

**San José State University**  
**English Department**  
**English 193, Literature of Self Reflection. Fall 2013**

**Instructor:** Susan Shillinglaw  
**Office Location:** Faculty Offices 118  
**Telephone:** 408-924-4487  
**Email:** Susan.shillinglaw@sjsu.edu  
**Office Hours:** Tues: 3-3:45; Thurs: 10:30-11:30  
**Class Days/Time:** Tues/Th: 1:30-2:45  
**Classroom:** Spartan Complex Central 211

**Course Description/goals**

The first aim of this course is reflective: You will review your years as an English major, rereading essays you've written, reflecting on your development as a writer and a reader, considering the reasons that you chose to be an English major. A portfolio will be assembled that contains papers from your courses in literature and writing, collected and organized in a way that seems appropriate to you, based on your growth as a writer. Early in the semester, each student will have a conference with me about your portfolio, which will include a reflective essay on your writing (see assignment below, Essay #1).

Each student will also reflect on the ways in which reading and class discussions have enriched his or her appreciation of literature. As a class, we will reflect on reasons why reading matters. In addition, we will review the department's list of Student Learning Goals.

The second aim of this course is literary: The class will consider a broad theme, literature and ethics: beliefs, codes, errors. Of course, if we read only for moral instruction, reading would become onerous. We read for many reasons: to delight, appreciate, escape, instruct, challenge. In this class we will consider different texts, their cultural contexts and the codes of conduct they explore—recognizing that ethical codes do not remain static, are not universal, but shift and change across time.

The third aim of the class is creative: You will write weekly reading responses, both personal and literary reflections/analyses.

The fourth aim of this class is “emergence”: You will soon graduate, and the future may be uncertain, may seem at once terrifying and thrilling. We will discuss possibilities: jobs, graduate school, careers, professional writing, travel, relocation. Furthermore, reading beyond the classroom is also a significant part of this class. Book groups serve as models for post-graduation reading groups.

### **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.

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend 4-5 hours per week preparing for a 3-unit course.

### **Required Texts/Readings**

*At Large and At Small*, Anne Fadiman

*Sula*, Toni Morrison

*Disgrace*, J.M. Coetzee

*Sand Country Almanac*, Aldo Leopold

*The Warmth of Other Suns*, Isabel Wilkerson

*Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, August Wilson

Recommended reading: *I'm an English Major—Now What?* Tim Lemire

Texts for group work, 3-5 in each group (copies from Amazon or Powells Books, Portland). Groups determined by August 29.

- a. Love: Lief Eger, *Peace Like a River*; Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

- b. Culpability: Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*; T.C. Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain*
- a. California: Joan Didion, *Slouching towards Bethlehem*; Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*
- b. Love: Nicole Krauss, *The History of Love*; Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*
- c. Finding self: Tobias Wolfe, *This Boy's Life*; Annie Proulx, *The Shipping News*
- d. Memory and reflection: Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing*; Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*.
- e. Humanity and the environment: Cheryl Strayed, *Wild*; Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*.
- f. Family: Chad Harbach, *The Art of Fielding*; John Updike, *Rabbit, Run*
- g. Violence: Flannery O'Connor, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*; Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*
- h. Power: J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*; Robert Penn Warren, *All the Kings Men*.
- i. Holocaust: Art Spiegelman, *Maus*; Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*.
- j. Race: Edward P. Jones, *The Known World*; as told to Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
- k. Individual and community: Bryce Courtenay, *The Power of One*; Kent Haruf, *Plainsong*
- l. Medical ethics: Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*; Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let me Go*
- m. Medical ethics: Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches you and You Fall Down*; Chris Bohjalian, *Midwives*

### **Classroom Protocol**

Please come to each class prepared; read the assignment for each day carefully and, on Thursday at 1:30, have your reading response ready to turn in. Please hand in hard copies of all essays; I do not accept online submissions unless I give a student specific permission to hand in an essay online. Late essays (1,2, 3 below) will receive lower grades; failure to attend class will result in lower participation grades as well. Please do not bring computers to class (unless you are consulting online texts for the class)—this is a seminar, and attentive participation is expected of all.

### **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/](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**

- I. Weekly responses, 25% + 2-page student learning goals response.** Each student will write weekly reading responses that are due at the beginning of Thursday's class; entries will be returned the following Tuesday. Each week, you will write on that week's reading, choosing from two types of entries, analytical or personal, each to be about 350 words or 1 ½ pages typed. The first option is a close reading of one passage, showing connections between part and whole. Discuss why the passage you select is important thematically and stylistically. Include page numbers. The introduction should be 2-3 sentences; the analysis should be specific and thoughtful; the conclusion—2-3 sentences—should clearly state why the passage is important to the work as a whole.

Your second choice for a weekly entry is to write a personal response to one idea, character, theme, image etc. in the week's reading. Again, please identify a specific part of the text that is important to you personally and discuss why that is so, using examples.

Note that these are two different activities: roughly half of your writing responses should be personal; the other half analytical. Please remember that you cannot possibly discuss broad issues in 2 pages; you will be graded on specificity and thoughtfulness.

Every reading response, whether personal or analytical should demonstrate active engagement in the text and in ideas generated by that text. Weekly assignments will be graded on a 1-10 scale, based on the following:

**9-10: A superior piece of writing.** The response is clearly focused on a passage, the language is sharp, and the writing is free of grammatical errors (please proofread for its/it's; for use of semicolons; for spelling errors; for incomplete sentences...). The response has originality and shows why the passage is important to the larger text (analytical) or important to you (personal).

**7-8: A good piece of writing, solid and clear.** This response may lack the innovation and sharpness of the top category. The point is clear but could be supported with additional details. There may be minor spelling, typographic,

and/or grammatical errors. But it is interesting enough to hold a reader's attention.

**5-6: This is an average response, acceptable senior-level work.** It meets the requirements of the assignment, but it does not go beyond. The point may be too broad or unsupported. Examples may be general rather than specific. There may be grammatical errors. The central idea may not be fresh. The writing may be wordy or vague.

**3-4: These responses are short, general, and lacking in examples.** There may be serious grammatical errors.

**1-2: Unacceptable work.** Lacks insight and clarity.

By the end of the semester, each student will have **at least 10 entries** completed. Please keep all in a folder (which you will bring to the final exam). No late responses accepted, no responses from those not in class.

## II. 3 Essays

**Essay #1, 15%: Self-reflective essay due at the conference with me at the beginning of the semester, Sept. 3-24:** "What kind of writer am I? What are my strengths and weaknesses?" 4-5 page essay + list of strengths and weaknesses.

**First**, collect and organize into a portfolio *all* the papers from your English courses, both at SJSU and at community college. **Second**, reread the papers and all comments from professors and peers. As you reread your essays, write a list of what you see as your strengths and weaknesses as a writer—you will append that list to the essay you will write. **Third**, write a four to five page essay that focuses on your strengths and weaknesses as a writer, drawing from the papers you have written as an English major to support your points (please consider only papers written for your major, in both lower division and upper division classes). Your introduction, 4-5 sentences long, will clearly identify what you see as your strongest traits as a writer (not identifying individual papers that may be strong but characteristics of your writing: clear sentences, sentence variety, logic, style, grammar, use of details, specificity, use of parallelism, vivid verbs, use of stylistic devices—etc). In short, the papers you examine and organize for your portfolio will be your "evidence" and the essay you write will reflect on what those papers tell you about your own writing: what are your strongest characteristics as a writer? What are your challenges? How confident do you feel in grammar? Are your sentences varied? Paragraphs coherent? Evidence strong? Have you developed a personal voice?

When you come to your conference, bring this essay and all of your English department papers in a portfolio, organized from the one you like the best to the one you like the least (NOT chronologically). (Scheduled from September 3-24).

**Essay #2: Creative essay 25%.** During each student's portfolio conference (above), the following options will be discussed:

a. Substantial revision of one paper. For this option, the student will read at least three additional scholarly essays on the text, the author, or the theoretical approach and revise with three specific goals in mind. Those goals will be articulated on a cover sheet of the paper. Students will hand in both the original essay and the revised essay.

b. Writing a "Familiar Essay" modeled on Anne Fadiman's essays. Select a topic that is important to you—it can be a hobby, an academic interest, an author, a summer job—almost anything, as Fadiman's book suggests. This essay is in part personal and in part factual, based on research. Each "familiar essay" will quote from at least 4 solid and useful sources and list at least 5 works in the bibliography.

The final grade will consider of the following:

- a. Originality of idea: due September 17 (but can be narrowed in process of research)
- b. Research notes: due October 1.
- c. Annotated bibliography of 4 solid sources—journal articles, newspapers, books, magazines: due October 8 (+ 2 others for final paper, due with paper)
- d. Thesis statement + first paragraph + rough outline: due October 22.
- e. Rough draft + Works Cited, 5 sources in MLA format: due November 7. In-class workshop.
- f. Final essay, due November 21. Please turn in a,b,c,d,e as well, stapled to final essay. No essays accepted without all previous work attached.

**Essay #3 on bookgroups (+ oral presentation): 25%.**

Working in groups of 4-5, you will select a pair of books from the additional reading list. After reading groups are determined, each group will spend 15 minutes on August 29 exchanging email addresses, work schedules, and preference of where to meet.

**Group organization and group dynamics:** One person will serve as discussion leader each meeting, another (perhaps) as president, organizing presentation and meetings. A template for group meetings is attached to this

syllabus, and that sheet will be handed in—signed by each participant in the session—when you come to class that day (with individual questions attached). I have scheduled bookgroup meetings during several class periods. Please come to your groups two questions, attached to the group sheet. You need not write down your responses to all questions—simply discuss them during the meeting. But at the end of each meeting indicate which questions brought to the meeting or generated by the discussion were most fruitful. Be specific and brief when answering #2 on the sheet.

Each group will read two books over the course of the semester. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate how book groups can enrich even the busiest lives.

On the day of your presentation, each student will hand in a four to five page essay which will cover the following in separate section:

Part I: Central ethical issues that were most intriguing to you in each book. You may compare treatments in each text or show how similar/different.

Part II: Relate an ethical dilemma in at least one of the books to another book read in class.

Part III: Is biographical/scholarly research helpful? Important? What did you use to prepare your presentation?

Part IV: What was best about your group and/or the books you read? What was the greatest challenge for you or your group?

Your grade for this assignment will be based on the following, each receiving equal weight:

- a. Quality of the team's group work (questions generated: 20%)
- b. Oral presentation (ie. voice projection, enthusiasm for material, original ideas generated, integrated research, each participant discussing issues in both books: 40%)
- c. Originality of the essay: clarity, specificity, lucid examples, etc. 40%

**III. Other: Class participation, resume workshop/final, short and creative final exam: 10%**

This is an important part of your grade, and I will determine the final piece in the following way, on a 7-point scale:

6-7 points: Someone who has been a reliable and constant positive force in class, who has not missed classes, and who turns in a carefully revised resume and writes a careful and thoughtful and specific exam.

5-6 points: Someone who has been a reliable and constant positive force in class but may have missed one or two classes. Resume is good, exam is good but could be more specific and thoughtful.

3-4 points: A mostly positive force in class but sometimes unprepared. Someone who has missed a few classes. Resume needs more work and exam is brief and/or vague.

1-2 points: Someone who has not contributed because of poor attendance and poor participation and poor preparedness. Resume may be weak, and exam is very general.

**Grading:** 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

### PART I: The Humanities: Reading/Writing

**August 22:** Introduction: Flash fiction (PDF sent); conference sign up.

Schedule conferences, held from September 3-17. Bring to your scheduled conference:

- portfolio of *all* essays written for English classes at SJSU and other universities, with table of contents.
- Essay #1, a four page reflective essay about your strengths and weaknesses as a writer.
- Ideas about creative essay.

**August 27:** Reflecting on literary studies: Fadiman: “Preface” and “Procrustes and the Culture Wars,” 75-94. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/23/opinion/sunday/the-decline-and-fall-of-the-english-major.html?emc=eta1&r=0> [SLG: 1,2,5]

**August 29:** More on the English major:

<http://www.deanrader.com/uploads/5/1/3/8/5138027/rader-sfc-op-ed.pdf>

<https://www.openforum.com/articles/why-english-majors-are-the-hot-new-hires/?extlink=of-social-twt-o>

Fadiman, “The Unfuzzy Lamb”; Charles Lamb; “Witches and Other Night Fears” and “A Dissertation on Roast Pig” <http://www.ucla.edu/~jer6616/>

Bookgroups determined by this date; 15 minutes for in-class meeting. [SLG: 1,2,3,4,5]

**September 3:** Fadiman, “Coleridge the Runaway” “Ice Cream” “Night Owl.” [SLG 1,2,3]

**September 5:** Fadiman, “Mail” “A Piece of Cotton.” [SLG 1,2,3].

**September 10:** Fadiman, “Coffee” and “Underwater.” Review the English Department’s Student Learning Goals, above, and select one; write a 2-page, 500 word reflection on why this goal is the most important one to you. Due Sept. 12 (in place of reading response this week)

**September 12:** Student learning goals response due. **Bookgroup meeting, 1:30-2:10.** Everyone should have read at least 100 pages of one text. Discussion of Student Learning Goals.

**September 17:** By this date everyone will have a topic for the creative essay; sheet will be circulated for student topics. Handout: from *Tiny Beautiful Things: Advice on love and life from Dear Sugar*.

**September 19:** “Insert a Carrot” (scanned). Why does grammar matter?

## PART II: Reading

**September 24:** *The Warmth of Other Suns*, 3-122. [SLG 1,2,3]

**September 26:** *The Warmth of Other Suns*, 123-284. [SLG 1,5] **Bookgroup meeting, 1:30-2:10**—everyone should be ½ way through the first book.

**October 1:** *The Warmth of Other Suns*, 285-331. [SLG 1,5] Notes due.

**October 3:** *The Warmth of Other Suns*, complete. [SLG 1,5]

**October 8:** Annotated bibliography due. *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, first ½.

**October 10:** *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, complete.

**October 15:** *Sula*; **Bookgroup meeting, 1:30-2:10**, complete first book. Ideas/2-sentence group summary collected. [SLG 1,5].

**October 17:** *Sula*

**October 22:** Thesis/outline due. In class workshop. Fadiman, “Collecting Nature.” [SLG 1.5]

**October 24:** Gary Snyder, “The Place, the Region, and the Commons” “Tragedy of the Commons” “Kansas and Al

Qaeda.” [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/11/opinion/sunday/friedman-kansas-and-al-qaeda.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/11/opinion/sunday/friedman-kansas-and-al-qaeda.html?_r=0)

**October 29:** Leopold, January-March [SLG 1,5] **Bookgroup meeting, 1:30-2:10, first 100 pp of book 2.**

**October 31:** Leopold, April-August

**November 5:** Leopold, complete.

**November 7:** Rough draft due—required in-class workshop on rough drafts.

**November 12:** *Disgrace*, Chapter 1-4; **Bookgroup meeting, 1:30-2:10**—¾ of book 2.

**November 14:** *Disgrace*, chapter 5-10

**November 19:** Final draft due. *Disgrace*, complete. [SLG 1,2,5]

## Part III: Presenting yourself

**November 21:** Workshop on resumes. Handout: “Graduates’ First Job: Marketing Themselves.” **Bookgroup meeting, 1:30-2:10:** [SLG 1, 2,5]

**November 26:** Workshop on interviews. <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/02/how-to-make-optimism-work-for-you-2/> Bookgroup presentations (2 groups) [SLG 1,3,5].

## November 28: Thanksgiving

**December 3:** Bookgroup presentations (2 groups)[ SLG 1,2,5]

**December 5:** Bookgroup presentations (2 groups) [SLG 5]

### Secret Ingredient for Success

By CAMILLE SWEENEY and JOSH GOSFIELD

WHAT does self-awareness have to do with a restaurant empire? A tennis championship? Or a rock star's dream?

David Chang's experience is instructive.

Mr. Chang is an internationally renowned, award-winning Korean-American chef, restaurateur and owner of the Momofuku restaurant group with eight restaurants from Toronto to Sydney, and other thriving enterprises, including bakeries and bars, a PBS TV show, guest spots on HBO's "Treme" and a foodie magazine, Lucky Peach. He says he worked himself to the bone to realize his dream — to own a humble noodle bar.

He spent years cooking in some of New York City's best restaurants, apprenticed in different noodle shops in Japan and then, finally, worked 18-hour days in his tiny restaurant, Momofuku Noodle Bar.

Mr. Chang could barely pay himself a salary. He had trouble keeping staff. And he was miserably stressed.

He recalls a low moment when he went with his staff on a night off to eat burgers at a restaurant that was everything his wasn't — packed, critically acclaimed and financially successful. He could cook better than they did, he thought, so why was his restaurant failing? "I couldn't figure out what the hell we were doing wrong," he told us.

Mr. Chang could have blamed someone else for his troubles, or worked harder (though available evidence suggests that might not have been possible) or he could have made minor tweaks to the menu. Instead he looked inward and subjected himself to brutal self-assessment.

Was the humble noodle bar of his dreams economically viable? Sure, a traditional noodle dish had its charm but wouldn't work as the mainstay of a restaurant if he hoped to pay his bills.

Mr. Chang changed course. Rather than worry about what a noodle bar should serve, he and his cooks stalked the produce at the greenmarket for inspiration. Then they went back to the kitchen and cooked as if it was their last meal, crowding the menu with wild combinations of dishes they'd want to eat — tripe and sweetbreads, headcheese and flavor-packed culinary mashups like a Korean-style burrito. What happened next Mr. Chang still considers "kind of ridiculous" — the crowds came, rave reviews piled up, awards followed and unimaginable opportunities presented themselves.

During the 1970s, Chris Argyris, a business theorist at Harvard Business School (and now, at 89, a professor emeritus) began to research what happens to organizations and people, like Mr. Chang, when they find obstacles in their paths.

Professor Argyris called the most common response single loop learning — an insular mental process in which we consider possible external or technical reasons for obstacles.

LESS common but vastly more effective is the cognitive approach that Professor Argyris called double-loop learning. In this mode we — like Mr. Chang — question every aspect of our approach, including our methodology, biases and deeply held assumptions. This more psychologically nuanced self-examination requires that we honestly challenge our beliefs and summon the courage to act on that information, which may lead to fresh ways of thinking about our lives and our goals.

In interviews we did with high achievers for a book, we expected to hear that talent, persistence, dedication and luck played crucial roles in their success. Surprisingly, however, self-awareness played an equally strong role.

The successful people we spoke with — in business, entertainment, sports and the arts — all had similar responses when faced with obstacles: they subjected themselves to fairly merciless self-examination that prompted reinvention of their goals and the methods by which they endeavored to achieve them.

The tennis champion Martina Navratilova, for example, told us that after a galling loss to Chris Evert in 1981, she questioned her assumption that she could get by on talent and instinct alone. She began a long exploration of every aspect of her game. She adopted a rigorous cross-training practice (common today but essentially unheard of at the time), revamped her diet and her mental and tactical game and ultimately transformed herself into the most successful women's tennis player of her era.

The indie rock band OK Go described how it once operated under the business model of the 20th-century rock band. But when industry record sales collapsed and the band members found themselves creatively hamstrung by their recording company, they questioned their tactics. Rather than depend on their label, they made wildly unconventional music videos, which went viral, and collaborative art projects with companies like Google, State Farm and Range Rover, which financed future creative endeavors. The band now releases albums on its own label.

No one's idea of a good time is to take a brutal assessment of their animating assumptions and to acknowledge that those may have contributed to their failure. It's easy to find pat ways to explain why the world has not adequately rewarded our efforts. But what we learned from conversation with high achievers is that challenging our assumptions, objectives, at times even our goals, may sometimes push us further than we thought possible. Ask David Chang, who never imagined that sweetbreads and duck sausage rice cakes with kohlrabi and mint would find their way beside his humble noodle dishes — and make him a star.

Camille Sweeney and Josh Gosfield are the authors of the forthcoming book “The Art of Doing: How Superachievers Do What They Do and How They Do It So Well.”

