Rhetoric and Writing Studies RWS 1301

CRN: 22117

Instructor Information:
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Expect responses to e-mail within 24 hours M-F, except on holidays

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 & 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
- Producing a collaborative or individual 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
- Asking, 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

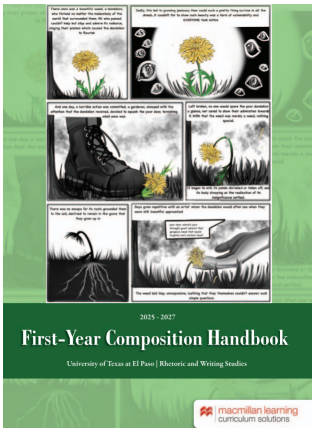
MODULE 4 – Social Issue Investigation

- Identifying an issue of personal and social concern
- Interrogating assumptions, biases, and representations through topic research
- Creating a brief report for future study

MODULE 5 – Visual Argument

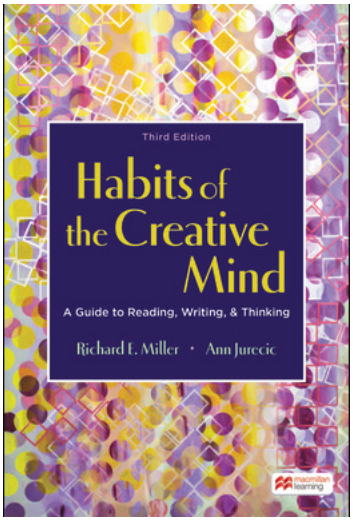
- Creating an infographic, PSA, or alternative visual project
- Presenting an infographic, PSA, or alternative visual project

Required Texts & 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

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

Based on class activities the grading points are subject to modifications

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

100 Points: **MODULE 1 – Taking Inventory**

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

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

100 Points: **MODULE 4 – Social Issue Investigation**

100 Points: **MODULE 5 – Visual Argument**

500 Points: Class Activities/ Reading Responses/Discussion Board (DB) Posts/Minor

Assignment for each module.***

Grading: *I will assign due dates for all the assigned works for each module and will provide you with detailed assignment requirements in blackboard 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; hence, I want us to practice revising our work as a part of the course. We will be practicing revising work through feedback from your peers and myself. Therefore, you will be rewriting and revising some of your work this semester because it is a crucial writing skill.

Grading breakdown-

Modules [50%]

*During the course, you will complete five major assignment projects (5*100 = 500), each of which will go through multiple drafts before it is considered complete. 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 [40%]

*You will be responsible for writing two discussions post along with making two comments on your peer's response (20*2 = 40) for each module throughout the course. These responses should be no less than 250 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.*

Class Activities/Participation Peer Response and Minor Assignment [60%]

*Additionally, you will be responsible for writing one minor assignment (30*1= 30) for each module. 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 assigned readings via discussion board (DB) posts and commenting on your peers posts. Do not worry if your input is brief or if you're concerned that it won't contribute to the conversation. What matters for the participation is that we read/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 worth 30 points. 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.

I will have office hours for your questions and comments about the course. My office hours will be held at the University Writing Centre.

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 (unless otherwise stated) following APA or MLA format unless directed otherwise. Be sure to name each submitted assignment with your name and the title of the assignment. One of the aspects of being an effective writer is letting your audience know what they will be reading. This starts with proper naming of your document. You are expected to follow proper naming format i.e. [Your last name] _ [Title of Assignment] e.g.
Adhikari_MinorAssignment1
Adhikari_MajorAssignmentModule1.
Failure to adhere to proper file naming format will lead to deduction in points.

Late Work: Late Work: It is important to submit work before deadlines for full credit and feedback. Submitting works after deadlines will be marked B (if submitted 1 day past due date) C (if submitted 2 days past due date) and will not receive any feedback or comments. Any submission after 4 days past due will automatically be assigned F. If you have CASS accommodation, please talk to me at the earliest. However please understand CASS accommodation is not an excuse to submit works late. As mentioned under CASS accommodation for late work, "A student will receive three additional days to complete assignments for a 15-week course", anything beyond 3 days will be considered an F.

***Make-up Work**: Make-up work will be given only in the case of a documented emergency. Note that make-up work will be in a different format than the original work, may require more intensive preparation, and will 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.
Note: Make up Work will only be considered for Major assignments.

Participation:

For this class participation does not simply mean to talk. Rather this class will expect you to participate by –

- Contributing meaningfully to class and online discussions
- Engaging in peer review with thoughtful feedback
- Collaborating respectfully with classmates
- Being prepared and present
- Reflecting on learning and personal growth

Classroom Etiquette: Debate, critical inquiry, and intellectual exchanges 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.

Cell Phone Usage: I encourage responsible mobile phone use to create a focused learning environment. Please keep your phone on silent during lessons. If you need to use your phone for an emergency, quietly step outside to make the call. Feel free to use your phone for educational purposes when permitted. I appreciate your cooperation in maintaining a distraction-free space for everyone

Email Etiquette: Email is a useful tool if you have questions for me, emailing me is generally the easiest and most efficient way to make contact outside class. Given that this is a university setting, you should recognize that your emails are documents that represent you professionally and therefore should rise to certain standards of professional decorum.

There are some basic guidelines that you should follow, both in my class and in your other classes:

A. All emails should have a clear subject heading.

B. All emails should have a clear, courteous salutation. "Dear Mr. Adhikari" would be appropriate in the case of this class.

C. All emails written for professional purposes should adhere to standard grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.

D. All emails should be signed with your name (otherwise, your reader may not know who you are!).

E. Emails should be sent from your UTEP/Blackboard account. If you do use another account, be sure, that the name on the account is appropriate for professional interactions.

F. If there are any attachments, you should explain your reason for sending them and indicate the program in which they were written.

G. You should consider your rhetorical context when emailing. What is the purpose of your email, and how can you most effectively accomplish that purpose?

Three particularly important matters to keep in mind are brevity, clarity, and courtesy. If your email is not clear, specific, and to the point, you may not elicit the response you desire. If your email is discourteous, you diminish the professionalism of the persona you present to others. To cite just one example, some professors find emails that include calls for action "ASAP" to be discourteous or even presumptuous.

Emails that do not meet the standards of professionalism, clarity, and courtesy outlined above may be disregarded.

Emails will be disregarded/ response will be delayed if:

1. There is no subject
2. Your name/ course (+ date & time) is not easily identifiable
3. The email has not been properly written and/or proofread and is thus incomprehensible
4. The tone is rude or discourteous
5. You are making me aware of an absence for an unexcused or non-emergency reason
6. The issue has already been addressed (online or in 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.

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.
- *Additionally, this is a scheduled course- you already know the days and time this class will meet. I request you not to over-lap any other commitments during the course time. Make plans ahead so as not to over-lap with the classes, no excuses will be entertained, and you will be marked absent.*
- *Lateness clause: Punctuality is a key aspect of growing into a responsible adult. I kindly ask that you make every effort to be on time for class. The classroom doors will remain open for 10 minutes after the class starts. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, please knock on the door to get my attention. Also, please do stay back after class to let me know if there are any valid reasons that I should consider.* ***Arriving to class 20 minutes after the scheduled time will automatically mark you absent****. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.*

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 example of an **appropriate use** of ChatGPT (or any AI program) could be

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

By contrast, an example of an **inappropriate use** of ChatGPT (or any AI program) could be

- 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.

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.

Course Support Resources

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

Spring 2026 Calendar

Jan 20th	*Spring classes begin*
Jan 20-23rd	*Late Registration (Fees are incurred)*
Feb 4th	Spring Census Day Note: This is the last day to register for classes. Payments are due by 5:00 pm.
Mar 16-20th	*Spring Break*
Mar 25th	*Freshman midterm grades are due*
Mar 27th	Cesar Chavez Holiday - No classes
Apr 3rd	*Spring Study Day - no classes*
May 7th	*Spring last day of classes*

May 8th *Dead day*

May 11-15th *Spring Final Exams*

Course Schedule

Your instructor will provide you with a course schedule specific to your class.