# Welcome & Table of Contents

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Welcome to Kemble's online English 1A course, and to this syllabus, which is meant to let you know what you can expect — from the course, and from me — and what I (and the college) expect from you, as a student in the course.

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# Course Information

## Course Title and Sections

English 1A: College Composition and Reading
Sections: D9176 and D9177 (online)

## Instructor

Greg Kemble

## Contact information

* **Canvas Message** —This is the best way to contact me, as it helps me keep track of things in Canvas.
* **Email:** gkemble@yccd.edu
* **Voice Mail:** (530) 749-3821 —Please make sure your message includes how you'd like me to get back to you.

**Note:** I’m likely to get a message more quickly though Canvas or email than through voicemail.

## Office Location

Marysville Campus: 1100 Building, Room 1179. (Directions: https://bit.ly/kemble-directions)

## Student Hours (via Zoom)

I call these “student hours,” rather than “office hours,” because I want to be sure you understand that they are scheduled for you, not for me. Please don’t hesitate to take advantage of them.

If you are not available at the times listed, please contact me to set up an appointment. I’m happy to find a time that works for your schedule — even if that means connecting in the evening or on a weekend.

* Monday 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. (in person, in my office)
* Wednesday: 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (via Zoom - from my office)
* Tuesday: 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. (via Zoom)

You are welcome to drop in at any of the above times, but I recommend that you contact me to set up an appointment, even for scheduled student hours. I do my best to protect these times, but I am sometimes required to attend meetings or other appointments.

**Here’s the link for the Zoom room:** <https://bit.ly/sh-s24>

## Conferences

A few times throughout the semester — usually to discuss a draft of your essay — I will schedule a Zoom conference with you. We’ll use the same Zoom link that as we do for Student Hours.

## Textbook

Anna Mills's *How Arguments Work - A Guide to Writing and Analyzing Texts in College*.

This course is a “Zero-Cost Textbook” course, which means that we’ll be using a **free** Open Educational Resources (OER) textbook. (If you’re interested in OER, you can read about the initiative on the California Community Colleges OER page at <https://bit.ly/cccco-oer> )

I've included the relevant parts of the text within the course, in Canvas, so you shouldn’t need to download anything. (If that changes, I’ll let everyone know through a Canvas announcement.)

However, if you’d like a copy of the full text — it’s a good book! — you may either download the full PDF (for free) or buy a paper copy at the book’s LibreTexts page at <https://bit.ly/1e-mills>. (Hover over the blue “Downloads” button for options.)

Just to be clear: **you are not required to buy the textbook**. Further, we won’t read the whole book, so — unless something comes up that makes me change my mind — you don’t need to download the full PDF, either. You’re welcome to do so, of course, but it’s not required.

## Course Description

Here’s the description of English 1A that you’ll find in the Yuba College catalog:

An introductory course offering instruction in expository and argumentative writing, appropriate and effective use of language, close reading, cogent thinking, research strategies, information literacy, and documentation. Focus on the recursivity of writing processes and integrating reading, writing, and speaking skills. Students will write a minimum of 6000 words.

If you don’t already have a lot of experience with college or with college-level writing, some of that might not make a lot of sense yet. That’s okay — that’s why you’re here! Don’t let the fancy words intimidate you. We'll address these concepts as they become important in the course.

## Time Commitment

English 1A is a demanding course, especially online. That’s not just because English professors are mean (though we may be). We’re required to follow rules and policies that the state of California has set for us.

One of those policies is to make sure we let you know, *explicitly*, that English 1A is a 4-unit course, which translates to:

* Total hours for the course: 216
* In-class (“lecture”) hours: 72
* Out-of-class (“homework”) hours: 144

Of course, these numbers are for face-to-face courses, so the 72 hours of “lecture” obviously doesn’t apply in quite the same way for our class. But you should expect something similar — you should expect to spend an average of 12 hours each week.

Does that sound like a lot? It is! And while I don’t want you to be scared of the course, I don’t want you to underestimate it, either. I am often surprised at how many students expect to be able to do the course in just a couple hours each weekend — or, worse, in a few hours at the end of the semester.

Again, I’m not trying to freak you out. Lots of people succeed in the course! But it’s important that you understand what’s expected of you so that you can plan your semester accordingly.

## Are you ready?

Requirements for placing into English 1A have changed, due to changes in California state law; placement is now mostly based on high school Grade Point Average (GPA).

This means that our class will include students with a wide range of reading and writing skills, and a wide range of expectations:

* some of you are just out of high school (or still in high school!) and have not yet encountered college-level writing;
* some of you have been away from school for so long that you fear you've forgotten much of what you used to know;
* some of you have rich life experiences and have no difficulty writing about complex issues and arguments, whether as workers, parents, or citizens;
* some of you are masters of a language other than English, but struggle with English;
* some of you are just sure that, for whatever reason, you’re not good writers.

I will do my best to meet you at whatever level you find yourself. Of course, it’s impossible for personal interactions to be 100% customized for each member of the class; there just aren’t that many hours in a day. But I will do my best to address your particular needs.

But you will need to do your part, too. You'll need to schedule the time you need to read and respond to challenging texts. You'll need to check your Canvas Messages and Announcements regularly. You'll need to keep up with -- and keep track of -- the work. You'll need to post and respond to your peers in Discussion Group Assignments. You'll need to ask questions when you don't understand something.

Above all: understand that a crucial aspect of a college education is *learning* *how to learn*. Be sure that you don’t rely *only* on me and my instruction; be sure you also seek answers on your own. There are a lot of good writing resources out there (I’ll point to several of them throughout the course, including later in this syllabus). The more you pursue questions on your own, the more useful my help — and the help of teachers in future courses — will be.

# English 1A (Spring 2024) — Learning Outcomes

## Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

The English Department at Yuba College has four Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that guide much of our instruction in English 1A courses.

Upon completion of the course, students will:

* use reading strategies to understand argumentative texts that contain both literal and implied meanings;
* compose a clearly-written, well-organized, purpose-driven essay;
* synthesize evidence from outside sources to support claims effectively;
* attribute and document sources correctly.

That isn’t the most student-friendly language, so don’t be too concerned if much of this doesn’t make sense to you yet. Things will become clearer as we work through the semester.

In addition to the official outcomes, I have a number of other objectives, as well. I would like you to:

* develop your skills as a critical thinker, reader, and writer;
* meaningfully affect people in your sphere of influence;
* engage deeply with important public policy issues.

Ideally, you also have your own objectives. If you don’t, I recommend you spend some time thinking about what objectives you might set for yourself. Why (beyond earning a grade) are you taking English 1A? Why are you in school more generally?

The clearer your sense of purpose, the more likely you are to stick with the course when it becomes challenging.

# How the Class Works

## Registration

### First Week Rule

I often have a number of students hoping to add the class during the first week or two of the semester. To make sure that those students have time to join — and to be sure that registered students don’t delay getting started — I require you to do two things by the end of the first week:

* The Syllabus Quiz
* The Canvas Message Assignment

I will drop any registered student who does not complete both of these by 11:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 28.

If that creates a problem for you, please contact me **before Sunday**. I am willing to consider other arrangements, but only if you contact me in advance.

### Drop Dates

This semester, the deadlines for dropping the course are as follows:

* February 2, to avoid a “W” on your permanent record and to be eligible for a refund;
* April 26, to receive a “W” on your permanent record.

If you decide you need to drop, I recommend that you see a counselor to discuss what effect that might have on your educational plans.

### Student Responsibility to Drop

Every term, several students disappear from the course without letting me know why. I cannot always tell if students have really left the course or have just gotten behind. That makes it hard to know whether I should drop them or not.

In the end, it is the student’s responsibility to drop by the appropriate deadlines. If you do decide you need to drop, please be sure you follow through with the Admissions Office.

That said, if you stop logging into Canvas, or stop participating in the class, I will consider dropping you, especially as we get close to the April 26 deadline; I’d rather you received a “W,” rather than an “F.” (I will try to contact you before making that decision, though I can't guarantee that I'll be able to).

**More important, though:** If you find yourself tempted to quit, I encourage you to contact me first. We might be able to find a way to get you back on track.

## Disability Statement

If you need special arrangements for a physical or learning disability, I encourage you to let me know, and to arrange an accommodation plan through Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) as soon as you can. Working with DSPS isn’t a requirement, but they offer helpful support for both you and me.

Please visit the DSPS page at <https://bit.ly/1ao-dsps> to see what kind of help is officially available to you. If you’re on campus, you can drop by their office (Building 1800, at the west end of campus), or you can contact them by phone -- (530) 741-6795 or email (dspsinfo@yccd.edu).

## Communication

### Announcements

Two or three times a week, I may post announcements for the class using (surprise!) Canvas’s Announcements. There will basically be two kinds:

* **Class business:** Reminders for upcoming assignments, changes to due dates, corrections, and other announcements related to the logistics of the course (how the course works);
* **Instructional material:** clarifications, responses to issues that come up in student work, and other items related to the content of the course (things to help you do your work).

Both kinds of announcements are important, so please check your announcements regularly. I recommend that you create a schedule for yourself — or, even better, consider setting up a “Notification” to inform you whenever an announcement appears (see the next item in this syllabus).

### Notifications

Canvas has a flexible communications system. Indeed, at times, it can be too flexible, and communications can get lost in the range of possible channels.

If you haven’t yet done so, I recommend that you go to your Canvas Settings and set up Notifications in a way that works for you. You can set it up so Canvas notifies you when there’s a new announcement, as well as when I post feedback on an assignment, or someone responds to a message in the Discussion forum, etc.

I'll walk you through that process in a video in the first week of the course — though if you'd like to do that now, go to about 3:40 in this video (<https://bit.ly/kemble-notifications>).

### Discussions

Throughout the semester, I will assign Discussion Group Assignments (DGAs) designed to help you to work through issues and ideas we bring up in class. I will also set up specific threads that focus on specific assignments, as well as general questions.

It’s important that everyone feel comfortable participating in Discussions, so please: be respectful of your peers. You may disagree, at times, but please do so thoughtfully and politely, not with sarcasm or derogatory remarks directed at any person or group of persons. Please remember that there is a feeling human being on the other end of the computer connection. There is a lot of room for debate in this class, but not for flame wars.

On the other side of the coin: please don’t take criticism or advice personally. Love-fests don’t help anyone improve; honest suggestions do. When they’re right, we learn something new. But even when they’re wrong, we strengthen our own position by articulating why we think they’re wrong.

In short: strive both to give and to receive feedback, criticism, or advice with grace.

### Canvas Messages (“Conversations”) and Personal Email

Messages to individuals (to your classmates, or to me) — Canvas calls these “Conversations” — should generally be used only for private communications. If you have any comments or questions that might be of interest to the class, please post them in an appropriate Discussion thread so others may benefit from the conversation.

For example, if you want to let me know why you haven’t turned in an assignment yet (a private issue that the rest of the class doesn’t need to know about), it would be appropriate to send me an individual Canvas message. If you are confused about the instructions on a writing assignment, though, it would be appropriate to ask that question in the Discussions area. You may fear that your question is obvious, but it’s likely that others have a similar question — and sometimes students’ answers to such questions are more helpful than my response.

For class-related issues, please contact me through Canvas when you can; it’s much easier to keep track of conversations that way. For issues not related to the class, or in case you have trouble with Canvas (if you have trouble logging into Canvas, for example), you can go ahead and contact me through my personal email address (gkemble@yccd.edu).

I will respond within two business days (though I’m usually much quicker than that).

## Dead Links

Every semester, I work to improve the course, which sometimes causes unintended glitches. If you find any “dead” links (or other mistakes—inconsistent due dates, typos, whatever), please let me know so I can fix them.

I am also open to feedback, so if you have any suggestions for improvement to the course, or if you can identify areas that were confusing or not intuitive, please feel free to let me know that as well.

## Standards

### Using Modules

Canvas presents the course in a series of pages grouped together into "Modules." I've designed the course so that you'll encounter information -- instruction, discussions, assignments, etc. -- as you need them.

As a new module is released, any assignments associated with the module will also become available, in the course’s Assignments section. However, you should go directly to an assignment *only as a convenience*, after you have worked through the module leading up to the assignment.

Occasionally students try to skip straight to the assignment without working through the modules. In fact, I'm finding that students have been doing this more and more often lately. **This is a recipe for disaster,** for a number of reasons. Please work through the modules thoroughly and in order, so that you will benefit from the explanations and preparatory writing assignments.

If you've not worked with Canvas before, that may all have been a bit confusing. I will have a video early in the course that walks you through how to (as I put it) work through the modules.

### Formatting

Your three main essays should be formatted using MLA style. We’ll talk about this during the course — I'll even post a walk-through video about how to lay out your essay. But here’s a short version:

Essays should:

* be typed, using a standard 12-point font (e.g., Times or Times New Roman);
* be double-spaced (never single-spaced; never triple-spaced);
* have one-inch margins;
* have a correctly formatted header, title, and pagination;
* document sources correctly, using both in-text citation and a Works Cited page.

Final drafts of essays, especially, should be edited, proofread, and spell-checked.

And please give each essay a clever and informative title (“Essay 1” is neither clever nor informative….)

### Submitting Essays

Unless specified otherwise, please submit assignments as a “File Upload” through the Assignments section in Canvas. (The most notable exception: Discussion Group Assignments.)

Please don’t submit work to my personal email unless it is absolutely necessary. It’s hard to keep track of work that is not submitted as instructed—especially work submitted outside Canvas.

If possible, please upload essays in Microsoft Word format (.doc, or .docx), as this format allows me to respond to your work most effectively. (Note that Google Docs can save a in Word format, under “File | Download.”)

If you do not have access to Word (or Google Docs), you may save and upload your essay as a PDF file. As I said, though, I am able to work more effectively with Word documents.

Note that Canvas won’t allow you to upload files in other formats (unless I’ve specified that other formats are acceptable).

I'll have a video that walks you through this process as well.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as passing others’ words or ideas off as your own. This may take many forms. Some may be accidental, such as forgetting to give credit for information you’ve cut-and-pasted from the Internet, or not realizing that you have to cite others’ work even if you don’t use their exact words.

Others are simply dishonest, such as buying a paper, having a friend of family member do an assignment, having ChatGPT write an essay, and so on. (I will say more about this last one in the next section.)

Please don’t.

Plagiarism is serious, and it carries serious consequences. At the very least, plagiarized work will receive an Incomplete or be considered missing. That's not a major problem for most assignments, but it is for the three major essay assignments: an Incomplete on a major essay lowers the course grade by a full letter, and a *missing* major essay would result in a D or F in the course (we'll talk about my grading policies soon).

However, plagiarism — especially if there's a *pattern* of it — may also result in disciplinary probation or suspension, or even expulsion. (See the Student Code of Conduct at <https://bit.ly/yccd-code> for more details.)

Most cases of plagiarism that I have encountered — and I have encountered many — have arisen from desperation. I hope that my grading policy (again, more on that soon) will help reduce desperation. But if you do find yourself growing desperate, please contact me as early as possible so that we can discuss strategies for success on the assignment.

## A Word on Artificial Intelligence (A.I.)

You may have heard of so-called “Artificial Intelligence” (A.I.), especially the “large-language model” chat bots like Bing Chat or ChatGPT. These are sophisticated enough that they can actually write competent, if boring, essays — and they're only going to get better. The social media platform TikTok shows lots of students, often high schoolers, having A.I. do their homework for them. Some of my students have been over-relying on A.I. in my courses, too.

There are many problems with relying on A.I. to do your work, but I’ll point out two.

First, as I mentioned above, having ChatGPT write an essay, and then turning it in as if it’s your own work, is clearly plagiarism.

But second, and more important, using ChatGPT to write an assignment — or even relying on it too much to brainstorm or organize a paper — hurts your ability to learn the critical thinking and expression tools that this class is intended to help you develop. For example, chat bots do a solid job creating summaries of articles, and some argue that we should just leave that to them. If we let A.I. do what it does well, they say— if, for example, we let A.I. summarize articles for us — that would free us up to do more meaningful work.

However, the act of summarizing develops a wide range of skills: reading, analysis, critical thinking, writing, problem solving, and much more. And those skills are foundational to producing “more meaningful work.”

So yes, a chat bot can summarize an article faster, and maybe even more “accurately,” than you could do it on your own. But your understanding of the article would suffer, and that would limit your ability to use the article in your own argument.

I know that some teachers have banned the use of A.I. tools in their courses. I understand that policy, but it’s not the policy I’ve chosen. There are many ways that A.I. can help. And while I won’t be able to weave a lot of instruction around A.I. into this course — anything I would write could be about of date in by the time I hit “publish” — I may try to find ways to work things in throughout the semester, perhaps in discussion threads.

If you're thinking of using A.I. to help you with your work, please let me know. A conversation would help you better use the tool, and would protect you against charges of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

That said, I hope that my grading policies will give you the freedom to explore your own thinking and your own writing — to take risks and to use the act of writing as a tool for thinking. A.I. can be useful, but it can also undermine your ability to create something authentic and meaningful for yourself and your readers.

I will add one last thought: one of the most important insights in this class — at least, this is what many students have told me — is that *your voice matters*. I'm interested in things that *only you* can say, and in the way *only you* can say it. A.I. erases your voice. Please don't let that happen.

# How Grades Work

## My philosophy

Last year, I participated in a study group that explored ways to make grading more equitable — that is, to be sure that my grading policies don’t create unnecessary obstacles for one group of students over others.

This inquiry led me to reconsider almost everything I’ve done in the past — things that you may be used to, since it’s what you've almost certainly experienced in most courses.

My new philosophy is based on the understanding that, for most students, *grades undermine the ability to learn*. I therefore emphasize the *process* of writing rather than the *finished product*. And this emphasis encourages me to separate your grade from the *quality* of your work.

This doesn’t mean that I’m not interested in quality; I will work hard to encourage you to think and write well. To do that, though, I need to ensure that you feel free to take risks, even to fail, without fearing that your grade will suffer.

Of course, I still have to assign you a grade at the end of the semester, so let me explain how that will work.

## The Grading Policy

*Note: Though this is not very complicated, it* ***is*** *complicated to explain. I will offer a relatively brief explanation here, but, early in the semester, I'll have a video that walks you through it. However, if you are ever confused by this policy, please contact me. I'd be happy to go over it with you as many times as you need.*

Here's the policy:

The default grade for this course is a B. This means that if you ***complete***the required work (listed in the center column of the table, below), then you are guaranteed at least a B in the course. If you don't complete the required work, then your course grade will be lowered. On the other hand, if you complete work *beyond* what's required for a B, then your course grade will be raised (allowing you to make up for any grade penalty and/or to earn an A in the course).

In this table , you can see how this works specifically:

| **Raising the Course Grade**  | **Required work: Default Course Grade (B)** | **Lowering the Course Grade**  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| N/A (Not applicable) | **Complete** all 3 major essays**Note**: All 3 major essays must be **submitted** to pass the class, but they must all be**complete** to meet this requirement.  | Each **Incomplete** major essay lowers the course grade **a full letter**. |
| N/A | Reflection on each of the 3 major essays | Miss 1 Reflection (-1/3)Miss 2 or 3 Reflections (-2/3) |
| All 3 working draft conferences with a reasonably complete draft (+1/3) | 2 working draft conferences with a reasonably complete working draft | 1 working draft conference with a reasonably complete working draft (-1/3)No working draft conference with a reasonably complete draft (-2/3) |
| 4 (out of 6) working draft questionnaires (+1/3)**Note:** these only apply if you attend the related working draft conference. | N/A | N/A |
| **No more than 1** Incomplete or missing Discussion Group Assignment Post (+1/3) | **No more than 2** Incomplete or missing Discussion Group Assignment Posts | 3-5 Incomplete or missing Discussion Group Assignment Posts (-1/3)6-8 Incomplete or missing DGA Posts (-2/3)9+ Incomplete or missing DGA Posts (- 3/3 - a full letter) |
| **No more than 1** Incomplete or missing Discussion Group Assignment Response (+1/3) | **No more than 2** Incomplete or missing Discussion Group Assignment Responses | 3-5 Incomplete ormissing Discussion Group Assignment Responses (-1/3)6-8 Incomplete or missing DGA responses(-2/3)9+ Incomplete or missing DGA Responses (-3/3 - a full letter) |
| 2 additional Annotated Bibliography entries from scholarly sources (+1/3) | 3 Annotated Bibliography entries, as assigned  | 2 or fewer Annotated Bibliography entries (-1/3) |
| N/A | Reflective Essay at the end of the semester | Incomplete or missing Reflective Essay (-1/3) |
| N/A | Unit 3 Topic Conference | No Unit 3 Topic Conference (-1/3) |
| **No more than 1** Incomplete Quiz for Understanding (+1/3) | **No more than 2** Incomplete or missing Quizzes for Understanding | 3+ Incomplete or missing Quizzes for Understanding (-1/3) |

Grade Chart

### Understanding the table

*Note: As I explain this, keep in mind that Yuba College only records full letter grades on your transcripts. For example, a B+ is recorded as a B; a C- is recorded as a C.*

To receive a B in the class, you’d complete all the assignments in the center column.

If you complete additional work, as explained in the left column, then your course grade would be raised. If you do not complete all the work in the center column, then your course grade would be lowered, as explained in the right column.

And note that the left and right columns offset each other. If you lose a portion of the course grade, you can earn it back by completing work in the left column; and if you raise your grade, you can lose that progress if you don't complete a center-column requirement.

#### Examples:

Diana Troy completed everything in the center column, with one exception: she did not want to attend any of the working draft conferences. This lowered her course grade 2/3 of a letter, from a B to a C+. However, she really wanted a B, so she made sure she missed no more than *one* Discussion Group Assignment post. This raised her course grade 1/3 of a letter, bringing her back to a B-. (Final reported grade: B.)

Selina Kyle wanted an A in the course. She completed everything in the center column, with one exception: she couldn’t attend the Unit 3 Topic Conference. This lowered her grade one-third of a letter, to a B-. However, she completed all 16 Discussion Group Assignment posts *and* responses (raising her course grade 2/3 of letter) and two additional Annotated Bibliography entries from scholarly sources (raising her course grade another 1/3 of a letter). This raised her course grade to an A-. (Final reported grade: A.)

## The Grading System

For this course, I will use a "Complete/Incomplete" grading system. In other words, I will not assign points or letter grades to individual assignments. Instead, each assignment will receive one of three "grades":

* **Complete**: If an assignment gets a “Complete,” then it means that you fulfilled the requirements of the assignment.
* **Incomplete**: If an assignment receives an “Incomplete,” then it means that you didn’t fulfill the requirements of the assignment. (Note that the major essay assignments may allow *rewrites*. Information about that will appear on the assignments.)
* **No grade**: If an individual assignment does not have a “Complete” or “Incomplete,” then it means that (a) you didn’t turn it in by the deadline, or (b) I haven’t yet graded it.

### What Does “Complete” Mean?

As I said, I will be separating the notion of *quality* from your grade. Instead of grading on how "well written" your essay is, or how “proper” your grammar is, or how “insightful” your argument is, I’ll assign a “Complete” or “Incomplete” based on whether or not you completed the requirements of the assignment.

Some of these requirements are simple to understand. For example, if an essay assignment asks for 1000 words, and you turn in 500 words, the essay would be marked Incomplete. If an essay assignment requires you to cite at least six sources, and you cite only three, it would be marked Incomplete. If a Discussion Group Assignments asks you to respond to three classmates, and you only respond to two, That DGA Response would be marked Incomplete.

Other requirements are trickier. For example, if the assignment asks you to both **explain and apply** Carol Dweck’s concept of “mindsets” to your experience (that’s Essay 1), and you mention the mindsets without explaining them, that assignment would be marked Incomplete. Or if the assignment asks you to **take a position** on an issue, but you only report on a range of positions without identifying your own, that assignment would be marked Incomplete.

These requirements will be explained in the assignment and identified in a rubric, so they should be reasonably clear. (If you don't know "rubrics" are, don't worry — I'll introduce them during the semester.) However, since some of the requirements are, as I said, trickier, please feel free to contact me if I assign an Incomplete and you don’t agree. I’m happy to talk to you.

### A Note on Canvas's Gradebook

Unfortunately, Canvas doesn't calculate grades based on Complete/Incomplete scores. This creates a real challenge: any calculation that Canvas makes is *wrong*, whether that's points, or a percentage, or a letter grade.

At the same time, the Gradebook can help students keep track of missing or incomplete assignments.

That benefit is important enough that I've chosen not to "hide" the Gradebook. However, be sure to keep that first observation in mind: **please ignore calculation that the Canvas Gradebook presents you.** Only use the Gradebook to keep track of assignments.

This semester, in response to recommendations from last semester's students, I'll be developing a way for you to monitor your progress. I hope you'll let me know what works, or doesn't, as I work with you to develop that process.

## Late Policy

As I mentioned above, my grading philosophy emphasizes the process of learning. In a perfect world, that would mean that I’d have no late policy at all.

Unfortunately, the world isn’t perfect. I have found — both from my own experience, and from feedback from students — that many students need hard deadlines to succeed, especially in online classes.

So here’s my general pattern for deadlines:

### Initial Due Date

Every assignment has a due date that is designed to keep you "on track." This will be the due date that is listed on the actual assignment in Canvas.

### Grace period

I know that this class (or even school, more generally) isn't always the most important thing in your life. I know that semesters get busy, and you forget things. (So do I....) I know that things come up — health issues, family emergencies, shifting job schedules, and much more — and you won't always be able to meet that initial due date.

That's why most assignments include a "grace period" — generally one or two weeks, depending on the assignment — during which I'll accept late work with no penalty (and no judgment).

You should do your best to meet the initial due date, as much of this class involves interacting with each other as you work through the concepts and issues that you'll be writing about. Discussion Group Assignments are less useful when you get out of sync in class discussions, for example. It's also best to wrap up one essay before you have to start dealing with the concepts and issues related to the next one.

### If you miss the grace period

I will not accept work after the grace period has expired. (There's one exception, which I'll mention in a moment.) This isn't meant to be punitive; it's meant to support your success. Putting everything off until the end of the semester only leads to shallow learning and overwhelm. (I know this from other semesters, before I'd put this policy in place.)

The exception: since you need to submit all three essays in order to pass the class, I will accept essays submitted after the grace period. However, they will receive an Incomplete, and will not be eligible for a rewrite.

A couple things I hope you’ll keep in mind, though:

* I don't assign “busy work.” Everything I assign is meant to contribute to what you're learning in the class (and not just the individual unit). So even if you miss the grace period, it would still be useful for you to finish the work for your own understanding.
* You might also use the missed grace period as an opportunity to consider how you might change your planning or schedule to avoid the problem in the future, whether in my class, or throughout your schooling (and beyond!).

## Major Essays

Please note how important the three major essays are: **To receive a passing grade in the class, you must submit all three essays**. If you don't — if you choose not to turn in one or more of the major essays — you won't pass the class. This cannot be offset by doing work from the left column.

Further, each major essay that receives an Incomplete will lower your grade by a full letter. However, this *can* be offset by doing work from the left column.

### Rewrites

If you turn in a major essay assignment by the grace period but still earn an “Incomplete,” you will have an opportunity to rewrite the assignment to meet the requirements. I'll explain the exact details within the course, but here's the general idea:

* I'll provide feedback about ways that you might revise the essay in order to receive the complete.
* After you've reviewed my feedback, we'll meet (via Zoom, if possible) to discuss that feedback. This will provide you the opportunity to ask questions and to run ideas for revision by me; it will also provide me the opportunity to assess how well you've understood my comments. **Note:** if you don't get the chance to review my feedback before the meeting, we'll reschedule to give you a chance to do so.
* At the meeting, we'll decide together on a deadline for the rewrite. If you submit the rewritten essay by that deadline, I will assess score the essay again. (If you miss the deadline, the "Incomplete" will stand.)

## One Last Thought

This grading system isn’t perfect. As far as I can tell, though, no system is perfect; there are always trade-offs.

In my judgment, the trade-offs from this system offer huge advantages over traditional ones. But if you’d like to talk through what these advantages are—if you’re concerned (as some students are), or if you just want to understand better what’s going on here — I’m happy to meet with you to talk through it.

I mean that: I welcome your insights, and I’ll consider them as I continue working through these issues.

# Helpful Stuff

## College (and Life) Resources

**The Writing and Language Development Cen**ter (WLDC - <https://bit.ly/yc-wldc>) is a great place to get help and feedback on your essays. They can help you at any stage of the writing process, from generating ideas to preparing a paper for submission. (Note that are not a proofreading or editing service, so please don’t expect them to “look at your paper and fix it.”) They also have workshops and access to computers. In addition to the Marysville center, they usually have a limited presence at the Sutter Center. They also have online tutoring available.

They’ve also created a video, which might give you a good idea of what they offer (as well as tutoring related to other disciplines). You’ll find it here: <https://bit.ly/video-s24>.

**Disabled Students Programs and Services** (DSPS - <https://bit.ly/1ao-dsps>) offers support for students with physical and learning disabilities. If you know (or suspect) you have a learning disability, be sure to contact them. There are resources available to support you.

**The Yuba College Library** (<https://bit.ly/yc-lrc>) has great staff. Since COVID, they've developed a strong online presence. (I’ll talk a bit more about the library during the course, especially as we approach the research portion.)

**The** [**Yuba College Counseling Department**](http://yc.yccd.edu/student/counseling) (<https://bit.ly/yc-counseling>) has both in-person and online counselors to help. They can help with a lot of different needs, from academic questions (what classes should I take if I want to go to Chico?) to personal questions (I’m hungry and don’t have any money. Where can I get food?)

**Yuba College's Basic Needs Services** (<https://bit.ly/yc-bn>) helps connect students with a range of community-based resources related to food, housing, childcare, transportation, financial aid, health, and mental wellness so that students can remain in classes to focus on their academic success.

This includes **Dusty's Pantry**, which provides food for students and their families, while also connecting students with longer-term resources. You'll find the pantry on both the Marysville campus, in Building 100B, Room 101A, across from Admissions and Records; and at the Sutter Center, in the Tutoring Center.

You'll find links to other resources at their campus webpage (<https://bit.ly/yc-bn>), but you can also contact them by phone, at (530) 741-8988.

## Canvas Help

I’ve been creating short videos explaining how Canvas works in my course. (Every teacher uses Canvas a little differently.) Generally, I’ll introduce the videos in the modules, when the information would be useful.

More generally, though, Yuba College offers many helpful **Online Learning Resources** (<https://bit.ly/yc-de>), including general information and resources about Distance Education, as well as links to Canvas guides, video tutorials, general FAQs, and guides specifically for mobile phones and tablets.

Canvas also has **a Student Guide** (<https://bit.ly/canvas-sg>), which is pretty complete.

And if you need more help, you can contact one of the **Help Desks**:

* Any time, you can email Yuba College’s Help Desk at helpdesk@yccd.edu;
* During working hours (Mon – Fri 8:00 am – 5:00 pm), you can reach Yuba College’s Help Desk at (530) 741-6981;
* After hours (Mon – Fri 5:00 pm – 8:00 am, and weekends), you can reach Canvas’s Help Desk at (844) 303-8279.

## Closing Thoughts

Online classes can be challenging; they require a high level of self-discipline, organization, and “self-starting.” It’s easy to get behind — and that can lead to feeling overwhelmed, which can lead to procrastination that gets you even further behind, and so on. It’s a nasty cycle. (I speak from experience.)

So: if you find yourself struggling, I hope you will reach out — to me, at least, or to some of the resources listed above. Please don’t think that I’ll be upset, or that I won’t care, or that I won’t want to help.

I want you to succeed. Of course, I can’t do it for you — I don’t *give* grades; you *earn* them. But I’ll support you however I can.

See you around.