The University Of Texas at El Paso
Department of English
Rhetoric and Writing Studies
RWS 1301 CRN 11498
Syllabus

Instructor: Candice Marlene Gibbs *(ask me for my pronouns)*
Email: cmduran3@miners.utep.edu
Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM

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.

And We Are…

The First-Year Composition Program is geographically and discursively situated in the US-Mexico borderland and offers a binational, 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 and 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

- Exploring texts
- Experimenting with multimedia
- Collaborative project on studying texts, authorship, and the idea of composition

MODULE 2 – Autoethnographic Study of Self and Language Experiences

- Reflecting on language and literacy—relationship to home and language
- Looking back on your linguistic identities
- How do linguistic and cultural experiences affect your ideas about what it means to write in college?

MODULE 3 – Remixing the Self Study

- Adapting to another audience—audience analysis
- Examining an alternative genre—genre analysis
- Composing in a new medium
- Conducting a rhetorical analysis

MODULE 4 – Social Issue Investigation

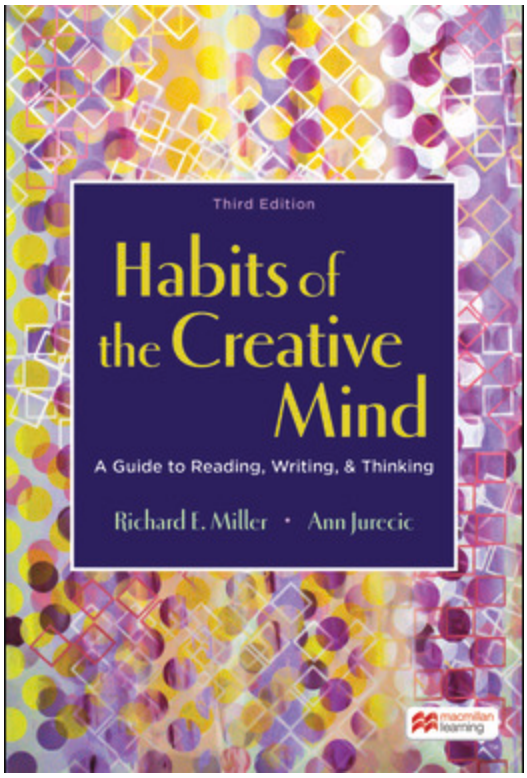
- Identifying an issue of personal and social concern
- Interrogating assumptions, biases, and representations through topic research
- Report with annotated bibliography for future study

MODULE 5 – Visual Argument

- Creating an infographic, PSA, or alternative visual project
- Presentation of infographic,PSA, or alternative visual project

Required Texts and Materials

UTEP First-Year Composition Handbook, 2025-2027 edition. ISBN 978-1-5339-7355-9. 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

Assignments for this course are assessed according to rubrics. You can find these rubrics by clicking on the appropriate assignment link in Blackboard and choosing to "View Rubric" from the button beneath the Points Possible for the assignment.

Grade Distribution— Students can earn a total of 1000 points for the course

1000-900 = A 899-800 = B 799-700 = C 699-600 = D 599 and Below = F

200 points: MODULE 1 - Taking Inventory
200 Points: MODULE 2 - Autoethnographic Study of Self and Language Experience
200 Points: MODULE 3 - Remixing the Self Study
200 Points: MODULE 4 - Social Issue Investigation
200 Points: MODULE 5 - Visual Argument

Grading:

Due dates are assigned for all assignments 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 that is attached to this syllabus.

Course Delivery

While most classes are held face-to-face, there are a few sections that are designated as online. 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. 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 and other labs on campus. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have internet access 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

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.

Late Work Policy: All course work you compose should be delivered by the dates written in the calendar. As a college student, it's expected of you to organize your time effectively and be responsible with your assignments. Having said this, please, communicate with me if you ever feel like you won't be able to deliver the assignments on time. If you do this, we can always arrange something.

Participation: In this class, we'll engage in numerous conversations about composition, our writing processes and other different aspects of writing. As your instructor for this course, I expect everyone to respond to discussion board posts as they are required. Participation is voluntary and highly encouraged. Students can raise their hand with an idea, comment, or feedback. Do not worry if your input is brief or if you're concerned that it won't contribute to the conversation- it will! What matters is that we hear your thoughts and what you need to say. 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 (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

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, transphobic, 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.

Texas SB17 Exception for Course Instruction: The Texas Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has issued the following statement that protects academic course content. The FYC program includes writing along with speech as an academic freedom of expression ("students should not feel the need to censor their speech" or writing):

Texas Senate Bill 17, the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations regarding academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics pertaining to race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

University and Program Policies

FYC Class Attendance Policy: 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 a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair their 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 the 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 with each missed weekly class meeting constituting absence from a week of class.

- 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 or 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 Community Standards 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' (2023) claim, in the Chronicle of Higher Education, that "writing practice continues to be intensely rewarding for students and central to intellectual growth in college."

Because of the rapid pace of change represented by ChatGPT and other Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs, it is necessary to set clear program standards regarding

their use in our classes. Specifically, the FYC Program recognizes that Large Language Models (LLMs) are part of our contemporary culture and hold educational value that can be explored in the classroom, such as narrowing down a topic idea or critically analyzing the quality of an AI-generated text. However, our program maintains an expectation that all assignment submissions must constitute original pieces of writing composed by the student-author only.

By this standard, an **appropriate use** of ChatGPT (or any AI-powered program) could take the form of

- writing an introduction paragraph that openly describes how this AI tool offered possible approaches to researching a particular topic, with any direct quotes placed in quotation marks and cited in-text and in a final references page.

By contrast, an **inappropriate use** of ChatGPT (or any AI-powered program) could take the form of

- copying any amount of text from an AI tool and claiming it as your original composition without acknowledging its source. This includes failure to cite and place quotation marks around any directly quoted language.

FYC instructors are required to submit any assignment submissions that appear to include inappropriate uses of AI programs (or that are marked for further review) to the Office of Community Standards (OCS).

Accomodations: 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.

Help Desk: Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

UTEP Edge: UTEP's cross-campus framework for student success and empowerment develops students' assets through high-impact experiences made possible by the expertise and dedication of faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners.

Military Students: If you are a military student (veteran, dependent, active) please visit the Military Student Success Center. I also recognize the complexities of being a student veteran. 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.

Resources:

Title IX	915-747-8358	titleix@utep.edu	Institutional Compliance
Dean of Students	915-747-5648	dos@utep.edu	Dean of Students
UTEP Police	915-747-5611	police@utep.edu	UTEP Police

UTEP Food Pantry	915-747-8053	foodpantry@utep.edu	Memorial Gym Food Pantry
Counseling and Psychological Services	915-747-5302	caps@utep.edu	202 Union West Counseling Services
Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS)	915-747-5148	cass@utep.edu	106 Union East CASS website
UTEP Health and Wellness Center	915-747-5624	studenthealth@utep.edu	100 Union East Student Health and Wellness Center

Academic Calendar Fall 2025

Aug 25th	Fall classes begin
Sept 1st	Labor Day holiday - University Closed
Sept 10th	Fall Census Day Note: This is the last day to register for classes. Payments are due by 5:00 pm.
Oct 22nd	Freshman Midterm grades are due
Oct 31st	Fall Drop/Withdrawal deadline Note: Student-initiated drops are permitted after this date, but the student is not guaranteed a grade of W. The faculty member of record will issue a grade of either W or F.
Nov 27-28th	Thanksgiving Holiday - University Closed
Dec 4th	Fall last day of classes
Dec 5th	Dead Day
Dec 8-12th	Fall Final Exams

Course Schedule

Week 1 Aug. 25 - 29	introductions & syllabus overview read FYC module 1 pgs. 3-8 **DB 1 due Sunday**
Week 2 Sept. 1 - 5	**Laboy Day holiday - no class** read HCM *On Habits*
Week 3 Sept. 8 - 12	read HCM *On a Space of Your Own* **in-class workshop** **assignment 1 due Sunday**
Week 4 Sept. 15 - 19	read FYC module 2 pgs. 80-82 **librarian presentation** **DB 2 due Sunday**
Week 5 Sept. 22 - 26	read HCM *On Unlearning*
Week 6 Sept. 29 - Oct. 3	read HCM *On Question-Driven Writing* **in-class workshop** **assignment 2 due Sunday**
Week 7 Oct. 6 - 10	read FYC module 3 pgs. 152-154 **DB 3 due Sunday**
Week 8 Oct. 13 - 17	read HCM *On 3 Most Important Words in the English Language* **UWC presentation meet @ library**
Week 9 Oct. 20 - 24	read HCM *On Seeing as a Writer* **in-class workshop** **assignment 3 due Sunday**
Week 10 Oct. 27 - 31	read FYC module 4 pgs. 201-204 **DB 4 due Sunday**
Week 11 Nov. 3 - 7	read HCM *On Asking Good Questions* **librarian presentation**
Week 12 Nov. 10 - 14	read HCM *On Writing to a Question* **in-class workshop** **assignment 4 due Sunday**

Week 13 Nov. 17 - 21	read FYC module 5 pgs. 223-226 **DB 5 due Sunday**
Week 14 Nov. 24 - 28	read HCM *On Choosing Your Own Adventure*
Week 15 Dec. 1 - 5	read HCM *On Structure* **assignment 5 due Sunday**