

Rhetoric and Writing Studies RWS 1301

Instructor Information:

Name: Ashley Estrada

Email: astrada66@utep.edu

Office Hours:

Monday: 2:00-3:30PM in HUDS 211

Friday: 2:00-3:30PM in HUDS 207

Program Overview

At UTEP, the **First-Year Composition (FYC) program** in the English department offers two first-year courses that are typically taken as a sequence, RWS 1301—Rhetoric and Composition 1 and RWS 1302—Rhetoric and Composition 2. These courses are intended to help students develop and reflect upon their rhetorical and writing knowledge including awareness of social and racial justice, and the implications of their language choices when they write, based on the understanding that language is never neutral. Therefore, we teach writing as a complex activity through which students are given guidance and often collaborate. Drawing on the rich scholarship of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, we have designed our courses to help students address the challenges of 21st century composing. In these courses, students are empowered to determine the most effective strategies, arrangements, and media to use in different rhetorical contexts.

The FYC program reminds students that the primary purpose of these classes is the learning and practice of writing. The Conference on College Composition and Communication together with the Council of Writing Program Administrators state:

Writing classes teach writing: Principally, writing classes foreground writing itself as a complex, distributed activity premised upon sociality and community formation, processes and materials, flexibility, and ethical communication. Writing classes may involve participants in purposeful interpersonal interactions (discussions and conversations), writing-related activities (peer review, studying features in model texts), and interpreting texts (making meaning individually or together with others); however, the activity of writing itself continues to be central to what a writing class sponsors.

CCCC and CWPA Joint Statement in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

And we are...

The First-Year Composition Program is geographically and discursively situated in the US-Mexico borderland and offers a binational and transnational experience through culture, language, and knowledge. We are committed both to learning from students and to building our program in a way that honors what they bring with them into the classroom and encourages them to make their voices heard in the university and beyond. Our vision is to collectively journey toward the practice of self-reflexivity, listening carefully and empathically to the ideas and experiences that challenge our thinking, and to engage various rhetorical practices and genres of traditional and non-traditional writing. The program's curriculum design encourages students to imagine the possibilities of speaking, listening, and being heard through different literacies and compositions. We invite students to explore topics from local, global, and disciplinary contexts that matter to them while learning effective writing skills and being mindful of their own situations and audiences.

RWS 1301 & 1302 Learning Outcomes

- 1) Students will reflect on and critically analyze their own language experiences.
- 2) Students will synthesize information about racial and ethnic biases and other social justice issues and confront these issues in their writing.
- 3) Students will demonstrate engagement with multiple media sources through their projects, including, but not limited to, digital resources.
- 4) Students will identify relevant research sources and opportunities from their lived experiences, their campus interactions, and their engagement within their communities.
- 5) Students will apply knowledge from local communities to research broader social issues demonstrating their critical awareness.

Rhetoric & Composition 1 (RWS 1301) Course Description

Rhetoric & Composition 1 (RWS 1301) is designed to help students in all disciplines reach their academic and professional goals as writers. Course assignments invite students to explore cultural, political, linguistic, racial, and social issues through topics that appeal to their interests and sense of civic responsibility as members of various academic and non-academic communities.

The curriculum consists of these 5 modules:

MODULE 1 – Taking Inventory

MODULE 2 – Autoethnographic Study of Self and Language Experiences

MODULE 3 – Remixing the Self Study

MODULE 4 – Social Issue Investigation

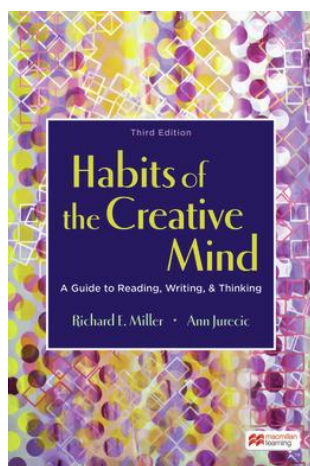
MODULE 5 – Visual Argument

Required Texts & Materials



UTEP First-Year Composition Handbook, 2024-2025 edition.

An e-book available directly through Redshelf.com.



Miller, R. E., & Jurecic, A. (2023). *Habits of the Creative Mind: A Guide to Reading, Writing, & Thinking* (3rd ed.) Available at the [UTEP Bookstore](#).

Additional required readings may also be posted on Blackboard.

Course Assignments and Grading

Grade Distribution—Students can earn a total of 1500 points for the course

1500-1370 = A 1369-1217 = B 1216 -1061 = C 1060-913 = D 912 and below = F

240 Points: *MODULE 1 – Taking Inventory*

240 Points: *MODULE 2 – Autoethnographic Study of Self and Language Experience*

240 Points: *MODULE 3 – Remixing the Self Study*

240 Points: *MODULE 4 – Social Issue Investigation*

240 Points: *MODULE 5 – Visual argument*

100 Points: *Reading Responses/Discussion Board (DB) Posts*

100 Points: *Black Board postings*

100 Points: *Class Activities/Participation and Peer Response*

Grading:

I will assign due dates for all and will provide you with detailed assignment sheets that describe expectations, constraints, and deadlines for each project. You are required to adhere to the terms of the grading policy specified in this syllabus and assignment sheet.

There will be five major assignments in this class, each associated with a module. You can review the points for all activities in the Course Calendar document. This class is focused on your composing practices. To that end, I want us to practice revising our work as a part of the course, but also more broadly through requests for you to take in feedback from your peers and myself and change your writing. You will be rewriting and revising some of your work this semester because it is a crucial writing skill.

Modules [80%]

During the course, you will complete five major assignment projects, each of which will go through multiple drafts before it is considered complete. As you go through the writing process, your drafts will be reviewed continually by your peers and me. You will receive copious

feedback on the drafts you submit. These comments are aimed at redirecting your work for revision. One of the primary goals of the course is to learn how to rethink and rework your writing. The point is that an early draft is composed of first thoughts, and that a truly sophisticated piece of writing usually involves a great deal of reflection, analysis, and craft. This course is about experimenting with a process, and discovering whether that process can help deepen your sense of your writing and of yourself as a writer. Each completed project will be evaluated for its adherence to this multiple drafting process. I will be looking for ways in which you work through your assignments, how willing you are to take risks, and how much effort goes into each assignment. If you write with sincerity and a serious approach, you will probably do well in the course.

Reading Responses/Discussion Board (DB) Posts [13.33%]

You will be responsible for writing one discussion post each week throughout the course. These responses should be no less than 150 words and provide a thoughtful response to the prompts/readings. You should analyze the topics addressed, draw connections among the various readings and between the readings and your experiences. You must turn in your discussion board question in time, be mindful of your fellow writers' time and late posting will count for half of the grade.

Class Activities/Participation and Peer Response [6.67%]

This is a workshop style class in which each person's participation is essential. I encourage you to be a lively participant in our discussions. What you offer to the whole group in discussions can help stimulate all of us. As your instructor, I expect you all to share what you think about the topic. Do not worry if your input is brief or if you're concerned that it won't contribute to the conversation. What matters for participation is that we hear your thoughts and what you need to say. Please do not hesitate to ask when you have questions about your writing or about other aspects of the course.

Throughout the semester, you will be engaged in frequent peer response sessions. I am interested in what you contribute to the community of your peers, and also how you utilize their feedback in guiding your revision. The feedback you give to your peers will go into their portfolios for each unit and will become part of your grade for that unit. You must also engage in conversation with your classmates by replying to other's post if required.

Attendance [10%]

Attendance and Lateness: As undergraduate students, you are expected to attend and participate fully in every class session. Students who anticipate being absent need to notify me ahead of time. I allow for five excused absences in a semester, by your sixth one it will be counted as an unexcused absence. Absences may jeopardize your ability to pass the course. That said, situations may arise that make it impossible for you to attend class or to attend punctually. I

urge you to be in communication with me, and your classmates, if there is a reason why you must be absent. If you miss six classes you will drop a letter grade, if you miss nine classes you will be automatically dropped from the course.

Course Delivery

While most classes are held face-to-face, there can be a few sections that are designated as online. Those classes may meet synchronously or asynchronously through Blackboard. Whether face-to-face or online, the course is designed to engage students through discussions with your classmates and instructor using Blackboard (Bb). In order to succeed in the course, you will need to have regular use of the internet and a stable connection regardless of whether your class meets face-to-face or online. Although you can use the Blackboard App on your phone, it is highly recommended that you compose your work for class, and perform class activities, via a computer. If you don't have a computer or reliable internet at home, the university can help you with resources: [Technology Support - UTEP](#). Please speak with your instructor immediately if you will need assistance. We want you to have the opportunity to succeed in class without concern about access. There are also computers available for you to use in the library on campus.

Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the [Help Desk](#) as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students.

Students can prepare by taking the Blackboard Student Orientation (<https://www.utep.edu/extendeduniversity/cid/student-resources/blackboard-orientation.html>)

Submitting Work:

All work will be submitted through the Bb course shell for this class. Since Bb comment and grade function works best with Microsoft Word, please submit all assignments in Microsoft Word following APA or MLA format unless directed otherwise. Be sure to name each submitted assignment with your name and the title of the assignment. I will not take work that is submitted to me as screenshots or through links which I need to request access.

Late Work, deadlines and absence policy:

It is important to submit work before deadlines for full credit and feedback. I do allow for late work however, point reduction will be reflected on the grade. My goal for this course is not to fail you but, instead make sure that you are receiving the most out of your education and your time in my class. Each student is allowed one late assignment submission up to two weeks without any penalties, but you must inform me when you plan to use this opportunity. This does not include your midterm nor your final, make sure to plan accordingly for these assignments.

Major Writing Assignments

- Major writing assignments will be due on **Sundays at midnight (11:59 PM)**. If you are unable to submit the major writing assignments on time a 5-point reduction will occur on every day that it is late.
- Students are allowed one assignment to be turned in 2 weeks after the original due date.

Quiz and Blog/Discussion Assignments

- All original quiz, blog, and discussion board assignments will be due on **Fridays at midnight (11:59 PM)**. No late work will be accepted, this is for consideration of your peers not for me, if an original discussion board is posted on **Saturday past 8am** it will not count as available for grading.
- Responses for peers will be due on Sundays at midnight (11:59 PM), this is to give me time to read through your responses and come prepared to address any issues or questions during our Monday class.

Make-up Work:

Make-up work will be given only in the case of a documented emergency. Note that make-up work may be in a different format than the original work, may require more intensive preparation, and may be graded with penalty points. If you miss an assignment and the reason is not considered excusable, you will receive a zero. It is therefore important to reach out to me—in advance if at all possible—and explain with proper documentation why you missed a given course requirement. Once a deadline has been established for make-up work, no further extensions or exceptions will be granted.

Alternative Means of Submitting Work in Case of Technical Issues:

I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. I also suggest you save all your work (answers to discussion points, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, please contact the UTEP Help Desk. You can email me your back-up document as a last resort.

Incomplete Grade Policy

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines

Participation:

Your participation in the course is important not only for your learning and success but also to create a community of learners. Participation is determined by completion of the following activities:

- Reading/Viewing all course materials to ensure understanding of assignment requirements
- Participating in engaging discussion with your peers on the discussion boards if required (grading rubric provided in the “grading information” area of each forum)
- Participating in scheduled Blackboard Collaborate sessions
- Other activities as indicated in the weekly modules

Because these activities are designed to contribute to your learning each week, they cannot be made up after their due date has passed.

Classroom Etiquette:

Debate, critical inquiry, and intellectual diversity are essential elements to higher education and a process of learning. There is the potential during this course for controversial and sensitive topics to be discussed during small group or whole class interaction (whether face-to-face or online), and to surface through discussion board postings. You are expected to demonstrate respect and courtesy for your peers and instructor when they express differing arguments, viewpoints, and/or experiences. Sexist, racist, homophobic, or other hateful speech will not be permitted. Angry displays, whether in writing, online postings, or in class discussions will be handled as disruptions to the wellbeing of the class and responded to as negative participation. While I allow for technology to be used in my classroom, if I see you constantly on your phone/computer/tablet looking at social media or doing work for another course I will count you absent for that day.

NETIQUETTE

As we know, sometimes communication online can be challenging. It's possible to miscommunicate what we mean or to misunderstand what our classmates mean given the lack of body language and immediate feedback. Therefore, please keep these netiquette (network etiquette) guidelines in mind. Failure to observe them may result in disciplinary action.

- o Always consider the audience. This is a college-level course; therefore, all communication should reflect polite consideration of other's ideas.
- o Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to the instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- o When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.

o Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space.

University and Program Policies

FYC Class Attendance Policy:

According to UTEP's [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](#):

The student is expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of extended absences. When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor can drop the student from the class with a grade of W before the course-drop deadline or with a grade of F after the course-drop deadline. Please consult UTEP's [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](#) for more information regarding Excused Absences for University-Recognized Activities, Absence for Religious Holy Days, and Military Leave. Attendance is mandatory for all freshman-level courses. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate in discussions and workshops. In addition, the First-Year Composition Program has developed the following policies that should be adhered to strictly by all instructors:

For Face-to-Face Classes:

Students are entitled to a single week of unexplained absences without penalty (for example, 3 classes missed in a three-times-a-week class, 2 classes missed in twice-a-week class, 1 class missed in a once-a-week class). After 2 total weeks of absence (not necessarily consecutive classes) the student's grade is lowered by a full letter (A becomes B, etc.). After 3 total weeks of absence (not necessarily consecutive), the student is automatically dropped from class. Missing a scheduled conference with the instructor constitutes an absence.

For Hybrid Classes:

The attendance policy for hybrid courses aligns with the structure for face-to-face courses. The program recommends that the student contact the instructor to discuss the attendance policy and how it applies in cases in which it is not possible to attend a weekly class meeting, while continuing to maintain robust participation in class activities. [see also online courses]

For Online Classes:

In an online class, attendance is measured by participation in class activities. The attendance policy for online courses aligns with the structure for face-to-face courses, with each missed week of class activities constituting absence from a week of class. *The instructor can*

measure participation through various pathways, such as completion of scaffolded activities and discussion posts, and responding to other students' posts and feedback. We also recommend measuring course activity by using the Course Reports feature on Blackboard, particularly the Course Activity Overview. When it becomes evident that it is not possible to participate in class, the program recommends that the student contact the instructor to discuss the attendance policy and how it applies, before resuming robust participation in class activities.

Drop Policy:

If you cannot complete this course for whatever reason, please contact your instructor ahead of the course drop deadline. Your instructor can help you with the drop process and you can contact the Registrar's Office. If you do not drop, you are at risk of being dropped by the instructor and possibly receiving an "F" for the course.

Academic Integrity:

The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Instructors are required to report the suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Affairs. Visit the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#) page for more information on Academic integrity.

The First-Year Composition Program fundamentally trusts its students and strives to create dynamic classroom experiences and writing opportunities rooted in the values of inquiry and critical thinking. We agree deeply with Anna R. Mills' (2003) claims, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, that "*writing practice continues to be intensely rewarding for students and central to intellectual growth in college.*" For this class, I implore you to resist assigning A.I. to perform cognitive tasks. A.I. degrades the core educational task of humanistic inquiry: learning to confront and work through complexity and difficulty in the world. As Ted Chiang has argued eloquently, "the task that generative A.I. has been most successful at is lowering our expectations, both of the things we read and of ourselves when we write anything for others to read. It is a fundamentally dehumanizing technology because it treats us less than what we are: creators and apprehenders of meaning. It reduces the amount of intention in the world."¹

¹ Ted Chiang, "Why A.I. Isn't Going to Make Art," *The New Yorker* (August 24, 2024). <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-weekend-essay/why-ai-isnt-going-to-make-art>

Accommodations:

UTEP is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting accommodation based on a disability must register with the [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS). Students are encouraged to visit CASS in room 106, Union East Building or contact them at 747-5148 or cass@utep.edu.

University Writing Center:

UTEP's University Writing Center (UWC) offers free writing tutoring assistance for all UTEP students. The tutors are undergraduate and graduate students who can help with all parts of a writing assignment, including prewriting, organizing, revising, and editing. They can also help to understand any writing assignment and help work on comprehending difficult textbook material. Go to [University Writing Center - UTEP](#) to make an appointment with a writing center consultant.

Military Students:

If you are a military student (veteran, dependent, active) please visit the [Military Student Success Center](#). If you are a student veteran, please inform me if you need special accommodations. Drill schedules, calls to active duty, complications with GI Bill disbursement, and other unforeseen military and veteran-related developments can complicate your academic life. If you make me aware of a complication, I will do everything I can to assist you or put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you.

Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy:

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for

accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

UTEP Land Acknowledgment Statement:

As members of the University of Texas at El Paso community, we acknowledge that we are meeting on unceded Indigenous land. We would like to recognize and pay our respects to the Indigenous people with long ties to the immediate region: Lipan Apache, Mescalero Apache, Piro, Manso, Suma, Jumano, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe, and Tortugas Pueblo. We also acknowledge the nations whose territories include present day Texas: the Carrizo & Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, and the peoples of Chihuahua and northern Mexico from whom most/many of our students descend, such as the Rarámuri, Tepehuan, Wixarrika and Nahuatlaca peoples. Finally, we recognize all of the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories here in Paso del Norte, on Turtle Island. The University of Texas at El Paso honors your history and cultures and we seek greater awareness of the myriad ways in which your legacy can guide us in fruitful partnerships and mutually fulfilling relationships.

Course Support Resource

Title IX	915-747-8358	Institutional Compliance
Dean of Students	915-747-5648	Dean of Students
UTEP Health & Wellness Center	915-747-5624	https://www.utep.edu/chs/shc/ studenthealth@utep.edu
UTEP Police Department	915-747-5611	https://www.utep.edu/police/ police@utep.edu
Counseling and Psychological Services	915-747-5302	https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/counsel/ caps@utep.edu

Course Schedule

Course specific schedule is available on BB shell.