

ENGL 1302

Composition II

Welcome to 1302!

Hi, everyone! Welcome to our class. Before we get started, I want to share with you the College of Arts and Science's land acknowledgment. If you aren't familiar with them, land acknowledgements are formal statements that both recognize and show respect for the Indigenous Peoples who are the traditional stewards of the land you are on. The statements are a small step toward reconciliation with Indigenous communities for the injustices those communities have experienced.

Here's the statement. Please read it with compassion, open-mindedness, and respect:

We acknowledge the land we are on, the Yanaguana, named for the life-giving waters of the San Antonio River. Indigenous peoples have lived in this area for approximately ten thousand years, and this long, rich history deserves telling. We pay respect to the elders past and present and future, and the many Indigenous people here today, including the Tap Pilam Coahuiltecan Nation and the Esto'k Gna/Carrizo-Comecrudo Nation. We recognize this region as home to the Payaya, Coahuilteca, Lipan Apache, and Comanche, as well as other diasporic peoples from Mexico, the Southern Plains, and the Eastern United States. A growing number of American Indians from a range of nations live here now, as Texas has the fourth largest population of American Indians in the United States. We thank the protectors of this land we all share.

Founded to serve the city's historically under-resourced and predominantly Mexican American Southside, Texas A&M University-San Antonio is situated on or near the ranchlands of the Mission San Francisco de la Espada and Mission San Antonio de Valero. We acknowledge the physical and cultural violence of colonialism as well as the vast contributions of Indigenous people to San Antonio. Indigenous peoples built and sustained the San Antonio area mission communities, and many of their descendants continue to maintain the vibrancy of these communities. We acknowledge the complex history of the U.S. university system, which has expanded access to education but which has also profited from the dispossession of Indigenous land and from the labor of enslaved people. In the face of this history, we commit to decolonial work and to accountability, dialogue, and collaboration that honors the Indigenous ancestry of this land and its inhabitants. We pledge to learn about and act in solidarity with Indigenous struggles for social justice.

Thank you all for taking the time read the land acknowledgement. I appreciate it.

So let's get started. [CONSIDER ADDING A BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF YOURSELF HERE].

Here's an example of what this could look like:

My name is Scott Gage—better known as “Dr. Gage”—and I'm thrilled to be working with you this semester. I truly believe writing and communicating are some of the most important and powerful things we do as people, and I've dedicated my life to helping students grow and learn as writers. I promise to do my best to help you this semester.

A bit more about me: I'm originally from South Louisiana (Lafayette, LA to be exact), but I came to San Antonio from Colorado. I've been living here for eight years now, and I really like the city—the food, the vibe. I also like how family-friendly San Antonio is. I have two young daughters, and there's always something for us to do here. My only complaint about the city (and it's a small one): I've yet to find a good Cajun restaurant. Thankfully, I know how to cook a few Cajun dishes, so I'm still getting that bit of home. I feel like there's a lot left for me to learn about San Antonio, and I look forward to doing that in the years to come.

Course FAQ

There are a lot of questions you probably have about our course right now, so let me do my best to answer them. If I don't answer a question you have, and/or if I don't answer a question in a way that's helpful, please let me know.

What am I reading here?

This is called a syllabus, or a course policy sheet. You're likely familiar with syllabi by now, but here's a bit more about them in case you're not: A syllabus describes the course you're about to take and outlines what you can expect from the course and your professor. (It also outlines what your professor will expect from you.) One way of thinking about a syllabus: it's an agreement between you and your professor. Another way of thinking about it: it's a guide to the course. If you ever have questions about a class you're taking, you can always ask your professor. You can also check the syllabus.

What is this class?

Good question. ENGL 1302 is the second of two courses you'll take in the First-Year Composition (FYC) program (the first was ENGL 1301). This class is intended to help you develop your abilities to make effective rhetorical/linguistic choices when you write and communicate. It does so in a particular way: it examines the ways and reasons language is judged, and it asks you to consider the ways you can effectively respond to linguistic judgment when writing and communicating. Please see the course description below for more information.

Why do I have to take this class?

Another good question. In short: it's a requirement, just like ENGL 1301. But why is it a requirement? Writing and communicating are fundamental to who you are: you're always doing it, both with words and with other forms of communication. (This, by the way, means you are a writer.)

Because you're always communicating, it's important that you do it well, especially as a college student (you're going to do a lot of writing in college). This class helps you to be a better writer.

What will I learn?

This one's a little hard to answer. Writing and communication are messy, complex, and individual, which means that what you learn will depend on where you are as a writer/communicator right now and what you and I think you need to learn to take the next step in your journey. While your learning this semester may be a bit individual to you,

there's one thing I hope you and your classmates will learn: how to make strategic and ethical choices when writing and communicating.

What work will I have to do?

We're going to do a lot of writing this semester. Mostly what's called "low stakes" writing. But there is one "high stakes" project you'll need to complete: a digital writing portfolio. We'll talk more about that in class. For now, you should know that's the one big project you'll work on all semester. You should also know you'll complete a lot of smaller writing assignments to build your portfolio. Specifically, I'll ask you to write the following:

- 2 unit assignments (drafts and at least one revision)
- 4 labor journals
- 6 Writing Tasks
- in-class writing exercises as assigned

I'll also ask you to complete weekly Reading Notes and Labor Logs. I'll give you all more information about these assignments later.

In addition to writing a lot, we're also going to read a lot. Each week I'll ask you to "read" one or two, sometimes more, pieces. These pieces may be academic articles, they may be spoken word performances, they may be personal essays, etc. The readings will inform and support the work we do as writers.

Is there a textbook?

No, there's no textbook for this class. I'll provide all of the readings through Blackboard.

Because we're using Blackboard, and because you're creating a digital portfolio, you'll need to make sure you have reliable Internet access. If that's a problem for you, let me know (if you feel comfortable letting me know), and we can figure out some solutions.

How will I be graded?

I have a lot of concerns about the "conventional" ways writing gets graded. I won't get into all of that now (but I will soon). In the meantime, you should know that I use what's called labor-based grading. We'll talk about labor-based grading in class, especially when we review our grading contract. For now, it's enough to know that labor-based grading grades you on how hard you work.

What is a "Writing Community," and why do I need to join one?

As in ENGL 1301, I'm asking you and your classmates to work together this semester in groups I'm calling "Writing Communities." Sure, you may write on your own. For example, you might sit down and put words on the page or screen on your own. But you don't succeed as a writer on your own. For that to happen, you need an audience who cares about you and your work to read and to respond to your work. That's how you learn as a writer. That's how you make improvements as a writer. And that's how you make something you're writing the best it can be. Your Writing Community will be that audience. They'll read your work, give you helpful feedback, and support you along the way. They'll also work with you to understand our readings and to complete in-class exercises.

To succeed as writers—and, honestly, to succeed as students—we need a group of supportive people behind us. Your Writing Community is one of those groups.

Again, if there are any questions you have that I didn't answer, and/or if any of my answers don't make sense, please let me know as soon as you can. Thanks, y'all!

Course Description

I provided a brief description of our course in the FAQs section above. But here's a more formal description of the class:

ENGL 1302 supports students in their development as critical language users. Building on and extending the examination of students' languaging started in ENGL 1301, the course examines the contexts and ideologies that produce judgments about students' language use. Students research topics such as standard language ideology; analyze and debate argumentative texts; and develop their abilities to make conscious, strategic, and ethical linguistic choices when writing and communicating. Students also produce the final version of their digital writing portfolios.

FYC Faculty Commitments

And now here's more information about the FYC program, who we are, and what we're trying to achieve, starting with FYC faculty commitments.

Those of us who teach in the FYC program are deeply committed both to supporting you in your journey as a writer/communicator and to fostering welcoming spaces where you can feel comfortable learning about writing/communication and language (even when we have uncomfortable conversations and/or debates). To help us work toward creating those kinds of spaces, FYC faculty share a responsibility to:

- Celebrate and validate students' language practices
- Encourage linguistic diversity and resist Standard Language Ideology
- Privilege cultural knowledge and provide opportunities to connect it to course content
- Center intersectional understandings of identity and writing practices
- Collaborate with students with care and compassion

FYC Program Goals

What's a goal? It's something specific that gives you focus and direction that you're working hard to achieve. You likely have individual goals you're trying to achieve this semester both as a student and as a writer (if you don't have goals right now, we'll work together to develop them). I also have goals I'm trying to achieve as an individual teacher, and those goals are different with every semester and every class. I'll share my goals with you all in class.

In addition to the individual goals I have, I'm also working to achieve the goals of the FYC program. This means that all of the work I do with you this semester is geared toward achieving the program's goals. Those goals are as follows:

- Increasing students' confidence as writers and communicators
- Helping students to see themselves as writers
- Cultivating students' sense of belonging as writers

- Increasing students' appreciation of their languaging
- Fostering students' rhetorical awareness
- Increasing students' self-determination and resilience as writers
- Inspiring creativity, risk-taking, and versatility in student writing
- Fostering students' introspection and self-awareness as writers
- Increasing students' skills and engagement as readers
- Strengthening students' critical language awareness

I promise to work toward each of those goals in everything I do with and for you all this semester.

FYC Key Terms

You're going to hear and see me use a particular set of terms this semester every time I communicate with you all about both reading and writing. Those terms are FYC's "key terms," and they represent the most important concepts we'd like you to learn in our FYC classes. I ask you to become familiar with these terms so that you understand what I'm saying to you all as we talk about your languaging and writing/communication this semester.

Here are the terms:

- *Languaging*: the ongoing process of developing and communicating meaning and ideas
- *Translanguaging*: the ability to fluidly access and use one's full linguistic repertoire
- *Standard Language Ideology*: the belief that a language has an ideal, consistent, and "correct" form that should be privileged
- *Critical Language Awareness*: the ability to examine and understand the social, political, and ideological aspects of language and communication
- *Rhetorical Awareness*: the ability to assess context and make intentional choices when communicating
- *Audience*: the person or people a text is intended to affect
- *Purpose*: the intended effect or impact of a text
- *Genre*: a specific type or form of writing/communication that is shaped by social convention and audience expectation
- *Context*: the social, historical, and cultural circumstances in which texts are read and composed
- *Reflection*: the act of examining and learning from one's actions, experiences, and writing

Course Policies

As I wrote above, this course is part of the FYC program. This program has a few policies that I'll follow this semester, so I want to make sure you're aware of them. One of the policies involves plagiarism, one involves attendance, one involves diversity, and one involves AI programs such as ChatGPT.

Plagiarism

We recognize that what constitutes plagiarism depends upon context. As such, we work with you to learn how different genres, professions, and academic disciplines define

plagiarism. In the context of your FYC classes, plagiarism is defined as the intentional use of another's "language, ideas, or original (not common-knowledge) material" without acknowledgement ("Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism"). If you are found to have committed plagiarism as defined here, your instructor may report you for academic dishonesty, and you may be subject to failing the assignment or even failing the class.

Attendance

Your success and development as a writer depends upon your active participation within a community of writers. The health and success of that community, in turn, depends upon the active participation of all of its members. Consistent attendance in your FYC classes is, therefore, crucial. If you are struggling to attend class this semester, we urge you to communicate with your FYC instructor, who will work with you to negotiate a plan for attending, participating in, and completing the class.

Classroom Inclusion

We are committed to fostering inclusive classroom environments where diverse backgrounds and perspectives are not only respected and understood, but are also recognized as powerful resources for building communities of writers both in the classroom and across campus. While working with classmates and instructors, we ask that you:

- respectfully share your unique experiences and perspectives
- demonstrate respect for and openness to the perspectives and experiences of others
- value the opportunity to learn from difference

Demonstrating respect for those different from you not only prepares you for success in the classroom, but it also prepares you for success as citizens and professionals in a global community.

Because we value the respectful expression and exchange of ideas, students who use violent, harassing, and/or discriminatory language, including, but not limited to, sexist, racist, homophobic, classist, ableist, and/or anti-ethnic language, will be reported to the university and may be subject to Student Code of Conduct policies.

GAI Technology

The FYC program expects you to generate your own content this semester. However, there are situations and contexts within our courses where you may use generative artificial intelligence (GAI) tools to support your work as a writer. For example, GAI technologies such as ChatGPT can work well as a starting point for written assignments, assisting you with brainstorming, outlining, generating ideas, and collecting basic information about a topic/idea. Note that the emphasis here is on "support." GAI programs have been shown to provide biased information, to circulate misinformation, and to generate writing that is, at best, mediocre. For these reasons, FYC discourages you from using GAI technology to generate content **for you**. If you have reason to use GAI to generate content **with you**, then we ask that you consult with your professor before doing so. If your professor approves your use, you should acknowledge the GAI program you have used, and you should identify which portions of the text you submit were produced by GAI. Using GAI content without your professor's permission and/or without proper attribution qualifies as plagiarism.

In addition to the FYC policies, I have a few additional policies you need to know about.

[PLEASE INCLUDED ANY OF YOUR OWN COURSE POLICIES HERE.]

University Policies

The university also has policies we'll all need to follow this semester. Here they are:

[PLEASE INCLUDE ALL UNIVERSITY POLICIES REQUIRED FOR OUR SYLLABI.]

Student Services and Support

Being a college student is hard. You're taking a bunch of different classes that are asking you to complete a bunch of different work, often at the same time. You're trying to balance that work with other responsibilities you might have like a job (or two or three), like family. And you're doing all of that while you may be struggling with some real issues involving mental health, food insecurity, academic success, etc. It's not easy, I know. Thankfully, you don't have to handle all of that on your own. The university provides important services that can help you make it as a student. Please check out the list below, and please reach out to any that you might need. There's no shame in getting help.

[PLEASE INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT/STATEMENTS FROM ALL STUDENT SERVICES SUCH AS THE COUNSELING CENTER, GENERAL'S STORE, THE WLDCC, ETC.]

Final Note

I really am committed to you and your success, so please know that I'm part of the team rooting you on. This means you can reach out to me any time you have a question or a concern. It also means you can reach out to me if you ever feel like you're falling behind. Let me know if that's happening as soon as you can, and we can work together to figure out how to get you where you want to be. You can also let me know if you're finding any parts of our class exciting or interesting. In other words, you don't just have to reach out if you're having trouble. I want you to succeed as a writer this semester, and I'm going to do what I can to help make that happen.