

ENGLISH 71 "INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING" SPRING 2015

(This syllabus can be found online: www.sjsu.edu/english/ENGLgreensheets/2015ENGLspring/.)

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English 71-3, MW 6:00-7:15, BBC 128

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Course Description and GE Objectives: English 71 "Introduction to Creative Writing" is a 3-unit lower-division course that fulfills the Core GE requirement in the "C2" Letters area of Humanities and the Arts. The course involves both the reading and writing of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. Students will produce original works of poetry - distinguished by its composition in meter and rhyme - as well as prose (fiction and creative nonfiction) in response to the required texts, both historical and contemporary, that will serve as models. English 71 will examine the aesthetic traditions of poetry and prose, as each genre has evolved over the past several centuries, in order to understand the historical and cultural contexts from which each genre arose. By the end of the semester, students will be able to recognize and utilize poetic forms and narrative techniques and, therefore, be better skilled and more appreciative readers of imaginative literature.

Course Student Learning Objectives (SLO): The Department of English and Comparative Literature has established the following Student Learning Objectives (SLO) for its baccalaureate courses, such as English 71: 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; 5) articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

Required Texts:

Samuel Maio, *Dramatic Monologues: A Contemporary Anthology*
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* (Penguin Classics)
Edgar Allan Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Tales* (Signet Classics)
Ernest Hemingway, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Stories* (Scribner)

Required Writing and Relationship to Student Learning Objectives (SLO):

5 poems: Major Assignment 1 (fulfills SLO 1, 2, and 3)
2 prose pieces, totaling 12-14 pages: Major Assignment 2 (the aesthetic statement assignment fulfills SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5; the prose narrative assignment fulfills SLO 1, 2, and 3)
1 critique, 3-4 pages, of workshopped student-prose (fulfills SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

Assignment Distribution, Grading, and Due Dates:

Major Assignment 1: 5 required poems, as follows:

- 1 English sonnet (14 lines, by definition of the form)
- 1 metrical and rhymed sestet-stanzas poem, a minimum of 3 stanzas (18 lines minimum)
- 1 metrical and rhymed quatrain-stanzas poem, a minimum of 3 stanzas (12 lines minimum)
- 1 metrical villanelle (19 lines, by definition of the form)
- 1 poem in blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter), a minimum of 20 lines

Note: At least one of those formal/metrical poems must be a dramatic monologue.

Major Assignment 2: 1 prose narrative, 10-12 pages in length, modeled after one of the readings on the Course Schedule (following), accompanied by a 2-page aesthetic statement; the prose narrative may be either fiction or creative nonfiction – defined as factual prose writing that employs the elements and techniques of fiction: narration, dialogue, etc.

Grading: All required writing will be evaluated and assigned a point value, as follows, which added together at the end of the semester will translate into your final course letter grade.

- I. Major Assignment 1: 50 points of course grade
- II. Major Assignment 2: 35 points of course grade (10 for the aesthetic statement; 25 for the modeled prose)
- III. Discussant Critique: 10 points of course grade
- IV. Participation in the prose workshop when not the Lead Discussant: 5 points

The maximum values of the four assignments (I-IV) total 100 points that represent percentages which graduate, in accordance with University policy, as follows: 100-98=A+; 97-94=A; 93-90=A-; 89-87=B+, 86-84=B; 83-80=B-; 79-77=C+; 76-74=C; 73-70=C-; 69-67=D+; 66-64=D; 63-60=D-; 59-0=F.

The Department of English and Comparative Literature 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 English and Comparative Literature courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing 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.

Due Dates:

Draft of English sonnet due **Wednesday, February 4th**.

Draft of metrical sestet poem due **Monday, February 16th**.

Draft of metrical quatrains poem due **Wednesday, February 25th**.

Draft of blank verse poem due **Monday, March 9th**.

Major Assignment 1 (poems) due **Wednesday, March 11th**.

Major Assignment 2 (aesthetic statement and modeled prose) due in final form one week after workshop.

The discussant critique is due the day that the assigned student-prose is workshopped.

All due dates are absolute. There is no provision for late work. Failure to hand in an assignment on its due date will result in a lowered grade for that assignment. In case of a legitimate – and verifiable – emergency, please contact me **before** the assignment is due, if possible.

Course Procedures: A part of this class is conducted in workshop format, which requires active student participation. Not all of your required writing (poems and prose) can be treated in workshop, but we will spend a portion of the semester workshopping – that is, critiquing constructively – your work. **To that end, you must provide copies of your poems for discussion, and you must distribute your aesthetic statement and modeled prose – hard copies for the assigned Lead Discussant and for me; via email to the rest of the class – at least one meeting before the date of your workshop turn.** Failure to distribute your prose narrative the class meeting **before** your workshop date will result in losing your turn – and a corresponding grade reduction for the assignment, as noted in the “Due Dates” section above. Before the poetry discussions and prose workshops begin, I will lecture on selections of

poetry and prose from the required texts as indicated by the Course Schedule. These lectures will center on a writer's aesthetic practice (that is, his or her particular craft or artistic technique).

Aesthetic Statement and Modeled Prose (Major Assignment 2): The length of your modeled prose will be determined in large measure by the model you choose to follow, but generally 10-12 pages is a good guideline. This prose, accompanied by a 2-page aesthetic statement, must reflect in manner and style one of the readings on the Course Schedule (except as noted below). Your aesthetic statement should be clear and focused, stating which author and which specific prose piece are reflected by your work's technique, mood, theme, plot, structure, characterizations, etc. State the general type of your prose - romantic, realistic, impressionistic, etc. - and be certain to identify and articulate other essential elements of your work such as the use of humor, irony, narrative point of view, etc. that reflect similar aesthetic practices by the model you have chosen. In short, you are to explain in your aesthetic statement your work's technique and composition in specific relation to your model. An example of this assignment, based on Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," will be made available to you. You may not, therefore, choose to model "The Story of an Hour" nor may you use Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart."

Concerning attendance: I strongly advise your making a friend in the class from whom you can get notes for any lecture or discussion you should happen to miss and to distribute the required hard copies of your workshop prose) should you not be able to come to class the meeting before your turn. I cannot conduct a private tutorial with you, either by email or during office hours, in order to replicate what you missed by not attending class. Please do not ask me to do so. However, after you've caught up on the reading and thoughtfully considered your friend's notes, feel free to ask me specific questions should you need clarification. Further, I will not act as your secretary by distributing hard copies of your workshop prose) in your behalf. Do not ask me to do so or leave them in my office or mailbox for distribution.

Manuscript Preparation and Procedures: 1) **All assignments must be typed in 12-point, single-spaced for poems - double-spaced between stanzas - and double-spaced for prose, on standard white, 8.5 by 11 paper. You must turn in to me a hard copy of each assignment. **Emailed assignments are not accepted and will be treated as failing to meet the due date.**** 2) All creative work - that comprising Major Assignments 1 and 2 - must be titled. Each work must retain its original title through subsequent revisions. 3) **The type of the work (English sonnet, blank verse, etc.) must be stated on the first page of your manuscript beneath your name. Remember to number your pages of prose work.** 4) All poems must be your own composition (that is, no translations) and written exclusively for this course. By University policy, you may not hand in any work for which you were given credit in another course, including mine should you be a former student. 5) The adherence to the fundamental tenets of literacy is expected. This includes the correct usage of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. **Failure to do so will result in a grade reduction, as per department policy, as stated above.** You must have - and be able to articulate - a viable aesthetic reason for deviating from proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

****Please do not ask for special treatment of any kind or to be exempted from any course procedure or requirement. In particular, do not ask to change the workshop schedule once it has been set or ask for an extension of an assignment's due date.****

University Policies: You are responsible for reading the SJSU academic policies available online (<http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>). Academic Integrity Policy (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07->

[2.htm](#)); Add/Drop Deadlines (http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/index.html); Late Drop Policy (<http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy>). [Note: Tuesday, February 3rd is the last day to Drop without a transcript notation, and Tuesday, February 10th is the last day to Add courses and register late.] Campus Policy in Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please see me as soon as possible. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with the AEC (<http://www.sjsu.edu/aec/>) to establish a record of their disability.

Some Suggestions for Creative Work: Remember that creative writing is possibility. Ideas can originate from one's personal history, dreams, private thoughts, observations, reading, and more. Following are a few **suggestions**, if needed. Write about: 1) a particularly memorable childhood experience, evoking the mood and tone of a child while retaining an adult's capability for descriptive language; 2) someone you have observed over the course of most of your life, a grandmother or brother for instance, and recount a memorable experience you shared with her or him; 3) a "dictionary" poem in which you use correctly 10 words previously unknown to you, making use of a thesaurus, rhyme dictionary, etc.; 4) yourself imagined as an "other," a well-known historical or mythic figure or member of the opposite sex, using the imagined voice to evoke a significant event in the life of that "other." *Dramatic Monologues* is replete with examples, such as "Tantalus" (p. 100).

Course Schedule:

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| Jan. | 26 | Course overview. Preliminary discussion of poetry. |
| | 28 | Discussion of the English sonnet : R. S. Gwynn, "Shakespearean Sonnet" and Len Krisak, "Mark Fleiss" (handout).
Discussion of meter (handout). |
| Feb. | 02 | Discussion of the English sonnet from <i>Dramatic Monologues (DM)</i> : William Baer, "The '2' Train" (p. 6) and "Eclipse" (p. 8); Rhina P. Espaillat, "On Being Accused of Optimism After Predicting Good Weather" (p. 48); A. M. Juster, "Fugitive Son" (p. 83); Gail White, "For a Senior Killed on Prom Night" (p. 247). |
| | 04 | Draft of English sonnet due. Small group workshop. |
| | 9, 11 | Discussion of the dramatic monologue from <i>DM</i> : Introduction (pp. xvii-xxiv).
Discussion of metrical sestets from <i>DM</i> : Anthony Hecht, "The End of the Weekend" (pp. 74-75) and "Death Sauntering About" (p. 80); Samuel Maio, "Projections" (p. 114).
W. D. Snodgrass, "April Inventory" (pp. 183-185) and "Looking" (p. 189); Timothy Steele, "Practice" (p. 198) and "Joseph" (pp. 203-204); Thomas Hardy, "Ah, Are You Digging On My Grave?" (handout). |
| | 16 | Draft of metrical sestets poem due. Small group workshop. |
| | 18 | Discussion of quatrains from <i>DM</i> : X. J. Kennedy, "First Confession" (pp. 88-89) and "Hangover Mass" (p. 90); Anthony Lombardy, "Abraham" (pp. 103-104); David Middleton, "The Sunday School Lesson" (pp. 150-152); W. D. Snodgrass, "The Last Time" (p. 190); Richard Wilbur, "The Ride" (pp. 248-249) and "Cottage Street, 1953" (pp. 253-254). |

- 23 Discussion of **quatrains** continued: Newton, “Amazing Grace” (handout); Housman, “To An Athlete Dying Young” (handout).
Discussion of the **villanelle** from *DM*: Joseph S. Salemi, “Penelope’s Postscript” (p. 173); A. E. Stallings, “Menielle” (p. 197). Dylan Thomas, “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night”; Edwin Arlington Robinson, “The House on the Hill” (handout).
- 25 Draft of metrical quatrains poem due. Small group workshop.
- Mar. 02, 04 Discussion of **blank verse** from *DM*: Jim Barnes, *from* “Bombardier” (pp. 14-16); David Middleton, “A Quiet Reply” (pp. 153-156); Joseph S. Salemi, “Laocoön in Hades” (pp. 170-172); A. E. Stallings, “Hades Welcomes His Bride” (pp. 191-192); Henry Taylor, “Breakings” (p. 209); John Updike, “Dry Spell” (pp. 222-223); Derek Walcott, “Fight with the Crew” (p. 231) and “A Far Cry from Africa” (pp. 238-239).
- 09 Draft of blank verse poem due. Small group workshop.
- 11 **Major Assignment 1 (poems) due Wednesday, March 11th.**
- 16, 18 Discussion of Chopin: “The Story of an Hour” (p. 217), “At the ‘Cadian Ball” (p. 178), “The Storm” (p. 267), and “The Kiss” (p. 225).
- 23, 25 **Spring Recess.**
- Apr. 30 No class.
- 01 Discussion of **point of view** and **opening paragraphs**. Discussion of Poe, “The Black Cat” (p. 99),
- 06 Discussion of Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart” (p. 172), and “The Cask of Amontillado” (p. 152).
- 08 Discussion of Hemingway, “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” (p. 3).
- 13 Discussion of Hemingway, “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” (p. 121).
- 15 Prose Workshop (3 students).
- 20 Prose Workshop (3 students).
- 22 Prose Workshop (3 students).
- 27 Prose Workshop (3 students).
- 29 Prose Workshop (3 students).
- May 04 Prose Workshop (3 students).
- 06 Prose Workshop (3 students).
- 11 Prose Workshop (4 students).
- 18 **Final Exam, 5:15 – 7:30, Monday, May 18th.**