

ENGLISH GRADUATE NEWSLETTER

Volume L, Number 9

May 2021

SJSU DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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Nancy Stork

Acting Graduate Coordinator
(until Fall Semester 2021)

Professor Krishnaswamy will be back as
Graduate coordinator in the Fall



Alan Soldofsky

Director of Creative Writing and
MFA Program Coordinator

Introducing New Faculty

J. Michael Martinez

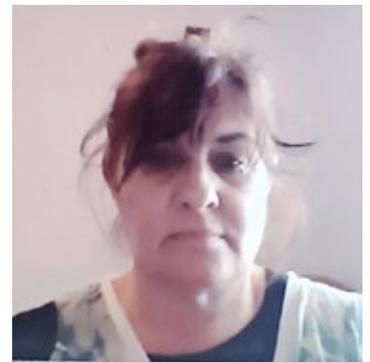
It is our pleasure to introduce our incoming faculty member for Fall 2021, J. Michael Martinez, who was longlisted for the National Book Award, is a winner of the National Poetry Series, and a recipient of the Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets. Professor Martinez is the author of three collections of poetry, *Heredities* (LSU Press), *In the Garden of the Bridehouse* (University of Arizona Press), and *Museum of the Americas* (Penguin Press). His poetry may be found in various publications including PBS, The Poetry Society of America's New American Poet's Series, New American Writing, and POETRY.

He is a Poetry Editor of NOEMI Press and his writings have been anthologized in Ahsakta Press' "The Arcadia Project: North American Postmodern Pastoral," Rescue Press' "The New Census: 40 American Poets," and Counterpath Press' "Angels of the Americlypse: New Latin@ Writing." Currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Poetry at St. Lawrence University, Martinez lives in upstate NY. He will be joining us at San Jose State this fall and offering English 240, the Poetry Writing Workshop.



Regina Arnold

New to the graduate faculty but not to our English department is Gina Arnold. She is a former rock journalist and the author of four books about music, including "Route 666: On the Road To Nirvana," her memoir of writing about indie rock in the 1990s, "Exile In Guyville," about Liz Phair's record of the same name, and "Half A Million Strong: Crowds and Power at Rock Festivals from Woodstock to Coachella." She holds a Ph.D. from Stanford in Modern Thought & Literature and teaches classes in writing, rhetoric and critical race studies at both USF and San Jose State. She recently edited the Oxford Handbook of Punk and a special issue on Taylor Swift in the Contemporary Music Review, and has contributed to a variety of publications, including the L.A. Review of Books. Her current project is about the history of record stores.



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Spring Office Hours

MA Advising

For questions about Spring 2021 Admission:

Nancy Stork
nancy.stork@sjsu.edu

For other questions:

Revathi Krishnaswamy
revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu

MFA Advising

Prof. Alan Soldofsky's virtual office hours:

M and W 3:15 - 4:30 pm. and
Th by appointment.

alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu

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: <http://www.sjsu.edu/cgs/current-students/policies/ContinuousEnrollmentGuidelines/index.html>

For students whose culminating experience is or includes a comprehensive exam not connected to an "RP" course: Appointments for 1290R cannot be system generated; request for appointment must come to Graduate Studies from the graduate advisor. The "RP" grade and a filed graduation in the current or future semester will generate an automatic appointment. Note that no student can receive an appointment with a "CR" grade in the culminating experience course. Nor can an appointment be given to a student whose filed graduation date is in a previous semester. 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) and 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.

Registration for Fall 2021

MySJSU should give you appointment times and information on how to register for next semester's courses in May. Registration for graduate students will begin in June. It is important that you register as early as possible. If there are not enough people signed up for a course, even a graduate course could be cancelled. Contact your advisor if you have any questions. MFAs need to be sure and sign up for any workshops they need for their degree as soon as possible. After a certain point writing workshops are opened up to all graduates on a first come, first served basis, regardless of program (MA or MFA). All MA students are required to take English 201 and English 297 (students entering the program in Fall 2017 or later, must be enrolled in 297 to take the comprehensive exam).

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Important Policies (Continued)

Fall 2021 Schedule of Graduate Classes

COURSE	MODE	DAY	TIME	INSTRUCTOR
English 201	Online	Monday	1600	Professor Eastwood
English 297	Online	Monday	1600	Professor Stork
English 254	High flex	Monday	1900	Professor Soldofsky
English 241	Online	Tuesday	1600	Professor Norris
English 259	Online	Tuesday	1900	Professor Skinnell
English 291	Online	Tuesday	1900	Professor Anderson
English 233	Online	Wednesday	1600	Professor Krishnaswamy
English 242	Online	Wednesday	1900	Professor Arnold
English 216	Online	Thursday	1600	Professor Stork
English 240	Online	Thursday	1900	Professor Martinez

Fall 2021 Course Descriptions

ENGL 201

Materials and Methods

Monday 1600, Professor Eastwood

This course is designed to introduce graduate students to the basic elements of work in the field. The goals for our seminar are as follows:

- Introduce students to critical literary theory and various analytical methodologies
- Help students to discover how to work in or apply particular modes to different literary texts
- Hone close-reading/textual analytical skills for poetry and prose
- Learn basic research techniques including bibliography, footnoting, on-line research, and problems/complications in literary study
- Gain experience writing and revising your work for various audiences and purposes

ENGL 216

Medieval Literature

Thursday 1600, Professor Stork

This course aims to introduce those less familiar with medieval literature to some of the foundational medieval texts covered in the Part Two MA Exam: *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, selections from Chaucer, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe. In addition, we will explore two remarkable prose works from the Old Norse and Latin traditions: *Njal's Saga* and *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard*.

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Fall 2021 Course Descriptions (continued)

ENGL 233

Literature of the Victorian Empire

Wednesday 1600, Professor Krishnaswamy

This seminar on "Literature of the Victorian Empire" expands the scope of Victorian literature to include all of Queen Victoria's empire. The course has three main goals:

1. extend "Victorian" beyond the national boundaries of England/Great Britain and Queen Victoria's death/WWI
2. scrutinize the constitution of "Victorian literature" as a distinct, coherent, hallmark of English high culture, and
3. examine the emergence of realism as the privileged aesthetic of the great tradition of the Victorian novel.

We will undertake this project through close readings of major works of literature as well as criticism. Throughout the course we will explore the connections between literature, culture, history and politics.

ENGL 240

Poetry Writing Workshop

Thursday 1900, Professor Martinez

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. 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 this course, we will examine how modern poetics and aesthetics advances an investigation into post-foundational thought. Moreover, we'll look at non-dualistic metaphysics as they occur in indigenous spaces and writing—most importantly, we will write. 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.

ENGL 241

Advanced Fiction Workshop

Tuesday 1600, Professor Norris

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 from *Best American Short Stories 2019*, the SJSU Campus Reading Program's book of the year, *Citizen: An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankine, and *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running: A Memoir* by Haruki Murakami.

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 written feedback to their classmates when their classmates are the focus of the workshop. 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.

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Fall 2021 Course Descriptions (continued)

ENGL 242

Creative Non-Fiction Writing Workshop

Wednesday 1900, Professor Arnold

From reportage to memoir, from travel writing to rock n' roll criticism, the field of creative nonfiction is rich with examples of literary excellence. In this course, students will practice writing nonfiction essays in various modes of the genre, improvising their grasp of exposition and storytelling. In addition to practicing with short exercises and turning in one long project, we will be reading and analyzing key nonfiction texts in order to hone our understanding of nonfiction tropes, structures, and stylistic possibilities.

- Trevor Noah, *Born A Crime*
- Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*
- David Foster Wallace, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*
- Carl Wilson, *Let's Talk About Love, a journey to the end of taste*
- Joan Didion, *The White Album*
- Essays on Canvas

ENGL 254

Genres In American Literature— “Can Poetry Save The Planet”: Ecopoetry And Environmental Justice

Monday 1900, Professor Soldofsky

This literary seminar will focus on the topic of Environmental poetry, also known as “ecopoetry.” Ecopoetry is more than poetry about nature or the wilderness; ecopoetics investigates connections between human activity (including poetry) and the environmental impact of human cultures and endeavors. We'll read poems that include works from earlier periods, beginning with a few select Tang Dynasty Chinese poems (in translation) that have influenced American Modernism. Then continue reading a diversity of modern and postmodern poems by poets such as: Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, Robinson Jeffers, Marianne Moore, Kenneth Rexroth, William Stafford, Elizabeth Bishop, Gary Snyder, W.S. Merwin, Pablo Neruda, Seamus

Heaney, Derek Walcott, Kay Ryan, Robert Hass, Brenda Hillman, Arthur Sze, Jane Hirshfield, Jorie Graham, Camile Dungy, C.S. Giscombe, Juliana Spahr, and Craig Santos-Perez, among others.

Because the course will be taught primarily as literary research seminar, students will read a group of poems each week by specified poets for our seminar discussion and student presentations. Each student will write a 5,000 – 6,000 word culminating research paper on the work of one or two (or possibly more) poets whose poetry was assigned during the semester. The paper will also be the source for each class member's 20-minute in-class presentation. There will be a creative option for the culminating project; writing a group of 5 to 6 original ecopoems modeled on poems we read during the course. A student choosing the creative option will also write a 2,000 – 2,500-word paper that “annotates” how their own poems emulate the poems read. And will be the basis of that class members culminating in-class presentation. There will also be a collaborative project with Environmental Studies students to fulfill the additional fourth unit.

Poet/critic John Shoptaw explains that what makes an environmental poem work is that “ecopoetry is nature poetry that has designs on us, that imagines changing the ways we think, feel about, and live and act in the world.” Changing the ways we and our readers think about climate change and environmental justice issues will be the goal of the work we do in the course. The course will be taught in a “Hyflex mode.” We will begin bringing back a small group of locally-based students into the CL 111 (Incubator Classroom). With the digital technology available in CL 111, I will teach the course so that it can be viewed on Zoom by students remotely. And on screens and laptops we which are provided in the classroom. We'll begin bringing students back in-person into the classroom starting on Week 4 of the semester.



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Fall 2021 Course Descriptions (continued)

ENGL 259

Seminar in Composition Studies

Tuesday 1900, Professor Skinnell

In ENGL 259, we will study current approaches to research in and the teaching of composition. Specifically, we will examine perspectives about composition that inform its instruction: what writing is, how it is studied, how it is taught, how it should be taught, and whether or not it even can be taught. Our overarching goal will be to understand writing/composition as a complex, situated act in order to chart possibilities for developing and improving our work as teachers and scholars. The course will focus on situating issues associated with teaching writing in theoretical frameworks of rhetoric and composition studies, and we will discuss practical teaching issues, as well.

ENGL 291

Literary Practicum

Tuesday 1900, Professor Anderson

This 4-unit CR/NC practicum course prepares Creative Writing graduate students to take the MFA exam and develop and begin writing their theses. In ENGL 291, students will customize their exam reading list, draft the thesis abstract and preface, and participate in vital peer reviews. At the beginning of the course, students will consult with their individual thesis committees (comprised of the thesis director and thesis readers) to create a completion plan and throughout the semester, will work under their guidance to complete a publishable manuscript. MFA candidates will share drafts with others working in the same primary genre on the class' Canvas page. There they will post texts of their thesis abstracts and introductions, as well as portions of their project. In turn, students will receive comments on their drafts from classmates (working in the same primary genre) and from their respective thesis committees. Beyond preparation for the exam and developing the thesis, ENGL 291 offers crucial professional development opportunities as students will have the chance to meet with literary agents, visiting writers, and editors. The course also provides a forum for a vibrant writing community through Thursday evening readings presented by the Center for Literary Arts.

ENGL 297

MA Comprehensive Exam Preparation

Tuesday 1600, Professor Norris

Exam preparation for the Master's Degree In this 2-unit course, we will strategize for taking the Masters Level Comprehensive Examination. With guidance, you will choose your topics for the take-home portion. We will also discuss the literary terms list and practice analyzing poetry. Near the end of the semester, you will take the in-class timed portion of the exam on literary terms and poetic analysis (Part One).

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MA/MFA Reminders and Guidelines



Thesis Reminders

MA/MFA students planning to write a thesis next year should take note of the following timeline and plan accordingly: Those planning to take thesis units (English 299) in Spring 2022 with intent to graduate in May will be required to submit thesis proposals for approval by November 1, 2021. This means you should ideally do your preliminary research over the summer to identify your area/topic of interest so that you can discuss this with potential advisors/readers early in the fall semester in order to form your thesis committee and prepare your proposal for formal submission by November 1. If your proposal is approved, use the winter break to work on your thesis. In Spring 2022, plan to submit your draft to your thesis director by February 1 and a revised draft to your 2nd and 3rd readers by April 1 to allow sufficient time for further feedback and revision. Planning ahead and following the timeline is critical to ensuring your thesis is of high quality and you are able to finish in time for May graduation. For MA and MFA students planning to write a thesis next year, please be familiar with the latest MLA Handbook.

Graduate Studies will expect your thesis to be consistently formatted in whatever style you choose. They will not allow you to mix styles, and they will expect you to be up to date, or they will require you to revise before they accept your thesis. MFA students should note that MFA theses must be accompanied by a 2000 - 3000 word (approximate length) preface, in which the author provides a literary context for her/his work, including literary influences, stylistic and theoretical influences, the influence of historical events, cultural and/or linguistic background, etc. It is hoped that the proposal-writing process will help MFAs to flesh out their ideas for their preface.

MA Exam Guidelines

Guidelines and reading lists for the MA Exams are now available on our website: [https:// www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomp.html](https://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomp.html). Note that Part 1 is an in-class exam you will take as part of English 297, a required course offered only in the fall. Please enroll in 297 if you plan to take Part 1 in the Fall. Part 2 is a take-home essay exam in 3 specific areas, administered via Canvas. You must indicate which three areas you wish

to be examined in when you sign up for the exam. The Fall 2021 Part Two exam will be given out on October 8th (9:00 AM) and will be due on October 11th, (5:00 p.m.).

MA students should email Professor Stork (Nancy.Stork@sjsu.edu) to sign up for Part 2.

MFA Exam

To sign up for the MFA exam, students should first have successfully achieved MFA candidacy status and have formed a three-person thesis committee. The MFA exam will be distributed on October 8, (9:00 a.m.) and will be due on October 11, (5:00 p.m.). Contact Professor Soldofsky (Alan.Soldofsky@sjsu.edu) by July 1 to receive a link to sign up.

MA Language Requirement

The MA Program requires demonstrated proficiency in a language, other than English, equivalent to 2 semesters or 3 quarters of MA Foreign Language Requirement college-level coursework completed with a grade of B or higher. If you have not already satisfied this requirement at the time of admission, you may be admitted to conditional standing, but you will need to satisfy the requirement by taking the required number of units and achieving the required grade OR proving your language knowledge via a test given by the World Languages Department before graduating from the MA program. For questions about this requirement, or to satisfy this requirement in a language other than French, German, or Spanish, please contact the MA Advisor.

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MA/MFA Reminders and Guidelines (continued)

Conditionally Classified Graduate Students

Conditionally classified students must complete 8 units of required undergraduate course work before enrolling in graduate seminars. A list of upper-division literature courses approved for conditionally classified students is available from Professor Stork. When you are eligible for classified status, the change is not automatic; see your advisor to file the necessary form (found at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gape/forms/>).

Professional Development Workshops for MA and MFA

A workshop entitled “Applying to Graduate School” was sponsored by GRADES (Graduate Resources and Academic Development for English Studies). Professors Allison Johnson, Sara West, Noelle Brada-Williams, as well as Ume Ali and Philip Avila joined to talk about their graduate school experiences. GRADES is an official club recognized by SJSU and Dr. Ryan Skinnell is our faculty advisor.



We changed the former club name from ELWPDC to GRADES (better acronym!). A central goal of GRADES is to build community in the graduate program and open opportunities for graduate student leadership for themselves and future students.

As of now, the current board members (Amber Sylva, Alayna Mills, Alexis Rocha, and Monica Lopez) will be graduating this semester. We have been looking for interested students to take over. Please contact Amber Sylva if you would like to know more (Amber.Sylva@sjsu.edu).

MFA Thesis Reading Event

The MFA in Creative Writing’s annual public MFA thesis reading is scheduled on Saturday, May 15, 2:30 - 4:00 pm. A Zoom link will be available from Professor Soldofsky by May 1.

Students receiving their MFA’s in May and August 2021 will read from their thesis projects.

Join Reed Magazine!

Join a 155-year legacy—and earn marketable credits toward your degree! **English 133—Reed Magazine**, California’s oldest literary journal—eagerly encourages graduate students to enroll. This unique, four-credit course exposes students to the work of thousands of writers and offers real-world experience in editing and promoting a publication that has held fast through world war, cultural revolution, and the turns of two centuries. See www.reedmag.org. For an add code, contact Editor in Chief Helen Meservey at helen.meservey@sjsu.edu.



Electronic Theses Or 298D Option

Graduate Studies is now accepting theses electronically and making them available to the public via open access on the web. For those of you who hope to publish your thesis, we suggest you file a form to see that your thesis is “embargoed.” That means it will still be available electronically within the library (just as the hard copies of our alumni’s theses are available to visitors to the MLK library), but will not be available to people who do not have access to the SJSU library. Currently Graduate Studies’ policy is that you can request an embargo for a set number of years (three) and then file an additional form to have the thesis embargoed further. The graduate faculty encourages those of you with the desire to later publish part or all of your thesis to protect your creative and intellectual property. For those of you with no desire to publish your thesis materials in print form, open access will provide you with the immediate and ultimate distribution of your scholarship (or creative work). Starting in Fall 2020, MFA candidates are able to submit a 298D Departmental Thesis. A Departmental Thesis is not submitted to the Graduate College thesis office but instead to the English Department for final approval. The Departmental Thesis, though submitted in digital form, will not be uploaded to the ProQuest or Scholar Works digital thesis depositories. This option is recommended for students who wish to protect their copyright of their creative work for future publication.