

Narrative Craft and Theory Section 01

ENGL 203

Spring 2024 4 Unit(s) 01/24/2024 to 05/13/2024 Modified 01/16/2024

Contact Information

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Office Hours

Wednesday, Thursday, 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM, FO 106 and Zoom

Also available by appointment.

Course Information

In this graduate literature seminar, we will read a selection of fiction published in the last three years. I ask that participants in the seminar come prepared to read these books as critics and as writers. As critics, we will explore whether there is a “school” of contemporary fiction. As writers, we will dissect each work in terms of form, aesthetics, and material, to determine how these authors—who are our contemporaries, if not our peers—are capturing the attention of early twenty-first-century readers. Writing requirements include short weekly response papers (500-1000 words) and a seminar paper or creative project (4000 words minimum).

Weekly meeting time

Thursday, 4:00 PM to 6:45 PM, FO 104

CFA Strike Information

The California Faculty Association (the labor union of Lecturers, Professors, Coaches, Counselors, and Librarians across the 23 CSU campuses) is in a difficult contract dispute with California State University management. We will be going on strike from January 22 – January 26. We demand management

gives us a fair contract that recognizes the dignity of CSU faculty, staff, and students. Our working conditions are student learning conditions; we seek to protect both. For further information go to:

www.calfac.org/strike.

Course Description and Requisites

Study of prose fiction and nonfiction as a literary genre (with sub-genres) and an art which can be learned through imitation and analysis. Course emphasizes the formal and technical properties of prose narrative, with attention to Narratology. Prior permission of graduate advisor may be repeatable once for credit.

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

In a seminar like this, students should feel safe sharing their observations about the assigned literary works. Hostile, threatening, or personal comments will not be tolerated. If you feel threatened or singled out unfairly by a classmate, please bring the issue to my attention so I can address it promptly.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

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

Upon successful completion of the MA English program, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research
3. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to
 - a. organize and present material in a cogent fashion,
 - b. formulate and defend original arguments,

- c. employ effectively the language of their discipline and
 - d. write under time constraints.
5. Demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.

Upon successful completion of the MFA in Creative Writing, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a high level of ability to propose and complete a publishable, full-length work of literature in a primary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
2. Demonstrate high level of proficiency to write works of literature in a secondary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
3. Demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.
4. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.
5. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to:
 - a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion;
 - b) formulate and defend original arguments;
 - c) employ effectively the language of their discipline;
 - d) write under time constraints.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

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

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

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Materials

1. Groff, Lauren. *Matrix*. (published Sep 7, 2021) ISBN 978-1594634505
2. Everett, Percival. *Dr. No*. (Nov 1, 2023) ISBN 978-1644452080
3. Kitamura, Katie. *Intimacies*. (Jul 20, 2021) ISBN 9780399576171
4. Torres, Justin. *Blackouts*. (Oct 10, 2023) ISBN 9780374716677
5. Garcia, Gabriela. *Of Women and Salt*. (Mar 30, 2021) ISBN 9781250776709
6. Lee, Min Jin and Heidi Pitlor, eds. *Best American Short Stories 2023*. (Oct 17, 2023) ISBN 978-0063275904
7. Rooney, Sally. *Beautiful World, Where Are You?* (Sep 7, 2021) ISBN 9781250859044
8. Chang, K-Ming. *Organ Meats*. (Oct 24, 2023) ISBN 9780593447345
9. Mottley, Leila. *Nightcrawling*. (Jun 7, 2022) ISBN 9780593318935
10. Abreu, Andrea. *Dogs of Summer*. (Aug 2, 2022) ISBN 9781662602450
11. Norris, Keenan. *The Confession of Copeland Cane*. (Jun 15, 2021) ISBN 9781951213909
12. Folk, Kate. *Out There*. (Mar 29, 2022) ISBN 9780593231487
13. Zevin, Gabrielle. *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*. (Jul 5, 2022) ISBN 9780593321201

Course Requirements and Assignments

Weekly response papers

500-1,000 words each

Weekly response papers should be uploaded before class to each week's Canvas assignment. You are free to write about any aspect of the assigned reading that felt important to you. There are no correct responses. The purpose of the exercise is for you to gather your thoughts after reading. I have found over the years that class discussions are more interesting and productive when we take time to reflect before speaking. Reflection papers give class discussions shape and help us cover more topics every week. Be sure to proofread before you turn in your papers, but please don't obsess. I realize that the schedule is tight, and I will grade according.

Meets MFA PLOs #4, #5; MA PLOs #3, #4

Participation in class discussions

Participation in all class meetings is essential. Because most of the value of this course is in the class discussions, you are only cheating yourself if you miss class. You are graduate students and serious writers, and I will treat you as colleagues. You must come to class prepared, which means that you have (a) read the assigned material, and (b) written a short reflection on what you've read.

Meets MFA PLOs #3, #4; MA PLOs #1, #2, #3

Literary Event Responses

1000 words each

You will be required to attend at least two literary readings over the course of the semester, and to turn in responses papers of 2-4 pages each. Your response papers can cover the substance of the reading, the author's presentation style, the author's wardrobe—anything that strikes you.

You are free to attend any literary events you choose, but here are some of the readings being held on campus this semester. Note that you will have read at least one book by each of these writers by the date of their visit.

Thurs 2/15 – Fiction writer Percival Everett, 12pm Steinbeck Center (craft talk), 7pm Hammer Theater (reading)

Thurs 4/18 – Fiction writer Leila Mottley, 12pm Steinbeck Center (craft talk), 7pm Hammer Theater (reading)

Thurs 5/9 – Fiction writer Kate Folk, 7pm MLK Library 225 (reading)

If you have questions about whether an event meets this course requirement, just ask the instructor beforehand.

Meets MFA PLOs #3, #4, #5; MA PLOs #1, #2, #3

Final project

4000 words

In lieu of a final exam, you will submit a final project, which can be either (a) an MLA-formatted seminar paper on some aspect of contemporary fiction (for example a plotting technique that you have observed in several of the works we've read, or an examination of different authors' use of similar material) or (b) a short story demonstrating techniques or subjects we have determined to be "extremely contemporary." In either case, your draft should be at least 4,000 words.

Meets MFA PLOs #1, #2, #3, #4, #5; MA PLOs #1, #2, #3, #4

✓ Grading Information

Breakdown

Weekly Response Papers: 40%

Participation: 20%

Responses to Literary Events: 10%

Final Project: 30%

Late Assignment Policy

Some weeks are busier than others. Some novels keep you glued and other don't. I know this.

Therefore, **I will allow you to turn in up to two of your weekly response papers a week late.** If you do so more than twice, or if your response paper is more than a week late, you will receive no credit for that assignment. You may not turn in your final paper late unless you have discussed it with me beforehand.

University Policies

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

Note: This schedule is subject to change. Announcements will be made in class.

When	Topic	Notes
01/25/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Introduction	CANCELLED due to faculty strike.
02/01/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Groff, MATRIX	
02/08/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Everett, DR NO	
02/15/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Kitamura, INTIMACIES	
02/22/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Torres, BLACKOUTS	
02/29/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Garcia, OF WOMEN AND SALT	The author will join us by Zoom for part of the discussion.
03/07/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES 2023	Discussion of first ten stories.
03/14/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES 2023	Discussion of last ten stories.
03/21/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Rooney, BEAUTIFUL WORLD, WHERE ARE YOU?	
03/28/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Chang, ORGAN MEATS	
04/04/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	NO CLASS - SJSU Spring Break	

When	Topic	Notes
04/11/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Mottley, NIGHTCRAWLING	
04/18/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Abreu, DOGS OF SUMMER	
04/25/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Norris, THE CONFESSION OF COPELAND CANE	The author will join us by Zoom for part of the discussion.
05/02/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Folk, OUT THERE	
05/09/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Zevin, TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW	Final class meeting
05/16/2024 4:00 PM - 6:45 PM	Literary Response Papers and Final Projects Due	No in-person final exam will be held - please submit all work on Canvas.