CR COLLEGE OF THE REDWOODS

Syllabus for English 1A

"Education is not the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think."

–Albert Einstein

Course Information

Semester & Year: Fall 2020
Course ID & Section #: V49734
Instructor's name: Ruth Rhodes
Course units: 4

Instructor Contact Information

Office location: Creative Arts 132
Office hours: Generally 9-4, M-TH and by appointment
Phone number: 707-476-4587
Email address: ruth-rhodes@redwoods.edu

Required Materials

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

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.

Course Student Learning Outcomes

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.

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.

Accessibility

Students will have access to online course materials that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and College of the Redwoods policies. Students who discover access issues with this class should contact the instructor.

College of the Redwoods is also committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you have a disability or believe you might benefit from disability-related services and accommodations, please contact your instructor or [Disability Services and Programs for Students](#) (DSPS). 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
- Klamath-Trinity: 530-625-4821 Ext 103

During COVID19, approved accommodations for distance education classes will be emailed to the instructor by DSPS. In the case of face to face instruction, please present your written accommodation request to your instructor at least one week before the first test so that necessary arrangements can be made. Last-minute arrangements or post-test adjustments cannot usually be accommodated.

Primary Focus

In this online class, we will learn how to read, write, and think at the college level. You will read, take notes on, and discuss diverse and engaging texts, from opinion pieces to in-depth scientific studies. You will identify interesting questions at issue—questions about which there is significant disagreement between people—questions you think are worth exploring—and then you will 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. How Do We Know What is True?
2. The Value of a College Education
3. The Challenges of Technology

Class Organization and Structure

This class is organized into three units, based on the themes above, and work is assigned in weekly modules.

The week typically begins with **lecture materials**, including written information, videos, images, and links. I use a program called SoftChalk, which helps me turns the materials into attractively designed pages with interactives, including short quizzes that keep you interested and engaged. I also sometimes tell stories about myself, make jokes, and try to keep things lively. I've designed this class just as I'd like to take it, and ever semester I incorporate suggestions from my students to make it even better.

I will often ask you to do a **reading or two** during the week and take **critical reading notes**. I will then ask you to turn in your notes from that reading to Canvas. We generally end the week with a **media chat** where you post a video or audio comment to your peers in a small discussion group. Then you submit to a **formal written discussion** post on a different topic.

You will see that **most work is due at the end of the week, on Sunday, just before midnight**. Rarely, if ever, are assignments due mid-week. This seems to work best for students. If I have an assignment due mid-week, I'll give you plenty of warning in advance.

While essays can be turned in late, **I generally don't accept late work** (see the next section for specifics). Assignments close automatically. So before the deadline on Sunday, check to make sure your work uploaded properly. Make sure your quiz grades are recorded. Send me an email or Canvas message with the attachment of the work if you are having technical problems.

I sometimes hear, "But I'm the kind of person who needs to turn work in late!" My response is this: It's *normal and appropriate* for human beings to prioritize some things over classwork. Work, family, and sleep are important. But it's also *normal and appropriate* for human beings to accept the consequences of that prioritization. You can't expect to earn A's if you consistently miss deadlines. You can't expect to pass if you miss multiple weeks of assignments and do poorly on the essays. I've set up my class so that students can earn high grades *if the work is complete and the outcomes are met*. So do the amount of work appropriate for the grades you want. Sound fair?

Modules are open early. If you know you're going to be swamped with other responsibilities or otherwise away from a computer for more than a week, you can complete most assignments in advance of the deadline.

Evaluation & Grading Policy

Available Grades:

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

There are no pluses or minuses in this class.

Assignments:

Critical Practices:	20% of total grade
Discussions, Reflections, and Workshops:	30% of total grade
Essays (3):	50% of total grade

Critical Practices (30%)

One of our course learning outcomes 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 need to engage in a lot of "critical practices," such as

- Taking brief **quizzes** to test your level of engagement and understanding with the material. Quiz sets are embedded in the lectures, and you can retake them as many times as you like for a better grade until the assignment closes.
- Writing **critical reading notes** on the readings. These notes will explore questions about the content of the texts, but also the reasoning and purposes behind it, the motivation of the writer, and the way it might be read or misread by different audiences. I'll show you not just how to take notes that expand your thinking, but how to use your notes to generate ideas for the essays.
- Discussing (through **audio and video "chats"**) with one another your reactions to readings, the themes of the course, and other relevant topics.

The critical practices are not busy work. They represent stepping stones to competence. Students who complete the critical practices on a regular basis tend to get the best grades overall, not just because they earn points, but because they master the skills they need to engage more deeply in the formal writing assignments. Please remember that **critical practices cannot be turned in late**. The assignments close automatically when the deadline passes.

Discussions and Reflections (20%)

Formal writing includes the ability to "utilize flexible strategies for writing expository and argumentative college-level essays," as well as the ability to "incorporate primary and secondary sources into essays using appropriate documentation format." The activities in this category are considered "formal writing" activities and makeup 20% of your grade. They should be carefully crafted and proofread, just as you would an essay.

In small groups, you will participate in weekly discussions where you make posts to others in your group in response to prompts about the ideas in the lecture, the readings, or upcoming essay topics. Sometimes in the discussions, you will be asked to "workshop" with your peers, providing them feedback on their essay outlines or drafts and offering up your work for feedback.

Another component of this assignment category is reflections. Reflections are formal responses to essay feedback. It's a chance to look at the feedback I've given you, process it, and think more deeply about your growing writing skill. Reflections are just between you and me and are not shared in your small groups.

In other classes, discussions and reflections may be considered "informal." Not so with this class. Discussions and reflections are graded as formal writing assignments, so craft and proofread them carefully for full credit.

Like critical practices, **discussions and reflections cannot be turned in late**. Once the assignment has closed, it cannot be reopened. Plus, there's not much point in adding to a discussion when everyone else has moved on to the next one.

Keep in mind that all together, your formal writing, including Discussions, Reflections, and Essays, must total over 6,000 words. This is a college-wide requirement for English 1A. Make sure you consistently meet the required word count in each post. If you do, you are likely to generate over 8000 total, so you're good to go.

Critical Essays (50%)

You will write three formal essays in this class, each demonstrating your developing reading, writing, and thinking skills. Essays 1 (1000+ words) is worth 15% of your total grade, Essay 2 (1200+ words) is worth 15%, and Essay 3 (1500+) is worth 20%. Together, these essays make up 50% of your total grade.

I comment extensively on your essays, right in your document in comment bubbles. Looking at and responding to feedback is one of the best ways to improve your writing skill, and students call out the feedback they get as one of the most useful things about this class. But please know that in Canvas, it's tricky to access the comments I give you, especially the first time you're learning the system. I will provide a video tutorial on how to do this. Always ask if you can't find my comments!

I've been evaluating essays for more than 20 years, and I've come to believe that the fairest way to grade them is to place them into three categories: **Exceeds Expectations** (100%), **Meets Expectations** (75%), or **Does Not Yet Meet Expectations** (50%). An essay that has a perfect score is never "perfect" (there's no such thing in the writing world). But an essay that exceeds expectations shows a strong mastery of the skills being evaluated in the assignment. An essay that meets expectations shows meaningful progress in gaining those skills. It indicates that the writer might be struggling in some areas but is on the road to success. An essay that does not yet meet expectations, on the other hand, is off the road for some reason. The essay doesn't meet the requirements for passing and for some reason doesn't demonstrate the basics. There's a big red flag up that the writer needs to address.

If you earn a "Does Not Yet Meet Expectations" on either Essays 1 or 2, don't worry. You can revise your essay and figure out the requirements during the revision process. Lots of students actually learn this way and end up exceeding expectations by the end of the course.

If you choose to revise, your grade will not go down, though it may not go up if you do not address the issues that kept it from passing. With a revision, you can earn up to a Meets Expectations (75%), but no higher.

Essays that pass can't be revised. In a perfect world, I would say "Yes!" to unlimited revisions. But I have a limited capacity to keep reading and grading papers, and I have to draw the line somewhere. Feel free, though, to revise on your own. As Ernest Hemmingway said, "There are no good writers. Only good re-writers."

I accept late essays. While I'm strict on the low-stakes assignments, I will take late papers. Some people need more time for longer projects, and the essays are worth a lot of points. If you have a personal crisis or are struggling with the writing itself—or any other reason—you can turn your essay in up to 7 days after the due date. **You don't need to ask for an extension. You have one automatically.** But please note: late essays can't be revised for a change in grade. So if want the extra time on your draft, it should be understood that your draft should be in good shape when you do turn it in.

Unfortunately, **Essay 3 cannot be turned in late or revised** because it is due at the end of the semester. We have to stop somewhere.

Regular, Effective, and Meaningful Contact

One of the challenges of online education is finding a way to have deep, meaningful communication with one another. It's important that instructors and students have regular, effective contact—and that there be meaningful and fulfilling communication between students, too.

I take great pride in communicating clearly with students and provides quick, helpful feedback. But I do have some limitations, including work hours and workload.

Professor Workload

As an English professor, I have an unusual amount of student work to read and grade. I can handle it, but it's good for you to put in perspective how challenging time management might be for me over the next 16 weeks, as I know it will be for most of you. I feel your pain.

Professor Work Hours

My normal work hours are 9:00 am-4:00 pm, Monday-Friday. I take holidays and weekends off. Most Fridays, I spend the bulk of the day in committee meetings. Like you, I have a life outside of work that matters to me (four children, dreams of being a novelist, and a writing consultancy in social justice comic books). I can't do it all, but I'm shooting for the moon. So I need some downtime away from the computer. I bet you do, too. I avoid reading emails and messages outside of work time if I can.

My work schedule might not seem like an excellent match for those of you doing college work during evenings and weekends. Connecting with your matters to me, but know that there might be some time delay. Please be patient and give me time to get back to you if you send me a message outside of my regular work hours or days.

One-On-One Help

I will gladly meet with you during or even outside of my regular work hours if you need support. I like making contact with students. It makes *you* feel more *real* to me when we meet, and students often experience the same lift by talking on the phone or Zooming. Zoom is usually the best since we can look at the same document together. All you need to do is ask for an appointment, and we can set one up. It's not a special privilege I'm granting you—it's my job to meet with you. So ask away! My family can usually accommodate a little weekend work, too, so don't worry about asking for support if you're a "weekender" student.

Tutoring

You may find that you want extra help with your reading and writing, but you'd rather not get it from me. That's fine. Tutoring support is available online from other CR faculty and staff. Our tutors are amazing, and it **IS** helpful to have an outside opinion from a different professor or skilled staff member. Check out the [Academic Support Center](#) for information about making an appointment. It's free and confidential (no one will tell me you went to a tutor).

Commitment to Communication and Feedback:

Here's my commitment to you in terms of 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 when you need it!).

- I will create **meaningful learning activities** that connect directly to the skills you need to master to succeed in this class, with **rapid feedback** so you can see when you're making progress. No bull-sh*tty assignments. I hate those, and so do you.

- I will facilitate and monitor **threaded discussions** between students in both **small and big groups**, so you practice critical thinking and critical writing skills in a highly interactive and supportive cohort. If

your group isn't working for you, let me know. I will probably rearrange the groups several times during the semester as enrollment shifts.

- 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 or let you know why there is a delay.

- I'll build the course in advance of the semester, but I'll chime in with real-time **Announcements** on a regular basis relating directly to the progress you're all making and the direction we're headed. I'm paying attention to what you're doing every workday.

- I'll **adjust** elements of the class, syllabus, and schedule if they aren't effective. You can email me or send me a Canvas message if you don't think something is working, or you can make an anonymous online comment [though this link](#), also accessible in the Modules section of Canvas. I want you to finish English 1A saying, "This was the best online class I've ever had!"

Admissions Deadlines & Enrollment Policies

Fall 2020 Dates
- *Classes begin: 8/22/20*
- *Last day to add a class: 8/28/20*
- *Last day to drop without a W and receive a refund: 9/4/20*
- *Labor Day (all-college holiday): 9/7/20*
- *Census date: 9/8/20 or 20% into class duration*
- *Last day to petition to file P/NP option: 9/18/20*
- *Last day to petition to graduate or apply for certificate: 10/29/20*
- *Last day for student-initiated W (no refund): 10/30/20*
- *Last day for faculty initiated W (no refund): 10/30/20*
- *Veteran's Day (all-college holiday): 11/11/20*
- *Fall break (no classes): 11/23/20-11/28/20*
- *Thanksgiving (all-college holiday): 11/25/20-11/27/20*
- *Final examinations: 12/12/20-12/18/20*
- *Semester ends: 12/18/20*
- *Grades available for transcript release: approximately 1/8/21*

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.

Inclusive Language and "Distressing" Ideas

My primary goal is to facilitate learning for everyone, and that includes monitoring discussions to ensure that we treat each other with respect, following the student Code of Conduct (AP 5500). This includes using language that is inclusive and respectful. In English 1A, we will explore what that looks like, especially as it applies to persuading an audience. It's not just a question of conduct—it's a question of effectiveness, too.

No one should treat another student with disrespect. This brings to mind a fundamental question: If the personal beliefs and prejudices of fellow classmates are upsetting and offensive, does that constitute "disrespect" and a violation of the code of conduct?

My thought is "not necessarily." Learning cannot happen in an environment where controversial ideas cannot be articulated or freely tried out. We all hold beliefs that we haven't thought out carefully, and we all have prejudices of which we aren't consciously aware. Malcolm X noted the need for tolerance for disagreement in this way:

> "Don't be in a hurry to condemn because [the person you are trying to persuade] he doesn't do what you do or think as you think or as fast. There was a time when you didn't know what you know today."

I will strive to protect free expression in this class, including speech that students might find ignorant and offensive, as long as it does not violate the Code of Conduct. In other words, it's okay to be wrong. **Just don't be deliberately mean or disrespectful.**

Part of your task here in becoming a better critical thinker is to recognize your values are shaped by individual experiences limited by your own life. Other people see the world differently because they experience it differently. They have much to tell us, even if we find their ideas wrongheaded or distasteful. We're going to practice avoiding overgeneralizations and oversimplifications, but we will also recognize the inherent imperfection of ourselves and our fellow learners. Our task is to **understand** different perspectives. We need to hear people out in order to do so.

As an educator, I see a trend in academic culture that sometimes privileges *safety* and protection *from offensive ideas* over meaningful discussion and debate. I do not believe in silencing ideas that might, for example, reflect racist or sexist or classist attitudes. This trend arises 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.

In college, we hold ideas up to the light of reason. We do not hide them away--especially ones that might be based on prejudice or faulty assumptions. How else can we grow our critical thinking skills? This is *public* education. It is meant to serve the *public*.

Side-stepping controversial ideas might be appropriate at Thanksgiving dinner with Grandma, but it is counter-productive in academic work. We all signed to learn, and we are on the same journey. 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. I join you in that, learning from my students each semester.

So, expect to be introduced to new ways of seeing things. 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. Mine will be, too. Every semester I learn from students' ideas and reshape my own view of the world. I look forward to this semester as a learning opportunity.

Setting Your 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 add preferred pronouns in Canvas. Contact Admissions & Records to request a change. Your preferences will only be listed in Canvas. This will not change your legal records. See the Student Information Update form for more information.

If you have a pronoun preference that you want to share with me, please tell me. Like most people, I make assumptions about gender based on visual cues and first names. Sometimes they're wrong; feel free to alert me if you have a preference or a correction.

I go 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, go ahead. If you want to talk about me in the third person, she/her/hers pronouns work for me—or for the daring and who appreciate the literary reference—try "she who must be obeyed."

Canvas Information

If using Canvas, include navigation instructions, tech support information, what Canvas is used for, and your expectation for how regularly students should check Canvas for your class.
Log into Canvas at https://redwoods.instructure.com
Password is your 8 digit birthdate
For tech help, email its@redwoods.edu or call 707-476-4160
Canvas Help for students: https://www.redwoods.edu/online/Help-Student

Canvas online orientation workshop: https://www.redwoods.edu/online/Home/Student-Resources/Canvas-Resources

Community College Student Health and Wellness

Resources, tools, and training regarding health, mental health, wellness, basic needs, and more designed for California community college students, faculty, and staff are available on the California Community Colleges Health & Wellness website.

Wellness Central is a free online health and wellness resource that is available 24/7 in your space at your pace.

Students seeking to request a counseling appointment for academic advising or general counseling can email counseling@redwoods.edu.

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 (which we do already), reading and writing about at least one full-length book, and conducting interdisciplinary research (which we do already).

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 offers assistance to students in need of professional counseling services such as crisis counseling.

Learning Resource Center includes the following resources for students

- Academic Support Center for instructional support, tutoring, learning resources, and proctored exams. Includes the Math Lab & Drop-in Writing Center
- Library Services to promote information literacy and provide organized information resources.
- Multicultural & Diversity Center

Special programs are 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