

## Rhetoric and Writing Studies RWS 1301

CRN:11527

Time/Days: **Tuesdays & Thursdays, 6:00 PM to 7:20 PM (1 hr and 20 min)**

Place: **UGCL 234**

### Instructor Information

Name: **Thomas Maldonado**

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Phone: **Via Blackboard messaging only**

Office Hours: **Thursdays from 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM in the UTEP Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor near the cubicles**

### 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

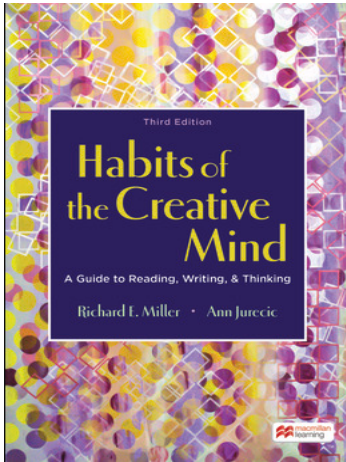
- Creating an infographic, PSA, or alternative visual project
- Presenting an infographic, PSA, or alternative visual project

### Required Texts & Materials



UTEP First-Year Composition Handbook, 2025-2027 edition.

An e-book available directly through [Redshelf.com](https://www.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

There are five major assignments for modules 1-5, all are considered **formal** assignments:

- Assignment #1: Taking Inventory
- Assignment #2: Autoethnographic Study of Self and Language Experience
- Assignment #3: Remixing the Self Study
- Assignment #4: Annotated Bibliography & Research Report
- Assignment #5: Visual Argument Presentation

In addition to these five formal assignments there are several **informal** assignments to complete. These are considered activity assignments that complement the topics for each week. They consist of:

- Reflection discussion board posts;
- Padlet posts;
- Reading responses (similar to a reflection DB post);
- Quizzes;
- And other miscellaneous activities.


Details for all assignments in each module can be found on Blackboard under the weekly folders.

**Grading:** I do not use points or percentages to assess your work. My grading system is based on labor-based grading or grading based on the amount of work you choose to do to earn a letter grade. Everyone starts the semester with a B and has the choice to do the assignments to maintain the B or the option to obtain an A by completing one additional writing assignment.

### *Understanding Your Grades*

There are four color-coded tiers used in the grading scheme for RWS 1301 based on the labor of your writing and work commitment.

Complete	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>10 / 10</b></p> <p>A perfectly completed assignment (formal or informal) receives a 'complete' mark color-coded bright green.</p>
Revise & Resubmit	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6 / 10</b></p> <p>Any assignment that receives a 'revise and resubmit' (formal or informal) needs to be revised and then re-uploaded in Bb. You have 48 hours to revise and resubmit the assignment or it will become a 'missing/incomplete' with no opportunity for a make-up. Be sure to read my feedback so you know what to revise in case you need to visit the Writing Center for assistance. A 'revise and resubmit' mark is color-coded orange.</p>
Late	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7 / 10</b></p>

	<p>An assignment (formal or informal) submitted after the due date will be marked 'late' color-coded yellow. You have 48 hours to submit the assignment. A 'late' submission always remains in late status even after you have submitted the assignment. I will not change it to a 'complete' status.</p>
<p>Missing / Incomplete</p>	<div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <p>An assignment (formal or informal) that is never submitted will be marked 'missing/incomplete' color-coded red. There is no make up for a missing or incomplete assignment after 48 hours.</p>

### Summary of Online Effort Required for Final Letter Grades

Final Course Grade	Effort Required
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2 or fewer late informal assignments</li> <li>● 2 missing/incomplete informal assignments</li> <li>● 1 late/missing/incomplete formal assignment</li> <li>● All of the "B" grade requirements, <b>plus</b> one supplemental A grade assignment (from the A.1 to A.4 list) completed by the due dates on Blackboard.</li> </ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 4 or fewer late informal assignments</li> <li>● 3 or fewer missing/incomplete informal assignments</li> <li>● 2 late/missing/incomplete formal assignments</li> <li>● All of the "B" grade requirements</li> </ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 5 or fewer late informal assignments</li> <li>● 4 or fewer missing/incomplete informal assignments</li> <li>● 3 late formal assignments</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 missing/incomplete formal assignments</li> </ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 or more late informal assignments</li> <li>• 5 or more missing/incomplete informal assignments</li> <li>• 4 or more late formal assignments</li> <li>• 4 or more missing/incomplete formal assignments</li> </ul>
F	<b>Attendance</b> – Stopped logging into Bb and/or turning in online work.

For a more detailed explanation of my grading system and the A option assignment, please see the 'Labor-Based Grading Instructions RWS 1301 TMaldonado' document under the "Syllabus & Labor-Based Grading" folder in Blackboard's course content section.

In order to pass RWS 1301, you must obtain a C or above.

### 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:** It is important to submit work before deadlines for full credit and feedback. See the 'Course Assignments and Grading' section in this syllabus for how I grade late work.

**Participation:**

Classroom participation involves the following:

- 1- Participating in classroom discussions whether digital or in class;
- 2- Engaging in classroom activities, peer reviews, and exercises with your peers and instructor;
- 3- Being cordial, respectful, and kind to your peers and instructor.

Classroom participation is **not**:

- 1- Being on your cellphone texting or watching videos with your headphones on while class is in session;
- 2- Working on assignments from other classes during class time;
- 3- Refusing to participate in peer reviews with partners or groups;
- 4- Holding sidebar conversations with your peers instead of listening to your instructor.

Self-regulating techniques like doodling or deep breathing are encouraged so long as it keeps you engaged with the class and helps you stay calm.

**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, antisemitic, 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.

### **University and Program Policies**

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

Please consult UTEP's [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](#) for more information regarding Excused Absences for University-Recognized Activities, Absence for Religious Holy Days, and Military Leave.

Attendance is mandatory for all freshman-level courses. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate in discussions and workshops. In addition, the First-Year Composition Program has developed the following policies that should be adhered to strictly by all instructors:

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

- After 2 total weeks of absence (not necessarily consecutive classes) the student's grade is lowered by a full letter (A becomes B, etc.).
- After 3 total weeks of absence (not necessarily consecutive), the student is automatically dropped from the class.
- Missing a scheduled conference with the instructor constitutes an absence.

**For Hybrid Classes:** The attendance policy for hybrid courses aligns with the structure for face-to-face courses with each missed weekly class meeting constituting absence from a week of class.

- The program recommends that the student contact the instructor to discuss the attendance policy and how it applies in cases in which it is not possible to attend a weekly class meeting, while continuing to maintain robust participation in class activities. [see also online courses]

**For Online Classes:** In an online class, attendance is measured by participation in class activities. The attendance policy for online courses aligns with the structure for face-to-face courses, with each missed week of class activities constituting absence from a week of class.

- The instructor can measure participation through various pathways, such as completion of scaffolded activities and discussion posts, and responding to other students' posts and

feedback. We also recommend measuring course activity by using the Course Reports feature on Blackboard, particularly the Course Activity Overview.

- When it becomes evident that it is not possible to participate in class, the program recommends that the student contact the instructor to discuss the attendance policy and how it applies, before resuming robust participation in class activities.

**Drop Policy:** If you cannot complete this course for whatever reason, please contact your instructor ahead of the course drop deadline. Your instructor can help you with the drop process or you can contact the Registrar's Office. If you do not drop, you are at risk of being dropped by the instructor and possibly receiving an "F" for the course.

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

The First-Year Composition Program fundamentally trusts its students and strives to create dynamic classroom experiences and writing opportunities rooted in the values of inquiry and critical thinking. We agree deeply with Anna R. Mills' (2023) claim, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, that "writing practice continues to be intensely rewarding for students and central to intellectual growth in college."

Because of the rapid pace of change represented by ChatGPT and other Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs, it is necessary to set clear program standards regarding their use in our classes. Specifically,

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

By this standard, an **appropriate use** of ChatGPT (or any AI 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 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](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.

**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](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

### 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="#">Health and Wellness Center</a> studenthealth@utep.edu
UTEP Police Department	915-747-5611	<a href="#">UTEP Police</a> police@utep.edu
Counseling and Psychological Services	915-747-5302	<a href="#">Counseling Services</a> caps@utep.edu

### Academic Calendar

#### Fall 2025

<b>Aug 25th</b>	<i>Fall classes begin</i>
<b>Sept 1st</b>	<i>Labor Day holiday - University Closed</i>
<b>Sept 10th</b>	Fall Census Day Note: This is the last day to register for classes. Payments are due by 5:00 pm.
<b>Oct 22nd</b>	<i>Freshman Midterm grades are due</i>
<b>Oct 31st</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 27-28th</b>	Thanksgiving Holiday - University Closed
<b>Dec 4th</b>	<i>Fall last day of classes</i>
<b>Dec 5th</b>	<i>Dead Day</i>
<b>Dec 8-12th</b>	<i>Fall Final Exams</i>

### Course Schedule

The weekly folders in Blackboard provide you with specific activities and assignments of our course schedule.