

Course Information

Semester & Year: Fall 2019
Course ID & Section #: English 1A-V8663
Instructor's name: Ruth Rhodes
Day/Time or *Online: Online
Location or *Online: Online
Number of units: 4

Instructor Contact Information

Office location or *Online: CA 132
Office hours: Fridays, 11am-12pm in Creative Arts 134, or by appointment
Phone number:
Email address: ruth-rhodes@redwoods.edu

Required Materials

Textbook Title: They Say, I Say (4E)
Edition: 4 th
Author: Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein
ISBN-13: 978-0393631678
Other requirements: Notebook or Desktop computer, word processing software with grammar/spell checker, video camera, high-speed internet access

Catalog Description

This is an introductory course that offers instruction in expository and argumentative writing, close reading, cogent thinking, research strategies, information literacy, appropriate and effective use of language, and documentation.

Primary Focus

In this class, we will read, take notes on, and discuss diverse and engaging readings. You will identify interesting questions at issue—questions where there is significant disagreement—questions you think are worth exploring—and write essays trying to answer those questions. Over the course of the semester, our readings will focus on three different themes, which we will explore one at a time:

1. Why can't we see eye-to-eye in America?
2. What is the value of a college education?
3. How is modern technology affecting our brains?

Course Student Learning Outcomes *(from course outline of record)*

1. Demonstrate the capacity to read, analyze and evaluate non-fiction texts in support of academic inquiry and argumentation.
2. Utilize flexible strategies for writing expository and argumentative college-level essays.
3. Incorporate primary and secondary sources into essays using appropriate documentation format.

Evaluation & Grading Policy

Possible grades: A (100-90%) / B (89-80%) / C (79-70%) / D (69-60%) / F (59-0%)

You will complete two categories of assignments, **Critical Practices** (30% of your grade) and **Essays** (70% of your grade). These assignment categories are explained further on in this document.

Contract Grading

I've been teaching for nearly twenty years. I've observed that grading and the obsession with grades by both teachers and students is a distraction from real learning.

It's a systemic problem. We've been trained to accept the idea that grades directly reflect learning. But grades aren't a direct reflection of learning, and we know they aren't. We just pretend they are.

Think about it. Some students earn high grades, not because they learned something in class, but because they entered class already possessing a high level of skill. Other students—bright and hardworking—learn a tremendous amount in a short time, but their grades in the class remain low because they're still catching up in some ways. Still, other students, ones who often start out with the best intentions, cut corners and skip assignments when they perceive those assignments won't affect their grade and even when they know the assigned work will help them develop skills.¹

So, this semester I'm going to use a system called **contract grading**. I didn't make it up. It's been around a long time.² Essentially, you decide what grade you want, and then you do the work required for that grade.

In this class, you earn points for assignments you complete. Canvas tracks your grades for you. My mathematical grading system is designed to fulfill the contract, but if there is a discrepancy between your numerical grade and your actual performance in the contract, **let me know before the end of the semester, and I will enter the *higher* of the two grades on your official transcript.**

So, for the grade you want, try not to focus on your numerical grade. Focus on meeting the *descriptors* below:

¹ People often characterize these students as "lazy." Sometimes that's true, but most of the time, these folks have complex lives and are merely making strategic trade-offs.

² If you're interested in entering the field of education and you want to follow the trail of my thinking, check out this blog in the Chronicle of Higher Education by Billie Hara called "Contract Grading": <https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/using-grading-contracts/25916>

How to Earn an A

Earn 90-100% on your Canvas assignments or...

1. Earn at least **90% on the critical practices**
2. Complete **all essay assignments**
3. Revise to “Pass” any essay “Not Yet Passing”
4. Earn “High Pass” on **two out of three** papers

How to Earn a B

Either earn 80%-89% on your Canvas assignments or...

1. Earn at least **90% on the critical practices**
2. Complete **all essay assignments**
3. Pass and/or revise to passing Essays 1 and 2; pass Essay 3

How to Earn a C

Either earn 70%-79% on your Canvas assignments or...

1. Earn at least **80% on the critical practices**
2. Complete **all essay assignments**
3. Pass and/or revise to passing at least two out of three essays

How to Earn a D

Earn between 60-69% on your Canvas assignments or...

1. Earn at least **70% on the critical practices**
2. Complete **all essay assignments**

Critical Practices (30% of total grade)

One of our course learning outcomes in this class is to “demonstrate the capacity to read, analyze and evaluate non-fiction texts in support of academic inquiry and argumentation.” To build these skills and, in turn, to write strong essays you will engage in “critical practices”:

- Writing critical notes on readings
- Taking quizzes to test your level of engagement
- Participating in discussions to encourage and support deeper analysis
- Generating pre-writing materials like outlines and mind maps to organize your ideas
- Completing essay reflections that analyze and evaluate how successful you were

When it comes to critical practices, you receive **full credit** as long as you meet the assignment requirements. In other words, I don't *grade* critical practices them as much as *check* to make sure they are complete and submitted on time.

Critical practices **cannot be turned in late**, so keep the due dates in mind; don't wait until the last minute to submit an assignment. It will close automatically if you miss the deadline. Always check to make sure your

work uploaded properly. I will open assignments early, so if you plan to be away from a computer for more than a week, in most cases, you can complete your work in advance of the deadlines.

Essays (70% of total grade)

You will write **three formal essays** in this class, each demonstrating your developing reading, writing, and thinking skills. Essays will be graded as either High Pass (100%), Pass (75%), or Not Yet Passing (50%).

Essays 1 is worth 20% of your total grade, Essay 2 is worth 20%, and Essay 3 is worth 30%.

A detailed [grading rubric](#) for the essays is available in the FILES section of Canvas. We'll discuss what makes a successful essay at length before and after each is due, and you will be provided with some examples which you might find helpful.

Late papers can be turned in up to **7 days** after the due date, but it will cost you: they are **not** eligible for revision. Because the term will have ended, Essay 3 cannot be turned in late.

Revisions (a.k.a. **rewrites**) are permitted for essays "not yet passing" and/or "not ready for submission." You are only eligible to submit a revision if you turn your essay in on time. Students have 1 week after receiving their grade to complete a revision of their essay. Grades will never go down with a rewrite, although they may not go up if they are not sufficiently revised in response to feedback. With a rewrite, you can earn up to a Pass (75%), but no higher. Because the term will have ended, Essay 3 cannot be revised.

Feedback: I will comment extensively on your essays, not just in the Canvas comment box, but on your document in bubbles. Seeing these comments requires you to click on the Assignment (in the GRADES or ASSIGNMENT section), and then VIEW FEEDBACK. Click the FULL SCREEN feature in the far right to expand the box so that my comments will appear in boxes on the right-hand side.

I agree that it's tricky and annoying getting to feedback in Canvas, but I can't find a workaround. I'm open to suggestions if you can think of a better way to present easy-to-find feedback to you.

[Prerequisites/co-requisites/ recommended preparation](#)

Placement into English 1A is determined according to the default AB 705 guidelines or the results of the guided self-placement process.

[Special Accommodations](#)

College of the Redwoods complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request at least one week before the first test so that necessary arrangements can be made. No last-minute arrangements or post-test adjustments will be made. If you have a disability or believe you might benefit from disability-related services and accommodations, please see me or contact [Disability Services and Programs for Students](#). Students may make requests for alternative media by contacting DSPS based on their campus location:

- Eureka: 707-476-4280, student services building, 1st floor
- Del Norte: 707-465-2324, main building near the library

Student Feedback

I generally work 8:30-4:30, Monday-Friday, and take holidays and weekends off. I try to avoid reading e-mail and text messages outside of work time. Like you, I have a life outside of work (in my case, four young children, dreams of being a novelist, and a writing consultancy in social justice comic books). I strive to create a balanced life. I find it rather daunting. I imagine this is true for you, too! That's why I have work time and non-work time.

However, I don't want to be inaccessible to those of you who can only do English 1A work on weekends. So let me know early in the semester, and we can find mutually agreeable times to communicate.

We're all taking a risk with online education. It's so different from traditional education in that communication—real communication—can be challenging. It's very important that instructors and students have regular, effective contact—and that there be meaningful and fulfilling communication between students, too. So here's my commitment to you when it comes to communication and feedback:

- Within the framework of my work schedule, **I will reply to your messages within 24 hours** (and probably sooner—I want to help you!).
- I will create **meaningful learning activities** that connect directly to the skills you will be learning in this class, with **real-time feedback** so you can see when you're making progress. No bull-sh*tty assignments. I swear.
- I will facilitate and monitor regular **threaded discussions** between students in both **small and big groups**, so you learn skills in a highly interactive and supportive cohort. If your group isn't work for you, let me know. We will probably rearrange the groups several times during the semester.
- I will **read and evaluate your critical practices within one week of submission, including your discussion posts**.
- I will grade your essays **within two weeks** of submission. That's a tall order for me this term because I will have three sections of English 1A (that's 84 students), but I think I can do it.
- Even though I'll build the course in advance of the semester, I'll chime in with **Weekly Announcements** that relate directly to the progress you've made as a class and the direction you're headed.
- I'll **adjust** elements of the class, syllabus, and schedule if they aren't working for some reason. You can e-mail me or send me a Canvas message if you don't think something is working, or you can make an anonymous online comment [through this link](#), also accessible in the Modules section of Canvas.
- To provide you with one-to-one and/or group support, I will **meet with you in person, on the phone, or through video conferencing** during office hours, or outside of office hours, including my weekends and holidays if necessary and if arranged in advance.

Proctored Exams

No proctoring is required in this class.

Student Accessibility Statement and Academic Support Information

These standards are required by federal regulation. Students will have access to this course that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and College of the Redwoods policies. Course materials will include a text equivalent for all non-text elements; videos will include closed captioning, images will include alt-tags, hyperlinks will use descriptive/meaningful phrases instead of URLs and audio files will include transcripts. All text will be formatted for use with screen readers and all course materials will be understandable without the use of color.

Students who discover access issues with this class should contact the instructor.

Admissions deadlines & enrollment policies

- *Last day to add a class: 8/23/19*
- *Last day to drop without a W and receive a refund:9/6/19*
- *Census date:9/9/19*
- *Last day to petition to graduate or apply for certificate:10/31/19*
- *Last day for student-initiated W (no refund):11/1/19*
- *Last day for faculty-initiated W (no refund): 11/1/19*
- *Veteran's Day (all campuses closed):11/11/19*
- *Fall break (no classes):11/25/19 – 11/30/19*
- *Thanksgiving (all campuses closed):11/28/19 – 11/29/19*
- *Final examinations:12/14/19 – 12/20/19*
- *Semester ends:12/20/19*
- *Grades available for transcript release: approximately 1/6/20*

Students who have experienced extenuating circumstances can complete & submit the **Excused Withdrawal Petition** to request an Excused Withdrawal (EW) grade instead of the current Withdrawal (W) or non-passing (D, F & NP) grades. The EW Petition is available from the Admissions and Records Forms Webpage. Supporting documentation is required.

Academic dishonesty

In the academic community, the high value placed on truth implies a corresponding intolerance of scholastic dishonesty. In cases involving academic dishonesty, determination of the grade and of the student's status in the course is left primarily to the discretion of the faculty member. In such cases, where the instructor determines that a student has demonstrated academic dishonesty, the student may receive a failing grade for the assignment and/or exam and may be reported to the Chief Student Services Officer or designee. The Student Code of Conduct ([AP 5500](#)) is available on the College of the Redwoods website. Additional information about the rights and responsibilities of students, Board policies, and administrative procedures is located in the [College Catalog](#) and on the [College of the Redwoods website](#).

Disruptive behavior

Student behavior or speech that disrupts the instructional setting will not be tolerated. Disruptive conduct may include but is not limited to: unwarranted interruptions; failure to adhere to instructor's directions; vulgar or obscene language; slurs or other forms of intimidation; and physically or verbally abusive behavior. In such

cases where the instructor determines that a student has disrupted the educational process, a disruptive student may be temporarily removed from class. In addition, the student may be reported to the Chief Student Services Officer or designee. The Student Code of Conduct ([AP 5500](#)) is available on the College of the Redwoods website. Additional information about the rights and responsibilities of students, Board policies, and administrative procedures is located in the [College Catalog](#) and on the [College of the Redwoods website](#).

Offensive Ideas

The personal beliefs and prejudices of fellow classmates can indeed be upsetting and offensive. It's true. As your instructor, my primary goal is to facilitate learning, and that includes monitoring discussions to ensure that we treat each other with respect, following the student Code of Conduct ([AP 5500](#)).

However, learning cannot happen in an environment where ideas cannot be spoken or freely "tried out." I will strive to protect free expression in this class, including speech that may be downright ignorant and offensive, as long as it does not violate the Code of Conduct.

As an educator, I see a trend in academic culture that sometimes privileges "safety from offensive ideas" over real discussion and debate. I do not believe in silencing ideas that might, for example, reflect racist or sexist or classist attitudes. Ideas need to be held up to the light of reason, not hidden away (especially wrong ones). How else can we grow our critical thinking skills?

In that same vein, side-stepping controversial ideas is counter-productive to student learning. It comes from the mistaken notion that students are weak-minded and cannot think their way towards what is reasonable. It also comes from the growing misconception that people who disagree with us ought to be framed as our adversaries. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are on the same journey here. As people in pursuit of education, all of us must constantly examine and reexamine those things we hold as true and right and good; it is part of the critical thinking process.

Expect to be introduced to new ways of seeing things in this class and in life, in general. Understand in advance that your ideas, values, and beliefs may be challenged in this class—in fact, ought to be challenged as part of the learning process.

Preferred Name in Canvas

I would like to address you as you would like to be addressed. Students have the ability to have an alternate first name and/or preferred pronoun appear in Canvas. Contact [Admissions & Records](#) to request a change. Your preferences will only be listed in Canvas. It does not change your legal records. See the [Student Information Update form](#).

I like to be called Professor Rhodes, but if you want to invent a nickname for me that is both dignified and approachable, by all means, do try to get a trend going! If you want to talk about me in the third person, she/her/hers work for me—or for the daring and who appreciate the literary reference—she who must be obeyed.

Canvas Information

Log into Canvas at <https://redwoods.instructure.com>

Password is your 6 digit birth date

For tech help, email its@redwoods.edu or call 707-476-4160

Student Support Services

The following online resources are available to support your success as a student:

- [CR-Online](#) (Comprehensive information for online students)
- [Library Articles & Databases](#)
- [Canvas help and tutorials](#)
- [Online Student Handbook](#)

[Counseling and Advising](#) offers academic support and includes academic advising and educational planning.

The Learning Resource Center includes the following resources for students

- [Academic Support Center](#) for instructional support, tutoring, learning resources, and proctored exams.
- [Library Services](#) to promote information literacy and provide organized information resources.
- Multicultural & Diversity Center [waiting for hyperlink and Mission]
- Math Lab & Drop-in Writing Center

Special programs also available for eligible students include

- [Extended Opportunity Programs & Services \(EOPS\)](#) provides financial assistance, support, and encouragement for eligible income disadvantaged students at all CR locations.
- The TRiO Student Success Program provides eligible students with a variety of services including trips to 4-year universities, career assessments, and peer mentoring. Students can apply for the program in [Eureka](#) or in [Del Norte](#)
- The [Veteran's Resource Center](#) supports and facilitates academic success for Active Duty Military, Veterans and Dependents attending CR through relational advising, mentorship, transitional assistance, and coordination of military and Veteran-specific resources.
- Klamath-Trinity students can contact the CR KT Office for specific information about student support services at 530-625-4821
- The [Honors Program](#) helps students succeed in transferring to a competitive four-year school.

Honors

If you are enrolled in the honors program, ask me about taking English 1A for honors credit. This means agreeing to engage in more challenging reading, writing, and research assignments, including the analysis and evaluation of peer-reviewed journal articles, at least one full-length book, and interdisciplinary research.