

# ENGLISH GRADUATE NEWSLETTER

San José State University

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Revathi Krishnaswamy, Graduate Coordinator

Alan Soldofsky, Director, Creative Writing

## Faith Adiele, 2020 Lurie Chair Distinguished Visiting Author-In-Residence

Faith Adiele, an award-winning memoirist and fiction writer, will be the Spring 2020 Lurie Visiting Author-in-Residence, joining the MFA program to teach the Graduate Nonfiction Writing Workshop (ENGL 242). Born to a Nigerian father and a Nordic-American mother, she is the author of two memoirs: *The Nigerian-Nordic Girl's Guide to Lady Problems* (Shebooks/SheWrites), a witty, tricultural ebook and audiobook about black women and fibroids; and *Meeting Faith* (Norton), a travel memoir about becoming Thailand's first black Buddhist nun, which received 2004 PEN Open Book Award. She is also writer/producer of the PBS film *My Journey Home* that documents her travels abroad to find her father and siblings.

A popular speaker, teacher, editor, and mentor, Faith has been featured in *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *Marie Claire Magazine's 5 Women to Learn From*, and *The Huffington Post*. She has appeared on NPR, on the Tavis Smiley show, and in a 2-page spread: "A Day in the Life of Faith Adiele" for *Pink Magazine*. She is the recipient of a UNESCO International Artists Bursary, the Millennium Award from Creative Nonfiction, and 17 artists' residencies in Brazil, Canada, Italy and the USA.



2020 Lurie Distinguished Visiting Author-In-Residence,  
Faith Adiele

Adiele, an Associate Professor of Creative Nonfiction at California College of the Arts, also teaches classes through the Stonecoast MFA in Creative Writing (University of Southern Maine); the San Francisco Writers Grotto; VONA/Voices, where she founded the nation's first workshop for travel writers of color; Esalen, and other organizations in the U.S. and abroad. She serves as a Senior Editor for *Panorama: The Journal of Intelligent Travel*, and is the founder of African Book Club, a free monthly club promoting contemporary African literature. You can read more about her on her website: [www.adielle.com](http://www.adielle.com).

## Fall Office Hours

**MA Advising:** Professor Revathi Krishnaswamy's drop-in office hours this semester are Mondays 4:00-6:00 p.m. Additional times are available by appointment. Please feel free to call or to stop by her office at FO 109. Phone: 924-1384. Email: [Revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu](mailto:Revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu)

**MFA Advising:** Professor Alan Soldofsky's hours are T/Th 3:30-5:00 p.m. and W p.m. times by appointment. His office phone is 924-4432 and his email is [alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu](mailto:alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu).

**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 <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/mafaq.html>.

**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 enroll in UNVS 1290R which is basically just a fee, not a class).

## Comprehensive Exam Schedule

### MFA:

Feb. 21 MFA Comprehensive Exam Distributed (9:00 a.m.).

Feb. 24 MFA Comprehensive Exam due (5:00 p.m.).

### MA:

The fall 2019 MA exams are scheduled on the following consecutive Saturdays in November: 16th (part 1) and 23rd (Part 2). Spring 2020 MA exam will be given on the following consecutive Saturdays in March: 7th (Part 1) and 14th (Part II). The time and place for both exams is 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. in Sweeney Hall 229 (unless you are notified of a change). Please let Professor Krishnaswamy know at least **two weeks** in advance if you plan to take one or both parts by submitting a completed self-survey of your reading (available as part of the MA exam guidelines: [www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html](http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html)). Computers will be supplied for the exam. Please indicate when you sign up whether you would prefer an Apple or a PC.

## MA Comprehensive Format

Questions on the first part of the exam cover the reading list through the 18th century and those on the second part cover material from the Romantic period onward. Expect questions on or informed by literary theory in both parts. Each of the two parts takes three and a half hours and asks for three separate essays. Students may take one or both parts of the exam in any term and in any order. The reading list and guidelines for the exam are at:

[www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html](http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html).

Sample exams are also posted on the website. Please note that section C of the Part 1 exam is a close reading of a poem and section C of the Part 2 exam is on World Literature.

### **New MA Exam Format**

In response to current disciplinary trends, faculty interests, and student feedback, a new format for the MA comprehensive exam has been approved by the Graduate Committee. This will go into effect in Fall 2020 and the old format will no longer be offered. The new format is as follows:

- (i) A 2-hour in-class exam to be taken at the end of English 297 (offered only in Fall)  
Content: close reading analysis of poetry/prose; short, factual questions based on a list of literary/literary history terms.
- (ii) A 48-hour take-home essay exam in three areas, one from each group:

#### **Group 1**

- Classical & Medieval
- Early Modern & Neoclassical British & American (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> C)

#### **Group 2**

- American & British Romanticism to Modernism (Long 19<sup>th</sup> c)
- 1900- Present British & American Literature
- Multi Ethnic American Literature
- 1900-Present Global Anglophone Literature

#### **Group 3**

- Literary Theory & Criticism
- Rhetoric & Composition

You must pass all four parts (one in-class and three out-of-class). More detailed guidelines and reading lists for each area as well as other relevant materials including information about grading criteria will be made available in Spring 2020. Those planning to take the exam in Fall 2020, should sign up in Spring 2020.

### **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. In a new streamlined process, students will be able to take the language placement exams for the most commonly taught languages in the SJSU World Languages Media Center in Clark 206. If you score higher than a 2nd semester level in a given language, bring the printout to the World Language office and Chair Damian Bacich will sign off on it. Should you place into a level of 2nd semester or below, you would then do whatever coursework is needed for you 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 other than French, German, or Spanish, 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 MFA theses and thesis proposals:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/mfa/mfathesis.html>

Guidelines for MA theses and cover sheet:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/mathesis.html>

Once you have secured a thesis advisor or “first reader,” and the thesis advisor has carefully read and approved your proposal, you can 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 of the proposal being submitted to the Graduate Committee and has stated that it is ready for that step.

## Planned Professional Development Workshops

Look out for announcements!

- **“Creative Writing & Publishing”**  
-Professor Nick Taylor & Dr. Keenan Norris (October, Date TBA)
- **“PhD Reflections from Recent Grads”**  
-Prof. Jose Villagrana & Mostafa Jalal, Ph.D (November, Date TBA)
- **“PhD Application: Statement of Purpose Workshop”**  
-Presenters TBD (December, Date TBA)

## Spring 2020 Graduate Courses

Here’s our tentative spring schedule of classes:

ENGL	203	W	16:00:00	18:45:00	1/23/2020	5/11/2020	HGH227	Miller, Cathy
ENGL	204	M	16:00:00	18:45:00	1/23/2020	5/11/2020	HGH227	Krishnaswamy, Revathi
ENGL	240	M	19:00:00	21:45:00	1/23/2020	5/11/2020	SH435	Soldofsky, Alan D
ENGL	241	R	19:00:00	21:45:00	1/23/2020	5/11/2020	HGH227	Norris, Keenan F
ENGL	242	R	16:00:00	18:45:00	1/23/2020	5/11/2020	HGH227	ADIELE (LURIE)
ENGL	254	T	16:00:00	18:45:00	1/23/2020	5/11/2020	HGH227	Shillinglaw, Susan

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.

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 see the MA Coordinator to file the necessary form and await approval.

## Spring 2020 Course Descriptions

### English 203 Memoirs: Sampling Other Lives

Memoirists have been accused of being everything from navel-gazing narcissists to cannibals feasting on their loved ones. However, none of this changes the fact that these works of narrative nonfiction are blockbuster bestsellers that have created a dialogue about what it means to lead a certain type of life. They create in-depth self portraits of cultural diversity, requiring no filter from an outside narrator. By reading memoirs, we can sample other people's lives, try them on for size, and see how they fit. In 203 we will look at the literary lives of ten popular memoirists and study how they represent the world around them, while creating themselves as characters. Since this is a craft course we will be examining the methods the authors use to write creative nonfiction. Most of our texts are from the MFA reading list, so we'll also be preparing you for the exam (although MAs are indeed welcome):

*A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*; Dave Eggers

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*; Maya Angelou

*The Liar's Club*; Mary Karr

*Angela's Ashes*; Frank McCourt

*The Woman Warrior*; Maxine Hong Kingston

*Barbarian Days*; William Finnegan

### ENGL 204: Modern Approaches to Literature

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. Focusing mainly on theories developed by literary scholars and critics of the 20th century, we will engage with fundamental questions about language, literature, and reading/writing: What is literature? How do we interpret it? How should we evaluate it? What is its relation to culture and society? What are the rights and duties of artists? Of critics and scholars? We will try to understand major intellectual schools such as New Criticism, Structuralism, Marxism, Feminism, Deconstruction, New Historicism, Postcolonialism, 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.

## **ENGL 240: Graduate Poetry Workshop (Soldofsky)**

The Workshop is intended for poets who want to further develop their abilities in the art of poetry (primary or secondary genre), to learn strategies for generating and revising poems. The class will also require you to consider your work in light of essential issues of the poet's craft, and to articulate your individual sensibilities as poets. Though the central text will be class members' poems, students will also be asked to read and respond to the work of contemporary poets, as well as to essays on the craft of poetry. The fundamentals of prosody, as well as "non-metrical" forms, will be addressed within the context of discussing aspects of a poem's music, syntax and lineation, form, structure, and image. We will use 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 ecopoetics and/or social 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.

## **English 241: Fiction Writing Workshop**

This is the most advanced fiction workshop offered at SJSU. It is designed for students pursuing writing as a vocation. Students enrolled in the MFA Program in Creative Writing have registration priority. If there is extra space, graduate students in other disciplines and Open University students may enroll with instructor permission. The majority of our class time will be spent discussing student work. We will also read a variety of short stories and longer prose work. The class is divided into four loosely thematized parts, based around the concepts of voice, character-building, story structure and reflection/revision. We will take a tour of different styles of creative writing, learning what's been invented, and we'll do a lot of our own new writing as well. Additionally, we will discuss aspects of the writing profession. Topics include finding time to write, managing time, revision, genre, using material, finding an agent or publisher, and networking. Students will workshop their own work on at least three instances during the term (2,000-5,000 words) and will also be required to provide respectful, constructive, detailed written feedback to their classmates when their classmates are the focus of the workshop. We'll also read the work of acclaimed writers every week and we will examine what we've read through in-class discussion and group book reports (each group will be responsible for one report to the class) to "open up" the work from an artist's vantage point. The objectives of this course are to study and work toward establishing our voice(s) as writers, to learn in nuanced fashion the deep lives of our characters, and to competently structure our stories.

## **English 242: Nonfiction Writing Workshop, R 4:00-6:45 PM (Professor Adiele)**

This workshop explores the intersection of personal narrative, research and lyric in creative nonfiction in the digital age. Class discussion will focus on figuring out what form your story wants, using research to create innovative structure and metaphor, leveraging the oral tradition, and the possibilities that hybrid writing affords multicultural/ multilingual/ gender fluid/ cross-genre and other complex stories. In addition to workshopping stand-alone essays or thesis chapters, assignments will involve short experiments with mapping, digital storytelling, visual reporting and

other innovations. Texts may include an anthology of lyric essays, examples of mixed-media/mixed-genre memoir and an immersion craft guide.

### **English 254: Conservation Classics**

**How do we consider the world?** We will read and discuss several “classics” in conservation and consider the questions they raise: how to participate fully in the places one inhabits; how to respect and conserve those places of the heart; how to turn contemplation into action; and how to consider ways in which these “classics” are urgently relevant today, as we confront a world in crisis. Assignments for this course include short essays on individual texts; group presentations; and final projects that link text/s and contemporary issues, either in a critical essay, science writing, a personal essay or active social/political/environmental engagement.

Readings will be selected from the following list:

Mary Austin, *The Land of Little Rain* (1903)

Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991)

John Steinbeck, *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* (1941)

Rachel Carson, *Under the Sea Wind* (1941)

Robinson Jeffers, Selected poems

Aldo Leopold, *Sand Country Almanac* (1949)

Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier*, (1962)

Wendell Berry, *Hannah Coulter* (2005)

Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, (1975)

Camille T. Dungy, *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry* (2009).

Richard Powers, *The Overstory: A Novel* (2019)

### **Graduate Faculty, Student, and Alumni Achievements**

Alan Soldofsky has published the “May 14” section of his long poem “Charts (For the End of Days),” in the Summer 2019 (10:2) print issue of the New Orleans-based literary journal, Gigantic Sequins. He has new poems forthcoming in the October issue of Poetry Flash (online).

Alumnus of the MFA program, Kym Cunningham’s first book, *Difficulty Swallowing*, was released by Atmosphere Press in September. The book is a collection of creative nonfiction essays that interrogates human fallibility, examining social aspects that can stick in our throats. The book can be purchased on Amazon [here](#).

Another alumnus of the MFA program, Brian Wood’s first publication, Joytime Killbox, a collection of short stories, is coming out this month. It’s available for pre-order: <https://www.boaeditons.org/collections/brian-wood/products/joytime-killbox>

Justin Bryant published his first story, “#TwitterJumper,” in the spring 2019 issue of The Watershed Review.

MFA alumnus Shannon Bowman-Sarkisian was selected as the winner of the Indiana Library Federation (ILF) 2019 Outstanding Library Staff Award for her work on increasing Library access for domestic violence survivors.

### Literary Professionals Round Table on Writing and Publishing: Oct 2019



L.to R.: Alan Soldofsky, Faith Adiele, Andy Ross, Steve Wasserman, David Koehn.  
Photo credit: Talia Adry.

#### Keep 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 in 2019-2020

<b>Oct. 1</b>	Deadline for May 2020 Graduates to submit their “Departmental Request for Candidacy” form to GAPE. Requires the MA or MFA advisor’s signature.
<b>Nov. 1</b>	Deadline to submit thesis or project proposals (for spring 2020 ENGL299 units) to the English Department Graduate Committee.
<b>Nov. 4</b>	Deadline for December 2019 graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office.
<b>Dec. 16</b>	Deadline for signing up to take the spring 2020 MFA Comprehensive Exam.
<b>Jan. 10</b>	Deadline for December 2019 graduates to submit thesis for publication (or embargo).
<b>Feb. 1</b>	Deadline for May 2020 graduates to submit graduation application to Graduate Studies Office.
<b>Feb. 15</b>	Deadline to submit reading lists to sign up for the spring MA exams (see the “Guidelines” at <a href="http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html">http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html</a> ).
<b>Feb. 21</b>	MFA Comprehensive Exam Distributed (9:00 a.m.).
<b>Feb. 24</b>	MFA Comprehensive Exam due (5:00 p.m.).
<b>Mar. 7</b>	MA comprehensive exam, Part 1, SH 229, 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
<b>Mar. 14</b>	MA comprehensive exam, Part 2, SH 229, 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
<b>April 1</b>	Deadline for December 2019 graduates to file their “Request for Candidacy” forms (requires MA or MFA advisor’s signature).
<b>April 1</b>	Deadline for applications for 2020-2021 TA and GA due to the Graduate Coordinator.
<b>April 1</b>	Deadline for May 2020 graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office.