



San José State University
Department of English & Comparative Literature
ENGL 1A: First-Year Writing, Section 36, Fall 2019

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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:30 – 11:45 am & by appointment.
Class Days/Time: Tuesday & Thursday 12 – 1:15 pm
Classroom: Boccardo Business Center, 122
Prerequisites: Reflection on College Writing
GE/SJSU Studies Category: GE Area A2 Written Communication I

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Faculty Web Page and SJSU Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on the [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#) at <http://one.sjsu.edu>. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through Canvas to learn of any updates.

ENGL 1A Section 23 Course Description & Learning Outcomes (GELO)

ENGL 1A – First Year Writing is an introductory writing course that will help you understand the writing process and the goals, dynamics, and genres of written communication. Through interpretation and analysis of texts, you will learn to think clearly and write effectively as you give form and coherence to complex ideas. You will explore writing for various audiences and rhetorical situations.

Over the next sixteen weeks we will practice:

1. **reading** actively and rhetorically;
2. **performing** the essential steps in the writing process (prewriting, organizing, composing, revising, and editing) and demonstrate an awareness of said performance;
3. **articulating** an awareness of and write according to the rhetorical features of texts, such as purpose, audience, context, and rhetorical appeals;

4. **integrating** our ideas and those of others by explaining, analyzing, developing, and criticizing ideas effectively in several genres;
5. **demonstrating** college-level language use, clarity, and grammatical proficiency in writing.



This is a college writing course. Therefore, we will be writing a lot. This is also a game-themed writing course that uses one of the oldest modern role-playing games, *Dungeons & Dragons* (“D&D”), as our primary (but not only) in-class textbook. This means we'll also be thinking about, discussing, and playing games in this class. And we'll be writing about them. A lot. Why? Because if you can persuade a horde of goblins to give you their treasure you might be able to persuade your boss to give you a raise. If you can analyze the features of a successful D&D session, you have the tools to analyze the features of a well-written essay.

Our adventures will explore how reading, writing, speaking, and thinking are skills that can be practiced and enhanced through conscientious role-playing, content creation, gaming, and reflection. We will use D&D 5th Edition as our gaming system. **Prior D&D experience is NOT required to be successful in this course.**

What This Course Is NOT:

A literature course. While we will be discussing and analyzing works of non-fiction, fiction, hybrid texts, and beyond, our primary focus is not on the “literary merits” of Shakespeare or sorcerers.

A game design course. While we will be creating, testing, and playing D&D throughout the semester, this course is more than just rolling dice and getting GE credits. Successful students (“Adventurers”) will need to think deeply and write frequently.

An “easy A.” Like all worthwhile adventures, this one will be challenging. Without intellectual effort, a commitment to reflect and think hard about your own experiences, you may not gain much from this class. And, while the goal is to combine education and entertainment, this is a college level course with collegiate expectations and responsibilities. Successfully completing this course entails not just attendance but also spending significant time outside of the classroom reading, researching, writing, testing, playing, strategizing, and reflecting.

What This Course IS:

A composition class that uses gaming as a way to practice rhetoric and writing. Just like rap, classical, and electronic music can all be studied to give a greater understanding of musical craft, culture, history, identity, even political discourse, so too can games serve as models for composition studies. After all, a Narrative Essay shares many features with a well-played session of D&D; an Informative Essay can be reworked to create a walkthrough guide for a difficult video game; and Persuasion takes place just as frequently in online forums as it does in formal, academic settings.

Required Items:

- **Dungeons and Dragons® Player’s Handbook:** 5th Edition, by Wizards of the Coast (ISBN:978-0-7869-6560-1). You will need immediate and persistent access to this in class and at home. Therefore, a printed copy is required.
- **Dungeons & Dragons gaming dice set,** aka: seven polyhedral dice (d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, & d20). Purchasable via Amazon for around \$6.
- **A Composition Journal (Mead, Roaring Spring, Rhodia, etc.),** which we will call your “Adventurer's Journal.” We will practice weekly journaling. You will be expected to take notes during the gaming sessions. And you will submit it for occasional journal checks. Your “Adventurer's Journal” is a critical component of this class. Therefore, you must ensure that you do not lose it.



Additional texts & videos will be posted to Canvas and/or distributed in class. Students will need to check their email and visit Canvas regularly!

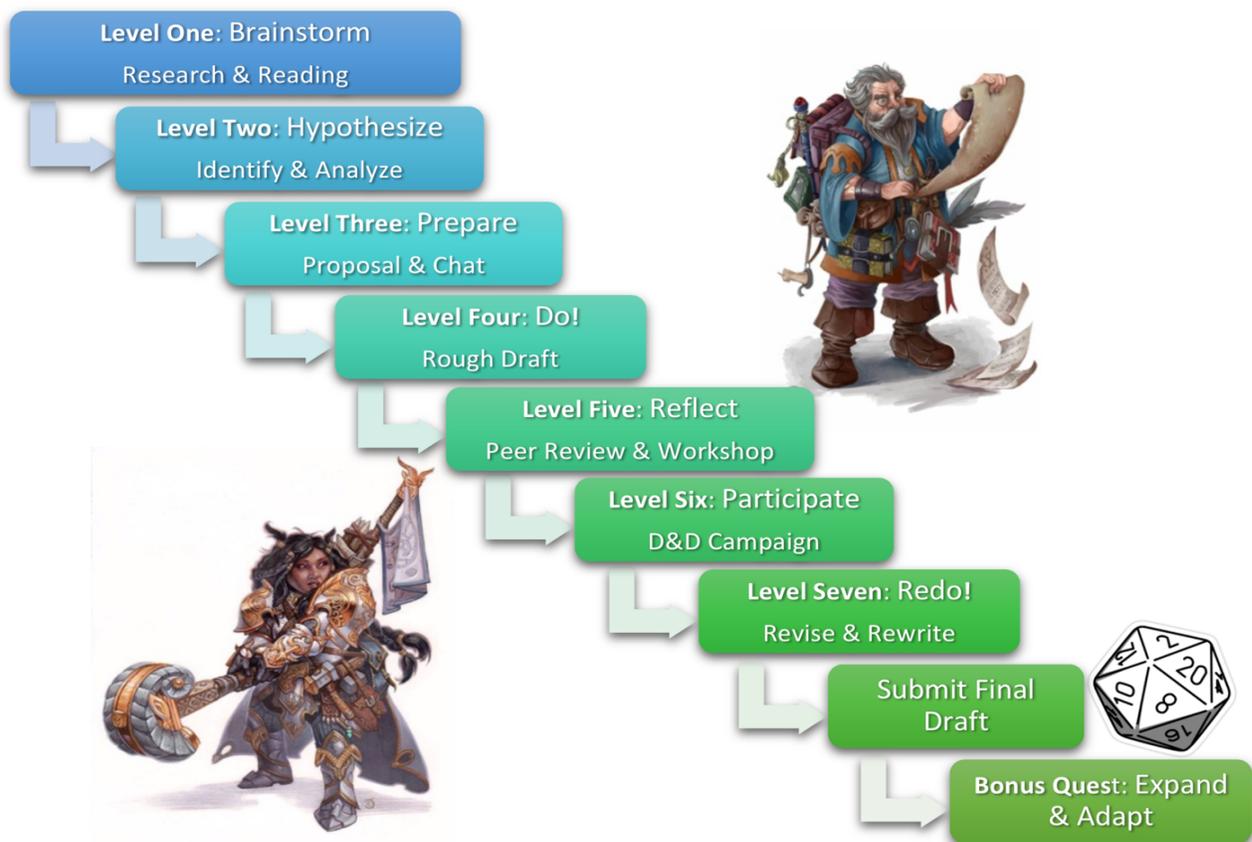
Phones, Computers, & Tablets

Access to a computer or tablet will be necessary to participate in Canvas discussions and submit assignments. Such devices may also be helpful at times during class. However, excessive use of technology is an impediment to learning. Unless otherwise stated, all electronics must be put away for the duration of class.

ENGL 1A Course Content

To replicate the experience of a Role-Playing Game ("RPG") and to allow each student ("Adventurer") the ability to customize and explore the ways writing can be practiced and enhanced through playful discovery and challenges, this course will utilize an OPEN WORLD design. Therefore, adventurers will need to chart their own unique way through the course, choosing assignments ("Quests") and customizing reading that will lead to the grade they want. Each quest awards experience points ("XP") up to a maximum amount based upon the difficulty of the tasks and the quality of the adventurers' work. The quests are broken down as such:

Main Quest: These are multi-level writing assignments required to complete the course. They award increasing amounts of XP per quest level. Main Quests require specific steps to be completed in order and must be turned in by a specific date.



Example: for Main Quest One, an adventurer chooses to write a Persuasive Essay about MOBA games, arguing that *League of Legends* players should get athletic scholarships. They need to:

- research and read other essays related to persuasion (though not necessarily related *to* games),
- contribute these essays to the class library ("The Archives"),
- analyze and identify the successful (or unsuccessful) features of one of the essays,
- create their own essay proposal and solicit feedback from the class,

- write a rough draft and submit the rough draft for peer review and workshop,
- workshop student drafts in small groups (3-4)
- rewrite and revise (multiple times) their rough draft,
- and finally: submit a final draft and write a reflective essay (also known as a ‘Writer’s memo’).

Main Quest Overview & Learning Goals

<u>Level</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>XP</u>	<u>GELO</u>
1	Research & Reading	10	1
2	Identify & Analyze	15	1, 2
3	Proposal & Chat	20	1-4
4	Rough Draft	30	1-5
5	Peer Review & Workshop Responses	45	1, 2, 4, 5
6	D&D Campaign Participation	40	1, 3, 5
7	Final Draft + Writer's Memo	75	1-5
		Max: 235 XP	

- There are 3 Main Quests. One is a **D&D Campaign Creation & Analysis**, and two are **essays** you design and revise.
- To earn full XP points for the Final Draft essay of any Main Quest, the submitted essay must receive a score of 85% or higher. Essays earning less than 85% will earn a % of the XP based upon the grade (example: a 90% essay earns 75 XP, but a 70% essay earns 52.5 XP).

Other Quests

Side Quest: Smaller, optional assignments that practice and develop a specific skill. Side Quests often have only one step to complete, where a Main Quest will have multiple steps. These activities have a narrow window of completion and will usually close within a week of being assigned. Side quests are pass / fail.

Bonus Quest: A capstone assignment that is unlocked when completing a Main Quest (or sometimes a Side Quest) and can serve to expand or reinforce skills practiced during the assignment. Bonus Quests are challenging and require significant work but reward significant XP.

Group Quest: Like the name implies, these quests will require multiple members to work together to achieve goals that would overwhelm a single member. Group Quests require coordination, advance planning, and delegation of responsibilities. Adventurers will need to think about their strengths and weaknesses and coordinate duties in and out of class.

Daily Quests: Activities that take place in class. These range from submission of adventurer's journals, in-class presentations, discussions, small reports, etc. These activities have a narrow window of completion and will close either at the end of the class day or class week.

Class Grading Information

A	1400+ XP	A-	1260+ XP	B+	1230+ XP
B	1150+ XP	B-	1120+ XP	C+	1090+ XP
C	1025+ XP	C-	1000+ XP	D+	950+ XP
D	895+ XP	D-	860+ XP	F	859 - 0 XP

Completing the three major assignments: Main Quest One, Two, and Three (with a score of 85% and over) will earn an adventurer a maximum of 705 XP. Thus, adventurers will need to find additional sources of XP via quests throughout the semester. This is the "open world RPG" aspect of the course; adventurers determine their destiny.

Like all adventures worth having, this one will be challenging. Without intellectual effort, a commitment to reflect and think hard about your own experiences, you may not gain much from this class. And, while the goal is to combine education and entertainment, this is a college level course with collegiate expectations and responsibilities. Successfully completing this course requires not just attending class, but spending significant time outside of the classroom reading, researching, writing, testing, playing, strategizing, and reflecting on your journey as a writer.

Requirements for particular assignments will vary, but Main Quest essay grades will reflect the paper's effectiveness as a piece of academic writing.

The following are the criteria by which essays are typically evaluated in first-year writing courses:

- An “**A**” essay is organized and well-developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment, written in a unique and compelling voice. It will show the student’s ability to use language effectively with a solid command of grammar, mechanics, and usage.
- A “**B**” essay demonstrates competence in the same categories as an “A” essay, but it may show slight weakness in one of these areas. It will respond to the topic suitably and may contain some grammatical, mechanical or usage errors.
- A “**C**” essay will complete the requirements of the assignment, but it will show weaknesses in fundamentals, such as development or logic. It will show weakness in grammar, mechanics, usage, and/or voice.
- A “**D**” essay will neglect to meet most of the requirements of the assignment or may be superficial in its treatment of the topic. It may lack development or fail to stay on topic. It may contain grammatical, mechanical, and/or usage errors that interfere with reader comprehension.
- An “**F**” essay does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment.

Submission & Late Policy

Submission dates vary by assignment, so be sure to track them via the syllabus and Canvas. Weekly announcements will go out via email on Thursday, but do not count on them to spell out everything. **It is your responsibility to ensure that you are actively aware of what is required, and that you turn in the appropriate assignment on time.** All late assignments incur an automatic 5% penalty per day.



That said, life happens and we're all human. Therefore, if you think you will be late on an assignment, you should contact me to discuss it.

The deadline to submit Main Quests are as follows:

- Main Quest One turn in: Final Draft + Writer's Memo: 8pm, **Sunday, October 13th.**
- Main Quest Two turn in: Final Draft + Writer's Memo: 8pm, **Sunday, November 10th,**
- Main Quest Three turn in: Final Draft + Writer's Memo: 8pm, **Sunday, December 8th.**
- Final Exam Day: Group Quest: Presentation. **9:45 am, December 17th.**

A note about submission format: all written assignments should follow MLA format. That means 12 pt. Times New Roman, double-spaced, with your name, the assignment title, etc. Please review MLA format, and/or use your word processor's MLA Essay format. Both Microsoft Word and Google Docs have MLA format built in.

Classroom Protocol

Participation is essential to this course. **Students will need to come to class on time, prepared, ready to ask and answer questions, engage with their peers and the instructor, contribute their own ideas and opinions, and nurture respectful discussions, even of sensitive and challenging topics.**

In any setting of greater than one person, disagreements will occur. Patience and empathy are necessary. Behavior that threatens the learning environment and safety of the classroom will not be tolerated.

- A student seeking an **A-grade** will be: prepared for class on time, able to answer questions, lead discussions, take risks, make mistakes, show thoughtfulness in their comments, contribute their own ideas while encouraging peer interaction, display a strong drive to revise their writing, and submit all their assignments on time.
- A student seeking a **B-grade** will be: prepared for class on time, able to answer questions, take risks, make mistakes, show thoughtfulness in their comments, contribute their own ideas while encouraging peer interaction, and submit all their assignments on time.
- A student seeking a **C-grade** will be: prepared for class, able to answer questions, and will submit all their assignments.

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 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

Reading

Reading, *ugh!* Why do we have to read? After all, few students enjoy assigned reading, and even the most exciting book loses about 50% of its fun when it's mandatory.

We have reading for two reasons.

First reason: we need to develop a common understanding, a "home base" that we can venture from and return to. Just like music or baseball requires orientation, rules, and examples of variation, so too does literacy. We need a basic framework to work from and to discuss writing. Reading provides that.

Second reason:

"If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: **read a lot and write a lot. If you don't have time to read, you don't have time (or the tools) to write.** Simple as that."

—Stephen King, *On Writing*.

One cannot become a competent baseball player, a driver, a dancer, or *fill-in-the-blank* without participating in activities that develop those skills. Writing is no different. **To be effective at written communication, you need to read and evaluate effective (and ineffective) writing.**

On Spelling, Grammar, and "The Rules"

Students comes to a writing class with different skills levels, abilities, and confidences. Every effort will be made to respect the uniqueness of each student's voice. However, there are fundamentals of writing and composition that adventurers are expected to have a working understanding of. Therefore, **if you struggle with issues such as grammar or essay structure, or simply don't know what a paragraph is, you will need to seek out assistance at the University Writing Center.** It is an excellent resource, and every adventurer should at least try to use it occasionally to strengthen the fundamental skills that are necessary for college-level composition.



Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition *Player's Handbook* Reading

Required Reading		Useful Reading		Discretionary Reading	
Intro & How to Play	<i>p. 4-8</i>	Chapter 2: Races	<i>p. 17-44</i>	Chapter 6: Customization	<i>p. 163-170</i>
Chapter 1: Step by Step Characters	<i>p. 9-15</i>	Chapter 3: Classes	<i>p. 45-120</i>	Chapter 11: Spells	<i>p. 207-289</i>
Chapter 7: Using Ability Scores	<i>p. 171-180</i>	Chapter 4: Personality & Background	<i>p. 121-142</i>	Appendix B: Gods	<i>p. 293-299</i>
Chapter 8: Adventuring	<i>p. 181-188</i>	Chapter 5: Equipment	<i>p. 143-162</i>	Appendix C: Planes	<i>p. 300-303</i>
Chapter 9: Combat	<i>p. 189-198</i>	Chapter 10: Spell Casting	<i>p. 199-206</i>		
Appendix A: Conditions	<i>p. 290-293</i>	Appendix D: Creature Statistics	<i>p. 304-311</i>		
INDEX	<i>p. 313-316</i>				
Character Sheet	<i>p. 317</i>				
Your Character Race (Chapter 2)					
Your Character Class (Chapter 3)					
Your Character Personality & Background (Chapter 4)					
Your Class Spells (if a spell casting class)					
Total Pages: about 45+		Total Pages: about 156		Total Pages: about 100	

As you can see, the total "required reading" for the beginning of this course varies by class and assignments chosen.

Example:

- Tom plays a gnome warrior who mainly fights with axes and swords. He does NOT need to have a perfect understanding of a Wizard's arsenal of spells, nor is it important for him to know the history of orcs.
- Celina plays a bard who specializes in trickery, deception, and illusions, so she probably doesn't need to know about the various gods of the forest a shape-shifting druid would worship.
- Emily won't be playing a character for this campaign, but she will be the DM ("Dungeon Master"). Therefore, she should have deep knowledge of adventuring, ability scores, combat, and conditions, and it will help to work towards general knowledge of the classes her players will be playing.



ENGL 1 A, Sec 36 Fall 2019 Course Schedule

Please note that this schedule is subject to change. Adjustments will be posted on Canvas with fair warning

Assignments are due by the beginning of class on the day listed.

SIDE QUESTS and BONUS QUESTS are listed on Canvas.

	Week	Date	Topics & Activities	Due:
Adventure Preparation	1	8/22	Introduction, Syllabus review, Get to Know Each Other	Get: Textbook & Composition Notebook
	2	8/27	Review D&D: How 2 College Read (aka skim) + Activity: Purpose, Audience, Stance, Media & Design	Reading: <i>How D&D Helped Me...</i> Reading: D&D: Intro & How to Play, Chapter 1: Step by Step Characters,
		8/29	Narrative Arc / Hero's Journey	Reading: D&D: Chapter 2: Races, & Chapter 3: Classes
	3	9/3	<i>Adventurer's Journal</i> , Creating Your D&D Character & Walkthrough	Reading: Chapter 4: Personality & Backgrounds, Chapter 7: Using Ability Scores.
		9/5	<i>Shitty First Drafts</i> & Revision, prep for Campaigns.	Reading: Chapter 8: Adventuring, Chapter 9: Combat. Appendix: Conditions.
	4	9/10	Activity: Audience Expectations: Blizzcon 2018	Due: Your D&D Character (Workshop on Canvas)
		9/12	Live D&D Play-Through Demonstration	Due: Your D&D Character Sheet

Due: Character Sheets + Basic understanding of YOUR character race, class, personality, background & spells.

Main Quest One	5	9/17	In-Class Reading & Writing Discussion	Due: MQ: Level 1 & 2
		9/19	In-Class Reading & Writing Discussion	Due: MQ: Level 3
	6	9/24	D&D Campaign #1 starts	Due: MQ: Level 4
		9/26	D&D Campaign #1 ends	
	7	10/1	Peer Review	Due: MQ: Level 5
		10/3	Peer Review (Cont'd) / Open Workshop	
	8	10/8	D&D Campaign #2 starts	
		10/10	D&D Campaign #2 ends	

☞ Main Quest One Turn In ☜

Level 6 & 7 Campaign Material, Final Draft + Writer's Memo: **8pm, Sunday October 13th**

Main Quest Two	9	10/15	Memes pt 1	Due: MQ: Level 1&2
		10/17	Memes pt 2 (Presentations)	Due: MQ: Level 3
	10	10/22	D&D Campaign #3 starts	Due: MQ: Level 4
		10/24	D&D Campaign #3 ends	
	11	10/29	Peer Review	Due: MQ: Level 5
		10/31	Peer Review (Cont'd) / Open Workshop	
	12	11/5	D&D Campaign #4 starts	
		11/7	D&D Campaign #4 ends	

☞ Main Quest Two Turn In ☜

Level 6 & 7 Campaign Material, Final Draft + Writer's Memo: **8pm, Sunday November 10th**

Main Quest Three	13	11/12	In-Class Reading & Writing Discussion	Due: MQ: Level 1 & 2
		11/14	In-Class Reading & Writing Discussion	Due: MQ: Level 3
	14	11/19	D&D Campaign #5 starts	Due: MQ: Level 4
		11/21	D&D Campaign #5 ends	
	15	11/26	TBD Day	

	11/28	Thanksgiving Vacation	
16	12/3	Peer Review	Due: MQ Level 5
	12/5	Peer Review (Cont'd) & Multimodal Presentation Overview	

☞ Main Quest Three Turn In ☜

Level 6 & 7 Campaign Material, Final Draft + Writer's Memo: **8pm, Sunday December 8th**

Final Exam	12/17	GROUP QUEST: Multi-Modal Presentations & Class Party
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