

## Rhetoric and Writing Studies RWS 1301

CRN: 11978

### Instructor Information:

**Name:** Sanjeev Niraula

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**Office Hours:** 12:30 - 02:00 pm, Friday at the University Writing Center, 2nd floor of the library.

I will be available to all of you during office hours for any inquiries or requests regarding the class. If you require additional days to discuss course-related matters, please feel free to email me.

### Program Overview

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

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

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

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

### And we are...

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

### RWS 1301 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
- Collaborative project on studying texts, authorship, and the idea of composition

**MODULE 2 – Autoethnographic Study of Self and Language Experiences**

- 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**

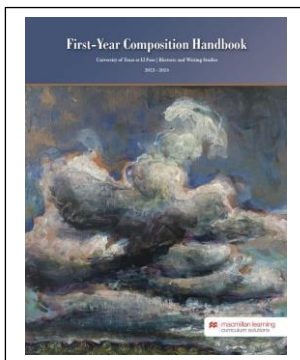
- Adapting to another audience—audience analysis
- Examining an alternative genre—genre analysis
- Composing in a new medium
- Rhetorical analysis

**MODULE 4 – Social Issue Investigation**

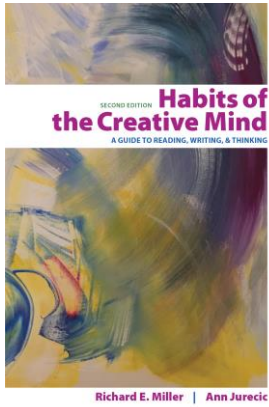
- Identifying an issue of personal and social concern
- Interrogating assumptions, biases, and representations through topic research
- Report with annotated bibliography for future study

**MODULE 5 – Visual Argument**

- Creating infographic, PSA, or alternative visual project
- Presentation of infographics and PSAs

**Required Texts & Materials**

UTEP First-Year Composition Handbook, 2023-2024 edition.  
An e-book available through the UTEP Bookstore.



Miller, R. E., & Jurecic, A. (2020). *Habits of the Creative Mind: A Guide to Reading, Writing, & Thinking* (2<sup>nd</sup> 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

I will consider the following grading criteria to gradually evaluate your work.

- Major Module Assignments: 700 points (70% of overall grade)
- Discussion Posts: 100 points (10% of overall grade)
- Participation and Peer Response: 100 points (10% of overall grade)
- Attendance: 100 points (10% of overall grade)

#### Grading:

##### Modules (70%)

Throughout the duration of the course, you will complete five major assignment projects. Each project will undergo multiple revisions before it is considered finalized. As you progress through the writing process, your drafts will be reviewed continually by your peers and me. You will receive extensive feedback on the drafts you submit. The purpose of the feedback and comment is to guide you in refining your work through the process of revision. Each completed project will be evaluated for its adherence to this multiple drafting process. I will be looking for ways in which you work through your assignments, how willing you are to take risks, and how much effort goes into each assignment. If you write with sincerity and a serious approach, you will probably do well in the course.

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
200 Points	MODULE 4 – Social Issue Investigation
200 Points	MODULE 5 – Visual argument

### **Discussion Board Posts (10%)**

Throughout the duration of the course, you will post a summary of your insights on the Blackboard discussion board. You will have to participate in at least 10 DBs in the entire semester. For each post, the requirement is a minimum of 200 words.

I will assign due dates for each assignment and will provide guidelines to them describing my expectations, constraints, and deadlines for each project. You are required to check Blackboard regularly so that you will not miss them.

### **Participation and Peer Response (10%)**

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. I expect that you will offer thoughtful, informed responses, ask questions, and feel welcome to challenge views expressed by your classmates and me. Throughout the semester, you will be engaged in frequent peer response sessions. I am interested in what you contribute to the community of your peers, and also how you utilize their feedback in guiding your revision. You are also expected to participate in the discussion by commenting on two of your friends' posts. You can offer thoughtful, informed responses, ask questions, and feel welcome to challenge views expressed by your classmates and me as long as we approach each other with respect. Please do not hesitate to ask when you have questions about your writing or about other aspects of the course.

### **Attendance (10%)**

Attendance and Lateness: As undergraduate students, you are expected to attend and participate fully in every class session. Students who anticipate being absent need to notify me ahead of time, although this does not excuse the absence. More than two absences (equivalent to one week of class) may jeopardize your ability to pass the course. Having that said, situations may arise that make it impossible for you to attend class or to attend punctually. I urge you to be in communication with me, and your classmates, if there is a reason why you must be absent. If you are going to be late for class for any reason, please join the class rather than missing it and getting marked absent. If you are late, it is still possible to benefit from the lesson.

For more information about attendance, refer to the next section of the syllabus.

### Course Delivery

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

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

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

**Submitting Work:** All work will be submitted through the Bb course shell for this class. Since Bb comment and grade function works best with Microsoft Word, please submit all assignments in Microsoft Word following APA or MLA format unless directed otherwise. Be sure to name each submitted assignment with your name and the title of the assignment.

**Late Work:** It is important to submit work before deadlines for full credit and feedback. It is important to note that late submissions will be subject to penalties. For every three days that your work, project, or assignment is delayed, there will be a 10% reduction in grade from the total points. This penalty will increase to 20% if the submission is delayed by six days.

However, I do accept late work if you communicate with me before the due date and request an extension. To request an extension, please send me an email explaining your situation and specifying the amount of additional time you require. I will review your request and decide on whether to accept your proposed extension. **Please be aware that extensions are only granted for major projects.**

**Participation:**

Participation includes, but not limited to, in-person in-class activities that are submitted and not. This also includes any peer-reviews, first drafts, pre-writing techniques, conferences, presentations.

Participation points also include Blackboard activities that are assigned last-minute and ahead of time. If you are not present for class, you might miss participation point opportunities that cannot be made up. Participation points add up to 100 points total at the end of the semester.

**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.

### University and Program Policies

**FYC Class Attendance Policy:** According to UTEP's [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](#):

The student is expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of extended absences. When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor can drop the student from the class with a grade of W before the course-drop deadline or with a grade of F after the course-drop deadline.

Please consult UTEP's [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](#) for more information regarding Excused Absences for University-Recognized Activities, Absence for Religious Holy Days, and Military Leave. Attendance is mandatory for all freshman-level courses. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate in discussions and workshops. In addition, the First-Year Composition Program has developed the following policies that should be adhered to strictly by all instructors:

**For Face-to-Face Classes:** Students are entitled to a single week of unexplained absences without penalty (for example, 3 classes missed in a three-times-a-week class, 2 classes missed in twice-a-week class, 1 class missed in a once-a-week class).

After 2 total weeks of absence (not necessarily consecutive classes) the student's grade is lowered by a full letter (A becomes B, etc.).

After 3 total weeks of absence (not necessarily consecutive), the student is automatically dropped from class.

Missing a scheduled conference with the instructor constitutes an absence.

**For Hybrid Classes:** The attendance policy for hybrid courses aligns with the structure for face-to-face courses 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 and you can contact the Registrar's Office. If you do not drop, you are at risk of being dropped by the instructor and possibly receiving an "F" for the course.

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

The First-Year Composition Program fundamentally trusts its students and strives to create dynamic classroom experiences and writing opportunities rooted in the values of inquiry and critical thinking. We agree deeply with Anna R. Mills' (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 similar programs, it is necessary to set clear program standards regarding their use in our classes. Specifically, the FYC Program recognizes that language models 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 a clear expectation that all assignment submissions must constitute original pieces of writing composed by the student-author. By this standard, an **acceptable use** of ChatGPT (or a similar program) could take the form of

- writing an introduction paragraph that openly describes how this language model offered possible approaches to researching a particular topic, with any direct quotes placed in quotation marks.

By contrast, an **unacceptable use** of ChatGPT (or a similar program) could take the form of

- copying any amount of text from a language model without attribution, i.e. failure to include quotation marks around any directly quoted language, and an in-text citation for any paraphrased or quoted text (including text generated by ChatGPT or another language model).

FYC faculty are required to submit any assignment submissions that appear to include unacceptable uses of AI programs (or that are marked for further review by AI detection programs that our faculty are trained with) to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

**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](mailto: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.

## Course Support Resources

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

## Academic Calendar Fall 2023

<b>Aug 28th</b>	Fall classes begin
<b>Aug 28th-Sept 1st</b>	Late Registration (Fees are incurred)
<b>Sept 4th</b>	Labor Day Holiday- University Closed
<b>Sept 13th</b>	Fall Census Day
<b>Nov 3rd</b>	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.
<b>Nov 23rd-24th</b>	Thanksgiving Holiday- University Closed
<b>Dec 7th</b>	Fall– Last day of classes

## Course Schedule

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