The University of Texas at El Paso
Department of English
Rhetoric and Writing Studies RWS 1301
CRN 24046
Spring 2025 Syllabus

Instructor Information
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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm
University Writing Center or via Zoom

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

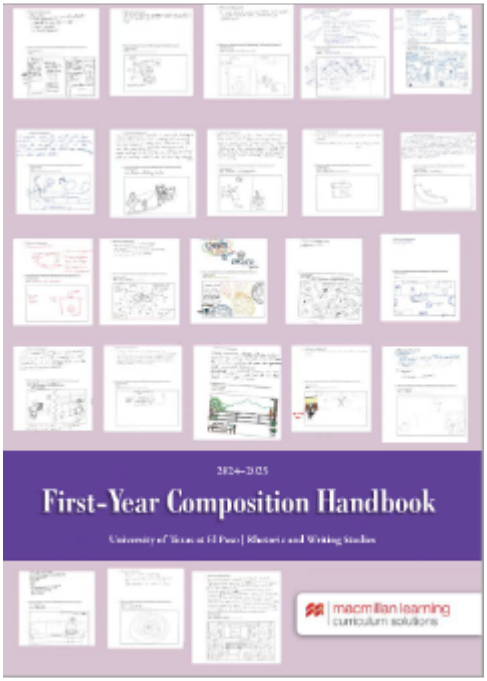
MODULE 4 – Social Issue Investigation

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

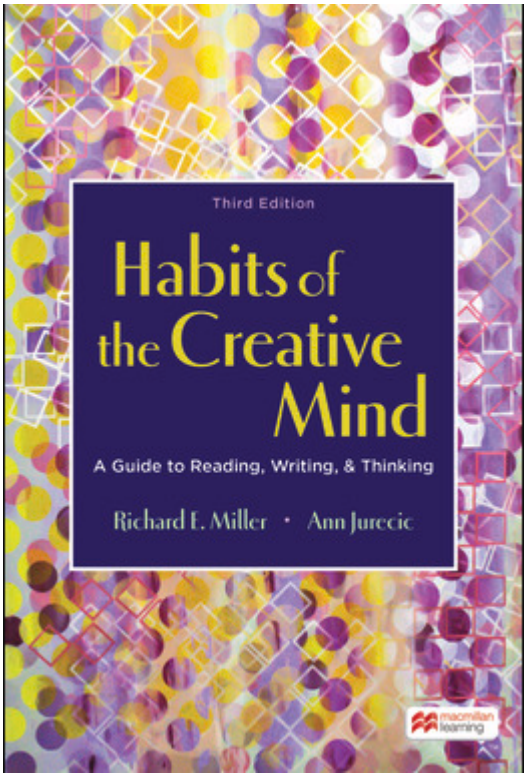
MODULE 5 – Visual Argument

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

Required Texts and Materials:



1. UTEP First-Year Composition Handbook, 2024-2025 edition.
An e-book available directly through Redshelf.com.



2. 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 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 & 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 instructions 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.

Grading Breakdown: This course does not have midterms or final exams, instead you are graded on discussion boards (100 pts.), and major assignments (100 pts.). As noted above, each module is worth 200 pts. Extra credit opportunities will also be available (50 pts.).

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: All course work should be delivered by the dates written in the calendar, usually Sundays by 11:59 PM. 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.

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. to race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

University and Program Policies

FYC Class Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions. It is your responsibility to inform each instructor of extended absences. When a student has been absent to such a degree (more than 4 absences) 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:

Students are entitled to a single week of unexplained absences without penalty. For example, a student is allowed to miss 2 classes without notification. However, after those absences, if they do not provide notification (either prior or within 24 hours of class) along with a form of proof, the absence is unexcused.

- After 2 total weeks of unexcused 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.

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."

Guidance on AI: 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).

Accommodations: If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or that form barriers to your inclusion, please let your instructor know as soon as possible. Together you can develop strategies that will enable you to succeed in the course.

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 an 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 Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy: 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. 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 UTEP. 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.

Course Support Resources:

UTEP Food Pantry	915-747-8053	UTEP Food Pantry foodpantry@utep.edu
Title IX	915-747-8358	Institutional Compliance
Dean of Students	915-747-5648	Dean of Students
UTEP Health & Wellness Center	915-747-5624	Health and Wellness Center studenthealth@utep.edu
UTEP Police Department	915-747-5611	UTEP Police police@utep.edu
Counseling and Psychological Services	915-747-5302	Counseling Services caps@utep.edu

Academic Calendar - Spring 2025

Jan 21-24th	Late Registration (Fees are incurred)
Feb 5th	Spring Census Day
Mar 10-14th	Spring Break
Mar 19th	Freshman midterm grades are due
Mar 28th	Cesar Chavez Holiday - No classes
Apr 4th	Spring 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.
Apr 18th	Spring Study Day; Deadline to submit candidates' names for commencement program.
May 8th	Spring last day of classes
May 12-16th	Spring Final Exams

Course Schedule:

Week 1 Jan. 20 - 24	Tues: introductions & syllabus overview Thurs: read FYC module 1 pgs. 3-8 **DB 1 due Sunday**
Week 2 Jan. 27 - 31	Tues: read HCM *On Habits* pgs. 3-8 Thurs: proposal 1 due Sunday
Week 3 Feb. 3 - 7	Tues: read HCM *On Unlearning* pgs. 9-11 Thurs: **assignment 1 due Sunday** in-class workshop
Week 4 Feb. 10 - 14	Tues: read FYC module 2 pgs. 82-84 Thurs: librarian presentation **DB 2 due Sunday**
Week 5 Feb. 17 - 21	Tues: in-class workshop Thurs: proposal 2 due Sunday
Week 6 Feb. 24 - 28	Tues: read HCM *Paying Attention pg. 25* Thurs: librarian presentation **assignment 2 due Sunday**
Week 7 March 3 - 7	Tues: read FYC module 3 pgs. 167-169 Thurs: **DB 3 due Sunday**
Week 8 March 10 - 14	Tues: **SPRING BREAK NO CLASS** Thurs: **SPRING BREAK NO CLASS**
Week 9 March 17 - 21	Tues: read HCM *On Seeing as a Writer* pgs.117-119 Thurs: proposal 3 due Sunday
Week 10 March 24 - 28	Tues: in-class workshop Thurs: **assignment 3 due Sunday**
Week 11 Mar. 31 - Apr. 4	Tues: read FYC module 4 pgs. 206-208 Thurs: **DB 4 due Sunday**
Week 12 Apr. 7 - 11	Tues: read HCM *On Asking Good Questions* pgs. 47-49 Thurs: proposal 4 due Sunday
Week 13 Apr. 14 - 18	Tues: UWC presentation Thurs: **assignment 4 due Sunday** in-class workshop
Week 14 Apr. 21 - 25	Tues: read FYC module 5 pgs. 227-229 Thurs: read HCM *On Choosing Your Own Adventure* pgs. 86-89 **DB 5 due Sunday 10 pm**

Week 15 Apr. 28 – May 2	Tues: **student presentations** Thurs: **student presentations**