

Poetry Writing Workshop Section 01

ENGL 240

Spring 2025 Hybrid 4 Unit(s) 01/23/2025 to 05/12/2025 Modified 01/27/2025

Course Information

4 unit(s): Poetics and poetry writing as preparation for thesis. Includes theory and practice of major trends in contemporary poetry. Intensive workshop experience. May be repeatable for credit for up to 12 units.

Intensive practice in craft of poetry and study of creative process. Intended for students already familiar with traditional and contemporary poetic modes and already writing original poetry.

In his "Materia Poetica," the poet Wallace Stevens wrote, "The relation of art to life is of the first importance especially in a skeptical age since, in the absence of a belief in God, the mind turns to its own creations and examines them, not alone from the aesthetic point of view, but for what they reveal, for what they validate and invalidate, for what they support and give."

In our course, we will examine how modern poetics and aesthetics advances investigations into perceptual practices with the goal of expanding our own individual art practices. We'll use class workshops, peer-review, and multiple drafts and revisions to achieve that goal. The course is demanding, and based on a certain kind of intense, exigent reading, requiring prolonged— in fact, repeated— attention to specific poems. We will see poetry as an artistic practice: as the great Paul Celan writes, "Attentiveness is the prayer of the soul." We will be attentive and practice the process of poetry.

Course Description and Requisites

Poetics and poetry writing as preparation for thesis. Includes theory and practice of major trends in contemporary poetry. Intensive workshop experience. May be repeatable for credit for up to 12 units.

Prerequisite: Graduate standing and admission via portfolio acceptance to the Writing Focus.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

While an in-person seminar meeting will regularly occur on M 7pm-9:45pm, requiring a computer and internet connectivity, students can also expect various classes to also contain an asynchronous component. I will be regularly assigning small group work and asking you to meet with me on Zoom one-on-one to check in about your participation and writing. Our class will be employing Canvas throughout the course.

≡ 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

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 Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

MFA Creative Writing Student Learning Objectives

- Students will 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).
- Students will demonstrate high-level of proficiency to write works of literature in a secondary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
- Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.
- Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.

Course Materials

Texts/Readings (All available on CANVAS)

- A Physical Journal/Daybook
- Poetry Course Readings: on Canvas as PDFs or Links.

There will also be handouts in class All required readings, whether online or in our books, must be brought to class.

Grading Information

Course Requirements and Assignments

Participation: while there may be lectures, the course will be organized as a single continuous discussion requiring everyone to voice their opinion.

The quality of your class participation will be judged through the following: your effort at completing short assignments and, as necessary, sharing them; the effort you put into responding to the workshopped writing of your peers and your willingness to share your thoughts with the workshop as a whole; and the

effort you bring to reading critically.

All required readings, whether online or in our books, must be brought to class.

In class, you are being asked to respond to each other and to questions raised in class: I WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY DISRESPECTFUL CONVERSATION OF ANY MANNER WHETHER IN CLASS OR ONLINE. Participation is essential to this course: we will work both in large and small groups.

Your class participation will be assessed as follows:

- A: Regular, helpful questions and comments that demonstrate full preparation for class meetings. Active, positive participation in all classroom discussions and activities. Conformity to all course policies as stated in this syllabus.
- B: Occasional, pertinent questions and responses; good listening. Conformity to all course policies as stated in this syllabus.
- C: Infrequent, tangential questions or comments; attentive. Conformity to all course policies as stated in this syllabus.
- D: Inconsistent conformity to policies stated in this syllabus; disengaged from discussion; not prepared for class.
- F: Regularly absent, physically or mentally; failure to contribute meaningfully to the classroom's learning community; repeated violations of classroom policies.

Students are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to review the course calendar in light of their other commitments. The instructor will determine on a case-by-case basis whether or not an out-of class commitment merits special consideration.

Regarding AI: There is a place for AI, but not in this class. Our Class is designed to develop students' abilities to think and write critically about literary texts. To that end, the use of any artificial intelligence tools, including but not limited to ChatGPT and Grammarly, is expressly forbidden. All graded student work is submitted to Turnitin, which flags AI above 20%. Any student work that is flagged with an AI score above 20% will be considered a violation of SJSU's academic code and result in a minimum penalty of zero for the assignment in question.

Reading Like a Writer: during the semester you will pair up with a colleague to present some opening thoughts on the day's reading. Both of you must speak/present. Both of you will receive the same grade. A good discussion will include the following:

1. Introduction to the Author—Biography, Important Notes, Etc.
2. CONCISE Summary of Poem/Essay
3. Identification of the Author's Use of Prosody we are studying. This should be a close-reading that pays attention to a SPECIFIC passage of text and explicates the writing for significance of language, imagery, tone, etc. I will assign one such technique or point of emphasis; you must choose another interesting feature of the Poem/Essay.
4. A discussion of the Poem/Essay's significance, with special attention to the deeper questions the events and reflections prompt.

You must prepare a visual aid for this presentation. You may make a Powerpoint presentation. I will be evaluating these Presentations for their depth and sophistication, your abilities to engage the class, your speaking dynamics—volume, clarity, rate, etc., and your overall professionalism.

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Final Examination or Evaluation

The course will complete with each student turning in a final portfolio of their written work. More information will be provided nearer the time the assignment is due.

Grading Information

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>

<i>A plus</i>	96 to 100%
<i>A</i>	93 to 95%
<i>A minus</i>	90 to 92%
<i>B plus</i>	86 to 89 %
<i>B</i>	83 to 85%
<i>B minus</i>	80 to 82%
<i>C plus</i>	76 to 79%
<i>C</i>	73 to 75%
<i>C minus</i>	70 to 72%
<i>D plus</i>	66 to 69%
<i>D</i>	63 to 65%
<i>D minus</i>	60 to 62%

- 50% **FINAL PROJECT**

Your final project will take the following form:

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1. A total of 15-20 pages of poetry (in the form of a lyric essay, poetry, prose).

- 20% **Participation** (including class discussion, preparation, attendance, class prompts, sharing sketches of poetry, etc.)

- 30% 2 scheduled individual meetings with Prof. J. Michael (15% per meeting)

- These meetings will occur after the 1/3rd of class and will be to discuss your poems: please have a packet of poems sent to Prof. J. Michael at least two days prior to the scheduled meeting; each packet should be comprised of at least five edited poems.

Total 100%

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.

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

English 240 Writing Poetry, Spring 2025

(As the course progresses, we may get off schedule--this is natural—as such, our daily assignments may be revised as necessary with fair notice given by email or in class).

Please be sure to have completed the assigned reading **before** that day’s zoom class.

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Week TWO:	Class Introductions
Jan 28	-

<p>WEEK THREE: Feb. 4</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Finite and Infinite Games by James Carse · Functional White by Orlando White · Selections-North True South Bright by Dan Beachy-Quick
<p>February 6</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Selections on THE ORDER OF THE THIRD BIRD
<p>WEEK FOUR: Feb. 11</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Selections of GAP GARDENING by Rosmarie Waldrop
<p>WEEK FIVE: Feb. 18</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Two Takes by Paisley Rekdal · Some of What's in a Line by Carl Philips <p>Group "January" PRESENTERS:</p> <p>§</p> <p>§</p>

WEEK SIX:

Read:

Feb. 25

- Furthermore....by Christina Davis
- POETRY IS NOT A LUXURY by Audre Lourde

Group "February" PRESENTERS:

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WEEK SEVEN:

Read: *Canvas*

Mar. 4

- Lineation...by Karla Kelsey
- Only the Broken Breath by Graham Faust

Group "March" PRESENTERS:

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<p>WEEK EIGHT: Mar. 11</p>	<p>Read: <i>Canvas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The line as fetish by Gabriel Gudding · One the Line by Kazim Ali <p>Group "April" PRESENTERS:</p> <p>§</p> <p>§</p>
<p>WEEK NINE: Mar. 18</p>	<p>Read: <i>Canvas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Meridian by Paul Celan <p>Group "July" PRESENTERS:</p> <p>§</p> <p>§</p>
<p>WEEK TEN: Mar. 25</p>	<p>Workshop</p>
<p>WEEK ELEVEN: Apr. 1</p>	<p>SPRING RECESS</p>
<p>WEEK TWELVE: Apr. 8</p>	<p>Inclass Writing</p>

WEEK THIRTEEN: Apr. 15	Workshop
WEEK FOURTEEN: Apr. 22	Workshop Discuss Final Portfolio and Contents.
WEEK FIFTEEN: Apr. 29	Workshop
Last Week: May 6	Last General Workshop

Final Manuscript is DUE, by end of day, of the day OUR FINAL IS SCHEDULED