

**San José State University**  
**Department of English & Comparative Literature**  
**English 139: Visiting Authors Seminar Spring 2016**

**Course and Contact Information**

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<b>Office Hours:</b>	Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:45pm-2:45pm and gladly by appointment. (Please note: No office hours on SJSU holidays.)
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	T/TH 1:30pm-2:45PM
<b>Classroom:</b>	Boccardo Business Center 120
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	Prerequisite: Upper Division Standing

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This class will center on study of literature (poetry, fiction, memoir, and non-fiction) written by writers who are visiting campus (Cristina Garcia, Ann Packer, Andre Dubus, Juan Felipe Herrera, Paul Douglass, and others). We will interact with these writers through events by the Center for Literary Arts (and other campus literary events).

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** 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 American 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.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Dubus, Andre. *Townie* (memoir)  
Herrera, Juan Felipe. *Notes on the Assemblage* (poems)  
Garcia, Cristina. *King of Cuba*. (novel)  
Ann Packer, *Swim Back to Me* (short stories)

## **ENGLISH DEPARTMENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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. (Objective met via reading assignments, writing assignments and discussions.) 2) show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature. (Objective met via reading assignments and discussion.) 3) write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject. (Objective met via writing assignments and critical reflection.) 4) develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively. (Objective met via Literary Event Research Paper.) 5) articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts. (Objective met via reading assignments, writing assignments and discussions.)

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

**Author Group Presentations** (SLO 2, 4 and 5): Groups of 7-8 students will present on an author and their history, biography, literary and cultural tradition, and aspects of their life and contributions to literature and society while using visuals, presenting to the class for (approximately 30 minutes) using different modalities.

- Include a two page handout with copies for the instructor and the class members that a) gives overview and key points b) shows information in creative ways c) discusses form and meaning of the author's work d) puts this author in social contexts that are urgent. Begin NOW researching the author and sharing information you're finding with your group by email, googledocs, and/or in person.
- You will also want to present in the presentation a list of all the authors' books, in chronological order, with a short annotation that briefly describes each book's plot and central themes/issues. Obviously these are general overviews that are to be found online. I DO NOT expect you to read all their works. :D
- BIO: Important biographical information. Pay especially close attention to traditions, familial backgrounds, cultural and identity touchstones, shaping influences.
- ONLINE PRESENCE: An introduction to the author's website, showing us what it includes and highlighting key portions. Also check to see if the author has any other online presence, such as being the developer of or contributor to another literary site, a Facebook page, Twitter account, etc.
- VIDEO: A clip of a video or audio interview with the author and/or video of a reading. Share with us one or two significant moments—followed by your

insights/analysis..

- **INTERVIEW:** After you have done some research and have read at least some of the author's work (and therefore developed some good questions to ask, preferably with your group-mates), I will help you request an interview with the author. These will most likely be through e-mail. Share with us what you learned.

**Short Papers or Pastiche w/ critical reflection (SLO 1, 2, 3 and 5)**

For each author, you will write a short (approximately 3-5 pages, double-spaced) paper or pastiche and critical reflection. A pastiche is an imitation in which you mimic the author's style, tone, content, mythos, identity, persona. It can be a mimesis or it can be an associative bridge you take from their work in order to write something of your own that is connected to their work in content, form, or both. In the short paper or pastiche with critical reflection I want you to respond to the book with the following:

- your *personal response* to the book, with a focus on *one or two* key aspects (possibilities include: what your experience was like reading it, what connections you made to life experiences/other readings, etc., what resonated for you, what you liked/didn't and why.)
- an *analysis* that uses a theoretical apparatus. We will discuss what this means in class, but often this means using another text to compare and examine the text in question. Key themes/motifs can be about race, gender, power structures, notions of identity, of persona, of new criticism and new historicism, and/or about traditions of writing style/craft, literary devices, etc through the Formalist tradition.

**Author Event Papers (SLO 1, 2, 3 and 5)**

Write 3 papers (approximately 2-4 pages each) in which you write about what happened and give reactions, interpretations, reflections on the literary events you attended (you must attend three). The more you can include specific things the author said, questions that were asked, etc. the better—You will hand all three of these papers in at the end of the semester in your portfolio, which you will hand in in lieu of a final. Try to connect these reflections to ideas and conversations we have had in the class and you have examined in your work over the semester in your short papers.

**Workshop Essays/"Creative Writing" Work:** we will discuss this as a class.

**Final Project (SLO 1, 2 and 3)**

*Choice #1: Analysis of One Book using critical theory*

*Choice 2: 10-30 page creative pastiche/ creative work with accompanying 4-5 page critical reflection, analysis, and contextualization.*

*Hand this in in the final portfolio with the author event papers.*

## Grading

- Your Workshop 10%
- Classroom Participation in Learning Community 15%
- Short Papers or Pastiches w/ critical reflections 30%
- Final Project 20%
- Author Event Papers 15%
- Group Presentation 10%

If you DO NOT TURN IN for workshop you will lose the ENTIRE 10% of your grade— if you don't hand out your work to the class on the meeting before your workshop date and show up for your workshop (excused absences excluded of course)! NO ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS ALLOWED.

- 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.
- 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.
- **Late Assignment Policy**
- I do not accept late assignments. It is crucial that you turn in your work when due in hardcopy AS I DO NOT ACCEPT ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS.

**Absences:** If you are not in class, **contact classmates to get assignments, directions, handouts, notes, etc. Please do not make your absences extra work for me.** Asking for special accommodations before an absence is always better than after.

## Classroom Protocol

Being on time, participating in class discussions and listening to and taking notes on class lectures are necessary for the successful completion of this course. Cell phones are shut off and put away.

Protocol for written work requires that all quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks or, when more than three lines, put in an indented block. Full citation of the original author and source must also be included. For all papers, review a writing handbook for help with quote integration, formatting and proper citation (most of you will have purchased one for your Freshman comp. classes).

**Schedule** – subject to change (changes will be announced in class)

## Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	N/A	
1	1/28	<p>First day of Class. Syllabus and Introductions</p> <p>HW: Bring an exemplary paragraph written by someone you admire with a short reflection/analysis on why you love it. Printed. 1-2 pages.</p>
2	2/2	<p>Discussion of HW analysis. Sharing what we love. An investigation of craft and aesthetics.</p> <p>Reading a first short story together from Ann Packer's <i>Swim Back to Me</i></p> <p><i>HW: Finish story.</i></p>
2	2/4	<p>Presentation from Ann Packer Group.</p> <p>Discussion of Packer's style, content, stories.</p> <p>HW: Write first <b>Short Paper or Pastiche w/ critical reflection</b></p>
3	2/9	<p><b>HAND IN first Short Paper or Pastiche w/ critical reflection</b></p> <p>Looking at theory—a how to on analysis and critical response.</p> <p>HW: optional: Attend <b>Ann Packer</b> reading at 7pm on FEB. 10th</p>
3	2/11	<p><b>GROUP PRESENTATION: Cristina Garcia Group</b></p> <p>Begin reading <i>King of Cuba</i> together in class.</p> <p>HW: Read first 1/3 of novel.</p>
4	2/16	<p>Discussing <i>King of Cuba</i></p> <p>HW: Read 2/3 of novel</p>
4	2/18	<p>Discussing <i>King of Cuba: FILM</i></p> <p>HW: FINISH novel</p>
5	2/23	<p>Final discussion of <i>King of Cuba</i></p>

		HW: Write second <b>Short Paper or Pastiche w/ critical reflection</b> BRING PRINTED FINAL DRAFT TO CONFERENCE
5	2/25	Meetings: NO CLASS CONFERENCES
6	3/1	Meetings: NO CLASS CONFERENCES
6	3/3	Meetings: NO CLASS CONFERENCES
7	3/8	TENTATIVE: Hopefully a VISIT W CHRISTINA GARCIA?  HW: Go see <b>Christina Garcia</b> TONIGHT March 8 <sup>th</sup> 7pm
7	3/10	PRESENTATION: Juan Felipe Herrera GROUP  First look at poems by Juan Felipe Herrera  HW: Read first 1/3 of collection: <i>Notes on the Assemblage</i>
8	3/15	TBA  HW: Read 2/3 of collection: <i>Notes on the Assemblage</i>
8	3/17	TBA  HW: Finish reading collection: <i>Notes on the Assemblage</i>
9	3/22	Final discussion of Juan Felipe Herrera
9	3/24	NO Class: AWP WORK ON YOUR LONGER ESSAY/Creative work and analysis & Read Dubus, Andre. <i>Townie</i> (memoir) over spring break!
10	3/29	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
10	3/31	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>  Write 3 <sup>rd</sup> <b>Short Paper or Pastiche w/ critical reflection over Herrera or Dubus</b>
11	4/5	Hand in third <b>Short Paper or Pastiche w/ critical reflection</b>  Presentation by DUBUS GROUP  In Class discussion of Dubus' <i>Townie</i>  <b>HW: Optional</b> <b>Reading by Andre Dubus at 7pm 4/6</b>

11	4/7	Watch Oscar-nominated <u>House of Sand and Fog</u>  <b>HW: Optional</b> <b>4/7 Conversation with Cathleen Miller at 1:30pm</b>
12	4/12	Student Workshop
12	4/14	Student Workshop
13	4/19	Student Workshop
13	4/21	Student Workshop
14	4/26	Writing Final Essay
14	4/28	Writing Final Essay HW: Work on final essay. Bring printed full draft to next class
15	5/3	PEER REVIEW: BRING PRINTED FULL DRAFT
15	5/5	<b>HAND IN FINAL ESSAY</b> <b>FILM</b>
16	5/10	<b>FILM</b>
16	5/12	<b>Discussion of portfolio assignment: LAST DAY OF CLASS</b>
Final Exam	TBA	<b>HAND IN Portfolio</b>