Course Overview

Welcome to English 131: Rhetoric and Composition, the first part of the composition sequence at SFA. This class is intended to develop your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills through various types of assignments while exploring issues both current and meaningful.

More specifically, you will develop various skills central to thoughtful, precise writing, including description, comparison and contrast, analysis / critique, and synthesis. Other equally crucial skills to successful writing and communication this course emphasizes is careful editing, proofreading, and revision.

The ability to communicate ideas and information effectively to an audience is a highly valued skill across many disciplines and professions. Rather than think of this course as a core requirement, then, think of this course as a requirement for your future.
How to Take this Course

Like life, you will get out of this course what you put into it. Put another way, think about this course as operating on three levels. Now, as a former food service worker, in thinking about those three levels, I immediately thought of a busy restaurant kitchen with kitchen staff working to fill customer orders. I would like you to imagine those staff and ask yourself: "Which one am I?"

DISHWASHER/PREP COOK: You only need surface-level knowledge of the basics of good writing.

It's fine if you want to stay away from the heat of the kitchen and keep things simple, especially if English is not your strongest subject.

The "Dishwasher/Prep Cook" is mainly concerned with WHAT rules need to be followed for each particular writing assignment.

LINE COOK: You have a grasp of the basics of good writing, and are ready to write more critically, tackling more complex subjects and forms. In other words, you're ready to start cooking.

Perhaps you are an English or Creative Writing major, or in a discipline that requires a lot of writing, so you know that you will need to tackle trickier "recipes" to get the most out of this class.

"Line Cooks" already understand the basics and want to explore HOW to make their writing more polished and thoughtful.

HEAD COOK: You want to write at a high level, using the tools of a sophisticated writer and critical thinker to write challenging, exceptional essays.

You have lots of experience writing essays. You know that good writing takes both planning and practice. You actively seek ways to push your writing further. Basically, you're ready to write your own recipes using the skills you have mastered.

"Head Cooks" tend to be curious thinkers, good at improvising and working with various materials. They are invested in writing as a lifelong skill. They are concerned with HOW to use writing to advance them both academically and professionally.
Course Policies

Attendance/Lateness Policy: In an online class, students can’t be late, but they can, in a sense, be “absent” by not regularly logging in (I recommend logging in everyday or at least every other day). Long stretches away from an online course means you fall behind on work, most of which cannot be made up, so be present, and log in regularly.

Academic Dishonesty/Integrity: The university policy on academic integrity can be found at: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp.

These are the penalties for plagiarism in this course: for the first offense, you will receive a zero for the paper and be reported to the appropriate dean for this academic offense; and for the second offense, you will receive a failing grade for the course, and be reported to the appropriate dean of students for this academic offense.

Late Work Policy: Students are allowed to turn in one revision draft late. I define a paper as “late” if it is submitted one hour after the official deadline for the paper. No papers will be accepted three days after the official deadline.

Disability Services: To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

"Remember that writing is a muscle, and that consistent training will improve it."

GRADING SCALE

A  An exceptional paper that meets all the requirements of the assignment as outlined in the assignment guidelines. Such a paper has a clearly stated, sophisticated, and insightful thesis statement. Supporting paragraphs are thoughtful and well-supported; transitions between ideas and paragraphs are smooth; and there are few to no grammatical errors.

B+  A superior paper that meets all the requirements of the assignment. Thesis statement is clear, but lacks the critical sophistication of an "A" paper. Paragraphs are nicely developed and supported; transitions between ideas and paragraphs are generally smooth; and there are few grammatical / mechanical errors.

B  A strong paper that meets most to all of the requirements of the assignment; the thesis statement lacks the level of clarity and sophistication of the "A" and "B+" papers; paragraphs show attention to development, but not as consistently or as rigorously as "A" or "B+" papers; smooth transitions between ideas and paragraphs are present in places, but not consistent; and there are several grammatical / mechanical errors.

C+  A good paper that meets a large number of the requirements of the assignment; the thesis is awkwardly constructed and somewhat lacking in critical depth; paragraphs are fairly developed but could use more support or development; transitions are abrupt or in some places non-existent; and there are several grammatical / mechanical errors.

C  An average paper that meets most of the requirements of the assignment; the thesis is identifiable, but its claim is vague, observational, or underdeveloped and is too informal in its construction and critical thinking; paragraphs show some development, but not as much as a "C+" paper; transitions are hard to find between ideas and paragraphs; and there are multiple grammatical / mechanical errors.

D+  A mediocre paper that meets only one or two of the requirements of the assignment; there is no discernible thesis statement; supporting paragraphs are underdeveloped and unfocused; the paragraphs lack structure and critical development; transitions are absent; the introduce and conclusion are awkwardly constructed and do not provide adequate setup or closure to the paper; and there are many grammatical errors.

D  A poor paper that does not meet the requirements of the assignment; the thesis statement is not identifiable; supporting paragraphs are underdeveloped and unfocused; there are no transitions to move from idea to idea or paragraph to paragraph; the introduction and conclusion are hard to follow, have no clear purpose or direction; and the paper has serious sentence structure issues as well as many grammatical errors.

F  Does not meet any of the requirements as a whole or those for the introduction and conclusion; the paper has no discernible main idea; paragraphs are short and undeveloped; the paper lacks focus; and there are serious sentence issues and grammatical errors throughout the paper.
A writing course emphasizes writing as a process, which means that you will be expected to produce multiple drafts of each writing assignment, with the final product reflecting thoughtful revision, editing, and proofreading. You will write the equivalent of 20 pages over the course of the term. You will need to put in consistent effort throughout the semester. You will need to participate in class, and not passively observe, in order to actively learn. Remember: learning is not a spectator sport.

**Miscellaneous Exercises (12.5%)**: Comprised of group exercises, small writing exercises, and other assignments using the course discussion board and Dropbox. Exercises done in class cannot be made up. (Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork)

**Microthemes (22.5%)**: Three small in-class essays responding to three issues informing higher education, reinforcing close reading skills, focused thesis development, concise writing, and critical thinking. (Critical Thinking, Communication, Personal Responsibility)

**Summary, Personal Response, and Critique Portfolio (25%)**: The first assignment in this course is a portfolio comprised of summary and personal response paragraphs, and a short critique paper, all addressing the issue of cultural appropriation. These distinct writing assignments reinforce close reading skills, concise writing, and critical thinking. (Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork)

**Comparative Article Analysis (20%)**: The second essay of the course is a 3-4 page essay that compares and contrasts two articles that examine the same issue/problem. The goal of the essay is twofold: 1) to identify the most significant and meaningful points of similarity/difference and agreement/disagreement between the two articles; and 2) to explain the larger meaning or significance of the points of similarity/difference and agreement/disagreement between the articles. (Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork)

**Visual Rhetorical Analysis (20%)**: The third essay of the course is a 3-4 page essay that analyzes the various rhetorical strategies employed by a visual, such as a political cartoon, advertisement, or commercial. Students will apply what they have learned about the rhetorical situation, the rhetorical appeals, and audience to construct an essay that engages in careful analysis and critical thinking. (Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork)

**ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES**

**SUMMARY DRAFT**: 9/18  
**PERSONAL RESPONSE DRAFT**: 9/23  
**CRITIQUE DRAFT**: 9/27  
**COMPLETED PORTFOLIO**: 10/2  
**COMPARATIVE ARTICLE ANALYSIS DRAFT**: 10/24  
**REVISED DRAFT**: 10/30  
**VISUAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS DRAFT #1**: 11/25  
**DRAFT #2**: 12/2  
**REVISED DRAFT**: 12/11

**MICROTHEME #1**: 9/11  
**MICROTHEME #2**: 10/8  
**MICROTHEME #3**: 11/4
## CONCISE COURSE CALENDAR

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>W1</td>
<td>8/26-8/31</td>
<td>Introductory Module and Module One</td>
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<tr>
<td>W2</td>
<td>9/1-9/7</td>
<td>Module One &amp; Begin Module Two</td>
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<tr>
<td>W3</td>
<td>9/8-9/14</td>
<td>Complete Module Two &amp; Begin Module Three</td>
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<tr>
<td>W4</td>
<td>9/15-9/21</td>
<td>Continue with Module Three</td>
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<tr>
<td>W5</td>
<td>9/22-9/28</td>
<td>Continue with Module Three</td>
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<tr>
<td>W6</td>
<td>9/29-10/5</td>
<td>Finish Module 3 and Begin Module 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>W7</td>
<td>10/6-10/13</td>
<td>Finish Module 4 and Begin Module 5</td>
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<td>W8</td>
<td>10/14-10/19</td>
<td>Continue Module 5</td>
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<td>W9</td>
<td>10/20-10/26</td>
<td>Continue Module 5</td>
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<td>W10</td>
<td>10/27-11/2</td>
<td>Finish Module 5 and Begin Module 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>W11</td>
<td>11/3-11/9</td>
<td>Finish Module 6 and Begin Module 7</td>
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<td>W12</td>
<td>11/10-11/16</td>
<td>Continue Module 7</td>
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<td>W13</td>
<td>11/17-11/23</td>
<td>Continue Module 7</td>
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<td>W14</td>
<td>11/24-11/30</td>
<td>Continue Module 7 / THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>W15</td>
<td>12/1-12/7</td>
<td>Finish Module 7 and Final Essay/Writing Review Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W16</td>
<td>12/8-12/11</td>
<td>FINAL ESSAYS DUE / COURSE ENDS</td>
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CORE OBJECTIVES AND PROGRAM OUTCOMES

General Education Core Curriculum Objectives: As part of the communication component area, in any given semester one or more of the following Core Curriculum Objectives for English 131 may be assessed:

Critical Thinking: creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
Communication: effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.
Teamwork: the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.
Personal Responsibility: the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

English Program Learning Outcomes

This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in the course.

English 131 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of English 131, the students should have:

1. Ability to show appropriate acquisition of CORE objective 1 skills. Students in composition courses make application of these skills in the writing of personal, expository, and persuasive essays, which require students to make inquiries into and explorations of topics in creative, innovative, or analytical ways. Students are expected to complete readings, to engage in course group discussions, and to analyze, interpret and synthesize their findings resultant from these critical engagements into well-developed essays. Written assignments will evidence the students’ command of these considerations: effective engagement of audience (pathos), logical development of ideas (logos), and effective use of examples, expertise, or insight (ethos).

2. Ability to show appropriate acquisition of CORE objective 2 skills. These skills include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication. Following instruction about group interaction, students will engage in oral communication through class discussions and group work (orally in face-to-face courses, electronically in online courses). Students will have occasion to respond to visual medium, as found in assigned readings, lectures, power-point presentations, or other media dependent upon course materials. Students learn processes for writing that help them to form coherent, well-developed, well-organized and unified discussions through a variety of writing methodologies, including personal, expository, and persuasive methodologies. Students will write at least four essays in composition courses, and rubrics will assess such concerns as development and exploration, mechanical clarity, and interpretation or expression of ideas.
3. Ability to show appropriate acquisition of CORE objective 3 skills. These skills include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal. Following instructions about peer review processes and small group work, students will perform peer mentorship on essay assignments and work together on group projects, which may include collaborative writing occasions, group presentations, or panel discussions. As peer review is the common teamwork experience, students will be required to share potentially diverse ideas with one another, to address those views in appropriate ways, and to help one another to finalize essays for submission.

4. Ability to show appropriate acquisition of CORE objective 4 skills. These skills include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making. Students will have opportunity to examine numerous readings, including essays written by classmates, to examine the credibility and value of those readings, and to understand how expository methodologies bear responsibility and consequence.