

**San José State University Department of English and Comparative Literature**  
**English 71: Fiction Writing Workshop (Section 08) – Fall 2017**

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“If there is a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, you must be the one to write it.”

—Toni Morrison

### **Course Description**

This course will examine works of poetry, creative nonfiction and short fiction as expression of human intellect and imagination, to comprehend the historic and cultural contexts, and recognize issues related to writing by men and women of diverse cultural traditions. Students will also write poetry, creative nonfiction, and a short fiction. This is a 3-unit lower-division course designed and administered by the Department of English & Comparative Literature at San José State University in accordance with the University's General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill Core General Education requirements in the “C2” Letters area of Humanities & the Arts.

In other words, this course will focus on the three major genres of creative writing and explore what makes them work, how they are put together, and why reading and writing them is important, even necessary. Some questions we might be continually asking ourselves over the course of the class are: What are some properties that poetry and prose share? What makes one genre completely distinct from the others? What allows a writer to create a convincing and wholly imagined world that translates in the mind of a reader? Students will approach these questions by focusing on concepts intrinsic to the writing of *any* creative work—including characterization, voice, conflict, point of view, setting, and descriptive language among others. By investigating and experimenting with these traditional concepts, 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. Class will consist of a mixture of student-led discussion of published works, writing check-in's and writing workshop-style discussion of student work.

**Prerequisites:** Completion of English 1A or equivalent. You must, however, be willing to show growth in the composition areas of grammar and mechanics, along with an ability to think both creatively and critically.

### **Learning Outcomes and Course Goals**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- 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, or rhetoric.
- SLO 2:** Show familiarity with major literary works (of poetry), genres (styles), periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
- SLO 3:** Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.

## English 71 GE Course Goals (GELOs):

Additionally, students enrolled in this class will learn to:

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 individuals 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. Respond to literature through clear and effective communication in both written and oral work.
8. Read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility.
9. Appreciate how literary works illuminate enduring human concerns while also representing matters specific to a particular culture.
10. 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

We will not be using a textbook in this course. All reading materials will be uploaded to Canvas or passed out during class. Students are required to check Canvas regularly. Directions on when and where to access specific reading materials will be provided by your professor.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

- Poetry – 4 poems (sound poem, sonnet, villanelle, and free verse) [SLO 2,3]
- Fiction – 1 short-short story (flash fiction) of one to three pages (400-600 words) [SLO 2,3]  
1 short story of eight to twelve pages (2,000-3,000 words) [SLO 2,3]
- Creative Non-fiction – 1 essay (travel writing, satire, personal essay, profile, memoir, etc.) of three to five pages (750-1,250 words) [SLO 2,3]
- In-class Writing Exercises and Quizzes [SLO 1,2,3]
- Written Critiques – For both group and class workshop students will provide written comments of no less than 1 page (300-500 words) to their classmates' work to the author and professor. [SLO 1,2]
- Workshop Revision Activity [SLO 3]
- Final Portfolio – At the end of the semester students will turn in a manuscript consisting of the revised poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction completed during the course (4 poems, 2 short stories, 1 essay) [SLO 3]

## Grading Information

Creative writing 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, and rhythm.
8. Naturalness and believability.
9. Appropriateness of style to subject.
10. Compelling audience interest.

Student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

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 the workshops.

Final grades will be the product of the following factors:

<b>Poetry</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Fiction</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Creative Non-fiction</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Workshop critiques and participation</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>In-class exercises, online responses, and quizzes</b>	<b>20%</b>

The maximum values of the above assignments total 100% that gradates, 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.

**This course must be passed with a C or better as a CSU graduation requirement.**

Note that “All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades.” See [University Policy F13-1](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf> for more details.

For extra credit students may attend up to two literary readings. Responses must be turned in within one week of the reading.

## Determination of Grades

The Department of English and Comparative Literature reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined by the SJSU Catalog (Grades-Letter Grading). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A+/A/A- = excellent; B+/B/B- = above average; C+/C/C- = average; D+/D/D- = below average; F = failure. Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g.

B+/B/B-), the assignment of a + or - grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

### **Departmental Policy on Grading Written Assignments**

Grades issued will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment:

The “ ‘A’ Range ” essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student’s ability to use language effectively and construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The “ ‘B’ Range ” essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the “ ‘A’ Range” essay. The chief difference is that the “ ‘B’ Range ” essay will show some slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The “ ‘C’ Range ” essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the “ ‘B’ Range ” essay.

The “ ‘D’ Range ” essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment – that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The “ ‘F’ ” essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

### **Participation**

Students are expected to attend regularly and thoughtfully engage in class discussion. Be open to relating to the texts we read in various ways (this includes through your lived experience, previous reading, the way you respond to a character, likeable or not, or a particular, unexpected turn of phrase—which you can adapt to your own writing. The more you put into the class, the more you will get out of it.

### **Late Work**

Any work not turned in by the assigned time/date will be lowered 10% per day up to 3 days. In-class exercises, online discussions, and quizzes cannot be turned in late. In case of a documented emergency, please contact me before the assignment is due.

### **Attendance**

Students are required to attend class regularly and to come prepared and ready to work. Make a friend in the class. If you happen to miss a class meeting, get notes from that friend. Please do not come to office hours expecting your professor to review again everything you missed by not attending class. However, after you’ve caught up on the reading and studied your friend’s notes, feel free to ask me specific questions should you need clarification.

## Course Procedure

A large aspect of the course is conducted in workshop format, which requires active student participation. You are expected to prepare written commentary before class and engage in discussion with your peers about a) your understanding/interpretation of a given piece and b) your suggestions for improvement.

There are two types of workshop: small group and class workshop. Not all of your required writing (poems and prose) can be treated in workshop, but we will spend a portion of the semester offering constructive criticism to your work.

To that end, you must provide copies of your work for discussion. On the class meeting before the date of your workshop, bring a hard copy for me and send your work via email to the rest of the class. This is one of your most important responsibilities in the class. 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.

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). Students will also have discussion on Canvas about selected readings.

## Manuscript Prep and Procedure

Student poetry manuscripts that are to be workshopped and turned in to me must 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) and printed single-sided. Failure to follow directions will negatively impact your grade. Your name and the work's title (even if it is *untitled*) are to always appear on the first page of the work's final draft. If in doubt, just follow MLA guidelines:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/24/> (links externally)

## Workshop Etiquette

Workshop is a place for respectful and constructive criticism. It is also a place where students practice articulating what makes creative writing distinctive, interesting, and fun to read. The author should take notes and remain silent as their work is being discussed. Spoken and written commentary from peers must always be directed at the work, not the writer. Personal attacks and offensive or inappropriate language will not be tolerated. Students who cannot follow these guidelines will be dismissed from the course. If you receive any offensive comments on your work, please let me know as soon as possible so I can address the problem.

## University Policies

The following link contains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc.: [www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/)

## 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](#) section at

<http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the [Academic Calendars webpage](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/) at [http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic\\_calendars/](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/). 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/>.

### **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 and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

- “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**

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 \(AEC\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/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 students wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require students to be absent from class. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor, in writing, about such

holidays before the add deadline at the start of each semester. If such holidays occur before the add deadline, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. It is the responsibility of the instructor to make every reasonable effort to honor the student request without penalty, and of the student to make up the 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>.

### **Student Technology Resources**

Computer labs for student use are available in the [Academic Success Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/> located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112.

These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

### **SJSU Peer Connections**

Peer Connections, a campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring, strives to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. You are encouraged to take advantage of their services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit [Peer Connections website](http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

### **SJSU Counseling Services**

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling>.

## ENGL 71 / Creative Writing (Section 08), Fall 2017, Course Schedule

*Note: This schedule is subject to change. Announcements will be made in class.*

- W 8/23 Welcome & Introduction. Course overview. Goals and expectations.  
The Elements of Fiction. Preliminary discussion of the short-short story or Flash Fiction. "How to Become a Writer" by Lorrie Moore. "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid.
- M 8/28 "Unzipping" by Etgar Keret. "Invasion from Outer Space" by Stephen Millhauser.  
"I Can Speak!" by George Saunders. Continue discussion of qualities and strategies of flash fiction. Writing Exercise: Voice.
- W 8/30 "The School" by Donald Barthelme. "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin.  
Writing Exercise: Style.
- M 9/4 Labor Day
- W 9/6 Student Flash Fiction Due: 1 short-short story (flash fiction) of one to three pages (400-600 words). Small group workshop.
- M 9/11 Sonnet and Villanelle. Forms defined and illustrated with examples. Begin Drafting Formal Poem: Sonnet or Villanelle.
- W 9/13 Sonnet and Villanelle cont. Writing Exercise.
- M 9/18 Sonnet and Villanelle are due. Groups (3-4) for Sound Poems assigned.
- W 9/20 Small group workshop. Writing Exercise: Model Free Verse.
- M 9/25 Students present sound poems.
- W 9/27 Sound poems continued.
- M 10/2 Free Verse poems are due. Introduction to Creative Non-Fiction. Forms defined.
- W 10/4 Small group workshop. Finding your topic. Writing Exercise: Creative Non-Fiction.
- M 10/9 "Portrait and Observation" by Truman Capote. Lecture on Image and Detail.
- W 10/11 "Memory and Imagination" by Patricia Hampl. "Hunger" by Roxanne Gay. Writing Exercise: Memory. Image and Detail assignment is due.

- M 10/16 *Borderlands* by Gloria Anzaldua. *Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston.  
Discussion. Writing Exercise: Theme
- W 10/18 Creative non-fiction 1 essay (travel writing, satire, personal essay, profile, memoir, etc.) of three to five pages (750-1,250 words) is DUE.
- M 10/23 Revision lecture. Revision exercise.
- W 10/25 Thanksgiving
- M 10/30 Revision lecture cont. Short story discussion. “The Lady with the Little Dog” by Anton Chekov.  
Plot and Conflict Discussion.
- W 11/1 Revision lecture cont. Writing Exercise: Revision. Craft Analysis. “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Image and Description Discussion.
- M 11/6 “The Grave” by Katherine Anne Porter. Scene and Setting Discussion.
- W 11/8 Poetry revision and rationale is due. Writing Exercise: Character.
- M 11/13 Short story Workshop (3 students)
- W 11/15 Short story Workshop (3 students)
- M 11/20 Short story Workshop (3 students)
- W 11/22 Short story Workshop (3 students)
- M 11/27 Short story Workshop (3 students)
- W 11/29 Short story Workshop (3 students)
- M 12/4 Short story Workshop (3 students)
- W 12/6 Short story Workshop (4 students)
- M 12/11 Last Class. Revision Handout. Performing Your Work.
- M 12/18 Final Portfolio is due. End-of-Semester Reading.