

**ENGLISH 1A: THE RED PILL COURSE    SRJC   Fall 2021**  
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English 1A is a course in analytical and critical reading and written composition, an introduction to the hermeneutic, dialectical and rhetorical technique required in the many disciplines of higher education and by a commitment to the examined life. It will use the original and historically most successful pedagogy used to teach critical thinking and composition—Classical Rhetoric as available on the [byu.edu/rhetoric](http://byu.edu/rhetoric) website—the closest thing to a textbook this course has.

The first and fundamental concept of Classical Rhetoric—as mentioned in the top left-hand column of the rhetoric byu site is Kairos—speech appropriate to the occasion one finds one’s self in. The course will address that occasion, the one we all find ourselves in, through a study of the concept and phenomena of propaganda and, optionally, its particular application to our current propaganda induced “health” crisis. In order to understand the order of magnitude of that crisis one must consider the remark of William Casey on his opening day briefing in his role as director of the CIA under then Pres. Jimmy Carter —“We will know that our disinformation campaign has succeeded when everything the American public believes is false.” CIA directors don’t have to resort to hyperbole. There is ample evidence over the last fifty years to establish the truth of that claim (from Operation Mockingbird which established the total spectrum dominance of the Media to this very day) and it lays a great challenge upon every single student in this course. You must be prepared to deal with the reality that everything you thought you knew, is false, on every issue of any importance whatsoever and especially about the latest global crisis. If you are not prepared to face that, and that means to deal with the four stages of facing that: Denial, Anger, Negotiation and Depression, neither this course nor the examined life is for you. (You must also be prepared for the possible estrangement of your friends and family. Most people are hostile to critical thinking.)

## A PARTIAL LIST OF REQUIRED TEXTS AND VIDEOS

*Dumbing Us Down*, J.T. Gatto; *Propaganda*, E. Bernays; *Conspiracy theory in America*, Lance deHaven-Smith; *The Declaration of Independence & Other Great Documents*, Jefferson et al, 1984 by George Orwell *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley, *Propaganda*; Jacques Ellul. [byu.edu/rhetoric](http://byu.edu/rhetoric); a college dictionary; BBC documentary (available on YouTube) *The Century of the Self* : parts 1 & 2; Pres. Dwight D Eisenhower's farewell speech—the "military/industrial complex" speech available on Youtube, Martin Luther King's speech *Beyond Vietnam* -available on American Rhetoric website, the Youtube video *In Shadow* and other texts and videos as required and announced during the course of the course. Not all of every book will be required and the Gatto text under consideration -"The Seven Lesson Schoolteacher" is available online.

These texts serve as a means of teaching reading and composition through the application of Classical Rhetoric to the situation which is demanded by the now century old domination of discourse by propaganda; they establish the reality, history and application of propaganda, embark on a highly critical assessment of its effects on the audience and discourse of our time and confront the dystopic literary treatments of its dominance. The hero of *1984* is employed as a propagandist in a society dominated by propaganda.

Formally, the course must confront the form literacy takes in our time in the country in which it is taught. The American educational system ranks at the bottom of the developed world in teaching literacy and critical thinking. In Europe and other developed Western countries people still read books while Americans watch TV and play computer games and there is no such thing as a college *composition* course there, much less a

remedial English course *in college*. Composition and general education are handled quite well in high school. The literacy gap can be illustrated by an example. Twenty years ago, while on sabbatical, I was enrolled in an Italian course in Florence and my fellow students were adults from all over the world. The Scandinavian college students I encountered could write better papers *in English* (which they had been studying throughout grade school), than my community college students could. Our first module will look more deeply into this condition. But the design of this course must take this into account. It is a sort of contradiction to teach page and print literacy to a populace which lives in a time and culture in which it has little place and in which the kind of human being it produces, a critical thinker with a wide range of ideas and references gleaned from wide reading, and a habit of questioning and coming to judgments based on individual authority, has not only little place, but is stigmatized. The only reason to do it is because it is essential to being fully human, because, regardless of the dominant values of our culture and its marketplace, one's students need it—not to become more serviceable employees, but to become themselves. We shall have to start, not with the page, but with the screen, so the first part of this course will be video heavy and the last text heavy. It is only in the last part of the course that writing, composition, can be taught, because writing is page not screen competence. However, my lectures will be written out from the beginning and it is not just because my SRJC issued computer and home computer cannot efficiently upload voice files, but because I want to engage page literacy from the very beginning. I believe my computer can handle Zoom sessions, but there are obvious legal problems with using Zoom. The first has to do with the legally mandated confidentiality of the classroom and office hour. You are attending this college as adults, regardless of your ages. I am legally prohibited from telling your parents or anyone else even whether you are attending class, much less what transpires there or in office hours. There is no way Zoom can be trusted to maintain that confidentiality. Conversely, what goes on in the classroom is protected by Academic Freedom; it has absolute freedom of speech and the Supreme Court decided, in *Sweezy vs. New Hampshire*, that not even the government nor any state

representative has a right to know what a professor or student says in that classroom. Once again, there is no way that Zoom can reliably meet that legal demand. If we were in a classroom, what goes on in that room as academic discourse, enjoys a legally protected absolute confidentiality...and that must apply to what goes on in this roomless course. This applies to you as well as to me. ***No part of this course may be made public beyond the bounds of the course—doing so on your part is a violation of Academic Freedom and confidentiality and is grounds for being dropped or for being failed and may constitute grounds for disciplinary action and/or actionable legal grounds.*** And once again, Zoom cannot provide those legal protections. Which is why even though the first part of this course is video heavy for the reasons already stated, the lectures have to be read. Screen “literacy” is being mediated by the print and page literacy, which this course is dedicated to teaching, from the very beginning. In short, there are overwhelming practical, legal and pedagogical reasons for how this course is being taught. It is somewhat more work for you and far more work for me, but it is necessary. The pedagogical situation will be treated more at length in the first module. There will be a discussion section in each module, but I will generally not be interfering in it in real time, but responding to it as needed in the next module. You have to be allowed to feel what it means to be on your own. There is a tremendous amount of freedom in this course, because in a setting in which you are not free, where you are always doing prompted tasks or responding to real time promptings by authority, like an employee, the only thing you can learn is that you are not free and to do what you are told.

Because the lectures are written, you have an opportunity to reread them and that lays a greater responsibility on you in the asking of questions—unlike a classroom setting where you cannot reread what is said and in which I must respond to questions in that context immediately, in this course I will expect you to apply greater deliberation to your questions—they must be precisely phrased and address matters that have not already been treated and which a rereading of the lecture could answer and I will respond to them in writing and not immediately---most often in

the next module or by class-wide, not necessarily individual e-mail. That way I can treat similar questions with a definitive and precise answer. In this way, a greater stress on your *writing* is being made immediately—a distinct advantage in a course designed to teach writing and not just word processing. With the greater freedom of this class comes greater responsibility. Without a real time classroom, you are being treated more as individuals and less as a group. As we will see in module 1, that constitutes another distinct advantage over a classroom. The discussion parts of each module are there for you to address the thought questions asked in the module and are not open but focused discussions. You may also submit well-focused questions raised in your mind by the provocative videos and texts in each module. But this is not a forum for your feelings or opinions, but for your questions about judgments. Judgments are not opinions. Judgments are assertions with sufficient reasons for making them; opinions are simply assertions without reasons and essentially irrational and therefore not a part of this course. There is no worse enemy of reason than the commonplace which asserts that everyone is entitled to their opinions. First of all, how do you know the opinion is yours? Opinions are marketed by the propaganda machine like products in the marketplace—except you don't have to do the work to pay for them, to earn them, to make them yours—all you have to do is repeat them. Being entitled to your opinions means only that no one is stopping you from having them, it does not entitle you to any respect for them if they are not respectable, if they do not meet the criteria of reason—which is to attempt to have a sufficient reason for making them which you can produce through logical inference from your own research. Your papers and your contribution to discussions are not about your *opinions* but about your *judgments*—which are assertions backed by reasons. And not everything counts as a reason. What does and what doesn't is what you are here to learn—*intellectual discipline*.

This course is intellectually as well as emotionally and practically challenging. The rule of thumb for a college course is at least two hours of work outside of class hours for every hour of class and class hours amount to 68 (72 including finals for a 4 unit course)

hours per semester—which means this class demands at least 204 hours of your time over the course of the semester—a minimum of 12 hours a week. You will be taught to do your own research which may include individual paths of research through the issue. You will be closely questioned on the required texts and required to give reasoned and correctly inferred answers whose word count will count toward the 6 to 8 thousand words of composition officially required by any English 1A or 5.

*Your module assignments will be graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory and must all be completed in satisfactory fashion in order for you to receive a satisfactory letter grade. Your take home final will be an essay chosen from among several assigned paper topics and must also receive a satisfactory grade. Your letter grade will be determined by the paper or papers you choose to do, which can be from my suggested paper topics and prompts or your own.*

Note: Officially all course objectives are linked with the official SLO's for this course:

Write a comprehensive, well-developed and coherent essay with a focused thesis and appropriate support. Recognize and correct errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Identify and analyze argumentative, stylistic and narrative techniques in non-fiction and fiction. Obtain, summarize and synthesize research materials including correct use of MLA citations

Do not look for an exhaustive week by week list of lesson plans, readings and assignment deadlines. These will be announced during the course of the course.

The assignment for the first week of class is to read Gatto's "The Seven Lesson Schoolteacher" and answer the following questions:

1. The speech is arranged around a list of seven “lessons”, the large majority of which are similarly titled but a small minority of which are differently titled—even grammatically different from the majority. Identify these. What do the majority of correctly titled sections refer to?
2. The opening identifies the list as a “curriculum.” Look up the word. Do these comprise a curriculum? What do they comprise?