

# ENGLISH GRADUATE NEWSLETTER

Volume L, Number 8

October 2020

SJSU DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND  
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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**Revathi Krishnaswamy**  
Graduate Coordinator



**Alan Soldofsky**  
Director of Creative Writing

## Lurie Chair

### Ellen Bass

2021 SJSU Lurie Distinguished Visiting Writer-in-Residence.  
Website: <https://www.ellenbass.com/>

Ellen Bass is an award-winning poet and author of nonfiction books. She was appointed a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 2017. She served as Santa Cruz County Poet Laureate 2014 – 15. Her most recent book, *Indigo*, was published by Copper Canyon Press in April 2020. Other poetry collections include *Like a Beggar* (Copper Canyon Press, 2014)—which was a finalist for The Paterson Poetry Prize, The Publishers Triangle Award, The Milt Kessler Poetry Award, The Lambda Literary Award, and the Northern California Book Award—*The Human Line* (Copper Canyon Press, 2007), and *Mules of Love* (BOA Editions, 2002), which won The Lambda Literary Award. She co-edited (with Florence Howe) the first major anthology of women's poetry, *No More Masks!* (Doubleday, 1973).



Image from ellenbass.com

Her poems have frequently appeared in *The New Yorker* and *The American Poetry Review*, as well as in *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The New Republic*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Ploughshares*, *The Sun* and hundreds of other journals and anthologies. She was awarded Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council and received the Elliston Book Award for Poetry from the University of Cincinnati, *Nimrod/Hardman's Pablo Neruda Prize*, *The Missouri Review's Larry Levis Award*, the Greensboro Poetry Prize, the New Letters Poetry Prize, the Chautauqua Poetry Prize, and three Pushcart Prizes.

Her non-fiction books include *Free Your Mind: The Book for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth* (HarperCollins, 1996), *I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (HarperCollins, 1983), and *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (Harper Collins, 1988, 2008), which has sold over a million copies and has been translated into twelve languages.

Ellen founded poetry workshops at Salinas Valley State Prison and the Santa Cruz, CA jails. She currently teaches in the low residency MFA writing program at Pacific University.

Here is a link to the Ellen Bass interview with Alan Soldofsky and Rachel Crawford recorded for the 2020 Legacy of Poetry festival: <https://www.sjsu.edu/legacyofpoetry/past-readings/2020/readings/interview-with-ellen-bass.php>.

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## Fall Office Hours



### MA Advising

Professor Revathi Krishnaswamy's virtual office hours this semester are Tues 3:00-4:00 p.m. and by appointment.

Office phone: 924-1384.

Email: [Revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu](mailto:Revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu)

### MFA Advising

Professor Alan Soldofsky's virtual hours are T/Th 3:30-5:00 p.m. and by appointment.

Office phone: 924-4432.

Email: [alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu](mailto:alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu)

## Comprehensive Exam Schedule

### MFA

Oct 9 MFA Comprehensive Exam Distributed (9:00 a.m.).

Oct 12 MFA Comprehensive Exam due (5:00 p.m.)

### MA

Visit [www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/comp-exam.php](http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/comp-exam.php) for the full guidelines.

**Part 1 (in-class):** to be given in English 297 (Professor Stork)

**Part 2 (take-home):** on Canvas Oct 9-12

Oct 9 MA Comprehensive Exam Part 2 Published on Canvas (9:00 a.m.).

Oct 12 MA Comprehensive Exam Part 2 due on Canvas (11:59 p.m.)

You must pass both parts in order to pass the comprehensive exam as a whole. Those planning to take the exam (Part 1 and/or 2) in Spring should sign up by Dec 1 by emailing [revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu](mailto:revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu)

## MA and MFA

### The MA in English: A Guide for Students

The MA in English: A Guide for Students," turned into a list of FAQs, is available on the web at <https://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/faq.php>

### Deadlines for MA and MFA Graduates

Please consult the GAPE website for current candidacy and graduation deadlines: [www.sjsu.edu/gape/current\\_students/deadlines/](http://www.sjsu.edu/gape/current_students/deadlines/). Note that if you are planning to graduate in May 2020, you should file your official "Petition for Advancement to Graduate Candidacy" by October 1, 2019. Applications (or reactivations of applications) for May 2020 graduation must be filed by February 1, 2020. The relevant forms can be found at the GAPE forms website: [www.sjsu.edu/gape/forms/](http://www.sjsu.edu/gape/forms/).

### University Policy Changes

University Policy now requires that graduate students must be enrolled in classes when they finish their culminating experiences (such as theses and exams). Note that it is already a policy that students must finish their theses while they are enrolled in their 299 units (or else enrolled in UNVS 1290R which is basically just a fee, not a class).

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## MA and MFA (Continued)

### MA Foreign Language Exam

The MA degree program requires a level of fluency in a second language equivalent to one year of college study of a language. Students will be able to take the language placement exams for the most commonly taught languages in the Department of World Languages. If you fail to obtain the required score, you must complete coursework necessary to achieve a level of language skill equivalent to one year of study. As always, native fluency in a language as shown 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.



### Deadline for 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 2020 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.

Guidelines for theses and thesis 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). 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.

## Spring 2021 Graduate Courses

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 Coordinator. Classes taken outside the department will not count except in unusual circumstances. Get prior approval from your advisor before you take such courses.

English 208	W	7:00 pm - 9:45 pm	Krishnaswamy, Revathi
English 211	M	7:00 pm - 9:45 pm	Soldofsky, Alan D
English 240	M	4:00 pm - 6:45pm	Bass, Ellen
English 241	T	7:00 pm - 9:45 pm	Anderson, Selena G
English 242	R	4:00 pm - 6:45 pm	Moriarty, Thomas
English 255	T	4:00 pm - 6:45 pm	Shillinglaw, Susan
English 281	W	4:00 pm - 6:45 pm	Spangler, Matthew

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## Spring 2021 Course Descriptions

### English 208

#### Decolonize! Literature, History, Theory

W 7:00-9:45 pm (Professor Krishnaswamy)

What do we mean when we say Western Civilization, Classical Literature, British Literature, American Literature or English Literature? How were these areas of study constituted, their canons established, their literary history constructed, and their disciplinary practices institutionalized? What role did literary criticism/theory play in these processes? Taking a broad comparative approach to these questions, we will (i) examine the structures of power that shape literary production and consumption, (ii) consider the legacy of Eurocentrism (or Western-centrism), (iii) deconstruct established definitions, conventional narratives, dominant ideologies, and (iv) learn about efforts to “decolonize” literature and literary studies.

In addition to reviewing relevant Norton anthologies as signposts of the field, we will read selected literature as well as criticism and scholarship from different time periods and places around the world. The course will be taught synchronously using Canvas and Zoom. The course satisfies the 4-unit GVAR requirement for both MFA and MA students.

### English 211

#### Seminar in Modern Poetry—Shifting Cultural Politics and Poetics from Modernism to Eco-Poetics to Black Lives Matter (1910-2021)

M 7:00-9:45pm (Professor Soldofsky)

ENGL 211 is designed to provide intensive study of prominent themes and innovations in selected influential American, British and World poets from the 20th and 21st centuries. The emphasis during the semester is on the evolving poetics and associated cultural politics as viewed through various aesthetic movements in poetry from the High Modernist period to the present. The curriculum includes close reading and explication of poems. The course will be taught partially in a synchronous distance learning mode, using SJSU’s Canvas and Zoom platforms. To fill the GVAR requirements students will write a 25 – 30-page MLA-style research paper (on one of several suggested topics the instructor will post on Canvas). Or alternatively, students can choose to write a

creative assignment, based on upon emulating or imitating some element(s) of a poet’s (or poets’) style selected for the project—including submitting a portfolio of at least 4 - 5 original poems, to be accompanied by a 8 – 10-page analytical paper, with accompanying MLA-style bibliography. Students will also each present a detailed explication of a poem (or poems) read during the semester. We will read one or more poems (available online) by canonical High Modernist and Harlem Renaissance poets as well by a diversity of mid-century poets, Beat era poets, and poets from the present Postmodern era and Black Lives Matter movement. The class will examine the increasing diversity and democratization in Postmodern poetry from its Modernist white privileged beginnings to the current diversity of significant voices receiving critical attention in the 21st century. We will also read excerpts (available online) from essays and salient works of literary, historical, and cultural criticism. Required websites: poets.org; poetryfoundation.org. Textbook: Oxford Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry (second edition) and accompanying Modern American Poetry (MAPS) website. This course satisfies the 4-unit GVAR requirement for both MFA and MA students.

### English 240

#### Graduate Poetry Workshop

M 4:00-6:45pm (Ellen Bass)

This workshop is an opportunity to develop your skills in the craft of poetry. You’ll be learning strategies that you can use to write poems that are vivid, arresting, meaningful and complex. I’ll be presenting practical teachings that you’ll be able to practice immediately. Each week you’ll be writing or revising a poem and we’ll be discussing these in class. You’ll also be reading the work of contemporary poets as well as essays on the craft. Some of the specific concerns we’ll be addressing are image and metaphor, detail and description, diction, syntax, form and structure, making lines and stanzas, music, and discovery. Each class member will complete a portfolio of at least 8 poems and also give an in-class presentation on the work of a contemporary poet. This workshop will be both rigorous and supportive. If you’re excited about reading poetry and eager to take a leap forward in your development as a poet, I hope you’ll join us. **Non-MFA students must submit a short writing sample to the instructor prior to the first class meeting to receive permission to enroll.**

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## Spring 2021 Course Descriptions

### English 242

#### Nonfiction Writing Workshop

Thursdays 4:00-6:45 pm (Professor Moriarty)

In this workshop, you will read, discuss, and have the opportunity to write in all the genres of Creative Nonfiction. We will discuss and critique each other's work, read pieces from well-known practitioners, and explore nonfiction's many shapes, forms, and possibilities.

### English 255

#### Reading the American West

Tuesdays 4:00-6:45pm (Professor Shillinglaw)

This course focuses primarily on the works of two seminal western writers, Wallace Stegner, who blew "tumbleweed-fashion around the continent," and Willa Cather, born and drawn to Nebraska prairies. We will discuss the contours of western narratives: place, themes, contacts. And we will work toward a description of literature of the west: Is the west a borderland, where different cultures meet? A homeland, where settlers take root? A wilderness, where intrepid adventurers prove their mettle? An attitude, suggesting freedom, creativity, restlessness? Is the West characterized by conflict or community? Primary texts include Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow*, *Angle of Repose* and *Big Rock Candy Mountain*; Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, *O Pioneers*, and *Death Comes to the Archbishop*. Film: *Lone Star*, John Sayles. Additional texts for student group reports: Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*; Annie Proulx, *Close Range*; James Welch, *Winter in the Blood*; Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*.

### ENGL 281

#### Scriptwriting Workshop

Wednesday 4:00 – 6:45 PM (Professor Spangler)

The adaptation of novels and short stories is one of the most popular forms of scriptwriting. In the last decade, over half the plays on London's West End and on Broadway have been adaptations. In TV and film, too, adaptations have been enduringly popular. **This scriptwriting seminar will focus on the adaptation of literary texts for the stage and screen.** Students will read and view a wide range of adaptations including: Simon Stephen's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* (from the novel by Mark Haddon), Lydia Diamond's *The*

*Bluest Eye* (from the novel by Toni Morrison), Peter Morgan's *Frost/Nixon*, Philip Kan Gotanda's *Remember the I-Hotel* (from the short story by Lysley Tenorio), and my own adaptations of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (London West End; San Francisco Theatre Critics Circle Award for Best Original Script and Best Overall Production) *Albatross* (based on "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," off-Broadway New York; recipient of Boston's Elliot Norton Award for Best Production), and *Operation Ajax*, from Stephen Kinzer's history about the CIA coup in Iran. For adaptation to film, students will pick works from among a wide range of selections, including, but not limited to: *Hotel Rwanda*, *Fight Club*, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Hours*, and others.

Early in the semester, students will choose a literary work to adapt for the stage or screen. The rest of the semester will be dedicated to 1) studying the techniques used by writers of adaptations and 2) writing your own script. By the end of the semester, you will have a full-length script that you can then continue to develop, and ideally, produce outside the classroom.

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At least 22 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 or 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 Coordinator. Classes taken outside the department will not count except in unusual circumstances. Get prior approval from your advisor before you take such courses.

Also check the schedule for additional upper division undergraduate course offerings that may be of interest, and which will not be covered by the Graduate Curriculum.

Conditionally classified students must complete their required undergraduate course work before enrolling in graduate seminars. When you are eligible for classified status, the change is not automatic; you need to file the necessary form and await approval.

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## Graduate Student and Alumni Achievements

### Reed Magazine

An event proposal submitted by the student editorial staff of Reed Magazine, "LitMag.edu: Maintaining and Advancing Institutional Legacy with a Student Staff," has been accepted for presentation at the 2021 AWP Conference.

The Reed editorial team includes Nonfiction Editor Allie Maier, who managed the submission process, Poetry Editor Anne Cheilek, Fiction Editor Tim Cech, Art Editor Sarah Nolte, and Managing Editor Ryan Smith.

### Jenny Clendenen

MFA alumna Jenny Clendenen published *Mine*, a book about the life of Maria Zacarias Bernal de Berreyesa.

Jenny has been invited to talk about her book at the Peninsula Open Space Trust, History San Jose, the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County, and possibly the Morgan Hill Historical Society. She is also a contributor to the San Jose Story Map project.

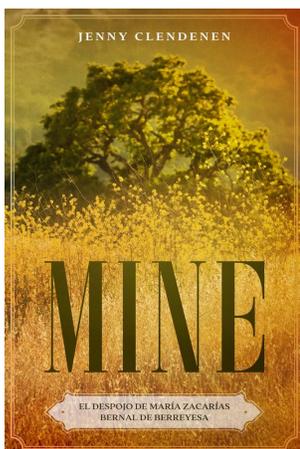


Image from <https://www.jennyclendenen.com>

### Ume Ali

Ume Ali's poem "Pinprick," was accepted for the Fall 2020 print edition of *Caesura Magazine*.

### Nicole Calande

Nicole Calande's piece, "Pulling," recently won F(r)iction's Spring 2020 Contest and has been selected for publication in 2021.

### Kym Cunningham

Kym Cunningham's collection of nonfiction essays, *Difficulty Swallowing*, was a Da Vinci Eye Finalist. A review of the book can be found here:

[https://www.literaryheist.com/articles/difficulty-swallowing-by-kym-cunningham-essays-that-will-stick-in-your-teeth//?fbclid=IwAR3MU58oDr7tJdY\\_d7Jr60ZGIAwCJkLgJvfvBeAzyknm-HJPAL05PRjiO3Q](https://www.literaryheist.com/articles/difficulty-swallowing-by-kym-cunningham-essays-that-will-stick-in-your-teeth//?fbclid=IwAR3MU58oDr7tJdY_d7Jr60ZGIAwCJkLgJvfvBeAzyknm-HJPAL05PRjiO3Q)

### Chris Dizon

Chris Dizon published one piece in the online literary magazine "The Mighty Line 12" and another one in "Quiet Lightning's Sparkle and Blink 106."

### Soumya Seetharaman

Soumya Seetharaman has been selected for the SJSU Student Scholarship for Fall 2020.

### Zachery England

Zachery England is the recipient of a Bodie McDowell scholarship from the Outdoor Writers Association of America.



Portrait provided by Ume Ali



Portrait provided by Chris Dizon

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## Upcoming Events

### Grad Student Brown Bag

October 28 from 12 pm - 1:15 pm

Get a preview of spring 2021 MA and MFA classes and learn about the San Jose story map project.



### The San Jose Story Map Project

Professor Revathi Krishnaswamy is leading a multidisciplinary team of faculty and students that is creating a digital multimedia geo-locational 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 2020, the project team is hosting two free workshops aimed at generating placemaking stories relating to San Jose:

**Nov 6: Writing Workshop for SJSU students led by Peter Nathaniel Malae.**

**Nov 14: Writing Workshop for the San Jose community led by Sally Ashton**

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: [www.sjsu.edu/gape/current\\_students/deadlines/](http://www.sjsu.edu/gape/current_students/deadlines/).

## Important Dates 2020-21

- Oct 1** Deadline for May 2021 Graduates to submit their "Departmental Request for Candidacy" form to GAPE. Requires the MA or MFA advisor's signature
- Nov 1** Deadline to submit thesis or project proposals (for spring 2021 ENGL299 units) to the English Department Graduate Committee.
- Nov 4** Deadline for December 2019 graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office
- Dec 1** Deadline for signing up to take the spring 2021 MA and MFA Comprehensive Exams.
- Jan 11** Deadline for December 2020 graduates to submit thesis for publication (or embargo)
- Feb 1** Deadline for May 2021 graduates to submit their "Departmental Request for Candidacy" form to GAPE. Requires the MA or MFA advisor's signature
- Feb 1** Deadline for May 2021 graduates to submit their Graduate Application to GAPE
- Feb 19** MA (Part 2) & MFA Comprehensive Exams Published
- Feb 22** MA (Part 2) & MFA Comprehensive Exams Due
- Feb 26** MA Part 1 Exam
- April 1** Deadline for December 2021 graduates to file their "Request for Candidacy" forms (requires MA or MFA advisor's signature)
- April 1** Deadline for 2021-2022 TA and GA applications
- April 1** Deadline for May 2021 graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office.