

San José State University
Department of English and Comparative Literature
ENGL 130, Sections 1&2: Writing Literary Fiction
Spring, 2013

Professor:	Andrew Altschul
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Office Hours:	M/T, 3:00-4:00pm, or by appointment
Class Days/Time:	Monday, 4:30-7:15pm (Sec. 1); Tuesday, 4:30-7:15pm (Sec. 2)
Classroom:	BBC 124 (Sec. 1); Clark 308 (Sec. 2)

Course Description

An intermediate workshop that focuses on the craft of writing literary short fiction. Students will study closely the techniques and conventions of contemporary short fiction, paying particular attention to the ways in which “rules” and “conventions” are understood, followed, re-interpreted, or subverted by different writers.

The course is divided into four units. The first three will examine a range of published fiction, including occasional exercises and a creative capstone to each unit that asks students to produce work which grapples with the technical and conceptual issues discussed. In the final unit, each student will submit a longer story for discussion in a workshop of approximately one hour. These stories will be substantially revised and turned in during exam week. *Prerequisite: English 71.*

English Department Student Learning Objectives [SLO]

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, 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 nature of the subject;
- 4) develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively; and
- 5) articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

Required Texts/Readings

Course Reader – Available for purchase at Maple Press, 481 E. San Carlos St., San Jose.

What Is “Literary Fiction”?

The focus of this class – what we will read and what we will write – is fiction written about **real, human people** in believable situations that take place in **our actual world**, and about the emotions, desires, and internal and external conflicts which drive those people and create those situations. It is fiction written **for adult humans** that is designed to say something memorable, complex, and true about what it means to be alive.

To that end we will *not* be writing about: zombies, vampires, wizards, witches, werewolves, mutants, space-colonists, time travelers, dimension-hoppers, ghosts, demons, monsters, talking animals, conscious-but-inanimate objects (e.g. toasters or shoes that think), artificial intelligences, psychics, ninja turtles, first-person shooters, angry birds, or zombies. Ask yourself: Would these characters and situations fit well in a comic book, monster flick, or sci-fi movie? If so, they will not fit well in this class and will not be accepted for credit.

All creative work must be **new** and **original**. “Fan fiction” or other work that incorporates characters or situations from previous works of fiction (including your own) will not be accepted.

Requirements and Grading

Written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, single-sided, and stapled or clipped. (Story responses may be single-spaced). *Note: I do not accept assignments by email.*

Participation (20%) A creative writing class is a community which depends upon the input, effort, and candor of all members. Please come to class on time, having done all assigned reading and prepared to discuss it. Your opinions are welcome here, as is your dissent – provided both are offered in a spirit of respect and support for the hard work of your classmates.

- If you are more than three minutes late for class, you will receive half-credit for the day.
- Please attend two literary events during the semester. Calendar below.

Reading Analyses (15%) For each class meeting with assigned reading, please write a brief analysis of one of the stories, 500-word maximum. Please discuss how the story illustrates, innovates, subverts, or contradicts the craft conventions of the current unit.

Unit Capstones (25%) Three short, creative pieces, one to follow each course unit. Formats to be announced; due dates listed below. Please bring four (4) copies to class.

Short Story and Revision (30%) In the second half of the semester, you will submit a complete short story of 10-20 pages. *Stories are due one week before your scheduled workshop.* **Please bring 20 copies.** After your workshop, you will produce a significant revision which addresses the technical and aesthetic issues raised by the class. Revisions are due Friday, May 17, and are *required* to receive credit for this component of the class.

- Stories **must** be turned in on time, in class. Emailed submissions are unacceptable.

Responses (10%) For each full story turned in by your classmates, you will write a 1-2pp. response in the form of a letter to the author. These letters should describe your encounter with the story – what you believe it sets out to do, what it makes you feel or think about – and examine the mechanisms of structure, character, voice, and meaning as discussed during the quarter.

Schedule (130-1)

Jan. 28	Introduction. Read: Shepard, "Proto-Scorpions of the Silurian."
Feb. 4	Unit I: Structure. Read Fitzgerald, "Babylon Revisited"; Thon, "Xmas, Jamaica Plain"; Phillips, "Blind Girls."
Feb. 11	Read Beattie, "The Burning House"; Barthelme, "City Life." Story Maps.
Feb. 18	Read Steinberg, "Isla"; Puchner, "Children of God."
Feb. 25	Capstone #1 due. Unit II: Voice. Read Jones, "Old Boys, Old Girls"; Steinberg, "Cowboys."
Mar. 4	Read Wolff, "Bullet in the Brain"; Moore, "How to Become a Writer"; Saunders, "The 400-Pound CEO." Point of View exercise.
Mar. 11	Capstone #2 due. Unit III: Meaning. Read Thon, "First, Body"; Julavits, "Marry the One Who Gets There First."
Mar. 18	Read Carver, "Cathedral"; Shepard, "Courtesy for Beginners." Poetry Brainstorm.
Mar. 25	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
Apr. 1	NO CLASS. (Capstone #3 due Tuesday, April 2, 4pm, in FO 214.)
Apr. 8	Discussion of student stories.
Apr. 15	Discussion of student stories.
Apr. 22	Discussion of student stories. Class ends at 7:00.
Apr. 29	Discussion of student stories.
May 6	Discussion of student stories.
May 13	Discussion of student stories.

Schedule (130-2)

Jan. 29	Introduction. Read: Shepard, “Proto-Scorpions of the Silurian.”
Feb. 5	Unit I: Structure. Read Fitzgerald, “Babylon Revisited”; Thon, “Xmas, Jamaica Plain”; Phillips, “Blind Girls.”
Feb. 12	Read Beattie, “The Burning House”; Barthelme, “City Life.” Story Maps.
Feb. 19	Read Steinberg, “Isla”; Puchner, “Children of God.”
Feb. 26	Capstone #1 due. Unit II: Voice. Read Jones, “Old Boys, Old Girls”; Steinberg, “Cowboys.”
Mar. 5	Read Wolff, “Bullet in the Brain”; Moore, “How to Become a Writer”; Saunders, “The 400-Pound CEO.” Point of View exercise.
Mar. 12	Capstone #2 due. Unit III: Meaning. Read Thon, “First, Body”; Julavits, “Marry the One Who Gets There First.”
Mar. 19	Read Carver, “Cathedral”; Shepard, “Courtesy for Beginners.” Poetry Brainstorm.
Mar. 26	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
Apr. 2	Capstone #3 due. Discussion of student stories.
Apr. 9	Discussion of student stories.
Apr. 16	Discussion of student stories.
Apr. 23	Discussion of student stories.
Apr. 30	Discussion of student stories.
May 7	Discussion of student stories.

Readings Calendar

The Center for Literary Arts will offer several excellent on-campus readings and conversations this semester with writers of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. For other literary events, check Artsopolis.com, Poetry Center San Jose (PCSJ.org), and creativewriting.stanford.edu.

Feb. 6 – Jayne Anne Phillips. MLK 225/229. 7pm

Feb. 7 – Jayne Anne Phillips in Conversation w/ Cornelia Nixon. MLK 225/229. 12noon

Feb. 13 – Richard Powers. Cemex Auditorium, Stanford University. 8pm

Feb. 25 – Jeffrey Eugenides. Cemex Auditorium, Stanford University. 8pm

Feb. 27 – Susan Steinberg: “What Happened to Experimental Fiction?” TBA. 4pm

Feb. 27 – Susan Steinberg & Susan Straight. MLK 225/229. 7pm

April 3 – Dana Gioia. ENGR 189. 7pm

April 4 – Dana Gioia in Conversation with Prof. Samuel Maio. ENGR 285/287. 1pm

Apr. 17 – Carmen Giménez Smith. MLK 225/229. 7pm

Apr. 22 – Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. ENGR 189. 7:30pm

Apr. 24 – Prof. Cathleen Miller. MLK 225/229. 7pm

May 1 – Steinbeck Fellows L. Rebecca Harris & Marian Palaia. MLK 590. 7pm

May 6 – T.C. Boyle. Cemex Auditorium, Stanford University. 8pm

Course Policies

- Use of cell phones in class for any reason is not allowed. If you use your cell phone in class you will receive a failing grade for the day.
- Use of email, IM, web-surfing, etc. in class are not allowed and will result in a failing grade for the day.
- Assignments turned in up to one week late will receive half-credit. I do not accept assignments more than one week after the due date.
- If you miss a class, *you* are responsible for acquiring notes, handouts, etc. I will have extra copies of handouts in my office, but I will not be available to go over what you missed in the discussion. It is your responsibility – not the writer submitting work – to make sure you get the manuscripts, and to deliver your comments/responses to him/her.
- Please see below for the university policy on academic integrity, and rest assured that all cases of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be pursued. If you submit work that is not your own, you will fail this class. (Please see note above regarding “fan fiction.”)
- You are welcome to email me with questions about the class – however, you should not expect a reply for *at least* 24 hours.
- I do not accept assignments by email under any circumstances. If you are not present in class on the day your work is due, you must bring it to my office during office hours. If it is an assignment that is to be distributed to your classmates, you – not I – will have to arrange for this to happen outside of class.

University Policies

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. [Information on add/drops are available at http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-298.html](http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-298.html). [Information about late drop is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/](http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/). Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

Academic Integrity

Students should know that the University’s Academic Integrity Policy is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require 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 website for Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html. Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. 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.

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 DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.