

# ENGLISH GRADUATE NEWSLETTER

Volume L, Number 10

October 2021

SJSU DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND  
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

## 2021 Lurie Chair

### Distinguished Visiting Author-In-Residence



#### Esmé Weijun Wang

Esmé Weijun Wang, an award-winning fiction and non-fiction writer, will be the Spring 2021 Lurie Visiting Author-in-Residence, joining the MFA program to teach the Graduate Nonfiction Writing Workshop (ENGL 242). Esmé is the author of a New York Times bestselling essay collection, *The Collected Schizophrenias* (2019), and a novel, *The Border of Paradise* (2016). Wang has been acknowledged for both her nonfiction, as the winner of the Graywolf Nonfiction Prize (2016) and the Whiting Award for Nonfiction (2018), as well as her fiction, as one of Granta's once-a-decade Best of Young American Novelists (2017) and a selected author in the 2018 Best American Short Stories anthology. Both her fiction and nonfiction focus on the human experiences of chronic mental and physical illness, bringing insight into the experience of psychosis, pain, and suffering via visceral description and sociocultural analysis. Meanwhile, her fiction works through the lens of what she calls "immigrant Gothic" literature—by using classic Gothic tropes, Wang examines the impact of migrating to, and living in, a new land. She is currently under contract for a two-book deal: her third book, a provocative and suspenseful novel, with elements of queerness and the supernatural, is about a chronically ill woman who moves into a small-town lodge with her volatile husband; her fourth book will be an essay collection about ambition and limitations in contemporary life. Born in the Midwest to Taiwanese parents, Esmé can be found at [esmewang.com](http://esmewang.com).



#### Revathi Krishnaswamy

Graduate Coordinator  
Virtual Office Hours:  
W, 3:00 - 4:00 PM and by appointment



#### Alan Soldofsky

Director, Creative Writing  
Virtual Office Hours:  
T, W, 3:00 - 4:00 PM; Th PM by appointment

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## Important Policies

### Continuous Enrollment and 1290R

Course Requirements per S17-5, University Policy, Required Enrollment for Culminating Graduate Students, apply to graduate students who have completed all degree program requirements except the culminating experience (thesis, project and/or comprehensive exam). Such students must enroll in the 1- unit UNVS or departmental 1290R for the purpose of continuing enrollment. Appointments for the 1290R open in MySJSU shortly after the last day to add classes.

**See:** <https://www.sjsu.edu/gape/graduate-student-guide/culminating-experience/index.php>

Students do not need the 1290R if they are enrolled in any other course. Note that the course attached to a culminating experience involving a thesis (or project) or a comp exam is given a "CR" upon successful completion of both components. Should the completion of one or both components continue into a subsequent semester(s), the course will carry a grade of "RP" (Report in Progress) and the student will need the 1290R for continuous enrollment for each semester used to complete the component or components.

**See:** <https://catalog.sjsu.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=116#1290r>

### Deadlines for MA and MFA Graduates

Please consult the GAPE website for current candidacy and graduation deadlines: <https://www.sjsu.edu/gape/deadlines/index.php>

Note that if you are planning to graduate in May 2022, you should file your official "Petition for Advancement to Graduate Candidacy" by October 1, 2021. Applications (or reactivations of applications) for May 2022 graduation must be filed by February 1, 2022. The relevant forms can be found at the GAPE forms web- site: <https://www.sjsu.edu/gape/forms/>

### MA and MFA Thesis Proposals

Thesis proposals must come to the Graduate Committee at least five weeks before the end of the semester preceding the semester in which you will enroll for 299 credits. If you plan to write your thesis or project in the Spring 2022 term, you must get your proposal to the Graduate Committee no later than Nov 1. Do not wait until the deadline approaches to get started. If you plan to write your thesis in Fall 2022, you must submit your proposal to the Graduate Committee by April 5th.

Guidelines for theses and theses proposals:

**MFA:** <https://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/mfa/thesis-guidelines.php>

**MA:** <https://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/thesis.php>

Once you have secured a thesis advisor or "first reader," and the thesis advisor has read and approved your proposal, you may submit your proposal electronically to the chair of the Graduate Committee [revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu](mailto:revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu). Be sure to cc your thesis advisor in the email so that the Graduate Coordinator knows that the first reader has approved the proposal being submitted to the Graduate Committee.

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## Important Policies (continue)

### MA Exam

Guidelines and reading lists for the MA Exams are now available on our website: <https://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/comp-exam.php>

**Part 1** is an in-class exam you will take in English 297, a required course **offered only in the fall semester**. The exam alone will be given in the spring semester as well.

**Part 2** is a take-home essay exam in 3 specific areas. You must indicate which three areas you wish to be examined in when you sign up for the exam.

Note: The Graduate Committee has determined that beginning Spring 2022 the minimum required to pass Part 2 is 3 Pass essays. The revised rubric no longer has a Low Pass category.

### Spring 2022 MA Exam

**Part 1** March 5 Sat 10-12 am

**Part 2** Exam Distributed 9:00 AM, Friday March 11; Exam due by 5:00 PM, Monday March 14.

Note that you are expected to have a basic foundational knowledge of British-American literary history to do well on the exam. This material is typically covered in undergraduate survey classes; you can also learn this material through independent self-study using standard anthologies such as the Norton anthologies of British and American literature.

MA students should email Professor Revathi Krishnaswamy [Revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu](mailto:Revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu) by **Dec 15, 2021** to sign up for spring exams.

### Spring 2022 MFA Exam

Exam Distributed 9:00 AM, Friday March 11; Exam due by 5:00 PM, Monday March 14.

To sign up for the MFA exam, students should first have successfully achieved MFA candidacy status and have formed a three-person thesis committee.

Contact Professor Soldofsky ([Alan.Soldofsky@sjsu.edu](mailto:Alan.Soldofsky@sjsu.edu)) by **Dec 15, 2021** to receive a link to sign up.

### MA Second Language Exam

The MA degree program requires a level of fluency in a second language equivalent to one year of college level study of a language for classified admission. Students admitted conditionally may fulfill this requirement by taking the language placement exams for the most commonly taught languages in the Department of World Languages or completing coursework equivalent to one year of college level study. As always, native fluency in a language as evidenced by schooling in that language or attestation by an academic skilled in that native language are also ways to satisfy this requirement. Evidence of a first-language literacy other than English also satisfies the requirement. For answers to questions about this requirement, or to satisfy this requirement in a language not offered by World Languages, please contact Professor Krishnaswamy.

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## Spring 2022 Graduate Courses

COURSE	MODE	DAY	TIME	INSTRUCTOR
English 204	Online	Monday	1600	Professor Krishnaswamy
English 225	Online	Wednesday	1600	Professor Villagrana
English 228	Online	Wednesday	1900	Professor Gorman-DaRif
English 240	CL 111	Monday	1900	Professor Soldofksy
English 241	Online	Tuesday	1900	Professor Ahmad
English 242	Online	Tuesday	1600	Professor Wang
English 281	Online	Thursday	1600	Professor Rivers

At least 21 of the 30 units of classes required for the MA program should be in 200 numbered English courses. Of the 30, only 6 units can be taken as credit/no credit independent study of thesis units. Upper-division English coursework (100 level) may count for graduate students if you have received permission of the instructor as well as the MA or MFA advisor. Classes taken outside the department will not count except in unusual circumstances. Get prior approval from your advisor before you take such courses.

## Course Descriptions

### ENGL 204

#### Modern Approaches to Literature

Monday 4:00 - 6:45, Professor Krishnaswamy

This course deals with the multidisciplinary field of Literary Theory and Criticism that cuts across various disciplines including psychology, philosophy, economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, history, biology and others.

We will focus primarily on theories developed in the western tradition during the 20th century, although we will reference non-western traditions of poetics/aesthetics where relevant. We will engage with fundamental questions about language, literature, and reading/writing: What is literature? How do we theorize and interpret it? How should we evaluate it? What is theory's relation to culture, history, power, politics, and society? How can we decolonize theory? What are the rights and duties of artists, critics and scholars at the present time?

We will try to understand major intellectual schools such as:

- New Criticism
- Structuralism
- Marxism
- Feminism
- Deconstruction
- New Historicism
- Post-colonialism
- Postmodernism etc. and discover how they may be applied to literature.

While this course will challenge you to read a considerable amount of complex material, it should also be exhilarating because you will have an opportunity to form clearer perspectives on the discipline and acquire more sophisticated tools for critically interpreting literary works. The class will be taught fully online via zoom/canvas.

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## Course Descriptions (continue)

ENG 225

### Shakespeare and Racialization

Wednesday 4:00 - 6:45, Professor Villagrana

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In this course, we read plays by Shakespeare, Kyd, and Marlowe alongside short excerpts of sixteenth- and seventeenth- century sources such as dictionaries, colonial reports, conduct manuals, and histories to investigate racial fictions and the racist objectives that drive them. We will be reading one play and one article per week. No prior experience in early modern literature is required.

ENG 228

### Postcolonial Realism

Wednesday 7:00 - 9:45, Professor Gorman-DaRif

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The genre of realism, in its claim to transparently represent “reality” has been routinely dismissed as Eurocentric, especially within the field of postcolonial literary studies. Rather than attending to the genre of realism, postcolonial theory’s investment in concepts like mimicry, hybridity, indeterminacy, and so on, has often focused the field on genres like modernism or postmodernism as more productive sites for literary study.

Yet realism makes up a significant, if overlooked, number of postcolonial literary texts. This course explores realism from a postcolonial context through a broad selection of Anglophone novels, starting from the anticolonial struggles of the 1960s and moving to the present day in fiction grappling with globalization and climate change. We will follow contemporary literary debates on the genre to ask, is realism capable of politically engaging with the world? Or is it only capable of sustaining the status quo? As a genre, is postcolonial realism necessarily conservative or can it support resistance and change?



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## Course Descriptions (continue)

ENG 240

### POETRY WORKSHOP Theme: POETRY FOR HARD TIMES--TAKING RISKS: POETRY OF PROTEST, RESISTANCE, AND EMPOWERMENT

Monday 7:00 - 9:45, Professor Soldofsky

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The Workshop is intended for poets who want to further develop their abilities to write poems that take risks, that stand up for social change and environmental justice (primary or secondary genre). In the workshop, we will also practice strategies for generating and revising poems. The class will also require you to consider your work in terms of poetic craft, and to recognize your individual sensibility. Though the central text will be class members' poems, students will also be asked to read and respond to the work of modern and contemporary poets, as well as to essays on the craft of poetry, especially to the poetry of healing, resistance, and empowerment. The class will include attention to the fundamentals of prosody as well as best practices for writing in "non-metrical" forms. We will give close attention to a poem's syntax and lineation, form, structure, and image. The Workshop will be taught as a hybrid virtual/in-person class (**but can be attended 100 percent remotely**). We will use Zoom and Canvas to facilitate workshopping poems both inside and outside of class. Each class member will complete a portfolio of at least 8 poems, and also give an in-class presentation.

During the semester students will read a diversity of recent books of poetry by poets whose work includes a concern for social and environmental justice. We'll read these works together selected from a larger reading. Students will lead discussions of the books/poets who they are reading, in class and on Canvas. MA students (and undergraduate students) must submit a short writing sample to the instructor prior to the first class-meeting to receive permission to enroll.

ENG 241

### Fiction workshop

Thursday 7:00 - 9:45, Professor Ahmad

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In this workshop, we will share stories or novel excerpts for in-depth study with the aim of deepening our understanding of craft and supporting each writer on their creative journey. To do this, we will explore a variety of workshop methods designed to meet the writer where they are in their process. Writers will be expected to share work with the workshop several times and to engage deeply with one another's work by providing thoughtful and extensive written comments and by participating in class discussion. In addition, we will read a range of published works together which, like the work of our peers, will allow us to explore the endless possibilities for our own work.

ENG 242

### Nonfiction workshop

Tuesday 4:00 - 6:45, Professor Wang

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In this course, we will examine different types of Personal Nonfiction—in particular memoir and the personal essay—with an eye toward prose and structure. We will read works from a diverse set of writers and discuss authorial choices, including matters of writing Personal Nonfiction ethically as well as beautifully. Students will be guided to workshop each other's work as practice for becoming peers' first readers; they will do so mindfully of different backgrounds and experiences. Class to be held remotely.

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## Course Descriptions (continue)

### ENG 281

#### Environmental Futures

Thursday 4:00 - 6:45, Professor Rivers

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Humans and our societies will need to learn to think and act differently if we hope to survive the climate crises (and address at least some of its root causes). Environmental Futures charts this speculative terrain using readings that range from science fiction and poetry, to creative nonfiction, manga, documentary film, climate fiction (cli fi), and critical theory. Along with examining the roles that empire, extractive industry, structural racism, heteropatriarchy, and colonialism have played in fostering the conditions of the climate crisis, this course will ask participants to examine how these world-shaping forces might influence humanity's responses to climate change--as well as the conditions of life on a transformed world.

Authors and texts of study will include Octavia Butler, Larissa Lai, Cherie Dimaline (Métis), Barbara Kingsolver, Hayao Miyazaki, Beatrice Pita, Rosaura Sánchez, N.K. Jemisin, alexis pauline gumbs, Donna Haraway, Aimee Bhang, Nicole Seymour, Sammie Schalk, & Curtiz Marez. Films will include:

- *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* (2013)
- *The Sleep Dealer* (2008)
- *Woman at War* (2018)
- *The Host* (2006)

## Graduate Student and Alumni Achievements

### Phuong Pham's short story "My Baby Brother Flood"

was published in October by Singapore Unbound, an NYC-based literary non-profit and publisher. <https://singaporeunbound.org/>

### Seher Vora published a short story titled "No God for Spilled Ink"

was published in the Baltimore Review in July. Here's the link: [https://baltimorereview.org/summer\\_2021/contributor/seher-fatema-vora](https://baltimorereview.org/summer_2021/contributor/seher-fatema-vora)

### Matty Heimgartner's first memoir essay

was published this month in *Thanks Hun*, issue 1 volume 2. It's called "Bob's Bar" and is available to download for free at: <https://thankshuneditor.wixsite.com/my-site/issues>

### Anne Cheilek has a poem

forthcoming in *RHINO Poetry*

### Soumya Seetharaman was a finalist in the SJSU Grad Slam 2021

competition for presenting on the topic "Strangers in Homeland: An Analysis of Othering in *Dracula*"

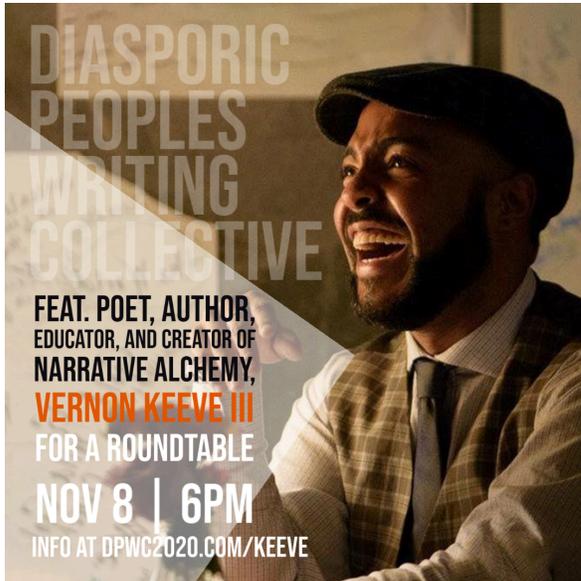
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## Upcoming Events



The Diasporic Peoples Writing Collective (DPWC) is hosting a reading and roundtable discussion with author, poet, and educator, Vernon Keeve III, aka, Trey, a Virginia born writer, living and teaching in Oakland.

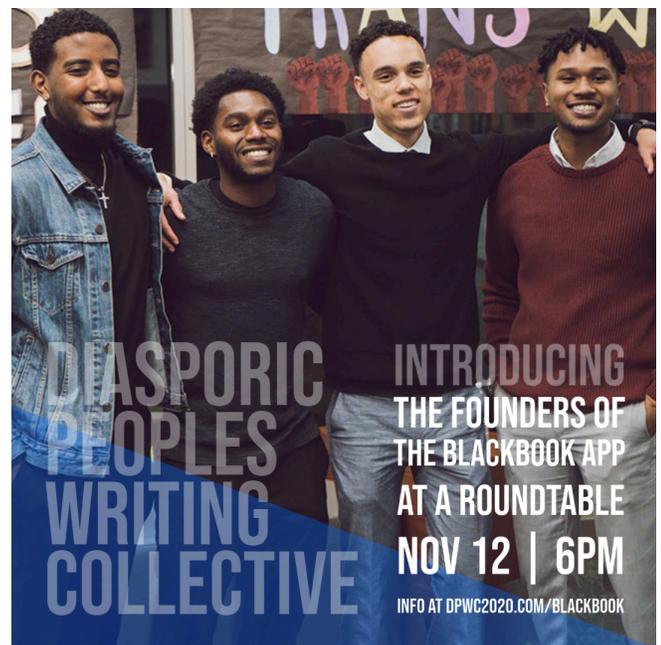
Keeve's art is transformative and a perfect entrée to conversations about intersectionality, claiming space, and creativity. Keeve will talk about how race/gender/and sexuality are focal to their lived experience and activism, and how craft is the bedrock to their work's accessibility. See Trey for a roundtable on November 8, 2021 at 6pm

See Keeve at [https://youtu.be/\\_H9xRDelrgo](https://youtu.be/_H9xRDelrgo)  
Pre-register at <https://DPWC2020.COM/Keeve>

The Diasporic Peoples Writing Collective (DPWC) welcomes the founders of Blackbook. Co-founder, project director, and recent grad, Ibrahim Baldé helped create Blackbook, a university app that improves student connectedness. The African American Student Handbook or "Black Book" was a 1980s guide to Berkeley's Black faculty, organizations, and campus resources. It was an important "peer-to-peer connections" reference for students. The new Blackbook app is a digital revival of its '80s counterpart, and serves as an ecosystem for diversity, equity and inclusion on college campuses.

Part of the founding team is featured in the photo above: left to right, Nahom Solomon, Chase Ali-Watkins, Nicholas Brathwaite, and Ibrahim Baldé. They've partnered with the Berkeley group, Mobile Developers, to ready the app for Android and iOS. Join the Diasporic Peoples Writing Collective (DPWC) for this roundtable discussion with the members of Blackbook's founding team as they discuss the broad applications of this revived idea and its new foundation in modern tech. See them at a roundtable on November 12, 2021 at 6pm

Zoom pre-registration <https://DPWC2020.COM/Blackbook>



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## The San Jose Story Map

Professor Revathi Krishnaswamy is co-leading a multidisciplinary team of faculty and students that is creating a digital multimedia geolocal story map of San Jose. The San Jose Story Map uses the power of stories to reveal San Jose's hidden histories, unheard voices, diverse communities, and dynamic neighborhoods. A special, themed category called "Covid Chronicles" has been introduced for stories written while or about sheltering in a place in San Jose during the pandemic. Content for the story map will come from winning entries submitted to a free and open online story contest. Contest entries must be short original compositions that relate to San Jose (text 750 words max, any genre, any medium). In Fall 2021, the project team is hosting two free workshops aimed at generating placemaking stories relating to San Jose:

**Nov 5 workshop for the San José public** led by MFA alumna Jenny Clendenen

**Nov 19: Poetic Postcards Workshop for the SJSU students** led by Sally Ashton and Emilio Banuelos

The project is currently an **online story contest** that is free and open to the San José public:

More workshops are being planned for Spring. Other activities and events will also be organized as part of this two-year project. Students interested in taking an active leadership role in the project may email [Revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu](mailto:Revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu). The San Jose Story Map project is funded by a grant from Cal Humanities For All, and is part of SJSU's Deep Humanities and Arts Initiative.

## Stay Informed

Please be sure to sign up for the google group for our English Graduate Program. To sign up, send a blank email to: [enggrad-group+subscribe@sjsu.edu](mailto:enggrad-group+subscribe@sjsu.edu). Key information is sent out via the google group that is essential for all MA and MFA students. Program descriptions, course descriptions, the most recent Newsletter, and other documents are posted on the English Department website: [www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/](http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/).

The SJSU Graduate Admissions and Program Evaluations (GAPE) Office website publishes important deadlines, forms, and information for current students at: <https://www.sjsu.edu/gape/deadlines/index.php>

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## Important Dates 2020-2021 (please consult GAPE for updates)

- **Nov 01** Deadline to submit thesis or project proposals (for spring 2021 ENGL299 units) to the English Department Graduate Committee.
- **Nov 04** Deadline for December 2021 graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office
- **Dec 15** Deadline for signing up to take the spring 2021 MA and MFA Comprehensive Exams
- **Jan 11** Deadline for December 2021 graduates to submit thesis for publication (or embargo)
- **Feb 01** Deadline for May 2021 graduates to submit their "Departmental Request for Candidacy" form to GAPE. Requires the MA or MFA advisor's signature
- **Feb 01** Deadline for May 2021 graduates to submit their Graduate Application to GAPE
- **Mar 12** Sat 10:00 -12:00 am Part 1 MA Exam
- **Mar 18** MA Part 2 Exam and MFA Exam Published
- **Mar 20** MA Part 2 Exam and MFA Exam Due
- **Apr 01** Deadline for December 2022 graduates to file their "Request for Candidacy" forms (requires MA or MFA advisor's signature)
- **Apr 01** Deadline for May 2022 graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office.
- **Apr 04** Deadline for 2022-2023 TA and GA applications