

# Literatures of the Americas Section 01

## ENGL 123A

Spring 2025 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/23/2025 to 05/12/2025 Modified 01/23/2025

### Contact Information

---

Instructor:	Dr. Maite Urcalegui (she/they)
Email:	maite.urcalegui@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	T/Th 4:30-5:30 p.m. in Faculty Offices Building (FOB) 216  By appointment on <a href="https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84765764961?pwd=MkFXSTVhb0d3alF2NXZ1Tm9XZEZKUT09">Zoom</a> ( <a href="https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84765764961?pwd=MkFXSTVhb0d3alF2NXZ1Tm9XZEZKUT09">https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84765764961?pwd=MkFXSTVhb0d3alF2NXZ1Tm9XZEZKUT09</a> ).
Class Day/Time & Location:	Tuesdays & Thursdays 3-4:15 p.m.  In person in Sweeney Hall 229

### Course Information

---

**English 123A: Literatures of the Americas** promotes global understanding and transnational analysis by examining literature across the Americas, a broad term that brings together many different regions, nations, cultures, and languages across North and South America and the Caribbean. In this course, we will explore how the idea of “the Americas” has been shaped, in part, through European colonial enterprises, U.S. imperialism and neocolonialism, global capitalism, and migration. At the same time, we will examine the ways in which authors and artists across the Americas create counternarratives that challenge the coherence of that concept and envision alternative forms of identity, community, and belonging. We will historicize and analyze distinct literary traditions across the Americas as they are shaped by historical, cultural, and political contexts. Given the wide scope of the course (both geographic and otherwise), much of our reading will focus on Indigenous literature from the Turtle Island, or North America, specifically the U.S. and Canada; Caribbean literature from Antigua; and a couple of works from South America, specifically

Chile and Argentina. Reading across these diverse literary texts and cultural contexts, we will consider what productive connections emerge within the broad, diverse, and vexed category of "Literatures of the Americas" and what gets left out.

## Course Description and Requisites

---

Examines the literatures of the Americas including the cultural, historical, and political contexts from which they emerge.

Satisfies SJSU Studies Area V: Cultures and Global Understanding.

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all SJSU studies courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.

Letter Graded

## Classroom Protocols

---

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance is vital to your learning and success in the course. We don't want to miss out on the opportunity to learn from/with you! If you are sick, or are unable to make it to class for whatever reason, you can catch up on the material you missed on our course Canvas page, via a friend/peer, and/or in my office hours or by appointment.

### **Preparation & Participation**

We all have a responsibility and an opportunity to be an active participant in our own learning and to contribute to the knowledge that we'll create together in this class! Please come prepared to do so. This means that you've completed the assigned reading for the day in advance of class; you have access to those readings during our class discussion; and you have basic materials like pen/pencil, paper, and a device if you would like or are requested.

### **Devices**

You are welcome to use larger devices like a tablet or laptop for class-specific activities, but please refrain from using your cell phone. Please be present and help create a respectful and distraction-free class by using your devices for class work only during our time together.

### **Engaging in Class Discussion & Building Community**

Given the history of the Americas, this course explores challenging issues around colonialism, race and racism, and gender-based and sexual violence, among others. I encourage you to engage in these discussions to the degree you feel comfortable, to connect what we read to your own life and to the world around you, and to listen to and learn from your peers with respect and care. We will continue to discuss our collective goals around engaging in class discussion and building community throughout the semester, but here are some foundational considerations:

- We can disagree and challenge each other's thinking and ideas in a civil, respectful, and productive way as long as *that disagreement is not predicated on hate speech, misinformation, or exclusion*.
- We will strive to be aware of and not use sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist and other marginalizing language. If harmful language is used in class, we will address it together as a learning moment to the extent it is appropriate and safe to do so.
- The texts we will read will sometimes use offensive language to either illustrate the realities of racist, colonialist, sexist, and queerphobic violence or to recuperate and reclaim violent language that has been directed at their community as a member of that specific community. Because our class is a diverse community and we all occupy different identities and positionalities, when a slur appears within a text, please do not reproduce it by saying it aloud. You may say "first letter of word-word" (i.e., "n-word") or simply redact it with a or spoken pause. If you are unsure of the history or meaning of a word, please ask about or research it and/or use language that you know is inclusive.
- Close attention to the language that we read, write, and use is a necessary component of reading and thinking like a literary scholar, which we all are when we enter this classroom. Please be mindful of the language you use, and we will continue to work together to unpack the relationship between and among language, identity, and power.

### Course Communication & Emails

All course materials can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). Please check both our course Canvas and your email regularly to stay up to date. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#).

Please be aware that I do not respond to emails outside of traditional business hours, M-F 9-5. I encourage you to also maintain professional boundaries around email and step away from it when you can/need. Unless it is a weekend or I am sick or away for travel, I should respond to your message within 48 hours. If you worry that I haven't seen or responded to your email, please do not hesitate to send me a follow up. I would appreciate it in fact!

When you email me, I'd appreciate it if you included a specific subject that states the purpose of your email as well as a greeting, message, and your name.

### Academic Originality, Honesty, and AI

The literature we will be reading and discussing is so, so good, and it explores narratives and experiences that are often ignored, distorted, or marginalized. I want you to do justice to that literature by seriously engaging with it and developing your own original analysis of it. While you are welcome to collaborate with resources like Grammarly to edit your work, you should also ensure that you do your own round of editing to not only catch what those virtual tools might have missed but also to develop your own editorial eye. You should not at any stage of your process use generative AI (ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Claude, Meta AI, etc.) to generate ideas, outlines/writing structures, or language/sentences. If for whatever reason you decide to ignore this and use AI, you must properly cite and credit the information, ideas, and language that you pulled. The model that AI like ChatGPT uses to generate material is fundamentally derivative and is also known to be inaccurate/incomplete and to reproduce misinformation, biases, and stereotypes. I want to hear your original ideas, arguments, and writing that can only be achieved by engaging with the texts we're

reading and the writing process! Additionally, we want to make sure that the scholars and authors whose ideas we engage with are properly cited and credited to not only credit their labor/talents/insights but also to build our own credibility as a writer.

You should also be aware of SJSU's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), and know that, as a faculty member, I am required to report all violations of this policy to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. If I suspect that you have plagiarized material or generated content with AI, I will not grade your work and will contact both you and the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development regarding future steps.

Please visit the [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](#) website for more information on academic integrity. It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and how to properly cite all sources.

## Program Information

---

**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](#).

### 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.

### 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)

---

### GE Area V Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area V course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze historical, social, and/or cultural significance of creative works of human expression (examples include, but are not limited to, written works, images, media, music, dance, technologies, designs), from at least one cultural tradition outside the United States;
2. Examine how creative works of human expression [as defined in #1] outside the United States have influenced the United States' cultures;
3. Explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external influences;

4. Appraise how the study of creative works of human expression from outside the United States shapes one's own understanding of cultural experiences and practices.

**Writing Practice:** Students will write a minimum of 3000 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

### ENGL 123A Specific Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Historicize “the Americas” as a contentious category that is shaped by colonial histories and comprises multiple literary traditions that emerge from specific national, geographic, linguistic, and cultural contexts (aligned with GLO 1).**
  1. You will demonstrate your understanding of this CLO throughout all class readings, discussions, and assignments.
2. **Discuss how literature of the Americas critically portrays and creatively resists coloniality, imperialism, racism, and capitalism and reflect on how these literary works shape our own understanding of cultural experiences and practices across the Americas (aligned with GLO 1-3).**
  1. You will demonstrate understanding of this CLO primarily through class participation and your discussion posts.
3. **Analyze, contextualize, and critically respond to both content and form of literary texts through close readings (aligned with GLO 4).**
  1. You will demonstrate understanding of this CLO through the passage presentation & discussion, discussion posts, close reading paper, and the final project.
4. **Practice writing and researching across genres and forms within the discipline with a particular audience and purpose in mind (aligned with GLO 4).**
  1. You will demonstrate understanding of this CLO through the discussion posts, close reading paper, and the final project.

## Course Materials

---

### Major Course Texts\*

- Deborah Miranda's *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (free electronic copy available through SJSU library)
- Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas' *Red: A Haida Manga* (free electronic copy available through SJSU library)
- Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*
- Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*

All other course readings will be available on Canvas.

\*While you are not required to buy these texts, you are responsible for getting access to the required readings, whether you purchase them through the campus bookstore, find them online, or check them out through the course reserves or the SJSU or SJPL libraries. *If you are able, I encourage you to purchase print copies to support the authors/artists and to bring to class.*

English Department Library Liaison

You may contact Peggy Cabrera ([peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu](mailto:peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu)) if you would like additional research support for your writing assignments in this course, or if you're interested in learning more about pursuing a career in library science.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

---

All assignment instructions and grading criteria will be discussed in class and posted on Canvas prior to the deadline.

### **Participation (15%)**

I encourage you to participate in class discussion not only by sharing your thoughts and asking questions but also by actively listening and creating space for others to share. I understand, however, that we all process knowledge in different ways and that our level of comfort participating in the classroom may be influenced by our own relationships to power and privilege and by our educational experiences. Every day students will be asked to participate in a short introductory assignment that will fulfill their participation for the day. *Participation assignments will not be excused unless there is an emergency or extenuating circumstance that you communicate with me. However, each student's lowest three participation grades will automatically be dropped.*

### **Passage Presentation & Discussion (15%)**

The purpose of these presentations is to give you an opportunity to learn by becoming the teacher. You will take leadership over guiding your small group through your close reading and discussion of a passage of your choice from the text.

### **Reflective Discussion Posts (four total; 20%)**

Your discussion posts will provide a low-stakes setting for you to practice your close reading & analysis of assigned readings and reflect on how they shape your own understandings of cultural experiences and practices across the Americas.

### **Close Reading Practice + Paper (25%)**

In the close reading practice, you will develop a tentative research question, argument, and a draft of a body paragraph to begin brainstorming ideas and getting feedback. You will then use that feedback to develop a 4-5-page paper. This process allows you to engage in writing as a *process* and offers a space for you to practice close reading as a methodology for exploring: what literature means, how it communicates meaning formally, why it is important, and how it contributes to cultural understandings of the Americas.

### **Final Project (25%)**

In your final project (about 6-8 pages) you will have the option of showcasing your learning in a format of your choice: an analytical paper, an original creative work and reflective statement, or a reflective essay. All three options must critically engage with scholarly and literary texts that we've read in class as well as your own outside research.

# ✓ Grading Information

---

## Grading Breakdown

Participation 15%

Passage Presentation & Discussion 15%

Discussion Posts (4 total) 20%

Close Reading Practice + Paper 25%

Final Project 25%

## Extensions & Late Work

I am willing to work with you if you anticipate that you may need extra time to submit your best work in an assignment. In order to avoid last-minute stress, please email me in advance of an assignment deadline to discuss an extension. If an emergency or other extenuating circumstance arises that makes this impossible, please contact me, and we can work out a solution. If late work is submitted, it will be graded at my discretion and may receive a deduction.

# 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

---

Please note that this schedule, including specific readings and assignment deadlines, are subject to change to meet the needs of the class. Additional work will never be assigned, however, and all changes will be communicated in advance.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1: Jan. 23	Course Introductions	Thursday 1/23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Course Introductions</li><li>• Complete Start-of-Semester Self-Reflection</li></ul>



When	Topic	Notes
Week 2: Jan 28 & 30	What is "the Americas"?	<p>Tuesday 1/28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jonathan Cohen "Why Do We Call It America?"</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 1/30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alexandra T. Vazquez's "Americas" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i></li> </ul> <p>Friday 1/31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Discussion Post #1 due by 11:59</b></li> <li>• <b>Respond to two peers before next class</b></li> </ul>
Week 3: Feb. 4 & 6	Decolonial Counternarratives of the Americas	<p>Tuesday 2/4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deborah Miranda's <i>Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir</i> "Introduction" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Content warning: this text discusses various forms of physical violence, child abuse, and rape within the context of settler colonialism</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Nichole Meyers Lim's "Educating Elementary School Children about California Missions and the Perpetuation of Genocide"</li> <li>• Discuss group teaching facilitation and sign up</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 2/6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 1-36 (The End of the World: Missionization 1776-1836)</li> </ul>
Week 4: Feb. 11 & 13		<p>Tuesday 2/11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 37-74 (Bridges: Post-Secularization 1836-1900)</li> <li>• "Indigeneity" from <i>Native Studies Keywords</i> edited by Stephanie Nohelani Texas, Andrea Smith, and Michelle H. Raheja</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 2/13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 75-106 (The Light from the Carrisa Plains: Reinvention 1900-1961)</li> </ul>

When	Topic	Notes
Week 5: Feb. 18 & 20		<p><b>*Please check progress. Tuesday, Feb. 18, is last day to drop a class without a "W."</b></p> <p>Tuesday 2/18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 107-175 (Teheyapami Achiska: Home 1961-present *Read Silver through Testimony*)</li> <li>• Guest visit from Dr. Regiani A. S. Zacarias, International Visiting Faculty at SJSU</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 2/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 176-208 (finish book)</li> <li>• "Colonialism" from <i>Native Studies Keywords</i> edited by Stephanie Nohelani Tevas, Andrea Smith, and Michelle H. Raheja</li> </ul> <p>Friday 2/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Discussion Post #2 due by 11:59 p.m.</b></li> <li>• <b>Respond to two peers before next class</b></li> </ul>
Week 6: Feb. 25 & 27	Graphic Narratives of Native North America/Turtle Island	<p>Tuesday 2/25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selected comic shorts from <i>Deer Woman: An Anthology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Content warning: Portrays sexual violence and graphic violence of self-defense.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Thursday 2/27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Marnette Federis and Mina Kim's "Examining the Painful Legacy of native American Boarding Schools in the US"</li> <li>• Watch &amp; discuss Reservation <i>Dogs</i> season 3, episode 3 "Deer Lady" in class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Content warning: Does not graphically portray but discusses child abuse and sexual assault within the context of Native American boarding schools.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discuss Close Reading Practice + Paper</li> </ul>

When	Topic	Notes
Week 7: March 4 & 6		<p>Tuesday 3/4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas's <i>Red: A Haida Manga</i> (read full text)</li> <li>• Maylei Blackwell's "Indigeneity" from <i>Keywords from Latina/o Studies</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue discussing Yahgulanaas's <i>Red: A Haida Manga</i></li> </ul> <p>Friday 3/7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Close reading practice due by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas</b></li> </ul>
Week 8: March 11 & 13	South American Feminist Short Stories	<p>Tuesday 3/11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read all of Mónica Ramón Ríos' "Cars on Fire" from <i>Cars on Fire</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue discussing "Cars on Fire"</li> </ul>
Week 9: March 18 & 20	Writing Workshop	<p>Tuesday 3/18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing workshop for Close Reading Paper</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No class meeting</b></li> <li>• At home work day for Close Reading Paper</li> </ul> <p>Friday 3/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Close Reading Paper due by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas</b></li> </ul>
Week 10: March 25 & 27	South American Feminist Short Stories	<p>Tuesday 3/25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mariana Enriquez' "The Dangers of Smoking in Bed" from <i>The Dangers of Smoking in Bed</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue discussing "The Dangers of Smoking in Bed"</li> </ul>
March 31- April 4	Spring Break	Rest and relax!

When	Topic	Notes
Week 11: April 8 & 10	Postcolonial Caribbean Prose	<p>Tuesday 4/8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jamaica Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i> pp. 1-37</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 4/10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No class meeting because Dr. Urcalegui is away on university-approved travel.</b></li> <li>• Jamaica Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i> pp. 41-81</li> </ul>
Week 12: April 15 & 17		<p>Tuesday 4/15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrap up discussion of Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 4/17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 3-16</li> </ul> <p>Friday 4/18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Discussion Post #3 due by 11:59 p.m.</b></li> <li>• <b>Respond to two peers before next class</b></li> </ul>
Week 13: April 22 & 24		<p>Tuesday 4/22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 17-42</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 4/24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 43-84</li> <li>• Discuss final projects</li> </ul>
Week 14: April 29 & May 1		<p>Tuesday 4/29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 85-132</li> <li>• Supplementary scholarly reading TBD</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 5/1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp.133-164</li> </ul> <p>Friday 5/2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Discussion Post #4 due by 11:59 p.m.</b></li> <li>• <b>Respond to two peers' before next class</b></li> </ul>

When	Topic	Notes
Week 15: May 6 & 8	Final Preparations & Reflections	Tuesday 5/6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final project workshop</li></ul> Thursday 5/8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Course reflections &amp; evaluations</li></ul>
Finals Week		Thursday 5/15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>No class meeting</b></li><li>• <b>Final project due by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas</b></li></ul>