

San José State University
Humanities and the Arts/ Department of English
English 167, Steinbeck, Fall 2013

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Office Hours: Tues: 3-3:45; Thurs: 10:30-11:30
Class Days/Time: Tues/Thurs 12:00-1:15
Classroom: Sweeney Hall 348

Course Description

John Steinbeck, Californian, was intimately connected with the region of his birth. Born in Salinas in 1902, he grew up loving the broad Salinas Valley, “Salad Bowl of the Nation.” On the shores of the nearby Pacific his family had a summer retreat, and throughout his life he yearned to be near the sea. At age 14, Steinbeck knew he wanted to be a writer, and he spent a lifetime writing about humans living in place, about the connections between and among human, animals, environment, region. He wrote in the early 1930s: *“Each figure is a population and the stones—the trees the muscled mountains are the world—but not the world apart from man—the world and man—the one inseparable unit man and his environment. Why they should ever have been understood as being separate I do not know. Man is said to come out of his environment. He doesn’t know when.”* Steinbeck’s vision of place is holistic: human communities and natural communities intersect. We begin the semester with a book that fully explores the meaning of place, *To a God Unknown*.

In this course we will also consider Steinbeck social vision, how that vision grows out of his sense of place. As well as considering Steinbeck and region, we will consider the reasons why his is a quintessentially American voice, speaking eloquently and consistently for the concerns of ordinary people. John Steinbeck represents one of California’s most resonant voices; his is also a compelling voice for America.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives (SLO)

In the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. *read* closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, and/or rhetoric;
2. *show familiarity* with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American and World Literature;
3. *write* clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and the nature of the subject;
4. *develop and carry out research projects*, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively;
5. *articulate* the relations among culture, history, and texts.

Required Texts/Readings

To a God Unknown
The Long Valley
Tortilla Flat
In Dubious Battle
Of Mice and Men
The Grapes of Wrath
The Moon is Down
Cannery Row
East of Eden

Classroom Protocol

Students are expected to attend each class and engage actively in discussions, to read assigned texts carefully, and to watch films with analytical sensibilities. When class begins, all students must be seated and quizzes are given to those who are on time; students arriving late will miss quizzes. Use of computers is permitted only when students are reading Steinbeck's books electronically, and I ask that those students sit near the front. Otherwise, no computers or cell phones are allowed in class.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the [current academic calendar](http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/) web page located at http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/. The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

Assignments and Grading Policy

1. Group presentation on Steinbeck in the 1960s. 20% (SLO 1, 3,5)

This semester, book groups will read one of four Steinbeck works of the 1960s: *Travels with Charley*, *The Winter of Our Discontent*, *America and Americans* and *Steinbeck in Vietnam*. I give you time in class to meet and discuss the text. Since I want to keep each group to about 5-6 students, we may have two groups reading the same book. In book group sessions, each group will discuss Steinbeck's social vision, his thoughts about America and American values and issues: race, the environment, equality, morality, the past, movement, ethnicity.

Presentations will be on these days:

The Winter of Our Discontent, November 26

Travels with Charley, December 3

America and Americans, December 5

Steinbeck in Vietnam, December 5

Group presentations will focus on American values, selecting **three issues** that seem most pertinent to your group, most relevant to today. On the day of the presentation, each person in the group will hand in **a three-page essay** on Steinbeck and American values, comparing the book you read with two other books considered this semester.

Grade: visual/artistic/creative presentation (powerpoint, video, art, dance, music, etc), with each person participating + 3-page essay from each participant.

2. Reading Notebook: 50%. (SLO 1,2,3,4,5)

Three times during the semester I will collect reading notebooks. Your notebook should be typed and organized into four sections, as outlined below:

Week of September 24: four entries (2 enrichment, 2 analytical on *To a God Unknown*, *Long Valley*, or *Tortilla Flat*)

Week of November 5: nine entries (four original + any substantial revisions + five new—at least two more enrichment. So by November 5 complete at least 4 of 6 enrichment)

December 5: Final notebook--fourteen entries (revisions + five new)

Section I—Analytical responses to reading (5 entries).

Discuss ideas and questions generated by primary material. Please comment on **five different** texts in two page commentaries. These entries should be focused and specific and thoughtful—not plot summaries, not general overviews, but issues in the text that puzzle or intrigue you or cause you to think in a new way. Don't try to discuss a major character in two pages, for example, but you might consider that character's actions in one scene. Or discuss the importance of a minor character. Or a setting. Or the ending. Or select an image that you noticed. You might focus on word choice, or sentence structure or style—or gender, race, class, ecology. Write about what interests you. But also narrow, narrow, narrow.

Please do not discuss the same scenes we covered in class discussions—thus echoing those discussions in your notebook. But come up with related ideas, perhaps, or expand an idea from discussion—comparing to other scenes, texts.

Please do not read secondary sources on Steinbeck for these entries. These analytical entries are ideas generated by the reading.

Section II—Relevance (2 entries)

Consider one character, issue, theme or image that is most relevant to your experience and explain why that is so. These are personal entries, specific and focused. Use examples from your experience.

Section III--Enrichment (6 entries)

Certainly the value of a single author course is the time to focus on one writer's career. Please examine materials in the Center for Steinbeck Studies, which is open Monday-Saturday. Include the following in this section of your notebook: **2 commentaries** on secondary works on Steinbeck (see bibliography attached to syllabus); **2 entries** on at least 20 pp of *Working Days*, the *Grapes* journal and *Journal of a Novel*, the *East of Eden* journal; **1 entry** on 20 pp of *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters* and **1 entry** on 30 pp of Benson's or Parini's biography. For these entries, please briefly summarize the part of the text you read (4-6 sentences) and then give your insights on how this material affected your reading of Steinbeck's work.

Section IV—Hooptedoodle (at least 1) In this section add material that has increased your appreciation of Steinbeck.

- Steinbeck films other than those shown in class—*Tortilla Flat*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and the 1939 or 1992 *Of Mice and Men* (in each case, entire film), *Lifeboat*, *Viva Zapata!*, *East of Eden*
- responses to Steinbeck's manuscripts, especially the “Long Valley Ledger”—read at least 5 of the commentaries between stories
- unpublished letters in the CSS (Guggenheim, Elaine Steinbeck material)
- film scripts/treatments for *Lifeboat* or *Viva Zapata*
- Tom Collins reports (additional material beyond class material)
- Steinbeck's journalism—in *America and Americans and Selected Nonfiction* (other than ones discussed in class or in reading groups). Select at least 6 pieces to discuss.
- Steinbeck and World War II: *Bomb's Away*
- Sweet Thursday* music (*Pipe Dream*) and novel.
- The Forgotten Village* and Ricketts' “antiscript”
- Ricketts' essays
- Ken Burns Dust Bowl series (He will be awarded the Steinbeck Award in December)

GRADING of ENTRIES/ REVISIONS: Please hand in polished entries. I will comment on your notebook each time you turn it in. You may revise entries to turn in *the next time notebooks are due*, but please remember that to revise is to **rethink/rewrite the** original commentary. A revision is not merely correction of a few sentences and grammatical mistakes. **If you choose to revise an entry, place**

the revision in front of the original and mark clearly on top: REVISION OF ENTRY ___ and the date of revision.

Notebooks are graded on clarity, originality, specificity (do not include long quoted passages, but refer to specific scenes in texts). Grammatical errors will lower your final grade. Throughout the semester, I will assign three grades to notebooks: check; check minus; check plus. **Check** indicates that your work is acceptable, but could be more insightful; that there are grammatical errors that must be attended to; that the entries could be longer or more specific. I will indicate suggestions in my final comments. **Check plus** indicates superior work. And **check minus** means that the work needs significant improvement—specificity, grammar, length, clarity, analytical insights (avoid summary). Again, I will indicate in a final comment how you can improve entries, and you may revise for the next notebook due date.

Please include a Table of Contents with your final notebook, handed in December 5. That final notebook will receive a letter grade, based on earlier checks—and it will be returned to you at the final exam.

For the final notebook, you may include photographs, drawings, additional Hoopedoodles or Enrichment entries in your notebook—or you may add these additional materials at any time during the semester. Indicate EXTRA when writing additional entries.

3. Midterm and final exam: 20% (SLO 2,3,5)

4. Participation: 10% (SLO 1)

Quiz grades and participation in class discussions. Quizzes may be given at the beginning of class. There are no quizzes given to late arrivals and no makeup quizzes.

Department of English grading policy: The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU *Catalog* (“The Grading System”). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A=excellent; B=above average; C=average; D=below average; F=failure. In this course, as in all English Department courses, I will comment on and grade the quality of writing (grammar, organization, clarity, specificity, etc.) as well as the quality of the ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

University Policies:

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University's Academic Integrity policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm), located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm>, requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Disability Resource Center](http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/) (DRC) at <http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/> to establish a record of their disability.

SCHEDULE

August

22: Introduction to course, introduction of students. A&E Biography of JS.

27: *To a God Unknown*, chapters 1-11 (SLO 1)

29: *To a God Unknown*, chapters 12-20 (SLO 1)

September

3: *To a God Unknown*, complete. Presentation: "Joseph Campbell, Ed Ricketts, John Steinbeck, Robinson Jeffers" (SLO 1,5)

5: **Steinbeck's short stories:** "The Kittens and the Curtain" *The Long Valley*, "The Chrysanthemums" and "The White Quail." "*I am writing many stories now.*"

Because I should like to sell some of them, I am making my characters as nearly as I can in the likeness of men. The stream underneath and the meanings I am interested in can be ignored.”(LL 94) (SLO 1,2)

10: *The Long Valley*, “The Snake,” “The Harness,” “The Murder.” (SLO 1)

12: *The Long Valley*: “Flight,” “The Vigilante,” “Johnny Bear” (SLO 1)

17: *The Long Valley*: “The Red Pony” (SLO 1,5)

19: **Book group (1/2 hour, 12-12:30. Please have 50 pp of text read).** “The Red Pony.” (SLO 1,2,5)

24: *Tortilla Flat*. First 1/2. **Notebooks due, 4 entries. A-M, Tues. and N-Z on Thurs.** (SLO 1,3)

26: *Tortilla Flat*. Complete. (SLO 1,5)

October

1: *In Dubious Battle*, chapters 1-5. “*It has three layers. Surface story, group-psychological structure, and the philosophic conclusion arrived at, not through statement but only through structure. I guess the first is all that will be seen though and it doesn’t matter a damn.*” (JS to Albee, 1934) (SLO 1,5)

3: *In Dubious Battle*, chapter 6-12. (SLO 1,5)

8: *In Dubious Battle*, complete (SLO 1,5)

10: **Book group (1/2 hour, 12-12:30. Please have 100 pp of text read.)** *Of Mice and Men*, chapters 1,2. Film clips. (SLO 1)

15: *Of Mice and Men*, complete. PDF, “*Of Mice and Men: Steinbeck’s Speculations in Manhood.*” (SLO, 1, 2, 5)

17: *The Grapes of Wrath*, Chapters 1-6. Presentation: Springsteen and “The Ghost of Tom Joad.” PDFs: “The Author, On ‘Grapes of Wrath’” “The Harvest Gypsies” excerpt and “Starvation Under the Orange Trees.” (SLO 1,2,5)

22: *The Grapes of Wrath*, 7-14 (unhomed). “*Throughout I’ve tried to make the reader participate in the actuality, what he takes from it will be scaled entirely on his own depth or hollowness. There are 5 layers in this book, a reader will find as many as he can and he won’t find more than he has in himself.*” (JS). (SLO 1,2, 5).

24: **Book group (1/2 hour, 12-12:30. Please have 150 pp read).** *The Grapes of Wrath*, 15-20 (on the road)

http://cornellreading.typepad.com/grapes_of_wrath/steinbeck/page/2/ (SLO 1,5)

29: *The Grapes of Wrath*, complete. PDF: "Tom Collins reports" "Tom Collins" "For it is through struggle and sorrow that people are able to participate in one another--the heartlessness of the healthy, well-fed, and unsorrowful person has in it an infinite smugness." (JS, *Sea of Cortez*.) (SLO 1,2,5)

31: *The Moon is Down*, first ½

November

5: *The Moon is Down*. Complete. **Notebooks due, 9 entries. N-Z on Tues and A-M on Thurs.** (SLO 1,3,5)

7: Cannery Row, ½ (SLO 1, 5)

12: *Cannery Row*, **complete.** PDF "About Ed Ricketts" and "Edward F. Ricketts, 1897-1948" <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1252560>
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/09/science/what-is-nostalgia-good-for-quite-a-bit-research-shows.html?ref=science&_r=0
(SLO 1,5)

14: *East of Eden*, Part I (SLO 1,2)

19: Bookgroup 12-12:30 (You should have book completed by this date) *East of Eden*, Part II. (SLO 1,2)

21: *East of Eden*, Part III. (SLO 1,2,5) "I have purged myself of the bitterness that made me suspicious of the self, the "I"; you see before you the composite of a real past (a history of limited, imaginative Hamiltons) and a fictional present (fable of Trasks). I am whole and free and know that art and life depend on the lonely, anguished, solitary effort." (SLO 1,2,5)

23: STEINBECK TOUR TO RED PONY RANCH, NATIONAL STEINBECK CENTER, STEINBECK HOUSE, and RICKETTS LAB

26: *East of Eden* Part IV, (SLO 1,2,5)

28: Thanksgiving

December

3 Bookgroup Presentations: *Winter of Our Discontent* and *Travels with Charley* (SLO 1,2,5)

5: Bookgroup presentations: *America and Americans* and *Steinbeck in Vietnam*. PDF: "The Trial of Arthur Miller" **Final notebook.** (SLO 1,2,5).

13: Final Exam: 9:45. Notebooks returned.

Library collections/Secondary works

Principal Collections

Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.
 Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.
 Center for Steinbeck Studies, San Jose State University, California.
 Columbia University, New York, New York.
 Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas.
 National Steinbeck Center, Salinas, California.
 Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, New York.
 Stanford University Library, Stanford, California.
 University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia

Selected Secondary Reading. Please select from the following or any essays published in scholarly journals in the past 10 years. See MLA bibliography or *Steinbeck Review*

- Astro, Richard. *John Steinbeck and Edward F. Ricketts: The Shaping of a Novelist*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1973.
- Beegel, Susan F., Susan Shillinglaw, and Wesley N. Tiffney, Jr, eds. *Steinbeck and the Environment: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1997.
- Benson, Jackson. ed. *The Short Novels of John Steinbeck*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1990.
- _____. *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer*. New York: Viking P, 1984.
- Bloom, Harold, ed. *Introduction. Modern Critical Views: John Steinbeck*. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
- Coers, Donald V. *John Steinbeck as Propagandist: The Moon is Down Goes to War*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1991.
- DeMott, Robert. *Steinbeck's Reading: A Catalogue of Books Owned and Borrowed*. New York: Garland Reference, 1984.
- _____. *Steinbeck's Typewriter: Essays on His Art*. Troy, NY: Whitston, 1996.
- Ditsky, John. *Critical Essays on Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath*. Boston: Hall, 1989.
- _____. *John Steinbeck and the Critics*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000.
- Everest, Beth and Judy Wedels. "The Neglected Rib: Women in East of Eden." *Steinbeck Quarterly* 21.1-2 (1988): 13-23.
- Fensch, Thomas, ed. *Steinbeck and Covici: The Story of a Friendship*. Middlebury, Vermont: Paul S. Eriksson, 1979.
- Fiedler, Leslie. "Looking Back After 50 Years," *San Jose Studies* 16.1 (1990): 54-64.
- Fontenrose, Joseph. *John Steinbeck: An Introduction and Interpretation*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963.
- French, Warren. *A Companion to The Grapes of Wrath*. NY: Viking, 1963. Rpt. NY: Penguin, 1989.
- _____. *John Steinbeck*. New York: Twayne, 1961.
- _____. *John Steinbeck's Fiction Revisited*. New York: Twayne, 1994.
- _____. *John Steinbeck's Nonfiction*. New York: Twayne, 199 .

- Gladstein, Mimi. *The Indestructible Woman in Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research P, 1986.
- _____. "The Strong Female Principle of Good—or Evil: The Women of East of Eden." *Steinbeck Quarterly* 24 (1991): 30-40.
- Hadella, Charlotte. *Of Mice and Men: A Kinship of Powerlessness*.
- Hayashi, Tetsumaro, ed. *After the Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck, 1936-1939*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1993.
- _____. *Steinbeck's Women: Essays in Criticism*. Steinbeck Monograph Series (9) 1979. 36-48.
- Heavilin, Barbara, ed. *The Critical Response to John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath*. Westport: Greenwood P, 2000.
- Jones, Lawrence William. *John Steinbeck as Fabulist*. Ed. Marston LaFrance. Steinbeck Monograph Series, No. 3. Muncie, IN: Ball State University/John Steinbeck Society of America, 1973.
- Lewis, Cliff and Carroll Britch. *Rediscovering Steinbeck: Revisionist Views of His Art, Politics and Intellect*. Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1989.
- Lieber, Todd M. "Talismanic Patterns in the Novels of John Steinbeck." *American Literature* 44 (1972): 262-75.
- Lisca, Peter. *Nature and Myth*. New York: Crowell, 1978.
- _____. *The Wide World of John Steinbeck*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1958.
- McElrath, Joseph, Jr., Jesse S. Chrisler, Susan Shillinglaw, eds. *John Steinbeck: The Contemporary Reviews*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP: 1996.
- Millichap, Joseph R. *Steinbeck and Film*. New York: Frederick Unger, 1983.
- Noble, Donald, ed. *The Steinbeck Question: New Essays in Criticism*. Troy, NY: Whitston, 1993.
- Owens, Louis. *John Steinbeck's Re-Vision of America*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1985.
- _____. "The Mirror and the Vamp: Invention, Reflection and Bad, Bad Cathy Trask in East of Eden." *Writing the American Classics*. Ed. James Barbour and Tom Quirk. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1990. 235-57.
- _____. *The Grapes of Wrath: Trouble in the Promised Land*. Boston: Twayne, 1989.
- Parini, Jay. *John Steinbeck: A Biography*. New York: Henry Holt, 1995.
- Shillinglaw, Susan. *A Journey into Steinbeck's California*, Roaring Forties Press, 2006.
- _____. "Steinbeck and Ethnicity." *After The Grapes of Wrath: Essays on John Steinbeck in Honor of Tetsumaro Hayashi*. Donald V. Coers, Robert DeMott, and Paul Ruffin, eds. Ohio UP, 1994. 40-57.
- _____. "The Chrysanthemums': Steinbeck's *Pygmalion*." *Steinbeck's Short Stories in The Long Valley: Essays in Criticism. Steinbeck Monograph Series* 15 (1991). 1-9.
- _____. Introduction to *The Portable Steinbeck*, Penguin, 2012.
- Simmonds, Roy S. *John Steinbeck: The War Years, 1939-1945*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1996.
- Timmerman, John H. *John Steinbeck's Fiction: The Aesthetics of the Road Taken*. Norman and London: U of Oklahoma P, 1986.
- _____. *The Dramatic Landscape of Steinbeck's Short Stories*. Norman: University of Oklahoma P, 1990.
- Wyatt, David, ed. *New Essays on The Grapes of Wrath*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

