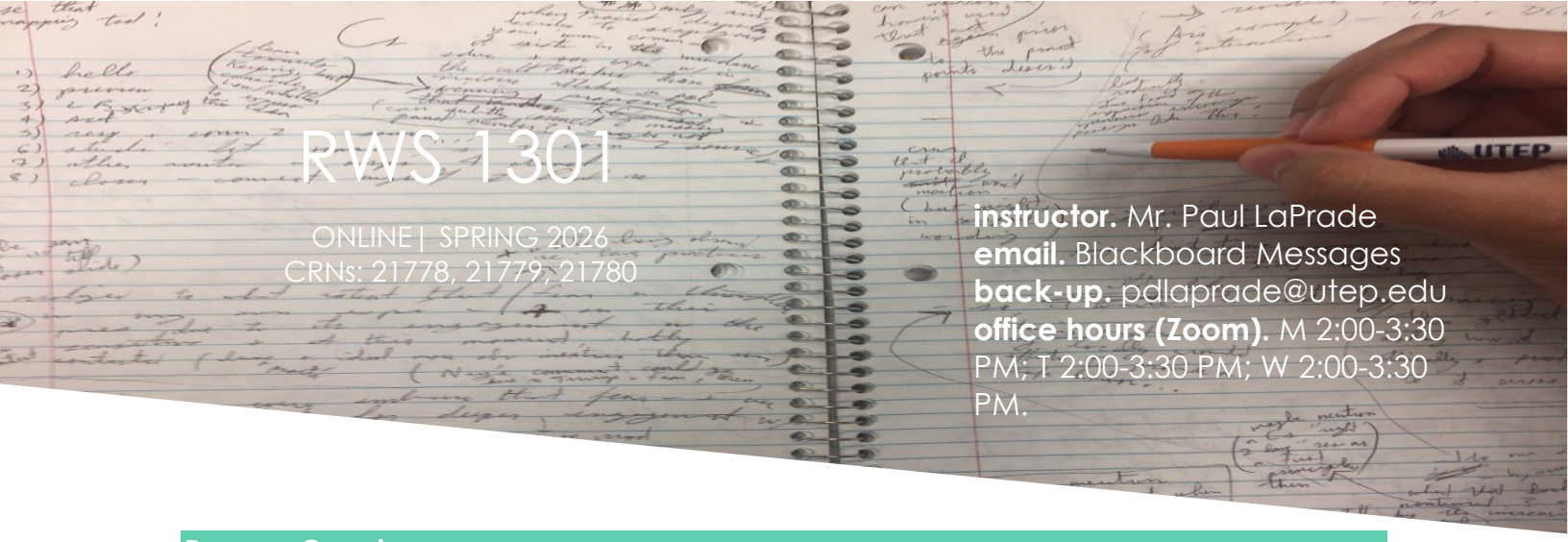


RWS 1301

ONLINE | SPRING 2026
CRNs: 21778, 21779, 21780

instructor. Mr. Paul LaPrade
email. Blackboard Messages
back-up. pdlaprade@utep.edu
office hours (Zoom). M 2:00-3:30 PM; T 2:00-3:30 PM; W 2:00-3:30 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 I and RWS 1302—Rhetoric and Composition II. 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 are 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

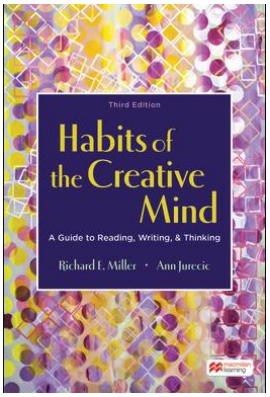
- Identifying an issue of personal and social concern
- Interrogating assumptions, biases, and representations through topic research
- Creating a brief report for future study

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. *See the week 1 folder for step-by-step instructions on how to purchase and activate this e-book 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

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 or below = F

Module 1 Taking Inventory
Major Assignment: 100 pts.

Module 2 Autoethnographic Study of Self and Language Experience
Major Assignment: 200 pts.

Module 3 Remixing the Self Study
Major Assignment: 175 pts.

Module 4 Social Issue Investigation
Major Assignment: 100 pts.

Module 5 Visual Argument
Major Assignment: 150 pts.

Total Points for Major Assignments: 725 pts.

Total Points for Discussion Posts and Activities: 275 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: For major assignments, I accept late work for 12 hours after the assigned due date. Please contact me as soon as possible regarding any circumstances that affect your ability to complete coursework on time.

Participation: Active participation is vital to your success in this online course. This includes engaging with classmates through discussion activities and working toward major assignments through writing activities.

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.

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

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. The class discussions will help students learn to improve their writing, often through the discussion of a sample student project (sometimes the student's, sometimes one written by a classmate).

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 (Applies to this class): 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. 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 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: 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.

Extra Credit @ The University Writing Center: You can earn extra credit by visiting the Writing Center in person or online at *https://www.utep.edu/uwc/*. Each UWC session counts for 4 points, for up to 40 total points. To receive extra credit, email me your UWC visit forms.

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	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

Academic Calendar, Spring 2026

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 Calendar

Major-Assignment Calendar:

1. **Week 2, Taking Inventory**: Due Sunday, February 1st
2. **Week 6, Autoethnographic Study of Self and Language Experiences**: Due Sunday, March 1st
3. **Week 9, Remixing the Self Study:** Due Sunday, March 29th
4. **Week 12, Social Issue Investigation:** Due Sunday, April 19th
5. **Finals Week, Visual Argument:** Due Wednesday, May 13th

Reading Calendar:

Key: HCM=*Habits of the Creative Mind*; FYC=*First-Year Composition Handbook*

Module 1 Readings:

- **Week 1:** Brief excerpts from the ***FYC*** *Handbook* (pp. v-xv; 1-8):

- "Indigenous Land Acknowledgment Statement," "And We Are," "First-Year Composition at UTEP," "RWS 1301 & RWS 1302 Learning Objectives," "On Writing Block"; "Introduction: Welcome to RWS 1301," "Module 1: Taking Inventory"
- **Assignment #1 Guidelines**: "Taking Inventory with Three Images" (**FYC**, pp. 74-81)

- **Week 2:** ONE: Orienting (**HCM**, pp. 1-24):
  - Chapter Introduction (p. 1)
  - "On Habits" (pp. 3-8)
  - "On Unlearning" (pp. 9-14)
  - "On a Space of Your Own" (pp. 15-24)

Module 2 Readings:

- **Week 3:**
  - "Module 2: Autoethnographic Study of Self and Language Experiences" (**FYC**, pp. 80-82)
  - **Assignment #2 Guidelines**: "Story of Self and Language/s" (**FYC**, pp. 128-135)
- TWO: Paying Attention (**HCM**, pp. 25-44):
  - Chapter Introduction (p. 25)
  - "On Learning to See" (pp. 27-33)
  - "On Looking and Looking Again" (pp. 34-39)
  - "On Paying Attention to Words" (pp. 40-44)

- **Week 4:**
  - "Week 4 Writing Activity: Invention" (**FYC**, pp. 136-138)
  - "Sample Student Text: A Bitter-Taste Language" by Alejandro Reaza Escárcega (**FYC**, pp. 139-142)
- THREE: Questioning (**HCM**, pp. 45-62):
  - Chapter Introduction (p. 45)
  - "On Asking Good Questions" (pp. 47-52)
  - "On Writing to a Question" (pp. 53-57)
  - "On Question-Driven Writing" (pp. 58-62)

- **Week 5:**
  - "Sample Student Text: Story of Language and Self" by Monica Pastor (**FYC**, pp. 143-145)
- FOUR: Exploring (**HCM**, pp. 63-92):
  - Chapter Introduction (p. 63)
  - "On Going Down the Rabbit Hole" (pp. 65-74)
  - "On Creative Reading" (pp. 75-85)
  - "On Choosing Your Own Adventure" (pp. 86-92)

- **Week 6:** No assigned reading from *Habits of the Creative Mind* to open extra time for completing the Module 2 major assignment.
  - **Suggested readings which can be incorporated into the Module 2 major assignment:** "Laia Sales Merino on Code-Switching" (**FYC**, pp. 100-103); "Translingual Practice, Ethnic Identities, and Voice in Writing" (**FYC**, pp. 84-100) by Sara P. Alvarez, Suresh Canagarajah, Eunjeong Lee, Jerry Won Lee, and Shakil Rabbi; "How We Pronounce Uvalde Says a Lot about the Power of Language in Mixed Communities" (**FYC**, pp. 104-107) by Isabella Gomez Sarmiento.

Module 3 Readings:

- **Week 7:**
  - "Module 3: Remixing the Self" (**FYC**, pp. 152-154)
  - **Assignment #3 Guidelines**: "Remixing the Self" (**FYC**, pp. 183-194)
- FIVE: Connecting (**HCM**, pp. 93-114)
  - Chapter Introduction (p. 93)
  - "On the Three Most Important Words in the English Language" (pp. 95-102)
  - "On Joining the Conversation" (pp. 103-107)
  - "On Working with the Words of Others" (pp. 108-114)

- **Week 8:**
  - Sample Student Text: "A Dandelion's Inner Turmoil" by Angelica Valadez (**FYC**, pp. 195-200)
- SIX: Reflecting (**HCM**, pp. 115-138)

- Chapter Introduction (p. 115)
- "On Seeing as a Writer" (pp. 117-121)
- "On Reading as a Writer" (pp. 122-127)
- "On Reading in Slow Motion" (pp. 128-138)

- *Spring Break: March 16th-20th*

- **Week 9:** No assigned reading from *Habits of the Creative Mind* to open extra time for completing the Module 4 major assignment.

Module 4 Readings:

- **Week 10:**
  - "Module 4: Social Issue Investigation" (**FYC,** pp. 201-204)
  - **Assignment #4 Guidelines**: "Social Issue Investigation: A Findings Guide to My Research Journey" (**FYC**, pp. 216-220)
- SEVEN: Persisting (**HCM**, pp. 139-158)
  - Chapter Introduction (p. 139)
  - "On Encountering Difficulty" (pp. 141-147)
  - "On Learning from Failure" (pp. 148-153)
  - "On Thinking Unthinkable Thoughts" (pp. 154-158)

- **Week 11:** EIGHT: Rethinking (**HCM**, pp. 159-190)
  - Chapter Introduction (p. 159)
  - "On Letting Go of Writing-by-Formula" (pp. 161-173)
  - "On Structure" (pp. 174-181)
  - "On Revising" (pp. 182-190)

- **Week 12:** No assigned reading from *Habits of the Creative Mind* to open extra time for completing the Module 4 major assignment.
    - **Suggested reading which can be incorporated into the Module 4 major assignment:** "Today's Book Bans Might Be More Dangerous Than Those From the Past" (**FYC**, pp. 205-207) by Jonna Perrillo.

Module 5 Readings:

- **Week 13:**
    - "Module 5: Visual Argument" (**FYC**, 223-226)
    - **Assignment #5 Guidelines**: "Visual Argument" (Blackboard)
- NINE: Wondering (**HCM**, pp. 191-210)
    - Chapter Introduction (p. 191)
    - "On Argument as Journey" (pp. 193-199)
    - "On Imagining Alternatives" (pp. 200-205)
    - "On Complexity" (pp. 206-210)

- **Week 14:**
    - Sample Student Texts: "9-Panel Comic" by Diane Burke (**FYC**, p. 271); "My Writing Journey" by Kacey Ponce (**FYC**, pp. 272-273);
- TEN: Playing (**HCM**, pp. 211-230)
    - Chapter Introduction (p. 211)
    - "On Laughter" (pp. 213-220)
    - "On Bending Conventions" (pp. 221-225)
    - "On the Joys of Pseudonymous Writing" (pp. 226-230)

- **Week 15:**
    - No assigned reading from *Habits of the Creative Mind* to open extra time for completing the Module 5 major assignment.
    - "Conclusion: Looking Forward to RWS 1302" (**FYC**, pp. 278-279)