

**San José State University**  
**Department of English and Comparative Literature**  
**English 71, Introduction to Creative Writing (40208), Section 02, Fall 2015**

**Instructor:** Tommy Mouton, MFA, **Office Location:** Faculty Offices (FO) 112, **Telephone:** (408) 924-4479, **Email:** [tommy.mouton@sjsu.edu](mailto:tommy.mouton@sjsu.edu), **Office Hours:** T/Th 10:00-11:15 a.m., and by appointment, **Class Days/Time:** T/Th 4:30-5:45 p.m., **Classroom Location:** Clark 306,

## **Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging**

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. You are responsible for regularly (at least once every other day) checking with the messaging system through MySJSU to learn of any updates. \*Also: In lieu of handouts, I will often upload reading materials to Canvas.

## **Course Description**

Introduction to Creative Writing (English 71) is a 3-unit lower-division course designed, adopted, implemented, and administered by the Department of English & Comparative Literature at San Jose State University in accordance with the University's General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill Core General Education requirements in the Letters area of Humanities & the Arts. In this course you are expected to read and write in the genres of poetry, short fiction, and creative nonfiction. Along with reading and writing, this class is comprised of weekly discussions, a presentation, and a number of writing workshops.

**Prerequisites:** Completion of English 1A or equivalent; an ability to think both creatively and critically.

## **Department Learning Outcomes:**

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.

## English 71 Course Goals:

- 1) Decipher and understand the form and content of assigned literary works
- 2) Comprehend the historical and cultural contexts of assigned literary works
- 3) Recognize the accomplishments of and issues related to writing by men and women representing diverse cultural traditions
- 4) Acquire through both individual and collaborative/workshop efforts of a written and oral nature the skills necessary for reading, discussing, analyzing, interpreting, and—most importantly—emulating and writing works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction;
- 5) Communicate such skills with clarity and precision
- 6) Develop an appreciation of literary works as expressions of human intellect and imagination, and as representations of diverse human cultures
- 7) Develop the ability to write literary works that express intellect and imagination and that represent diversity in human cultures
- 8) Respond to literature through clear and effective communication in both written and oral work
- 9) Read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility;
- 10) Appreciate how literary works illuminate enduring human concerns while also representing matters specific to a particular culture
- 11) Write works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction that are of interest and value to the writer, to other students in the course, and to a diverse reading audience

### Required Texts: Are available in the SJSU library

*Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft, 4<sup>th</sup> edition*-Janet Burroway (ISBN-13: 978-0321923172)

*The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry*-Addonizio and Laux (ISBN-13: 978-0393316544)

### Other Reading Materials:

Outside reading materials taken from *Writing True: The Art and Craft of Creative Nonfiction*-Perl and Schwartz... Other readings be provided to you.

### In-Class Materials:

One Journal Notebook/Binder  
Pens and Pencils  
Stapler  
Highlighters

### Out-of-class Materials:

Laptop/Tablet  
Printer access

## Classroom Protocol

**Attendance/Professionalism:** You will arrive on time and be ready to work. Regular attendance is expected of you. If you are not present, you cannot participate. A lack of participation will adversely affect your growth as a writer and your overall grade in this course. Consider this

your workplace: appropriate language, dress, and behavior are expected. Technology excuses regarding the failure to compose/type or print work will not be tolerated. Do not text or make/receive phone calls during class. Laptops/ipads, e-readers, etc., will remain off/closed during class unless told differently. Please eat and drink prior to coming to class. In most instances, however, bottled water will be allowed.

**\*About Office Hours:** You should plan on seeing me regularly, especially if you are having a hard time in my class. Make the necessary time to meet with me. Your final grade will often depend on how well you advocate for yourself.

## **Assignments/What Are They Worth:**

### ***100 points total***

#### **Poetry (20%):**

2 Formal Poems (1 Shakespearian Sonnet; 1 Villanelle)

2 Free Verse Poems

#### **Fiction (20%):**

1<sup>st</sup> Person short story- 4-8 pages

3<sup>rd</sup> Person (Limited or Omniscient) short story- 4-8 pages

#### **Creative Nonfiction (20%):**

Memoir-4-8 pages

#### **Peer Reviews (15%):**

3 Peer reviews/write-ups (1 from each genre) are to be chosen by you and turned in on the workshop date of the peer (from your assigned group) you choose to review

#### **Revision Presentation (10%):**

1 Revision write-up + presentation from any of the 3 genres discussed in class

#### **Experimental Project (5%):**

1 experimental project from a genre of your choice (2-4 pages)

#### **Homework/Outside Readings/Quizzes (5%):**

Homework in the form of short sketches will be assigned

When necessary, quizzes will be administered

#### **Reading Event (5%):**

1 reading event is required

## **Grading Protocol:**

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT GRADING STATEMENT:** In English Department courses, instructors comment on and grade the quality of writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. *All* your writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

Grades given conform to the English Department and university grading policy. The Department of English is committed 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.

Creative writing, though subject to the instructor's individual interpretation, can be evaluated according to general standards used to determine how well a piece of writing “works.” These include: 1) Textual and/or technical competence and eloquence. 2) Imaginative risk. 3) Energy and freshness of language. 4) Effective use of metaphor and other forms of figurative language. 5) Clarity and precision of detail. 6) Capacity for mixed feelings and uncertainty. 7) Effective use of grammar, syntax, rhythm; also meter, rhyme, and other elements of poetic style and form. 8) Naturalness and believability. 9) Appropriateness of style to subject. 10) Compelling audience interest.

The following grading will apply: A (96-94%), A- (93-90%), B+ (89-87%), B (86-84%), B- (83-80%), C+ (79-77%), C (76-73%), C- (72-70%), D+ (69-67%), D (66-63%), D- (63-60%), F (0-59%)... Note: I do not, under any circumstances, round up.

## **Assignments**

**Written Poetry, Fiction and Creative Nonfiction (LO 3, 5):** All poetry that is to be workshopped and turned in to me is to be typed (12pt. font, Times New Roman, single-spaced, except at stanza breaks, one inch margins, stapled when necessary). All prose/short stories and nonfiction essays are to be typed (12pt. font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, one inch margins, with page numbers present somewhere on the page, and stapled). Failure to follow directions will adversely impact your grade. Your name and the piece’s title are to always appear on the first page of the work’s final draft.

## **Workshop Procedures (LO 1, 3):**

In this class we will workshop approximately twice a month. Groups will be assigned (approximately 6 groups of four). Each student is responsible for printing out (five or six) the necessary copies (five or six) for workshop. *Note: See the course schedule below for “Print Out” days.* All work is to be critiqued at home, wherein each student is to markup his/her peers’ drafts. I will allow you to (so that you might save paper) print workshop copies double-sided. However, all revised drafts must be single-sided when turned in to me. If you are absent the day you are to distribute copies, you must see me ahead of time. Failure to distribute copies (without the necessary absence documentation/doctor’s excuse) will adversely impact your grade.

**Peer Reviews/Critiques (LO 1, 3, 5):** You are required to turn in three peer reviews over the course of the semester. Peer review write-ups are due on the workshop date. You are free to choose the group member’s work you would like to formally respond to. Since this is a formal response, all the department guidelines related to grammar and mechanics apply. Your peer

review should be *at least* 500 words in length. You will respond using that genre's specific craft elements ( meter, rhyme, enjambment, etc.; point of view, characterization, plot, setting, literary devices; scene, summary, reflection, etc.) discussed in class. Your critique should be focused and articulate. I will not tolerate non-constructive criticism, where you only find it within yourself to focus on the work's problem areas, without considering what *is* working in the piece. Condescension will not be tolerated!

Note: Although you are only turning in one critique from each workshop, you still must critique your other peers' work (marking up their story) with the same critical astuteness. Failure to wholly participate in this process will negatively impact your grade.

**Revision write-up + Presentation (LO 1, 3, 4, 5):** Your ability to go back into your work (after my and your peers' comments have been returned) and very critically look back at your work is crucial. Revision and your commitment to doing so is what often sets published and unpublished writers apart. So, you will have the opportunity to share with the class the ways in which you have critically and creatively gone back into your work (from any of the three genres) and have made the necessary decisions to improve your project. You are not presenting on the obvious; you are presenting to the class the real problem (i.e. the questions you have yet to answer) areas found by your peers and me, along with those problem areas that your artistic sensibilities continue to happen upon. A short write-up (between 300-500), along with a slide show are due to me on your presentation day. If using a document camera works best (since I will have one) I will give the necessary credit in lieu of slides. *Note: from poetry, you are choosing one poem and from fiction, you are choosing one story.*

**Experimental Project (LO 1, 3, 4, 5):** One of the other ways you will grow as a writer in this course is by taking risks. Influenced by a favorite published writer or multiple writers' work, you will attempt your hand at employing, from a craft standpoint, that writer's techniques. Be careful; do not merely emulate that writer's style, where *your* voice and creative point of view are lost. This is still *your* work. Have fun!

**Homework/Readings and Quizzes (LO 1, 3, 4, 5):** Any assigned homework is due at the beginning of the class period. If you are late, your homework *will not* be accepted. If you are absent, you can pass your homework on to a classmate. If any homework is assigned (i.e. an addendum to what is on the syllabus) while you are absent, plan on contacting a classmate. Do not contact me! *Late* homework will not be accepted.

Concerning quizzes: If I sense that the class as a whole has not read, I will quiz you! If you are late or arrive after the quiz has begun, or if you are absent, you forfeit that day's quiz. Quizzes *cannot* be made up.

**Participation:** Class participation (being present; engaging in class discussions) is expected of you. An unwillingness to participate will more likely than not keep you from growing and enjoying the class.

### **Reading/Literary Events (LO 2, 3, 4) :**

You are required to attend one literary event over the course of the semester. I do, however, encourage you to attend as many as your schedule will allow. I will post via Canvas all literary events within a week in advance.

Events can be found at:

<http://www.litart.org/> (Center for Literary Arts)

<http://www.sjsu.edu/english/community/index.html> (SJSU English Department)

<http://www.sjsu.edu/steinbeck/index.html> (Center for Steinbeck Studies)

<http://www.pcsj.org> (Poetry Center San Jose)

<http://www.sjsu.edu/english/community/pwc/> (Poets and Writers Coalition)

**Diversity Statement:** *Some assignments (reading and writing) may in fact address issues of race, class, etc. I expect you to have an open mind and respect the views of your peers as they will respect yours. Insensitivity will not be tolerated.*

### **Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material**

[University Policy S12-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course:

- “Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor’s permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.”
  - It is suggested that the greensheet include the instructor’s process for granting permission, whether in writing or orally and whether for the whole semester or on a class by class basis.
  - In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.
- “Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.”

### **Academic integrity: PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> 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/>.

### **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](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) at [http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD\\_1997-03.pdf](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/aec) (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

### Accommodation to Students' Religious Holidays:

San José State University shall provide accommodation on any graded class work or activities for any student wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require you, the student, to be absent from class. It is your responsibility to inform me, in writing, about such holidays before the add deadline at the start of each semester. If such holidays occur before the add deadline, you must notify me, in writing, at least three days before the date you will be absent. It is my responsibility to make every reasonable effort to honor your request without penalty. It is also your responsibility to make up all work missed. See [University Policy S14-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf>.

## English 71: Fall 2015

### Course Schedule

*Note: I will teach to your needs. This schedule is subject to change. When the need arises, I will make the necessary amendments to this schedule.*

Week	Date	Topics and Due Dates	Next Class Period's Readings/Homework and Assigned Essays
1	Th 8/20	Course introductions Syllabus Review Student Introductions	Buy Textbooks Complete Sketch #1
2	T 8/25	Sketch #1 Due Share-outs Formal Poetry: Format, Meter, the Shakespearian sonnet	Read from the Poet's Companion (PC)-144-148 Rhyme and the sonnet
2	Th 8/27	Shakespearian Sonnet rhyme exercise; The poetic line: caesura, enjambment, end stop Group assignments!	Work on Sonnet draft Print Copies!
3	T 9/1	Imagery and Connotation Sonnet Distribution	Leave comments/feedback on peers' poem
3	Th 9/3	Sonnet Workshop	Read PC (171-186); complete appositives exercise (177-178) and verbals exercise (181) Work on Sonnet Revision
4	T	Final revised sonnet Due!	Read PC (161-163); IW (310-315)

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics and Due Dates</b>	<b>Next Class Period's Readings/Homework and Assigned Essays</b>
	9/8	Intro. to the Villanelle Read from Imaginative Writing (IW)-320 "The Grammar Lesson"- Steve Kowit	
4	Th 9/10	Finding voice discussion Read "Do not go Gentle into that Good Night"- Dylan Thomas Repetition Exercise	Begin work on Villanelle Draft  Print Copies!
5	T 9/15	The Refrains "The Waking"-Roethke Villanelle Distribution	Leave comments/feedback on peers' poem
5	Th 9/17	Villanelle Workshop!	Work on Villanelle final draft
6	T 9/22	Final Villanelle Due! Sketch share-outs Intro. to Free Verse Talk and exercise	Read <i>PC</i> (19-45) Sketch to be assigned...
6	Th 9/24	Free Verse: Choosing a Subject Read "Facing It"-Komunyakaa and "Snow Day"-Collins	Work on 2 free verse poems
7	T 9/29	The Poetic Line "The Portrait"-Kunitz 20 min. exercise	Complete 2 free verse poems (Draft)  Print Copies
7	Th 10/1	Free Verse exercise Free Verse Poem Distributions	Leave comments/feedback on peers' poems Complete poetry Peer Review #1
8	T 10/6	Free Verse Workshop! Peer Review #1 Due	Intro. to Fiction: Read "The Writer in the Family"-Doctorow

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics and Due Dates</b>	<b>Next Class Period's Readings/Homework and Assigned Essays</b>
8	Th 10/8	Discuss Characterization and Point of View Begin Sketch #2	Complete Sketch #2
9	T 10/13	Sketch #2 share-outs Point of View and Voice; <i>IW</i> "The Book of Sand" (82-85)	Begin Draft 1 <sup>st</sup> Person Story Print Copies
9	Th 10/15	Read from "What You Pawn I Will Redeem"-Alexie 1 <sup>st</sup> Person Draft Distributions	Leave comments/feedback on peers' story
10	T 10/20	1 <sup>st</sup> Person Workshop! Character, setting, backstory	Intro. 3 <sup>rd</sup> person narration: Read "Everything Stuck to Him"-Carver
10	Th 10/22	3 <sup>rd</sup> Limited vs. Omniscient Point of View exercise	Read <i>IW</i> (94-102); (138-146)
11	T 10/27	1 <sup>st</sup> Person Story Due Character vs. Setting/Action "A Summer Tragedy"- Bontemps	Begin 3 <sup>rd</sup> Person story  Print Copies
11	Th 10/29	"Every Tongue Shall Confess"- Packer handout... 3 <sup>rd</sup> Person distributions	Leave comments/feedback on peers' story Complete Peer Review #2
12	T 11/3	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Workshop Peer Review #2 Due!	Intro. to creative nonfiction; Read from handout "Notes of a Native Speaker"-Liu
12	Th 11/5	Intro. to creative nonfiction talk: "Where Does I Stand"	Complete 3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Due Scene, Summary Reflection handout
13	T 11/10	Revised 3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Due! Discuss Scene, summary, reflection  Read from "Under the Influence"-Sanders	Read <i>IW</i> (62-68): "Beauty: When the other Dancer is the Self"-Walker  Begin drafting memoir  Print Copies
13	Th 11/12	Memory exercise Memoir Distribution	Read from <i>Into Thin Air</i> -Krakauer

Week	Date	Topics and Due Dates	Next Class Period's Readings/Homework and Assigned Essays
14	T 11/17	Memoir Workshop	Begin Experimental Piece (a poem, a short short story, or a memoir sketch)... Your Choice!
14	Th 11/19	Revision Talk	Complete memoir Begin Revision write-up for presentation
15	T 11/24	Memoir Due Getting Published Talk	Continue Revision write-up for presentation Complete Experimental Piece
15	Th 11/26	CAMPUS CLOSED	HAPPYTHANKSGIVING!
16	T 12/1	Experimental Piece share-outs	Complete Revision write-ups and presentations
16	Th 12/3	Begin Revision presentations Revision Write-ups Due!	Complete Revision write-ups and presentations
17	T 12/8	Complete Revision presentations Write-ups Due!	Literary Reading event Write-up (Final opportunity to submit for credit) Prepare for Reading/Party
Final	F 12/11	14:45-17:00 Literary Reading event write-up Due! End of Class Reading/Party	Enjoy Winter Break!

### Important Dates for Fall 2015

**Thursday, August 20**

First day of instruction

[option\(PDF\)](#)

Last day to submit [Instructor Drops\(PDF\)](#)

**Tuesday, September 1**

Last day to drop a class without a "W" grade

**Thursday, September 17**

Enrollment census date

**Monday, September 7**

Labor Day - Campus Closed

**Wednesday, November 11**

Veterans Day - Campus Closed

**Wednesday, September 9**

Last day to add Last day to submit [Audit option\(PDF\)](#)

Last day to submit [Credit/No Credit grading](#)

**Friday, November 13**

Last Day to withdraw -[Withdrawal from the Semester Request on AARS website](#)

**Thursday, November 26 - Friday, November 27**  
Thanksgiving holidays - Campus Closed

**Tuesday, December 8**  
Last day of instruction

**Wednesday, December 9**  
Faculty web access for Fall grade posting opens at 8am

**Thursday-Friday, December 10-11 & Monday-Wednesday, December 14-16**  
Final Exams (Exam Schedule)

**Monday, December 21**  
Fall 2015 grades due from Faculty (Preliminary Deadline)

**Tuesday, December 22**  
Fall 2015 [grades viewable on MySJSU\(HTML\)](#)

**Tuesday, December 22 – Tuesday, January 26**  
Winter Recess