

San José State University
Department of English & Comparative Literature
ENGL 71: Intro to Creative Writing, Section 5, Spring 2020

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Dr. Kristian O'Hare
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Office Hours:	Tues 9:15-10:15am, Thurs 1:30-2:30pm
Class Days/Time:	12-1:15pm
Classroom:	BBC 221
Prerequisites:	Reflection on College Writing
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	Letters C2

Faculty Web Page and Canvas Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, and assignment instructions can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. You are responsible for checking the messaging system through MySJSU to learn of any updates.

Course Catalog Description

Examinations of 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.

Section-Specific Course Description

This course will be a basic introduction to the study and practice in the writing of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Through the reading of selected texts, students will gain a better understanding of craft and technique. In addition, this course will be an introduction to the writing workshop. In the writing workshop, students will be expected to develop as critics, and as writers be expected to be open to criticism.

ENGL 71 GE Learning Outcomes (GELO)

Upon successful completion of the course, you will be able 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 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 and Materials

- There is **no required** textbook for this course; instead, I have uploaded poems, short stories, and essays onto Canvas. You will be required to read these poems, stories, and essays. You must print out and bring these readings to class, for I will be asking you specific questions and pointing out key passages from the text. ***You may use a kindle or laptop to pull up assigned readings, but I prefer hard copies. You may never use your cell phone to pull up the readings.***
- A journal for class notes, writing exercises, daily observations, workshop responses, etc.
- A folder or binder to hold handouts, poems, and stories.
- Dictionary and Thesaurus. Being writers, it is important to know what words mean and to vary your word choice. You should own both. There are free apps available.
- Access to a desktop, laptop, or tablet

Recommended Resources

- ***Purdue University Online Writing Lab (MLA STYLE GUIDE)***
- ***San Jose State Writing Center***

The SJSU Writing Center has two locations: Clark Hall, Suite 126 and on the 2nd floor of the library. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or

to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the Writing Center website (link available on Canvas).

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 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

Reading

Writers read like writers. As you read the works in this class, you are expected to mark up the texts and prepare for class discussions.

Writing Exercises

Writing exercises are beneficial because they can help spur our imaginations and help us grasp elements of craft. For this reason, work diligently on them. These writing exercises may contain a germ; they can grow into a poem, essay, or story.

Major Writing Assignments

Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to produce three poems, one short story, and one literary essay, all of which must be edited into final drafts for your portfolio. Your pieces are due to Canvas one week before your assigned workshop. Late submissions will not be workshopped.

Workshops

You will have three workshops: *you are required to workshop two poems, one short story (5-6 pages), and one essay (4-5 pages)*. After a few weeks devoted to learning our craft, we will begin student workshops. You will need to post your work to Canvas one week before you are scheduled to be workshopped. This will give your peers time to thoroughly read and comment on your work. You will read your peers' work, making line edits and margin notes, and writing a one page letter to each discussing what in their piece worked well, what didn't, and any suggestions you might have on how to improve their work during revision. You must also print one copy each of these letters to be turned in to me on the day of workshop. We will discuss workshop etiquette further in class, but consider this: your classmates are putting a lot of trust in you to read and respond to their stories and poems, many of which will be very personal. In the interest not only of being a good student, but also a good person, this will be an opportunity for each of us to practice empathy, understanding, and criticizing in a constructive, rather than destructive, fashion.

Class Participation

This is a discussion-based course, not a lecture-based one. This means participation is very important to the success of the class. You add value to the class by reading the assigned workshop and published pieces, participating in discussions, writing insightful critiques, and carefully listening. It is my fervent wish that everyone participate actively in our conversations. Participating in a discussion is a skill that can, and should, be learned.

Writing Portfolio

At the end of the semester, you will submit a final writing portfolio that consists of edited, final versions of your creative work; any previous drafts should be attached to the back of the final draft. It is crucial that all pieces be substantially revised from their earlier, workshopped drafts. The quality of your revisions will be a significant factor in your portfolio grade. You will reflect on your work in this course (review the learning objectives) and assess your work in a one- or two-page reflection.

Assignment Word Count and Learning Goals

ASSIGNMENTS	Word Count	GELO
3 poems (two drafts each)	Varies	4, 5, 7, 8, 11
1 short story (two drafts)	2000-2500	4, 5, 7, 8, 11
1 essay (two drafts)	1500-2000	4, 5, 7, 8, 11
Written Workshop Critiques	100-200 Words Each	3, 4, 5, 8, 9
Final Portfolio	Varies	4, 5, 7, 8, 11
Self-Reflection	500	1-10

Grading Policy

The department's standard grading scheme consists of the following: "Requirements for particular assignments will vary, but in all cases essay grades will reflect the paper's effectiveness, which is broken down into three major areas: content (this includes maturity and sophistication of thought), organization, and expression.

The following are the criteria by which essays are typically evaluated in first-year writing courses:

- An "A" range essay is organized and well-developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment, written in a unique and compelling voice. It will show the student's ability to use language effectively with a solid command of grammar, mechanics, and usage.
- A "B" range essay demonstrates competence in the same categories as an "A" essay, but it may show slight weakness in one of these areas. It will respond to the topic suitably and may contain some grammatical, mechanical or usage errors.
- A "C" range essay will complete the requirements of the assignment, but it will show weaknesses in fundamentals, such as development. It may show weakness in mastery of grammar, mechanics, usage, or voice.

- A “D” range essay will neglect to meet all the requirements of the assignment or may be superficial in its treatment of the topic. It may lack development or fail to stay on topic. It may contain grammatical, mechanical, and/or usage errors that interfere with reader comprehension.
- An “F” essay does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment.

The Department of English 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.

- **Unless I make changes and announce otherwise, the final course grade breaks down as follows:**

Final portfolio (revisions of poetry, essay, short story, and self-reflection)	40%
Workshop (timely submission of pieces, participation, written critiques)	30%
Participation (discussions on assigned reading, writing exercises)	30%
- **No grade haggling: I do not negotiate grades. If you are concerned with your grade and want to know how to do better in the future, I welcome appointments to discuss possible strategies for improvement.**

Classroom Protocol

All students are expected to treat everyone in class with respect and in general to behave in a reasonable, responsible, and courteous manner at all times. This means observing the customary rules that govern polite, civilized behavior. I expect everyone to do the following:

- Arrive promptly and stay in the classroom for the duration of the class meeting, unless you are ill or have an emergency; this holds true for all classroom activities. If you must leave class early for some reason, please let me know in advance.
- Do the reading and writing assignments before class time so that you come to class prepared to contribute to and participate in discussions.
- Do not talk, read, sleep, or do other work during class. When someone is talking, you should listen attentively, and when you are talking, you should address yourself to your group or to the class.

Attendance

University policy F69-24: “Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefit for all members of the class.”

Canvas

Much of the course materials will be posted on Canvas: syllabus, readings, and assignment sheets. Class announcements will be made through Canvas as well. Be sure to check your account daily. Unless otherwise stated, your completed weekly writing assignments will be submitted through Canvas.

Electronic Devices

You may use a laptop or tablet for note-taking and to participate in class discussions and activities; however, if I see that you are not using laptop or tablet for class (looking at Facebook, Instagram, emailing, etc.), you will be asked to shut it down and will no longer be able to use said device again in class for the entire semester.

No phones. Ever. This even includes using your phone to access course materials. Your phone must be turned off and properly stowed in your bag.

Late Policy

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class for which they are due. **NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

University Policies

The following link contains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, student success resources, etc. <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>.

ENGL 71, Intro to Creative Writing, Spring 2020 Course Schedule

Reading assignments must be completed by the day that they are listed. The schedule is subject to change with fair notice; any changes will be announced in class and on Canvas. Bring the texts we are using for the day with you to class.

Date	Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Thurs. January 23rd	<p><u>Course Overview, Syllabus, Introductions</u> Lecture: How to Read a Poem In-class annotation of Wifred Owen’s “Dulce et Decorum Est” In-Class Writing Exercise: Abstract Vs. Concrete HW: Bring a magazine or discarded library book from Dr. MLK, Jr. Library</p>
Tues. January 28th	<p><u>Imagery/Sound</u> <i>Alliteration, Assonance, Consonance, Internal Rhyme, Onomatopoeia</i> Discuss: Plath “Alicante Lullaby”; Kumin “Sound of Night”; Toomer “Reapers” Updike “Player Piano”; and Kinnell “Blackberry Eating” In-Class Writing: The Cut-Up</p>
Thurs. January 30th	<p><u>Imagery/Sight</u> <i>Figurative Language</i> Discuss: Trethewey “Incident”; Hongo “Yellow Light”; Young “Negative”; Wright “Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy’s Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota”; and Hudgins “Green Inside the Door”</p>
Tues. February 4th	<p><u>Objects</u> Discuss: Doty “Tiara”; Kooser “Porch Swing in September”; Brooks “The Bean Eaters”; Harjo “Perhaps the World Ends Here”; and Soto “Oranges”</p>

Thurs. February 6th	<u>Place</u> Discuss: Hirsch “Fast Break”; Hughes “The Weary Blue”; Stafford “Traveling Through the Dark”; Turner “R and R”; and Forche “The Colonel”
Tues. February 11th	<u>Memory</u> Discuss: Diaz “No More Cake Here”; Hayden “Those Winter Sundays”; Lee “Eating Alone”; Lorde “Hanging Fire”; and Corral “In Colorado My Father Scoured and Stacked Dishes”
Thurs. February 13th	<u>Love</u> Discuss: Addinozio “First Kiss”; Brown “Host”; Williams “Love: Beginnings”; Walcott “Love After Love”; Duffy “Valentine”; and Gunn “The Hug”
Tues. February 18th	WORKSHOP
Thurs. February 20th	WORKSHOP
Tues. February 25th	WORKSHOP
Thurs. February 27th	WORKSHOP
Tues. March 3rd	Introduction to Fiction <i>Plot/Structure</i> In-Class Read/Plot out Walker’s “The Flowers” and Wolff’s “Powder”
Thurs. March 5th	<i>Plot/Conflict</i> Discuss: Walker’s “Everyday Use”

Tues. March 10th	<i>Character</i> Discuss: Richard's "Strays"
Thurs. March 12th	<i>Point of View</i> Discuss: Erdrich's "The Red Convertible"
Tues. March 17th	<i>Setting</i> Discuss: Alexie's "This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona"
Thurs. March 19th	<i>Dialogue</i> Discuss: Tan's "Two Kinds"
Tues. March 24th	WORKSHOP
Thurs. March 26th	WORKSHOP
Tues. March 31st	WORKSHOP
Thurs. April 2nd	WORKSHOP
Tues. April 7th	WORKSHOP
Thurs. April 9th	Introduction to Creative Nonfiction Discuss: David Sedaris "Go Carolina" and "A Plague of Tics"

Tues. April 14th	Discuss: James Baldwin “Notes of Native Son”
Thurs. April 16th	Discuss: Judith Ortiz Cofer “The Story of My Body” and “The Myth of a Latin Woman”
Tues. April 21st	Discuss: Cheryl Strayed “The Love of My Life”
Thurs. April 23rd	Discuss: Maxine Hong Kingston “No Name Woman”
Tues. April 28th	WORKSHOPS
Thurs. April 30th	WORKSHOPS
Tues. May 5th	WORKSHOPS
Thurs. May 7th	WORKSHOPS
Friday, May 15th	DUE: FINAL PORTFOLIOS