

San José State University
English Department
English 193, Literature of Self Reflection. Fall 2015

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 3-5 PM; Thursday, 8-10 AM
Class Days/Time: Tues/Th: 1:30-2:45
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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. At the beginning of the semester, each student will assemble a portfolio that contains ALL papers from your courses in the English department, collected and organized in a way that seems appropriate to you, based on your growth as a writer. During the first 3 weeks of the semester, each student will have a conference with me about the portfolio, which will include a 4-page reflective essay on your writing (see assignment below, Essay #1). **Important: Bring all papers and your essay to the conference.**

Over the course of the semester, each student will also reflect on the ways in which reading and class discussions enrich 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.

Another aim of this course is literary. This semester, class readings will consider the acts of reading and writing; the significance of family bonds; the consideration of your futures. Why are you a reader, a writer? What shape does fiction take today? Who are important writers today? Why are family dynamics a source of endless fascination for writing, for readers? And how does the act of reading, the process of writing, the choice all you have made to become English majors impact your futures? We read for many reasons: to delight, appreciate, escape, instruct, challenge, and that range will be emphasized throughout the semester.

Another aim is appreciation of clear and effect writing: Each student will write weekly reading responses, both personal and literary reflections/analyses. We will review grammar and discuss effective sentences, logical organization, clear reasoning.

The final aim of this class is “emergence”: You will soon graduate, and the future may be uncertain, may seem at once terrifying and thrilling. Throughout the semester we will discuss possibilities: jobs, graduate school, careers, professional writing, travel, relocation. 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

Anne Fadiman, *At Large and At Small* (2008)

Anne Tyler, *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* (1996)

Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007)

William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929)

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*, Alison Bechdel (2006)

William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*. Illustrated by Maira Kalman

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 **Thursday August 27**.

- a. Jonathan Franzen, *Freedom*
- b. Donna Tartt, *The Goldfinch* OR *The Secret History*
- c. Chad Harbach, *The Art of Fielding*
- d. Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America* OR *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania*
- e. Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*
- f. Don DeLillo, *Underworld*
- g. Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*
- h. Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*
- i. Elena Ferrante, *My Brilliant Friend*
- j. Iris Murdoch, *The Sea, The Sea*
- k. Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*
- l. Annie Proulx, *The Shipping News*
- m. Edward P. Jones, *The Known World*
- n. Sebastian Faulks, *Birdsong*

Classroom Protocol

Please come to each class prepared and on time; please read the assignment for each day carefully and, each Thursday, have your reading response ready to turn in at the beginning of class. Please hand in hard copies of all reading responses and essays, typed double space. I do not accept online submissions unless I give a student specific permission to hand in an assignment online. Late essays (1,2, 3 below) will receive lower grades; failure to attend class will result in lower participation grades as well, since you will miss quizzes and in-class work. Please do not use computers or cellphones in 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/. 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. 500 word weekly responses, 20%.** Each student will write 10 reading responses that are due at the beginning of Thursday's class; entries will be returned the following Tuesday. Each week, you will select a passage from the reading that week, relate that passage to central themes in the book (3-4 sentences that explain why the passage is significant to the book as a whole) and then briefly discuss why that passage is relevant to your life. Include page numbers for any quotations. Please remember that you cannot possibly discuss broad issues in 2 pages. **You will be graded on specificity and thoughtfulness.**

Every reading response 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. No late responses accepted; no responses accepted from those not in class.

II. 3 Essays

Essay #1: Self-reflective essay, 15%. Due at the conference with me at the beginning of the semester, September 3, 4, 8, 15, 17: “What kind of writer am I? What are my strengths and weaknesses?” 4-5 page essay + an additional page that is a list that you generated noting your strengths and weaknesses as a writer (that list is the basis for the essay that you write).

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).

Essay #2: Creative essay 30%. During each student’s portfolio conference (above), a paper topic will be discussed. Come with ideas:

Each student will write 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: Two ideas for a paper are due Tuesday September 22 (the idea can be narrowed in process of research)
- b. Preliminary notes: October 15
- c. Annotated bibliography of at least 5 solid sources—journal articles, newspapers, books, magazines: due October 29
- d. Thesis statement + first paragraph + rough outline: due November 3.
- e. Rough draft + Works Cited, 5 sources in MLA format: due November 10. In-class workshop.
- f. Final essay, due November 24. Please turn in a,b,c,d,e as well, stapled to final essay. No essays accepted without all previous work attached.

Essay #3: Presentation/paper/contract on bookgroups, 20%

Working in groups of 4-5, you will select **one** book from the additional reading list. After reading groups are determined, each group will spend 15 minutes on August 27 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. I have scheduled bookgroup meetings during several class periods. At the end of each meeting indicate in what ways the discussion were most fruitful. Be specific and brief when answering #2 on the sheet.

Each group will read one long book 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 sections:

Part I: Central familial issues that were most intriguing to you.

Part II: Relate family dynamics to one other 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 each session: 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 and resume workshop, 5%, and final exam (December 10, 12:15 PM), 10%

Participation is a small but 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/Grammar

August 20: Introduction: conference sign up. “Secret Ingredient for Success.”

Schedule conferences, held September **3, 4, 8, 15, 17**. Bring to your scheduled conference:

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

August 25: 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 27: 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> [SLG: 1,5]

Fadiman, “The Unfuzzy Lamb”; Charles Lamb: “A Dissertation on Roast Pig”

<http://www.ucla.edu/~jer6616/> [SLG: 1,2,5]

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

September 1: Fadiman, “Coleridge the Runaway” “Kubla Khan” (online) [SLG 1,2,3]

September 3: Fadiman, “Ice Cream” “Night Owl.” Strunk/White/Kalman, Chapter II [SLG 1,2,3].

September 8: Fadiman, “Mail” “A Piece of Cotton.” [SLG: 1,2,3]

Review the English Department’s Student Learning Goals, above, for in-class discussion. In class, we will write reflections on why this goal is the most important one to you.

September 10: Book group meeting #1. Everyone should have read at least 75 pages.

Fadiman, “Coffee”; Strunk/White/Kalman, Chapter I [SLG: 1,2,3]

September 15: Strunk/White/Kalman, Chapter I. Quiz and discussion. [SLG: 1,2,4,5]

September 17: “Insert a Carrot” (sent as PDF); Strunk/White/Kalman, Chapter III. “Holy Writ” <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/23/holy-writ> [1,3]

September 22: Familiar essay a.) Submit 2 possible topics for the creative essay; sheet will be circulated for student topics. Workshop on topics. Strunk/White/Kalman, Chapter IV. [SLG: 1,3]

September 24: Strunk/White/Kalman, Chapters V; “Dear Sugar” (sent as PDF).

PART II: Reading: Families

September 29: *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, Chapters 1-3

October 1: Book group meeting #2—everyone should have 150 pp read. [SLG 1,5]

October 6: *Dinner*, Chapters 4-7 [SLG 1,5].

October 8: *Dinner*, Chapters 8-10 [SLG 1,4,5].

October 13: *Dinner*, complete. [SLG 1,2,5].

October 15: Book group meeting #3—everyone should have 250 pp read [SLG 1,2,5].
Familiar essay, b.) 5 pp notes due (or Xerox, underlined).

October 20: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (pt. 1) [SLG 1,4,5].

October 22: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (pt. 2) [SLG 1,2,5]

October 27: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (pt. 3) [SLG 1,3,4]

October 29: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (pt. 3) Familiar essay c.) Complete bibliography of books consulted for familiar essay. **Book group meeting #4**—400 pp read. [SLG 1,5]

November 3: *The Sound and the Fury* (Benjy). Familiar essay d.) First paragraph + underlined thesis or central focus. [SLG 1,3,4,5]

November 5: *The Sound and the Fury* (Quentin) [SLG 1,4,5]

November 10: *The Sound and the Fury* (Jason) Familiar essay e.) Rough draft of Familiar essay due; required in-class workshop (edits will be attached to final draft and are part of final grade). [SLG 1,5]

November 12: *The Sound and the Fury* (Jason) **Book group meeting #5, books completed** [SLG: 1,5]

November 17: *The Sound and the Fury* (Dilsey) **Familiar essay f.) Final (submitted with rough draft workshop corrections, annotated bibliography, notes).** [SLG 1,5]

November 19: Workshop on resumes. Handout: “Graduates’ First Job: Marketing Themselves.” [SLG 1, 2,5] **Book group presentation I.** [SLG 1,5]

November 24: Workshop on interviews. <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/02/how-to-make-optimism-work-for-you-2/> **Bookgroup presentation II** [SLG 1,3,4,5]

November 26: Thanksgiving

December 1: *Fun Home*. <http://www.npr.org/2015/04/16/400095882/broadway-passes-the-bechdel-test-with-fun-home>

Bookgroup presentation III

December 3 *Fun Home*. **Book group presentation IV** [SLG 1,4,5]

December 8: *Fun Home*. **Book group presentation V** [SLG 1,4,5]

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.”

BOOK GROUPS: For each session, please hand in a copy of this sheet, one per group per session. The recording secretary changes each time; you need not answer all questions each session—only 2 out of 6 required for each session.

BOOK: _____
MEMBERS PRESENT, signatures of each present:

Who was the discussion leader for this session? (different leader for each session) _____

Who was the recording secretary, filling out this sheet at the end of the session (do not write during discussion—you may be a few minutes late to class) _____

1. What were the two best questions that leader posed this session?

2. What was the liveliest topic of discussion this session?

3. What does the group like best in this section of th book? Plot? Style? Characters? Issues? Setting?
Any consensus?

4. Which characters are of greatest interest and why?

5. In what ways does this seem like a 20th century text?

6. In what way/s is this text relevant to your own lives?

