

ENGLISH 71 INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING FALL 2016  
SAN JOSE STATE UNIV. DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & COMPARATIVE LITERATURE  
JOHN ENGELL FACULTY OFFICE BUILDING 218 MONDAY 13:30-15:00 & BY APPT.

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SECTIONS 2 & 3

TUESDAY/THURSDAY 10:30 AND 12:00

SWEENEY HALL 413

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Introduction to Creative Writing (English 71) is a 3-unit lower-division course offered in accordance with the University's General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill Core General Education requirements in the Letters area of Humanities & the Arts, Area C2.

In this course we read, discuss, and write poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction—in that order. The course is taught using both discussion and writing workshop approaches. In discussions, we comment on published works of creative writing, analyzing these works closely and precisely. In workshops, we analyze creative work by class members in order to assist with revision.

**STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

SLO 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.

SLO 3: Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, context, and nature of the subject.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

All required poetry and poetry-related materials will be either read online at one of a couple of websites or will be included in handouts to the class. Specific reading assignments will be detailed in class.

All required creative non-fiction pieces and materials will be read online at [brevitymag.com](http://brevitymag.com) (Brevity Magazine) from the most recent issue: Issue 52, May 2016. Specific reading assignments will be detailed at the beginning of the creative non-fiction unit of the class. But if you wish to read ahead, simply read online all of the short creative non-fiction pieces from Issue 52, May 2016 of the magazine.

All required short stories will be from Short Story America, Volume IV, ed. T.D. Johnston. You should order this volume through the Short Story America website, [www.shortstoryamerica.com/](http://www.shortstoryamerica.com/) This volume is the only text you must buy for this class; it costs \$25. Order it soon and begin to read the stories in the volume whenever you can. Specific required reading assignments from this volume will be detailed at the beginning of the fiction unit of the class.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

POETRY (four poems of from 14 to 30 lines in length)

a self-portrait poem

a poem containing sensory images and concrete details

a brief narrative (story) poem

a Shakespearean sonnet

CREATIVE NON-FICTION (two personal essays of approximately 1000 words—4 double-spaced, typed pages—each)

a personal essay about an incident from you childhood (before age 13)

a personal essay about a subject of your choice (but not from your childhood)

FICTION

a short story, either first- or third-person, of approximately 2000 words—7 to 10 double-spaced pages

#### ASSIGNMENT FORMAT

All material handed in must be typed and double-spaced with page numbers. Multi-page assignments must be stapled. Your name, the assignment title, and the date should be included at the top of the first page.

#### CLASS WORKSHOP PROCEDURES

For each unit (poetry, creative non-fiction, fiction) I will divide the class into four groups of approximately six (6) students each. Your workshop group will consist of different students each unit, so you will get to read work by most of your classmates. Each time you turn in a piece of writing, you will bring enough copies for everyone in your workshop group and your teacher and yourself (around eight copies). We will critique the pieces at home, writing directly on the manuscripts, and discuss them in workshop groups during the following two class periods. At the end of the discussions, you will get to keep the seven or so marked-up copies of your work.

What do you comment on? You have two responsibilities. The first is to indicate what you got out of the poem(s), personal essay(s), or story. What's your interpretation? If the piece were a required text for the class, what would you say about it? This helps the writer understand what came across and what didn't. The second responsibility is to suggest avenues for improvement. How can the writer make this creative work better? Often this requires putting yourself in the writer's shoes. Remember that you can help a fellow writer with thoughtful commentary even if you would not have chosen the same topic or style in your own work.

In a workshop, writers must feel safe sharing their work with the group. Please keep your critiques confined to the work, not the author. Hostile, threatening, or personal criticism will not be tolerated.

#### GRADING

Grades will be based on the quality and quantity of writing you do as well as the quality and constructiveness of the criticism offered during workshops and class discussions.

Creative writing, though subject to the instructor's individual subjectivity, 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 complicated 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.

Final grades will be the product of the following as judged from the Final Portfolio and the success of the transition from earlier draft to final draft of each piece:

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Poetry  | 25% |
| Creative non-fiction                            | 25% |
| Fiction   | 25% |
| Class participation (including reading quizzes) | 25% |

Grades given conform to the Department and University grading policy. The Department of English & Comparative Literature 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.

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

#### SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Each section of English 71 meets on Tuesday and Thursday at either 10:30 or 12:00. There is no final examination. Instead, on the last day of class, you will submit a final Portfolio.

Reading assignments meet SLO #1; writing assignments meet SLO #3.

Details of all reading assignments will be announced during class sessions. For texts to be used see REQUIRED TEXTS on page one of this syllabus. You will need to purchase only one text, SHORT STORY AMERICA, VOLUME IV.

#### AUGUST

TH 25 Introduction to the Class and to the Poetry section

T 30 Discussion of assigned poetry reading/poetry writing assignment

#### SEPTEMBER

TH 1 Discussion of assigned poetry reading/poetry writing assignment

T 6 Discussion of assigned poetry reading/poetry writing assignment

TH 8 Discussion of assigned poetry reading/poetry writing assignment

T 13 Discussion of assigned poetry reading

NINE COPIES OF THE COMPLETE POETRY WRITING ASSIGNMENT  
(TYPED ROUGH DRAFT) DUE AND DISTRIBUTED TO WORKSHOP  
GROUPS

TH 15 First Poetry Workshop

T 20 Second Poetry Workshop

TH 22 Third Poetry Workshop

T 27 Introduction to Creative Non-fiction

TH 29 Discussion of assigned non-fiction reading/non-fiction writing assignment

OCTOBER

T 4 Discussion of assigned non-fiction reading/non-fiction writing assignment

TH 6 Discussion of assigned non-fiction reading/non-fiction writing assignment

T 11 Discussion of assigned non-fiction reading/non-fiction writing assignment

TH 13 Discussion of assigned non-fiction reading/non-fiction writing assignment

NINE COPIES OF THE COMPLETE CREATIVE NON-FICTION WRITING  
ASSIGNMENT (TYPED ROUGH DRAFTS) DUE AND DISTRIBUTED TO  
WORKSHOP GROUPS

T 18 First Creative Non-fiction Workshop

TH 20 Second Creative Non-fiction Workshop

T 25 Third Creative Non-fiction Workshop

TH 27 Introduction to Fiction (Short Story)

NOVEMBER

T 1 Discussion of assigned fiction reading/fiction writing assignment

TH 3 Discussion of assigned fiction reading/fiction writing assignment

T 8 Discussion of assigned fiction reading/fiction writing assignment

TH 10 Discussion of assigned fiction reading/fiction writing assignment

T 15 Discussion of assigned fiction reading/fiction writing assignment

NINE COPIES OF THE COMPLETE FICTION (SHORT STORY) WRITING  
ASSIGNMENT (TYPED ROUGH DRAFTS) DUE AND DISTRIBUTED TO  
WORKSHOP GROUPS)

TH 17 First Fiction Workshop

T 22 Second Fiction Workshop

NO CLASS THURSDAY 24 NOVEMBER: THANKSGIVING

T 29 Third Fiction Workshop

DECEMBER

TH 1 Discussion of Revision and of the Final Portfolio

T 6 Discussion of Revision and of the Final Portfolio

TH 8 FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE; PORTFOLIOS MUST BE SUBMITTED ON TIME AND  
INCLUDE ALL ROUGH DRAFTS AND FINAL DRAFTS OF THE POETRY,  
CREATIVE NON-FICTION, AND FICTION (SHORT STORY) ASSIGNMENTS

#### ACADEMIC HONESTY

Your commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at SJSU and by the University's Academic Integrity Policy, requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The Policy on academic integrity can be found at: [http://www.sjsu.edu/student\\_conduct/](http://www.sjsu.edu/student_conduct/)

### AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words or ideas and is considered an instance of academic dishonesty that instructors must report. You commit plagiarism by:

Buying, stealing, or borrowing written work

Hiring someone to write you assignment(s)

Building on someone else's ideas without providing citation

Copying from another source or using a source too closely when paraphrasing

In other words, submit only your own work.

### PEER CONNECTIONS

Peer Connections is an on-campus center that provides peer tutoring for SJSU students. They offer assistance with writing; if you feel you need intensive help beyond what I can provide during office hours, please request a writing tutor. Peer Connections has two locations on SJSU's main campus: 1) in the Academic Success Center in Clark Hall, on the first floor next to the Computer Lab; 2) in the Student services Center (SSC) 600 on the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and San Fernando inside the 10<sup>th</sup> Street parking garage building.

### DISABILITY POLICY

If you need course adaptation(s) or accommodation(s) because of a disability, or if you need 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 register with the DRC to establish a record of their disability.