ; Tufte, Syntactic Symbolism
13	November 13	Stegner, <i>All the Little Live Things</i>
13	November 15	Stegner, <i>All the Little Live Things</i>
14	November 20	Submit to Canvas by November 19 at 8 a.m. , a draft of a short story or sequence of poems. Review the drafts assigned to you. (Peer review discussion in class.)
14	November 22	No school: Happy Thanksgiving!
15	November 27	Submit to Canvas: Project, Phase 3 + Reflection , a narrative (<2000 words) or poetic sequence (100 lines)
16	November 29	Present in class: 5 Stegner sentences artfully sequenced for our observation (25 copies of the lesson on handout + oral presentation of no more than 5 minutes)
16	December 4	Submit to Canvas by 8 a.m. on December 3 , a draft of your final project. Review the drafts assigned to you. (Peer review discussion in class.)
17	December 6	Present in class: 5 Stegner sentences, cont.
Final Exam	Thursday, December 13	Present in class: 5 Stegner sentences, cont. Final Reflection and Project Portfolio Due: [We meet in BBC 130 at 7:15 a.m.]