

# Creative Writing Section 03

## ENGL 71

Fall 2024 3 Unit(s) 08/21/2024 to 12/09/2024 Modified 08/21/2024

### Contact Information

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Instructor: Nick Taylor

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Office: FOB 106

#### Office Hours

Thurs 3-4pm and by appointment  
FOB 106 or on Zoom

### Course Information

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In this course we will read, discuss, and write poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. The course will be taught using a combination of discussion and writing workshops. In the discussion, published works of creative writing will be read closely and analyzed. In the writing workshops, creative work by class members will be analyzed and critiqued for revision.

### Course Description and Requisites

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Examinations of works of poetry, creative nonfiction and short fiction as expression of human intellect and imagination, to comprehend the historic and global cultural contexts, and recognize issues related to writing of diverse cultural traditions. Students will also write poetry, creative nonfiction, and a short fiction.

GE Area(s): C2. Humanities

Letter Graded

### Classroom Protocols

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# Class Workshop Procedures

For each unit (poetry, fiction, nonfiction) I will divide the class into four groups of approximately six students each. Your workshop group will consist of different students each unit, so you will get to read work by all of your classmates. For each written assignment, you will upload a draft of your poem/story/etc to the Canvas Discussion Board for your group. You will then read each of the pieces submitted by your groupmates and post comments. During the following class period, you will have the chance to discuss the pieces as a group.

So what do you comment on? You have two responsibilities. The first is to indicate what you got out of the story, poem, or essay. What's your interpretation of it? If the piece were in the textbook, what would you say about it? This helps the writer understand what came across and what didn't. The second responsibility is to suggest avenues for improvement. How can the writer make this story better? Often this requires putting yourself in the writer's shoes. Remember that you can help a fellow writer with thoughtful commentary even if you would not have chosen the same topic or style in your own work.

In a workshop, writers must feel safe sharing their work with the group. Please keep your critiques confined to the work, not the author. Hostile, threatening, or personal criticism will not be tolerated.

## Program Information

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**Welcome to this General Education course.**

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

**Goal 1:** To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

**Goal 2:** To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

**Goal 3:** To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php). (<https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php>)

### English Program Information

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English

reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

### Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

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### Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: [www.sjsu.edu/english](http://www.sjsu.edu/english) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: [english@sjsu.edu](mailto:english@sjsu.edu) (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

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### GE Area C1: Arts

Area C1 Arts courses help students to respond subjectively as well as objectively to aesthetic experiences and to develop an understanding of the integrity of both emotional and intellectual responses. C1 Arts courses encourage students to analyze and appreciate works literary, aesthetic, and cultural importance.

### GE Area C1 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of a C1 course, students should be able to:

1. Identify aesthetic qualities and processes that characterize works of the human intellect and imagination;
2. Explore and articulate their own subjective aesthetic and intellectual responses to such works;
3. Analyze the role and impact of the creative arts in culture and on the interrelationship of self and community;
4. Research and apply relevant aesthetic criteria and/or artistic conventions in effective written responses to works of art.

**Writing Practice:** Students will write a minimum of 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

## Course Materials

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### Reed Magazine

**Edition:** Volume 157 (2024 edition)

**Availability:** Will be sold in class by a Reed staff member.

**Price:** \$15

### Handouts

PDFs on Canvas

## Course Requirements and Assignments

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### Writing Assignments

#### *Poetry*

- A self-portrait poem
- A poem containing sensory images and concrete details
- A metaphor poem (also known as a “conceit” poem)
- A villanelle

#### *Fiction*

- Character sketch (2pp)
- Scene (2-4pp)
- Short story (4-10pp)

#### *Creative Nonfiction*

- Memoir/personal essay (2-4pp)
- Work essay (2-4pp)
- Travel essay (2-4pp)

## Final Portfolio

- Revised versions of all writing assignments
- Responses to attendance at two Bay Area literary readings

## Assignment Format

All material handed in should be **typed and double-spaced**. Your name, the assignment title, and the date should be included at the top of the first page. You may use Word, PDF, or Google Docs format, submitted via Canvas.

## Attending Readings / Lectures

You are required to attend **two readings** by poets or prose writers presented on the SJSU campus or elsewhere. The Bay Area is one of the world's great literary regions, where seven days a week one can attend a reading by a renowned writer at a bookstore, college, community center, or library. Readings are listed in the Sunday editions of the *San Jose Mercury News* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and in *Metro*. After attending each reading, you will write a brief response (1-2pp) to include in your final portfolio. You may respond to any aspect of the reading, for example the speaker, the venue, the material performed, or the Q&A with the audience.

Here are some of the readings being offered on campus this semester:

Sat, Aug 24 // Jive Poetic (poetry) // Zoom (<https://bit.ly/46hPoU0>) // 11:00am-12:30pm

Tues, Sept 10, Viet Thanh Nguyen (novelist and essayist), Student Union Ballroom, 3:30pm

Thurs, Sept 12, Reed Magazine Gala, Student Union Theater, 5pm-6:30pm

Thurs, Sept 12 // Margaret Juhae Lee (memoir) // MLK Library Room 590 // 6:30pm-7:30pm

Mon, Sept 16 // SJSU Student and Alumni Poets // MLK Library Room 255 // 4:30pm-6:30pm

Thurs, Oct. 17 // Tommy Orange (fiction) // Hammer Theatre // 6:30pm – 7:30pm

Fri, Oct 25, Gene Luen Yang (graphic novelist), Student Union Theater, 3:30pm-5:30pm

Thurs, Nov. 7 // Jaime Cortez & Dino Enrique Piacentini (fiction) // Hammer Theatre // 6:30pm – 7:30pm

## Extra Credit Assignments

For extra credit you can attend at up to two more literary readings and write responses to include in your final portfolio.

## ✓ Grading Information

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Grades will be based on the quality and quantity of writing you do as well as the quality and constructiveness of the criticism offered during the workshops and class discussions.

Creative writing, though subject to the instructor's individual subjectivity, can be evaluated according to general standards used to determine how well a piece of writing works. These include: 1) Textual and/or technical competence and eloquence. 2) Imaginative risk. 3) Energy and freshness of language. 4) Effective use of metaphor and other forms of figurative language. 5) Clarity and precision of detail. 6) Capacity for mixed feelings and uncertainty. 7) Effective use of grammar, syntax, rhythm; also meter, rhyme, and other elements of poetic style and form. 8) Naturalness and believability. 9) Appropriateness of style to subject. 10) Compelling audience interest.

Final grades will be the product of the following factors:

- Poetry 20%
- Non-fiction 20%
- Fiction 20%
- Final Portfolio (incl. literary events) 20%
- Class participation (incl. reading quizzes) 20%

Grades given conform to the English Department and university grading policy. The Department of English is committed to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure.

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT GRADING STATEMENT: In English Department courses, instructors comment on and grade the quality of writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All your writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

## University Policies

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Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

## Course Schedule

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This class meets every Tuesday and Thursday, starting on Thursday, August 22. The last class is Thursday, December 5. Class will not be held on Thurs, Nov 28 (Thanksgiving). There is no final exam. Instead, on the date reserved for our final exam (Monday, Dec 16), you will submit a final portfolio via Canvas.

Reading assignments meet GEALO #1, writing assignments GEALO #3.

*Reed = Reed Magazine 2024*

Handout = PDFs available in "Files" area of Canvas course

Thurs, Aug 22

***Topic***

Introduction; still write

Tues, Aug 27

***Topic***

Self portrait poems

***Reading Due***

Adam Zagajewski, "Self Portrait" (Handout)

Linda Pastan, "Self Portrait" (Handout)

Thurs, Aug 29

***Writing Due***

Self portrait poem

***Topic***

Sensory images and concrete details

***Reading Due***

Lorna Dee Cervantes, "Freeway 280" (Handout)

Dion O'Reilly, "Why I Write" (Reed, 76)

Cecil Morris, "We Try to Bear Witness" (Reed, 78)

Tues, Sept 3

***Topic***

Workshop self portrait poems

Thurs, Sept 5

***Topic***

More on sensory images and concrete details

***Reading Due***

Peter Kline, "Interval" (Handout)

Natalie Diaz, "If I Should Come Upon Your House Lonely in the West Texas Desert" (Handout)

J. Michael Martinez, "Heredities (1) Etymology" (Handout)

Tues, Sept 10

***Writing Due***

Imagery.poem

***Topic***

Metaphor or Conceit Poems

***Reading Due***

Maria Kraiskaya, "Sea Rituals" (Reed, 50)

Dan Pinkerton, "Fire, Speaking My Language" (Reed, 86)

Emily Dickinson, "'Hope' is the thing with feathers" (Handout)

Alafia Nicole Sessions, "Animal Husbandry" (Reed, 88)

Thurs, Sept 12

***Topic***

Workshop imagery poem; more on metaphor poems

***Reading Due***

Thomas Pfau, "This Western Wind" (Reed, 92)

Rae Armantrout, "Money Talks" (Handout)

Billy Collins, "Litany" (Handout)

Tues, Sept 17



## ***Writing Due***

Conceit poem

### ***Topic***

Structured poetry; the villanelle

### ***Reading Due***

"Villanelle Handout" (Handout)

Dylan Thomas, "Do not go gentle into that good night" (Handout)

Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art" (Handout)

Thurs, Sept 19

### ***Topic***

Workshop conceit poem; more on villanelle

### ***Reading Due***

Sylvia Plath, "Mad Girl's Love Song" (Handout)

Dan Lechay, "Ghost Villanelle" (Handout)

Tues, Sept 24

## ***Writing Due***

Villanelle

### ***Topic***

Other structures

### ***Reading Due***

Maria McLeod, "In the Museum of Happy Endings" (Reed, 64)

David Miller, "Questions for My Mother" (Reed, 90)

Tejaswini Sudhakar, "The Telegu Word for Home Sounds Like Illness" (Reed, 94)

Madeleine Cravens, "Leaving" (Handout)

Thurs, Sept 26

FICTION UNIT BEGINS

***Topic***

Workshop villanelle; elements of narrative; character

***Reading Due***

Edward P. Jones, "First Day" (Handout)

Kristen Roupenian, "Cat Person" (Handout)

Tues, Oct 1

***Topic***

More on character

***Reading Due***

Jhumpa Lahiri, "A Temporary Matter" (Handout)

Thurs, Oct 3

***Writing Due***

Character sketch

***Topic***

Conflict and scene

***Reading Due***

Yaerim Gen Kwon, "Death as a Writing Prompt" (Reed, 16)

Tues, Oct 8

***Topic***

Workshop character sketch; more on conflict

***Reading Due***

Dino Enrique Piacentini, "Adam's Nose" (Handout)

Thurs, Oct 10

*Topic*

Setting

*Reading Due*

Alice Hatcher, "Caesura" (Reed, 4)

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Tues, Oct 15

*Writing Due*

Scene

*Topic*

Point of view

*Reading Due*

Tommy Orange, "The State" (Handout)

Thurs, Oct 17

*Topic*

Workshop scene; voice

*Reading Due*

George Saunders, "Semplica-Girl Diaries" (Handout)

Tues, Oct 22

*Topic*

How to end a story

*Reading Due*

Steff Sirois, "Severed" (Reed 23)

Jaime Cortez, "The Jesus Donut" (Handout)

Thurs, Oct 24

## ***Writing Due***

Short story.

## ***Topic***

NONFICTION UNIT BEGINS; listen to David Sedaris, "Santaland Diaries"

Tues, Oct 29

## ***Topic***

Workshop short story; intro to memoir / personal essay

## ***Reading Due***

Maggie Dressler, "My Identity Is Disputed Territory" (*Reed* 141)

Thurs, Oct 31

## ***Topic***

More on memoir

## ***Reading Due***

Arya Naido, "On Celebrity, On Control" (*Reed* 128)

Karin Hedetniemi, "Waymarker Near Briallos" (*Reed* 138)

Tues, Nov 5

## ***Topic***

Nonchronological and braided narratives

## ***Reading Due***

Amelia Skinner-Saint, "Breaking Kayfabe" (*Reed* 105)

Lisa M. Jackson, "Birth Plan" (*Reed* 115)

Thurs, Nov 7

## ***Writing Due***

Memoir/personal essay.

## ***Topic***

Writing about work

***Reading Due***

Karen Maner, "Hugo" (Handout)

Tues, Nov 12

***Topic***

Workshop memoir; discuss work essay assignment

***Reading Due***

David Sedaris, "Santaland Diaries" (Handout)

Thurs, Nov 14

***Writing Due***

Work essay.

***Topic***

Travel writing

***Reading Due***

Amy Boyes, "When You've Travelled to Nothing" (*Reed* 126)

Tues, Nov 19

***Topic***

Workshop work essay; discuss travel essay assignment

***Reading Due***

Roxane Gay, "Why the Beach Is a Bummer" (Handout)

Thurs, Nov 21

***Writing Due***

Travel essay.

***Topic***

Hybrid/experimental forms

***Reading Due***

"A Dictionary of Modern Consternation" (excerpt) by Brook McClurg (Handout)

Tues, Nov 26

***Topic***

Workshop travel essay

Thurs, Nov 28

NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

Tues, Dec 3

***Topic***

Revision and submitting work for publication; discuss final portfolio

Thurs, Dec 5

Last Class – In-Class Literary Reading

Mon, Dec 16

***Writing Due***

Final portfolio