

**Section Syllabus SPRING 2023**  
**ENC1101: English Composition I**  
**Section P1151 TR 8:00-9:15 in room 465**

Instructor: Sara Smith  
 Office: Building 4, room 408  
 E-mail: [ssmith@pensacolastate.edu](mailto:ssmith@pensacolastate.edu)  
 Office Phone (Pensacola campus): (850)484-1414  
 Office Hours (subject to change):  
 MW 8-10:30 a.m.;  
 TR 12:30 – 3 p.m. and by appointment

English and Communications Department: (850) 484-1400, Pensacola campus, Bldg. 4, rm. 442  
 Department Head: Tracy Peyton [tpeyton@pensacolastate.edu](mailto:tpeyton@pensacolastate.edu)  
 Assistant Department Head: Christine O'Donnell [codonnell@pensacolastate.edu](mailto:codonnell@pensacolastate.edu)  
 Withdrawal dates for this class: Jan.13 (refund); April 5 (no refund)  
 Final exam date: Thursday, May 4, 8-10 a.m.

**Welcome!**

I am excited to work with you this semester! In this class, we will practice and develop a number of skills that I hope will serve you well in your other college courses and beyond your academic career. These include critical thinking strategies, analyzing and responding to rhetorical situations, composing essays and other documents using various genre conventions, researching a topic and formulating an informed perspective, and engaging in productive and respectful discussions with your classmates. I will be your guide through this journey, but YOU must take an active role in the classroom and in your own

## A Note about Critical Thinking

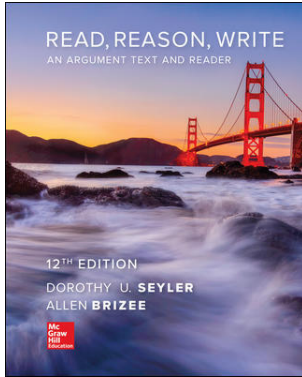
This is primarily a writing class, but you will notice that a big part of this course also centers on critical thinking. What exactly is that, anyway? According to [the Foundation for Critical Thinking \(Links to an external site.\)](#), "[c]ritical thinking is self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way. People who think critically consistently attempt to live rationally, reasonably, and empathically. They are keenly aware of the inherently flawed nature of human thinking when left unchecked." As we go through this course, I will be introducing you to tools and resources that you can use to analyze and evaluate other texts, as well as to write your own informed, rational arguments. Strong thinking is absolutely essential to good writing--it doesn't matter if you can express something well if you have nothing to say in the first place! [This site is an excellent introduction to principles of critical thinking that you can begin using immediately. \(Links to an external site.\)](#) We will refer to this site often during the semester.

## SPECIAL COURSE THEME: Thinking Critically about the Prison-Industrial Complex

Over the years, I have experimented with organizing courses around themes, topics, or issues that students learn about, research, write about, and discuss all semester. I have found that when I organize my writing classes in this manner, students are able to concentrate more deeply on the topics they write about, and are thus able to produce higher quality writing. This semester, our major writing assignments will be centered on the issue of the prison-industrial complex, which the [organization Critical Resistance defines](#) as "the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems." To be clear, I am NOT personally an expert on prisons or criminal justice. I was inspired to build a course around this theme by one of my former students--we'll call him "John." Not too long before enrolling at Pensacola State College, John had finished serving a twenty-five-year sentence in a Florida penitentiary. He decided to write his research paper for my class on the prison-industrial complex. It was a term I was somewhat familiar with, but John's essay brought the significance of this issue to life for me--not just because it had affected him personally, but because he addressed this topic with depth, sincerity, and nuance. Not only had he experienced personally the implications and consequences of this system, but he also actively sought out other voices through his research, including scholarly articles, personal interviews, and even poetry on the subject. John's work that semester inspired the rest of the class, too. So, I am literally taking a page from him and passing the task to you to use this issue as a way to find your way into critical thinking and strong academic writing. We will start by reading and viewing some materials to introduce you to this concept and its many intertwining issues; these texts will also give you material to write your first couple of essays for this class. Then, during the second half of this course, you will conduct your own research on a narrowed-down topic of your choice that examines a specific issue related in some way to American prisons. My hope is that all of us (including myself) will emerge from this class not only better educated about some of these issues, but also as deeper thinkers and stronger writers.

**DISCLAIMER/TRIGGER WARNING:** Given the nature of this topic, please be aware that some of the readings and viewings assigned in this class may be considered controversial or upsetting. Expect some texts to include foul language or violence. Topics such as racism, sexual assault, drug abuse, and others are likely to be mentioned in some of our texts and discussions. Expect some rays of hope as well, however--positive things are also happening in terms of help and support for incarcerated populations and reform of this system. The bottom line is that college is a place to talk and write about stuff that matters, to confront difficult truths, and to question narratives that we perhaps have taken for granted previously. As a teacher, I firmly believe this. However, if you feel uncomfortable or squeamish about the course theme, consider taking a different course.

- **Required Textbook:** Seyler, Dorothy, and Allen Brizee. *Read, Reason, Write*. 12th edition. McGraw-Hill, 2019. ISBN:978-1-259-91627-4



- In addition to the textbook, I will require other readings that I will post on eLearning or hand out in class.
- **Required Technology:** You must have consistent access to a device that allows you to utilize Canvas. Please note that while Canvas offers a handy phone app, not all features may work consistently on your phone, so plan to have a backup device if needed. Google Chrome is the recommended web browser for Canvas. Acceptable file formats for submitting assignments are pdf and docx. Please convert any files to one of these formats before submitting.

#### Assignments and Weight of Each:

- Response Paragraphs (5): 20%
- Quizzes (approximately 10): 10%
- Short Essays (3): 20%
- Annotated Bibliography: 10%
- Research Essay: 20%
- Final Exam Essay: 20%

#### Grading Scale

A	90 – 100	B+	88 – 89	B	80 – 87	C+	78 – 79
C	70 – 77	D+	68 – 69	D	60 – 67	F	0 – 59

#### General Essay Grade Descriptions:

- **A Assignments:** Assignments of A quality follow the directions explicitly and display a polished style. They are well-organized with a clear purpose and strong claims supported by relevant evidence. These assignments include evidence of complex thinking and academic creativity. A assignments generally go beyond what is required while staying within the dictates of the assignment. The grammar and mechanics are nearly perfect.
- **B Assignments:** Assignments of B quality follow the directions explicitly. They are generally well-organized with a clear purpose and strong claims supported by adequate evidence. They are thoughtful, and there is evidence of attention given to style, but they are not as creative as A assignments. B assignments demonstrate a strong competency in grammatical skills but may have a few minor errors.

- **C Assignments:** Assignments of C quality follow the directions and fulfill the basic expectations of the assignment guidelines. However, these assignments may make leaps in logic, confuse concepts, or contain too much “filler” at the expense of substance. These assignments may have significant grammar issues, including mechanical errors or problems with sentence structure. C assignments show little extended thought or attention to style.
- **D Assignments:** Assignments of D quality do not follow the directions. Assignments that do not meet the basic page requirements will automatically receive a D+. Additionally, these assignments are hastily executed and poorly thought out. These assignments may lack the professionalism required for academic writing.
- **F Assignments:** Assignments of F quality display a significant misunderstanding of the writing or concepts under consideration. Extreme lack of professionalism may be an issue.
- **No Grade Assignments:** Assignments that plagiarize intentionally or unintentionally will receive no grade, as will off-topic assignments.

## CLASS POLICIES

- **Attendance:** This class is highly interactive and requires that you remain actively engaged throughout the semester. That means you need to show up and participate. Your full attention as well as your maximum possible attendance is essential to your success in this class, and if you are not here, you will miss important information as well as the benefit of peer interaction as we build knowledge together. More than four total unexcused absences will result in your being assigned an early ‘F’ grade for non-participation. To be excused from class, you must have documentation of a medical or other emergency, or be participating in a school-sponsored extracurricular activity with verification of that activity. If possible, notify me ahead of time of any anticipated absences. Students who are absent are responsible for keeping up with coursework on Canvas.
- **Tardies:** Do not arrive late or leave early except when absolutely necessary. I cannot spend valuable time catching you up on information you may have missed. If arriving late or leaving early becomes a habit for you, I will begin counting those instances as absences.
- **Paper Format:** All assignments written outside class must be typed, double-spaced, in a 12-point font such as Times New Roman or Calibri, with one-inch margins. Format and documentation for all papers written outside of class must conform to MLA style. If you are unsure of what this is, refer to your textbook, or ask the writing lab.
- **Late papers:** No essays will be accepted more than TWO calendar days after their due date. NO EXCEPTIONS. Major essays are the ONLY assignments that can be turned in late.
- **If you miss a test:** I will allow you to take a make-up exam if you can produce documentation of an emergency that caused you to miss class that day.
- **If you miss a quiz or other in-class activity:** Response paragraphs, quizzes, and in-class activities CANNOT be submitted late or made up. However, I will drop the lowest score for these assignments at the end of the semester.

### Canvas and Online Essay Submission:

PSC uses the eLearning system Canvas: <https://www.pensacolastate.edu/elearning/> or [pensacolastate.instructure.com](https://pensacolastate.instructure.com). It is essential that you have regular access to Canvas. All assignments and quizzes must be submitted to the designated online dropboxes on our eLearning site. I will provide feedback

and a graded rubric directly on the eLearning site so that you will have online access to your graded papers and feedback for future reference. I try to have papers and quizzes graded and commented upon within one week of submission, but the turnaround time may be later depending on my workload that week. When you submit an assignment to eLearning, it is your responsibility to ensure that the essay file is uploaded properly and appears in the dropbox. In the event that the eLearning system is down and you cannot submit your assignment, the backup mode for submission is sending the essay as an attachment to ssmith@pensacolastate.edu, followed by submitting to eLearning when your access is restored. Almost all assignments will be run through Turnitin.com for a plagiarism check. As you can see, it will be important for you to have consistent computer/internet access to succeed in this course. While Canvas has a handy app for your smartphone, please be aware that some functions are not as reliable via phone versus a computer. If you do not have computer/internet access at home, remember that there are several places on campus where computers are available for student use, including the writing lab in room 448, the library (building 20), and the computing lab in building 21.

**A note on controversy in the classroom:** While I have the utmost respect and concern for my students' wellbeing, I cannot shy away from confronting controversial topics in the college classroom, since these are precisely the issues that need to be discussed so that we may learn from each other and grow as human beings. So consider yourself warned: we will at various times address in our readings and class discussions some potentially sensitive issues. Please remember that when I assign a text, I am NOT asking you to agree with it or to adopt a particular belief system—I merely ask that you consider the material thoughtfully and carefully. Also, while I strongly encourage serious discussion and debate in class, please do not be rude to others whose opinions may not match your own. Note that a bad attitude will affect your grade. You need to come to class ready to learn with an open mind. You should adopt a similar attitude when you are writing about texts.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is academic dishonesty--copying someone else's work without acknowledging the source(s). I carefully investigate any paper in which I notice evidence of plagiarism. Obviously, any paper that is bought or copied off the Internet is plagiarized, as are papers that are copied from other students/friends or "ghost-written" by another person. These papers will receive zeroes. What I see most often are essays that have been pieced together using plagiarized portions of Internet content. Plagiarized passages are usually very easy to locate. Any paper that is totally plagiarized OR includes one or more plagiarized portions will receive a zero with NO opportunity to reclaim points. A plagiarized portion may consist of but is not limited to the following:

- Phrases, sentences, or paragraphs copied directly from another source without quotation marks and/or without in-text citations
- Phrases, sentences, or paragraphs improperly paraphrased (too close to the original) from another source with or without in-text citations
- Ideas or information that you gathered from a source but failed to cite

Note: Using artificial intelligence to assist in writing is strictly forbidden and is another form of plagiarism. You must write all essays and papers in your own words, citing and quoting any outside sources consulted. AI-detecting software may be used to analyze your submissions.

If a student plagiarizes more than one assignment, that student will receive a failing grade for the course, will be reported to the PSC academic misconduct database, and may be referred to the dean for further disciplinary action. Each major assignment you complete for this class will automatically be run through Turnitin.com to check for material that too closely matches internet content or papers submitted by other students. If you upload your assignment before it is due to the Turnitin Student Self Check function in Canvas, you will have a chance to correct any portions that are not quoted or paraphrased correctly, so feel free to use this function strategically for your own benefit. I view the originality reports of any assignment that is submitted, but I also check each paper myself to verify the accuracy of the report.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Although we will cover this topic extensively in class, it is ultimately your responsibility to make sure you know what counts as plagiarism. Any ideas, facts, information, or words gathered from another author and used in your paper must be attributed to their proper source both on a works cited (bibliography) page AND in the text (parenthetical citations) and quoted or paraphrased properly. The MLA provides detailed instructions for handling these tasks. The Writing Lab and the PSC library are also excellent resources for citation technique. Of course, I am always happy to help you quote, paraphrase, and cite properly if you need my help. It's my job to help you! However, I can neither help nor tolerate students who attempt to pass off others' work as their own, assuming that I either will not notice or do not care. I care very much, and I do not tolerate cheating in any form.

### **The Writing Lab:**

The Writing Lab (Building 4, room 448; 484-1451) provides free tutoring and assistance with essays online, via Zoom, and in person. I strongly recommend that you use the lab's services to get help with your assignments for this class. A portion of your grade on the first major essay will be a requirement that you receive help (and provide proof) from the lab with drafting or revision. The tutors will not correct or edit your paper for you, but they will give you advice and suggestions to improve your writing. No appointment is necessary. The lab offers two types of online tutoring: you may send your paper to the lab to receive written feedback and suggestions, or you may consult a tutor via Zoom for a live conversation about your assignment (recommended).

### **Additional Student Resources at PSC:**

- ADA Office: (850) 484-1637
- TRIO Student Support Services: (850) 484-2028
- Pirates Care Team: [https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?PensacolaState&layout\\_id=11](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?PensacolaState&layout_id=11)

**A Final Note:** You will get out of this class what you invest into it. The best way to learn while in this class (and others) is to be focused on the course material during class time, engage in conversations with your instructor and classmates, put effort into completing your assignments, and ask for help when you don't understand something. While this is primarily a writing class, its broader aim is to provide you with an academic, cultural, and social experience that will serve you during the rest of your college career and beyond. While your instructor is your guide through this process, you are ultimately responsible for your education, so make the most of your time while you are here!