

Table of Contents

<i>Dr. Persis Karim Awarded Outstanding Professor 2017</i>	1
<i>Wanderlust Takes Over SJSU Campus</i>	3
<i>After 17 Years, A Friend Departs: Gabby's Farewell</i>	5
<i>English Department Finalizes Four-Unit Transition</i>	7
<i>SJSU Takes the Star from The Lone Star State: Proudly Presenting Selena Anderson</i>	8
<i>Bob Woodruff Wins 2017 Steinbeck Award</i>	10
<i>Brutal Murder in the BBC</i>	12
<i>Nevertheless, She Persisted: SJSU's Lurie Scholar, Vendela Vida</i>	14
<i>Steinbeck Fellows: Gary Singh & Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo</i>	16
<i>Author Kim Addonizio Returns to SJSU for Readings And Conversation</i>	18
<i>Reed: Celebrating 150 Years of the Oldest Lit Journal West of the Mississippi</i>	20
<i>Creatures and Other Such Oddities</i>	22
<i>Course Descriptions</i>	24
<i>Letter from the Chair, Shannon Miller</i>	28



Photo by David Schmitz

Dr. Persis Karim Awarded Outstanding Professor 2017

By Jacqueline Moore & Kelsey Mullins

Persis Karim—poet, editor, English professor, and founding director for Persian Studies at San José State University—has been awarded Outstanding Professor of 2017. Karim began her journey as a San José State professor in 1999. Karim has since coordinated the Middle East Studies minor program and founded the Persian Studies program, which raised \$500,000 in department support. Karim feels honored to receive this award because she cares deeply about the relationships she has with her students, and it is important to her that she maintains these connections long after graduation. Karim values receiving recognition for her work; however, she believes the English Department deserves more praise. “[We] do so much heavy lifting and so much of what we do requires tremendous labor and care, and often we feel that we’re not recognized for this.” This is the first time since 1972 that someone from the English Department has received this award—making her a great representation of a 21st-century English professor.

Through her accomplishments and impressive background of Iranian studies, she is known as an important contributor to the academic world of storytelling and archive building. One of the things she loves to do outside of the classroom is support her students and encourage them to deepen their own ideas and research. She is not a big believer in anyone knowing or doing the bare minimum. Karim also emphasizes the importance of learning outside the boundaries of textbooks and classrooms. Her hope with each one of her classes can be boiled down to two goals—the first being that she can introduce ideas and literature that expand her students’ worlds. She hopes that this will help her students think more critically and will build empathy towards people and cultures that are unknown to them. Second, she likes to engage with her students in such a manner that “they are better able to see and feel that they have a voice, that they have something to contribute [and] that their ideas and feelings matter.”

Karim is devoted to the idea that education plays a large role in our ability as a country, and as people globally, to unify and become understanding of one another. She believes that we are at a time where our democratic institutions are being besieged by the interests of corporations and autocrats. “This is an urgent time for us to protect and defend the role of education in our society. I believe that education, the exposure to a more complex way of thinking, to the arts and humanities, to looking beyond what is profitable, for the sake of our whole planet and all of humanity, is the most sacred mission we have before us,” she explains. Karim is hopeful that “education is the best way to mold humanity into responsible and engaged citizens who ultimately act in the interests of our imperiled planet and future generations.”

Her busy schedule as an instructor includes leading courses in Global Studies, Middle Eastern studies, US Ethnic Diaspora Literature, and many more. However, not only is she so well-deserving of this award for her experience in teaching, but also for her work in Middle

East Studies. Along with her busy teaching schedule, some of her many accomplishments include collecting and editing three anthologies of Iranian diaspora literature—*Tremors: New Fiction by Iranian American Writers* (2013), *Let Me Tell You Where I’ve Been: New Writing by Women of the Iranian Diaspora* (2006), and *A World Between: Poems, Short Stories, and Essays by Iranian-Americans* (1999).

Along with her independent studies, Karim is also involved in a digital storytelling project about Iranian Americans in Silicon Valley and produced a staged adaptation of a novel with her colleague Matthew Spangler in the Department of Communication Studies last October. As an avid poet, Professor Karim has had much of her work published and is currently working on a new collection titled, *When the World is Harsh, Find Your Tenderness*.

Her passion for Iranian and Middle East studies stems from her Iranian father, Alexander Karim, who would share stories with Karim at a young age. His stories motivated her to understand the power of language, places, and experiences that go beyond the realm of the present and into the past. Karim passes on this understanding and admiration for Middle Eastern studies to her students to help them understand that economic injustice, bigotry, and Islamophobia are “manufactured stories” that spread hate and create a false narrative that such beliefs are somehow normal or acceptable.

As she accepts this award, Karim hopes that her passion to inform is inspiring her students. Karim wishes she could change the economic reality of SJSU students’ lives so that they could more fully give themselves to their education. Karim explains that she sees so many young people who have to work too many jobs to pay for their degrees, and they end up having less energy and time to really be present and involved in their education as a “discovery” rather than just a degree. During her undergraduate and graduate career, she had the good fortune of having some amazing pro-

fessors that introduced her to ideas and histories which challenged her to think outside the box. Because of this, she continues their legacy in the way she teaches by deeply investing in the idea that the literature she presents to her students gives the most potent and engaging experiences of a college education. Karim's dream is that her students will walk away from reading a book, a novel, or a poem with a fresh perspective about not only the literary merits of that particular text, but also an appreciation for what makes that text important to read and why it could and should matter to us as readers.

Karim's achievements for overall excellence in academia was recognized at the 18th Annual Faculty Service Recognition and Awards Luncheon on March 9, 2017 at the Diaz Compean Student Union Ballroom. There, San José State recognized faculty for their long years of service. Along with Karim receiving the Outstanding Professor Award, other awards given were SJSU's President's Scholar Award, Distinguished Service Award, and the Outstanding Lecturer Award. With this award, she will continue to grow and stimulate the minds of her student's college education through the College of Humanities and the Arts, and Persian and Middle East studies.



Photo by The Odyssey Online

Wanderlust Takes Over SJSU Campus

By Chris Casey & Kerri Jensen

If you've seen some students with a preoccupied, faraway look in their eyes, they attended the Center for Literary Arts (CLA) Travel Writing Conference. Wanderlust took over SJSU campus when CLA hosted its first-ever writers' conference March 21–23, 2017. The conference brought some of the top globe-trotting writers in the world directly to SJSU's campus for students and the community to learn from.

The three-day event featured experts in food, adventure, and editing, with each day highlighting a specific area of concentration in the travel writing industry. Authors participated in panel discussions, sharing their expertise and knowledge, with a portion of the program dedicated to audience questions. The conference closed with a reception in the Student Union lobby where students had the opportunity to meet and talk with top editors in travel writing.

The conference began with everyone's favorite subject—food. Our favorite travel memories often include the meals we experience. The panel, including Janis Cooke Newman, Jacqueline Harmon Butler, Andrew Lam, and Margo True, encouraged writers to capitalize on this commonality. Much of the discussion centered on the importance of using sensory details when writing. Author Jacqueline Harman Butler, a recipient of noteworthy press awards, said, "Through writing, I

give readers a little walking tour of a location.” Sharing how she finds the best places to eat, Butler laughed and said, “I let my nose lead me. If it smells good, eat it.” Her advice to new travel writers is to “activate all five of your senses. Instead of covering an entire destination, stop and look around. See, smell, hear, touch, and taste. Maybe choose one thing to write about at a particular destination.”

The panel all agreed that getting out of the big cities is important, but they shocked the audience with their next piece of advice. They all agreed that visiting a McDonald’s in other countries is a worthwhile experience to see how local cultures influence western fast food.

Adventure was the focus of day two. The Adventure Travel Panel featured Don George, Dan White, Michael Katakis, and Susan Orlean. Although these authors have been everywhere, they stressed the importance of finding adventure wherever you are. Susan Orlean, author of *The Orchid Thief* and staff writer for *The New Yorker*, stressed, “Adventure really has nothing to do with where you are; it’s a state of mind.” Dan White agrees. White is the author of *Under the Stars: How America Fell in Love with Camping*. He is also a former Steinbeck Fellow and has taught composition at SJSU. Originally, White thought that writing about camping would be boring, but it turned out to be one of his most interesting projects. He believes the more you learn about a topic, the more it opens itself to you and becomes fascinating.

The panel finished the evening by sharing how travel has the power to transform the world. “When we travel, we are ambassadors,” says Don George, author of *The Way of Wanderlust* and editor for *National Geographic Traveler*. George believes that travel helps both travelers and natives realize that cultures are more alike than different. Michael Katakis, photographer and author of *A Thousand Shards of Glass*, poetically stated, “Travel writers remind us that...the vast majority of people around the world are good people.”

Don George returned on day three to moderate the Travel Editors Panel, which included Spud Hilton of *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Larry Habegger of *Travelers’ Tales Books*, and Julia Cosgrove of *AFAR*. George and the panel shared the following tips on getting published:

1. Locate publications you’re interested in and begin reading them religiously so that you know exactly what they’re looking for.
2. Know the point of what you’re writing; everything in the piece should lead to that point.
3. Ask yourself, “What lessons did I learn on this trip, and how did I learn them?”



Story is also key for these editors. They agreed that they look for writers who tell a story, not recount an event. The panel finished the evening by sharing their passion about travel and its importance in our politically charged climate. Travel is perhaps more important now than ever, because it brings people and cultures together.

While this was CLA’s first writers’ conference, it wasn’t the first for CLA’s director, Professor Cathleen Miller. Professor Miller is a successful travel writer and has hosted conferences before: “When I first became a writer, I started a group called Wild Writing Women—twelve women who were all travel writers. We put together an anthology and were doing readings

at area bookstores. All these women wanted to be part of our group. They were curious about what we did, especially the concept of traveling alone as women. So we put on a three-day conference in San Francisco.”

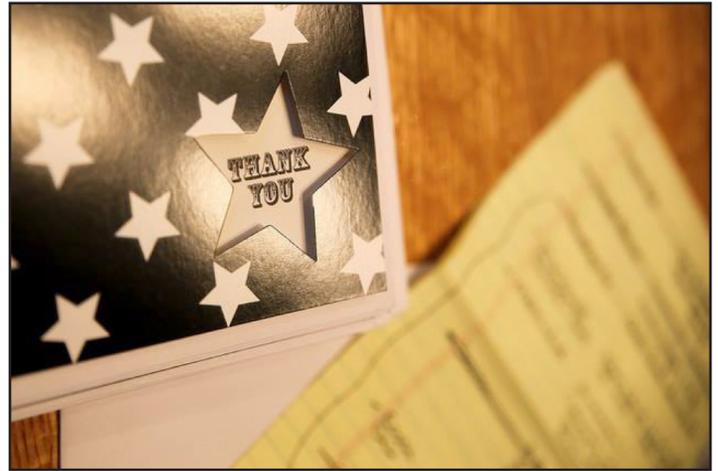
Professor Miller sees conferences as valuable learning and networking experiences for students. “This is the kind of thing that, as a university, we should be doing. Entertaining more of a discussion with people instead of being lectured to. That’s how we teach creative writing here at SJSU. We’re more participatory than lecture-based.”

Travel writing is an ever-changing industry. Gone are the days of the travel guidebook. Like everything in journalism, the travel industry is now much more geared toward digital mediums. But Professor Miller points out that there is still demand for good narrative. “The narrative storytelling aspect goes back to recorded history. There’s a huge market for armchair travel. That lure of wanting to learn about far-away places, that goes back to the beginning of human nature.” Dan White agrees adding, “I think the big challenge for armchair travel books is to come up with a new and original way of approaching a subject that the readers think they know very well.”

It’s a big world and a tough market to break into, but it’s not impossible. Professor Miller encourages students, saying, “Get going! Get assignments that take you out of the country. Start publishing your work anywhere you can.” A conference is what started Professor Miller’s writing career, and she hopes that this conference does the same for SJSU students.

So follow your wanderlust. Get going and get writing! To learn more about the CLA and its schedule of events, visit their website at www.litart.org. Visit the authors featured in this article at their websites:

- Jacqueline Harmon Butler:
www.jacquelineharmonbutler.com
- Don George: www.don-george.com
- Dan White: www.danwhitebooks.com



After 17 Years, A Friend Departs: Gabby’s Farewell

By Arthur Hoang & Ali Ahsan

Whether you know him as Gabriel Rabanal, “Gabby,” or the friendly, smiling guy who greeted you in the English Department’s main office, it’s likely you have heard of him. Gabby worked in the English Department at San José State University (SJSU) as an administrative assistant. He played a key role in helping every chair, dean, and office manager throughout the College of Humanity and the Arts. He was also the person who organized a lot of the paperwork for student and faculty resources. Over the years working for the English Department, his efforts inspired others and made their jobs easier. After 17 wonderful years, Gabby has retired from his duty at SJSU.

Some people may not know exactly what Gabby did for the English Department. Well, what didn’t he do? As executive assistant to the dean of the College of Humanities and the Arts, Pat Cunningham puts it, “He was the ‘face of the office.’” Gabby did everything from assisting students with scheduling, training student assistants, answering the English Department office’s phone calls, to managing course notices, and quite literally everything in between. He offered his helping hand to students in the lower-division English classes all the way to students in upper division and graduate-level courses. As a matter of fact, Gabby

would also help students from other majors who were interested of pursuing an English degree, while providing them with the necessary contact information for advising. Associate Chair and SJSU Professor Noelle Brada-Williams says, “He really understood the difficulty of getting over bureaucratic hurdles.” The truth is that whether one was affiliated with the department or not, Gabby helped anyone who came up to him. He was also the person who had the master key for all the department rooms; when a faculty member was locked out of their office, didn’t have their papers, or forgot to post a “class cancelled” note on doors, he was always there to provide immediate assistance.

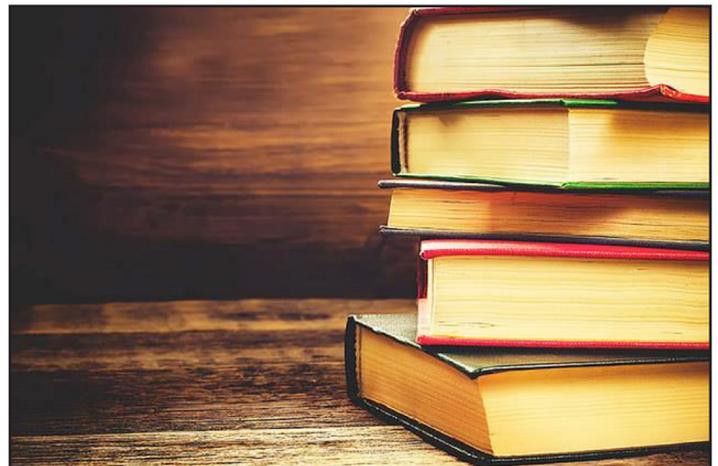
Perhaps the most significant thing to note about Gabby is his personality. Loved by all who got to know him, Gabby is charming, reliable, and ethical. Gabby’s dedication to his role never faltered; he never took the easy way out or stubbornly stuck to how things were “always done.” Long-time colleague, friend, and SJSU professor Dr. Mary Warner says that he is very gracious, personable, and “zen-like.” When students had concerns, and may not have understood the process of transferring to the English Department, Gabby was there to help the student in need. Gabby made sure to keep students calm, work out the process slowly, and make a smooth transition. Pat Cunningham says, “He would chat with students until they were better.”

Many people don’t know that Gabby is legally blind. This, however, did not stop him from becoming a successful and effective member of the SJSU team. He did not let his disability hinder him—his productivity flourished despite the fact. To fight his blindness, Gabby got into the habit of memorizing details, facts, phone numbers—essentially everything vital to his job. This made him both an efficient worker and an essential team member, as many faculty would rely on Gabby for the information he had memorized. Pat Cunningham comments, “He was my walking Rolodex.” Gabby had even learned to identify regulars by

their footsteps, again demonstrating his ability to live fully despite his challenges.

Aside from his career, Gabby has several hobbies that take up his time. A huge follower of sports, Gabby is a fan of Los Angeles teams, supporting the Dodgers and the Lakers. He is also an avid reader and writer. Associate Chair Brada-Williams is aware of a particular novel Gabby had started writing some time ago—a novel that features vampires. The two also connect with one another over Asian American literature.

Throughout his career, Gabby was beloved by many students, professors, and faculty alike. The hard-working administrative assistant made the difficult decision of retiring very suddenly. Naturally, many were upset by this news, since Gabby had left a very significant



mark on both the English Department and the university as a whole. Dr. Warner says, “It really is a huge loss for me.” Similarly, Pat Cunningham remarks, “I could not have been successful if he wasn’t there.” Though it is an immense void to fill, Gabby’s presence made it possible for the English Department to be what it is today—a great and well-respected institution. Dean of the College of Humanities and the Arts Lisa Vollendorf comments that “Gabby has the most extraordinary way of making everybody feel welcome. That is his superpower. He has been a beacon of kindness, light, and warmth in our college for many years. Now that he is gone, we will all have to work just that much harder to carry on his legacy of compassion and

kindness.” For such contributions, Gabby was awarded the Outstanding Staff Award for the year 2016, a commendation given to the best amongst the College of the Humanities and the Arts.

Faculty and staff are optimistic for Gabby’s future, as they understand that Gabby is taking time to take care of his health, spend time with family, and travel. It is undeniable that we are all proud of Gabby’s contributions to the school and that we wish him the best for the future.



English Department Finalizes 4-Unit Transition

By Cristian Macaraig

San José State University Spartans have a lot on their to-do lists as juniors and seniors. In addition to passing all their classes so they can actually graduate, they’re likely working a job, attempting to stay on a healthy diet, maintain a social life, or a combination of all three with minimal sleep. Through all this, the English Department has been addressing an issue for the benefit of our hard-working students. Because it’s the vision to make SJSU Spartans as competitive as possible in the job market, additional time and focused attention on the complexities of writing and critical thinking is something that three-unit courses at SJSU can’t necessarily provide. That’s why SJSU is converting its upper-division English classes to four units.

The English Department will complete the transition in the major this fall semester. It’s important to note that the Political Science, Economics, Communi-

cations, and History departments have already made the same transition. This effort’s lengthy time-frame required approval of the new survey sequence, the new majors, and the alteration to the credits in the courses by the graduate and undergraduate programs. The people to thank for this change are English Department Chair Shannon Miller and the department’s staff and faculty, who agreed on the importance of adding the additional unit in 2014 and began the conversation about starting the process just a year later. For the next two years, department members worked collectively and overhauled each major’s design, voted on the new program, and filed necessary paperwork that now brings the overhaul just months away.

The most notable advantage to four-credit courses is a more concentrated focus on four classes per semester instead of five. This workload will still allow Spartans to graduate in four years as long as they maintain a 14- to 16-unit schedule. Furthermore, Professor Miller states, “Students will be getting the opportunity to pursue longer papers or specific projects that we think will highlight their skills in the job market. We all know that English majors develop a number of excellent skills in writing, critical thinking, and research that are immensely valuable in a work context. These longer papers or projects, which will vary in terms of what they are showcasing of a student’s skills, will allow potential employers or graduate programs to see those skills in action.” But what, in detail, can students expect in the classroom that’s more insightful on these forthcoming changes?

Mark Thompson, Director of Career and Professional and Technical Writing at SJSU, explains that students taking Technical Writing can expect him to bring a local employer to class where mock interviews will take place. Students will be expected to present their work in 15-minute interviews much like they’ll be doing after graduation. It’s this type of project, along with the healthy workload Professor Thompson’s pedagogy already has, that will familiarize



students with the process of applying for a professional position that can land them their dream job faster. The extra time four-unit classes provide can make this happen.

Perhaps you're a student who's wondering how this will affect you in your junior and senior semesters. Current students are obviously a priority because they'll be experiencing the transition firsthand since they've surely grown accustomed to three-unit classes. Professor Miller speaks to this, stating, "We are beginning an advising process that will include an email to all majors about the transition this week, along with transition documents that explain which courses students will complete to fulfill the major requirements. We encourage you to work with an advisor to arrange your courses during the transition."

English, like all majors, has its own unique value it brings to the student and society. The written word, when properly crafted, has a way to convince clients, persuade customers, attract a following, and monetize clever ideas. Professor Miller says, "I look forward to knowing that our students are going out into the job market with an ability to communicate with employers about their talents and skills. I think the redesign of our major highlights this ability." With the change just around the corner, it looks like our Spartans will be doing just that.



Photo courtesy of Professor Anderson

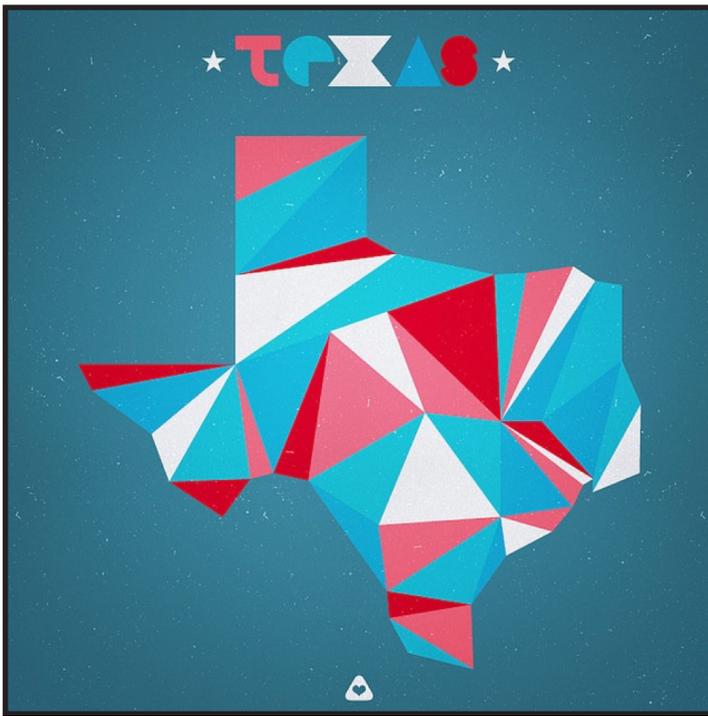
SJSU Has Taken the Star from the Lone Star State: Proudly Presenting Selena Anderson

By Christine Nguyen & Jason Wells

Is everything really bigger in Texas? Well, if soon to be San José State Professor Selena Anderson's charisma is any indication, then it's certainly true! Similar to Texas, the state in which she currently resides, Professor Anderson has a plethora of naturally occurring talent that has been cultivated in the fine arts at some of the most prestigious educational institutions in the world.

After graduating from the University of Texas with her BA in English, Professor Anderson went on to earn her Master of Fine Arts, with a concentration in Fiction Writing, from Columbia University. Professor Anderson is currently finishing her Ph.D. in English Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Houston. She expects to have earned her doctorate in May of 2017.

Beginning fall semester of 2017, Professor Anderson will bring her experience and expertise to SJSU where she will begin teaching creative writing courses—ENGL 71 and ENGL 241.



Professor Anderson’s adoration for English and the fine arts began to blossom at an early age. Since childhood, she’s been an avid reader and writer. She says, “Reading allows you to go to all these parallel worlds. Writing is an extension of all of this. When you write, you’re making another world. It’s cool to read about someone’s experience that is different than your own. You’re always learning something when you read, and your level of empathy increases a lot.”

It’s evident that Professor Anderson genuinely cares for her students. At Houston Community College, Professor Anderson loved leading fiction workshops as well as seeing how her work was able to influence her students in such positive ways. “I love breaking down a story to see how it’s working and guiding students as they develop their voice and artistic sensibilities. It’s always really inspiring to see folks change their minds and begin to articulate what they believe fiction can do.”

Her sincerity allows her to connect with students on a level that is essential for the development of young writers. In fact, she expresses that some of her college professors had a profound impact on her and even inspired her to pursue a career in education. “I had a really great history professor my freshman year who

really changed the way I thought about history,” she explains nostalgically. “We read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, *George Washington Gomez*, and *Black Elk Speaks*—among a lot of other good stuff. I had some great studio art professors who encouraged me to be creative and go with my creative instincts. It was a real time of growth and transformation. After having professors like that, I knew I wanted to contribute in a similar way.” Though she now does most of the instructing, Professor Anderson says that she also learns from her students. She humorously tells us, “Students teach you to drop the mic, wreck the mic, and (most importantly) pass the mic.”

Professor Anderson’s unique flair is perhaps rivaled only by that of Grace Jones, one of her childhood heroes, whom she still looks up to. Professor Anderson’s proficiency and style have already earned her a bounty of accolades. Among her many awards and fellowships, Professor Anderson says, thus far, that she is most proud of winning the prestigious Transatlantic/Henfield Prize and the Inprint Joan and Stanford Alexander Prize.

With a deep appreciation for reading and writing fiction, Professor Anderson is currently writing her own novel in hopes of taking readers to different worlds we all have dreamed of chasing. One of the key things she’s realized as a child is that “anytime you’re reading a story, you’re in two places: the real world and the world of the story. So that’s cool.”

She relates the challenges that come with being an author, especially one with a powerful imagination that is hard to fully express: “I had a problem with portraying point of view—or maybe it was just realizing that I couldn’t be in two places at one time,” she says. “When I was little, I remember feeling so frustrated by the fact that I could see other people’s eyes as they looked at me, but I couldn’t see my own eyes as they looked out. Other people could see my eyes but I couldn’t.” Having an astute understanding of the importance of literature and its ability to in-

spire, Professor Anderson acknowledges how persuasive and strong our words and the arts can be.

Though decorated and well versed, Professor Anderson hasn't yet been to California, but she is



quite excited to make Silicon Valley her new home. She says of San José State University: “I really can’t wait to teach the craft of fiction and write books and contribute to my department and the SJSU community at large.” With her astute understanding of the importance of literature and its ability to inspire, there’s no doubt that Professor Anderson is an academic jewel that will be a valued addition to the already overflowing treasure chest that is our San José State English Department. The English Department is fortunate to gain not only an empathetic and compassionate educator, but also a driven and an aspiring author. We eagerly wait for Professor Anderson’s arrival, and we are positive that her students will learn a great deal from her.



Bob Woodruff Wins 2017 Steinbeck Award

By Ajah Yee & John Harris

On February 21, 2017, ABC’s World News Tonight reporter Bob Woodruff, a man with dedication, compassion, and exceptional talent, was invited to San José State University’s Student Union Theater to receive the John Steinbeck Award. Woodruff’s phenomenal career in journalism as a reporter of international affairs and war has caught the attention of the Steinbeck Fellows to recognize him as the first journalist in 20 years to become a Steinbeck honoree.

The John Steinbeck Award is awarded to writers, artists, theorists, scholars, and activists whose body of work encompasses Steinbeck’s commitment to humanistic values and the dignity of people who persist despite such unconventional circumstances. The phrase “in the souls of the people” comes from Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. This phrase, and the novel it originates from, epitomizes the writer’s legacy as a passionate, sensible, and mindful artist. Steinbeck wrote with brutal honesty about people who struggled and became disregarded by society. Steinbeck felt a

sense of kinship with all Americans despite class, race, or national origins.

The Steinbeck Award is sponsored by The Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies, and Catherine Busalacchi, Executive Director of Student Union, Inc. Ted Cady, the chair of the Cox Center's award selection committee and event director for the Student Union, has organized previous award presentations and has brought forth each of the honorees to recognize the significance and importance of the Steinbeck Award, as well as Steinbeck's legacy here at San José State.

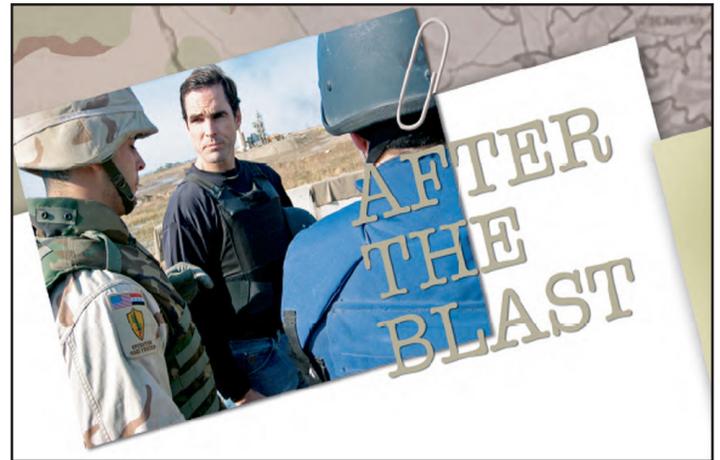
"It's such an honor to get this award," Woodruff said at the award ceremony. "I can't believe there haven't been other journalists that have been given this kind of award."

The night of the Steinbeck Award ceremony, Woodruff was stunned and appreciative of receiving the award. Woodruff was proud to have been included with such talented and acclaimed writers honored before him.

Woodruff was not only receiving the Steinbeck Award for his journalistic career, but also for his philanthropic efforts to support war veterans and their families. Ever since the tragic roadside bombing in Iraq that seriously injured Woodruff, he has become an active philanthropist for war veterans by creating the Bob Woodruff Foundation along with his wife, Lee Woodruff. His nonprofit foundation is dedicated to ensure all veterans, service members, and families affected after the September 11 terrorist attacks are supported and cared for.

"We got such an enormous amount of attention for what happened to us, far beyond what we ever should have gotten," Woodruff said. "When our book [*In an Instant: A Family's Journey of Love and Healing*] came out we were on a big tour and people would walk up to us and say 'Here's \$20. Can you make sure it gets to a veteran?'—so we realized we have this voice." Since the start of their foundation, they have

raised nearly \$33 million for people and their families who are affected by war. Later in the event, Woodruff was joined on stage by his wife to share her experience with his injury and recovery. She shared how his



experience in Iraq helped the two of them create the Bob Woodruff Foundation. Throughout the night, the audience asked many questions about his journey from lawyer to acclaimed journalist, the struggles he faced throughout his journalistic career, and the path to recovery. Woodruff answered all questions openly as he shared those aspects of his life with the audience.

According to *The Spartan Daily*, Sarah Bautista, a graduate student in communicative disorders and sciences who attended the event, says, "I wasn't as intimately familiar with his story before I came here tonight. I was really pleased with both the openness and the intimacy that was provided here tonight."

At the end of the night, Woodruff took the time to give thanks to his wife and his children for supporting him and helping him through his speedy 13-month-long recovery after the bombing.

This event marked a phenomenal moment in history as Woodruff stepped up on stage to accept the award. His wife looked at him as he was handed the award with awe and support. As the event ended, the audience applauded and took pictures with Woodruff.

Bob Woodruff is a great addition to the talented and phenomenal honorees of the John Steinbeck Award. He will be joining previous honorees such as Rachel

Maddow, Michael Moore, Sean Penn, Bruce Springsteen, Arthur Miller, Jackson Browne, Ruby Bridges, and Francisco Jimenez. Woodruff continues his work as a philanthropist and as a reporter for ABC News.



Photo by Ability Magazine

Brutal Murder in the BBC

By Mai Nass & Corrine Willson

Nine o'clock. Your classes are done, but you stayed after class to rush out an essay due at midnight—the time escaped you. As you walk, a dull thud echoes through the halls on the second floor, and you look down at your phone like it's your safety net. Should you call someone? You need to head toward the bus station. The elevator lights blink sleepily at you. The ping announces its arrival, and suddenly you aren't sure you want to take the elevator down. When the doors open, will someone be there? Should you just go down the stairs? What if someone is lurking in a dark corner of the stairwell? You decide to risk the elevator. Its doors creep open and you rush in, furiously pressing the buttons. They finally close, and you exhale with relief. Wait. But what about when they open again? You feel a mounting sense of dread as the elevator descends. You really wish you weren't taking a murder mystery class right now. Hopefully, no one will be solving your murder tonight.

Still, you don't regret taking Professor Mary Williams's ENGL 21 Detective Fiction class! It's a

new class offered this semester that is currently being taught in the Boccardo Business Building (BBC). As a lower-division GE course available to any major, this class has something interesting for everyone. You'll find yourself traveling through time, solving mysteries from the classics like Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and Hammett's hard-boiled mysteries to exploring the modern world in Patricia Cornwell's contemporary forensic thrillers—right in BBC! The class studies a series of mysteries, ranging from short puzzlers to long and juicy deep-thinkers. With mystery being such a diverse genre, you'll find yourself in the murky streets of the city, solving a grisly murder, then in the country, figuring out who silently poisoned Ms. Patterson.

Some might argue Professor Williams is what makes the class. She's a quirky individual, obsessed with cats; she's always got a smile and laugh ready on her lips. She's young at heart and has been reading mysteries ever since she can remember. Mary Williams has been teaching at SJSU for eight solid years, with classes like Reading Composition, Critical Thinking, and Intro to Literature, though her favorites are her detective fiction and classic literature classes. In her spare time, she loves making music and singing. She even participated in last year's Poe Festival with her talents! Among her students and colleagues, she describes herself as an extrovert, but she's an introvert at home with her five indoor cats. She has even volunteered herself as the leader of a feral cat colony. Williams is a kind and compassionate soul, loving not only her fellow humans but her animal counterparts as well.

She loves teaching what she's passionate about. As an avid mystery fan, Williams makes sure to keep the class environment fun and explorative. She loves to see her students heavily involved in her mystery class. She loves the moments when she hears her students talking about the novel, and yelling, "I didn't even know that was a clue!" As this is the first semester it

has been offered, finding the right balance of stories to teach is difficult—there’s just so many! She says she often ends the class with “I wish we had more time.” Even the students have told her they wish the class was longer, and that’s saying something.

While Professor Williams does her best to cover a variety of works in the class, she is personally interested in feminism and how it affects the genre. She points out what the third wave of feminism in the 70s



did for the genre, as more women were able to write and become published. “Their approach had a major effect in terms of innovating the genre,” she explains. The genre focuses more on domestic-type situations, even taking mystery from the “gritty city” and looking at settings you wouldn’t stereotypically think of as dangerous. Professor Williams’s passion for the genre starts to shine through as she talks about the popular novel *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn, set in suburbia. “Suburbs! It’s supposed to be safe. Everyone is happy there,” Williams starts to laugh. “It turns out, not so much. Murder can happen pretty much anywhere...so [Flynn looks] at cultural issues that talk about that.” It gives detective fiction a whole new outlook: “What does it mean when murder happens? What does it mean when the woman isn’t the victim, but maybe she’s the villain?”

This class isn’t just educational—it’s fun! In how many English classes do you get to read about murder, analyze crime, or watch Benedict Cumberbatch play

Sherlock? Not many. But it’s so much more than that: It develops critical thinking skills and analyzes the core problems behind a dysfunctional society. That’s the great thing about genre fiction, and mystery in particular. “It’s always included some kind of social commentary,” Williams explains. “Most of the time it’s not heavy-handed or over-the-top, but you’ll find authors working on serious issues that reflect what’s going on in their society. Like Raymond Chandler is concerned with crime in the city... and police corruption.” Mystery is just one facet of genre, and a vast one at that. Some may criticize it as lesser than classic literature, but as Williams counters, that’s “ridiculous.” She does have an optimistic outlook on it, though. “I think some people might still see it as genre fiction, like, ‘That’s not literature, why would you teach it in college,’ but that attitude is not as prevalent as it used to be, thanks to incredible authors who write beautifully complex stories.” Sure, genre fiction might include anything from murder to aliens, but it reflects life in an utterly real way. It’s just a different package.

If you aren’t fascinated with mystery fiction by now, then you should take a look at all the other classes that the SJSU English Department has to offer! This spring included Professor Williams’s ENGL 21 Detective Fiction class, but it also offered classes on the graphic novel, fantasy, and science fiction. It’s unknown whether the mystery and detective fiction class will be offered regularly in the future, so make sure to take it if given the opportunity! This keeps interesting classes like Professor Williams’s in the running for future semesters. You’ll be guaranteed a semester full of exploration into exciting and thrilling mysteries of different themes, certain to satisfy your curiosity of “who dunnit.” Sure, you might have a few scary moments in an elevator, debating if you’re about to descend to your death. But hey, it’s worth it, right?



Photo by *The Guardian*

Nevertheless, She Persisted: SJSU's Lurie Scholar, Vendela Vida

By Aaminah Baloch & Sophia Woodmansee

Elizabeth Warren was presenting in the senate chambers when she was forcefully prevented from speaking. Nevertheless, she persisted. Esra Altun, a 19-year-old SJSU student, was attacked for wearing a hijab. Nevertheless, she persisted. Vendela Vida, SJSU's visiting author, wrote in seedy hotel rooms and traveled across the world while pregnant to do research for her novels. Nevertheless, she persisted. Through Vida's personal experiences, and the strong characters she writes about, Vida provides SJSU with an example of a pragmatic woman who knows no limits. In a time when women still struggle with inequality, Vida's presence is a step in the right direction for SJSU. "I was tired of reading novels by women in which the men could act as badly as they wanted while the female characters had to please and enchant," said Vida in an interview with *The Guardian*. Her novel's heroines don't need a Prince Charming to save them; instead, through self-empowerment, they find their own paths to healing and stability.

Because of Vendela Vida's literary career and experiences, the Bay Area native was elected to be San José State University's Spring 2017 Lurie Scholar. She is currently teaching ENGL 241, a fiction writing workshop. Vida is a novelist, journalist, and editor

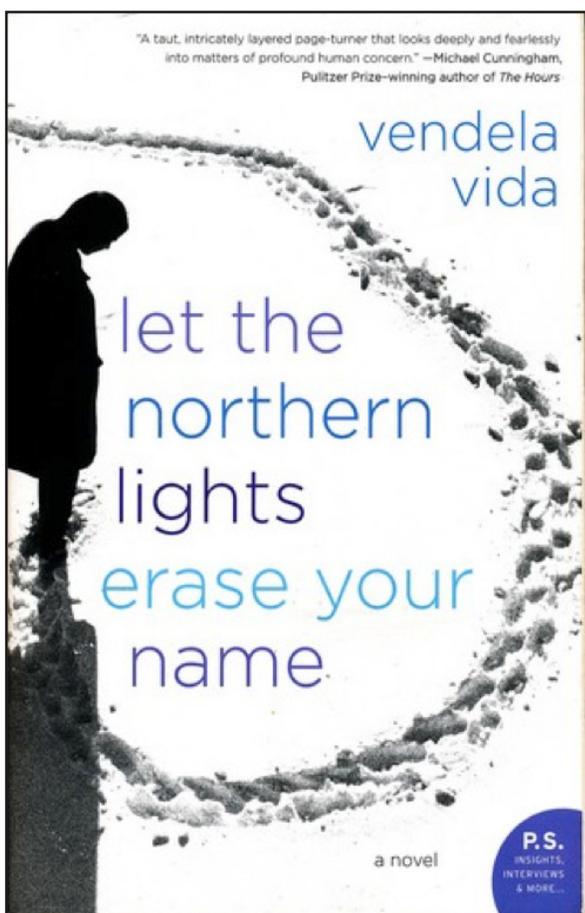
who has published five books while also balancing family life. In an interview with *7x7*, a San Francisco based magazine, Vida talks about her daily routine as a working woman. "Get up, make tea, set grand ambitions for my work day, make breakfast for kids, pack their lunches, worry that grand ambitions will not be met, write, tell myself that my ambitions for the day were way too grand and unattainable, attend kids' sports games or performances, vow to meet grand ambitions the next day." Despite the difficulties of juggling being a mom and a writer, she has achieved great success.

Two of her novels were awarded the New York Times Notable Books of the Year Award, and she has also been given the Kate Chopin Award, bestowed on writers whose female protagonists choose an unconventional path. "You know the saying," Vida asks in her interview with *The Guardian*, "that there are two kinds of novels: a man leaves on a journey, and a stranger comes into town? Odysseus's story and Penelope's? Well, I was never as interested in Penelope. I like the idea of putting someone in a new place and watching them have things revealed to them by the situation they find themselves in. Or have them changed by it." For example, Clarissa, the protagonist of Vida's 2007 novel, *Let the Northern Lights Erase Your Name*, provides an insight into the trials of abandonment and the struggle to find love in a broken family. She tracks down her estranged mother all the way to Finland, trying to get answers once she learns her father isn't her real father. As an author, Vida often writes about faraway places; she also travels to know first-hand what her characters would experience.

Vida's travels have allowed her to bring a worldly perspective to her SJSU graduate student's fiction writing workshop. Vida explores different cultures and ethnicities in her novels and sets her characters in places that are foreign to them. She says it takes around three years and three trips per book to complete her novels. So far, Vida's novels have been set in Turkey, the Philippines, Morocco, and Finland. Vida's idea of the powerful nature of change is shown in her novel, *The Diver's Clothes Lie Empty*. The

protagonist, after dealing with a nasty divorce, travels to Morocco. Upon landing, she loses all forms of identification and decides to leave who she was behind, taking on the identity of a new woman and running away from her old life's problems.

Through the settings and themes of Vida's novels, Vida addresses not only insecurity and alienation, but also the importance of cultural exploration. This is key in a university like SJSU where there is so much ethnic diversity. Like the characters of Vida's novels, it is easy to fear new places and experiences, but through persistence and dedication, the rewards are worth it.



Vida is the perfect addition to San José State University, and we are honored to have such a worldly and unique individual on our campus.

Steinbeck Fellows: Gary Singh and Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo

By Kervin Cano & Jamie Jara

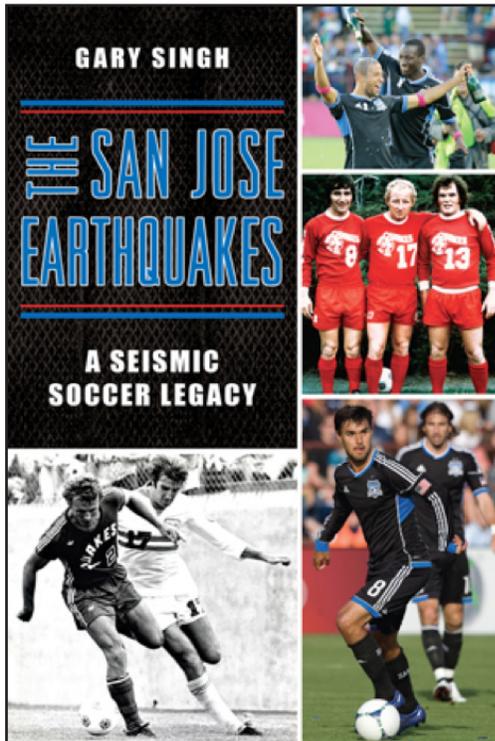
Since 2001, the Steinbeck Fellows Program of San José State University has offered emerging writers the chance to showcase their writing projects while in residence at SJSU. The program helps writers who have had some success but haven't been published to a large degree. This year, Steinbeck Fellows has chosen Gary Singh and Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo.

San José native and journalist Gary Singh explores aspects of music, the arts, and counterculture scenes from San José and the Silicon Valley. His life as a writer began with playing piano in grade school, which ignited his fascination for both music and the arts, and led him to enroll at SJSU in 1990. "Academia is compartmentalized, so you're expected to only study one main discipline," he says. "I could never function that way, so I had to explore everything." By 1998, he had explored all the creative disciplines offered at SJSU. He finished with a B.A. in music and an MA in interdisciplinary studies that combines music theory, new media art, and creative writing. Singh didn't originally intend to be a writer, but he later realized that all of his life experiences involved music, art, and counterculture. He says he didn't choose to be a writer; he believes the profession chose him. "Arts and music education is what saved me," he said. "I'd be a criminal otherwise, or dead."

After his epiphany, Singh became an award-winning writer. He's written nearly 1,000 articles in many trade and consumer publications, penning art and music criticism, travel essays, profiles, business journalism, lifestyle articles, and more. He also wrote the 2015 book *The San Jose Earthquakes: A Seismic Soccer Legacy*, which covers the complete history of the soccer club from his experience as a lifelong fan. For the past 12 years, he's written a weekly newspaper column called *Silicon Alleys* for *Metro*, San José's

alternative weekly newspaper. Singh views his hometown as a “hidden place” compared to “real cities” like San Francisco. He believes there are many stories yet to tell. In addition, he regularly talks about topics like art and the human condition in the Silicon Valley. “It’s like if you’re in a rock band,” he says, “You have to be true to yourself with your writing.”

Along with his writing ethics, Singh is currently using his Steinbeck Fellowship to extensively research and write about Astley David Middleton Cooper (1856–1924), a well known American painter in San José who specialized in Native American culture and other scenes of the Old West. Since there is not enough information to write a full-length book about Cooper’s biography, Gary will write a few long essays instead. He’s also working on a memoir about his time at SJSU and what made him the writer he is today.

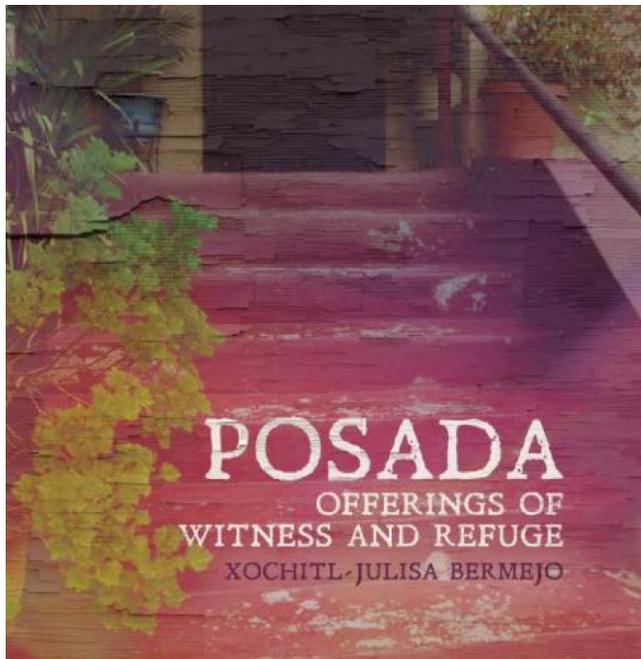


Los Angeles native and first-generation Chicana Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo incorporates both her culture and upbringing into her poetry. Though Bermejo doesn’t speak Spanish fluently, she writes in a style she calls “borderland-type language.” Being raised in an immigrant family inspired her to volunteer for the No More Deaths humanitarian organization near the Arizona border in 2011. During this time, she spent 15 days in the Arizona desert near the border searching migrant trails, providing fresh water and first-aid, and witnessing border patrol abuse. Along with the scorching temperatures, there was no electricity or running water. This experience, along with being a daughter of immigrant parents, is a prevalent theme in her writing.

In Bermejo’s 2016 poetry collection *Posada: Offerings of Witness and Refuge*, she showcases her family memories and history. One of her poems she is most proud of is “This Poem is for Nopales,” which honors her grandmother through the metaphor of chin hairs as a connection that unites them. The inspiration came from seeing her grandmother in her death bed and noticing her chin hairs, which became a reminder of her grandmother when she started noticing her own. “Bringing comfort to other people is something I wanted the book to do, and my grandmother is the biggest symbol of comfort for me,” she explains. She adds that she learned valuable lessons from having her book rejected multiple times since it encouraged her to improve her writing. She admits that she once thought her book would never be published. “I didn’t realize how scary it would be to have my words in people’s hands,” she says.

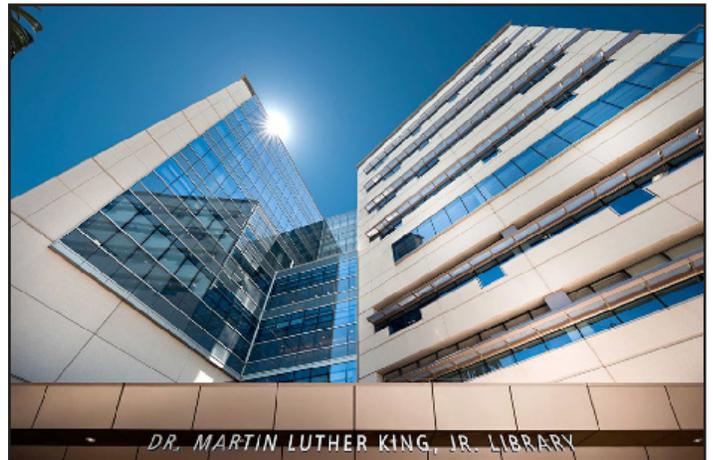
As a woman of color growing up in a white patriarchal society, Bermejo established networks to help other writers. One group she created is Women Who Submit. “My goal is to empower women and non-binary writers to submit their work for publication in order to close the gap between male and female representation in publishing,” she explains. She advises aspiring female writers to find other writers

and exchange work for feedback. “Build relationships with the writers around you because in the end they are the ones you are going to learn the most from,” she suggests. Bermejo also created the group called HITCHED, which she describes as a “love-fest” where



writers meet to read their work and build relationships through encouragement.

Bermejo is currently working on a novel called *Dear Lupe*, which landed her the Steinbeck Fellow award at SJSU. As a young girl, she loved Steinbeck’s novel *Of Mice and Men*, but never liked how Curley’s wife was nameless and the ways in which the book “slut-shamed” her. *Dear Lupe* is a feminist Chicana retelling of the classic. It tells the story of Nora Davila, a 14-year-old daughter of Mexican migrant farmers working in the Central Valley, who also happens to be Curley’s wife. Throughout the novel, Nora writes to Mexican actress Lupe Velez, the first Mexican “spitfire” of the 1930s. Bermejo retells Steinbeck’s classic through the Mexican-American viewpoint since it was never featured in Steinbeck’s writing, despite the fact that Mexicans made up a large percentage of the population during his time.



Author Kim Addonizio Returns to SJSU for Readings & Conversation

By Ariel Arzac-Ellison & Nichelle Kamrar

On March 3, 2017, San José State University hosted a cocktail-hour reading and conversation session with world-renowned poet Kim Addonizio. The event, held in the Martha Heasley Cox Steinbeck Center on the fifth floor of the King Library, drew a mixed crowd of fans, SJSU students, and faculty. Although she had trouble finding a parking spot near campus that afternoon, Ms. Addonizio is no stranger to SJSU. In 2013, she taught a graduate poetry writing workshop as SJSU’s Lurie Author-in-Residence. In 2017 she’s been a featured poet for both *Reed Magazine* and *Cinequest*. Since receiving her MA in English from San Francisco State University, Addonizio has authored seven poetry collections, two novels, and two books on writing poetry. Over the course of her literary career, she has received several notable accolades, including the John Ciardi Lifetime Achievement Award for poetry, two Pushcart prizes, and fellowships from National Endowments for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation.

Following a brief introduction by current Director of Creative Writing Alan Soldofsky, Kim Addonizio casually stood up from a seat in the first row, relocating to a cushioned bar stool in front of the long, center-aisle microphone. Two giant portraits on the wall behind flanked her on either side of the microphone;

one a painting of a 1950s-era woman in a blue gown, the other a black-and-white photograph of John Steinbeck and his wife Elaine. The light of the late afternoon sun streaming through the high windows above her illuminated Kim Addonizio as a petite woman with short, brown, wavy-curly hair. As she sat, she pulled out a pair of classic, rectangular, black-framed reading glasses that matched her outfit: a black leather motorcycle jacket with a “Black Lives Matter” tank top underneath and artfully ripped blue jeans that revealed alternating patches of red and blue checkers.

While Addonizio was casual, her outfit was more reflective of the writing she is known for: edgy, gritty, wild, with street-smart characters who face mortality, aging, love, and the multitude of life’s struggles. Her stories are provocative, but relatable, as they tap into the rawest forms of human emotions. Though she often integrates humor and sarcasm in her writing, Addonizio’s bluesy style lends itself to deep philosophical reflection and melancholy. She doesn’t shy away from depicting some of the racy personal details of her own life, such as one-night stands, her struggles with alcoholism, and caring for her sick mother. In her poem “What Do Women Want,” Addonizio expresses her desire to proudly display her femininity, represented by a red dress, without fear of being sexualized or stereotyped. “Poems should take you somewhere,” she says. “If your poems only consist of descriptions, they’re not going to do that much, especially if it’s only a one-note poem.”

On this day, however, Addonizio eschewed “What Do Women Want” in favor of works from her latest collection of poetry, *Mortal Trash*. Once seated, Addonizio opened her copy, filled with sticky notes, and dove into reading without preamble. As she read in her smoky voice, Addonizio communicated the wry, almost worn feel of her poetry, making emphasized intonations on the onomatopoeia, yet somehow remaining energetic. She read through a selection of nine poems—“Scrapbook,” “Stray Sparks,” “Idioms for

Rain,” “Internet Dating,” “Red Flower, White Flower,” “SAD,” “Manners,” “Poem in November,” and “What to Save from the Fire”—almost without taking a breath between the end of one poem and the beginning of the next. Although each poem has a twinge of melancholy, most also contain a bit of humor. In “What to Save From the Fire” the narrator finds herself stuck in the middle of the house set ablaze, contemplating which of her valuables are worth saving. She shows concern for her personal journals and their “pages of proof you never changed, no matter what the mirror tells you,” but decides to leave them behind stating, “then again, look at those rosettes of self-pity, adorning the cake of your depression: let the journals burn. Meanwhile, better wet a towel and hold it to your face.”

The readings started off a bit awkwardly, with the audience making few audible responses to Addonizio’s poetry, perhaps unsure of whether she was finished



with a poem or building a dramatic pause. However, after the sixth poem, “Red Flower White Flower,” one bold member of the congregation initiated a clap, and the rest of the room followed. With a relief like letting out a breath of air you hadn’t noticed you held in, everyone seemed to loosen up, and Addonizio slowed down her pace in order to introduce each subsequent

poem with an anecdote, or a bit of background information about the poem's origin. By the time Addonizio finished her last reading, the initial awkwardness of uncertain etiquette had completely given way to unabashed appreciation; and the Steinbeck Center was filled with applause.

Once the applause died down, the conversation commenced with Professor Soldofsky pointing out that audiences and readers often find humor in her poetry, yet the poems are frequently about tragic situations. Addonizio acknowledges these interpretations, but considers her poems in terms of duality; she "see[s] them as both because life is both or neither. The author is not as somber as her works may seem," she adds. "It's good to be funny because otherwise I might kill myself."

Addonizio also had a few pointers to share with aspiring poets. One piece of advice she strongly advocates is seeking feedback from other people. Addonizio runs a writer's workshop out of her own home, where writers can share their work and receive constructive criticism. Although attending formal workshops is not necessary, conversing and sharing ideas with other writers is imperative to developing writing skills. She says, "What's most important is to find people who are good critics of your works and can help you get to where you want to go."

Several members of the audience had inquiries along a similar vein, wishing to hear Addonizio's wisdom on motivation. An older man in a plaid brown shirt with thin red stripes described the frustrating paradox of hitting writer's block when you have to write, or want to write, but being struck with an inspirational idea once you had finally resigned to giving up. Or as one purple-sleeved and hot-pink-vested young woman put it, "How do you keep a soft bed for your muse?"

Although Kim Addonizio exudes confidence and mental toughness in spite of her hardened exterior, she is not invulnerable. The recent political climate in the U.S. worries her, as she sees many flaws being

exposed within the democratic process. Authoritative regimes, who she calls "enemies of the imagination," feed off people's fear and prejudices and are notorious for stifling artistic voices, especially those that challenge the establishment. But Addonizio says you shouldn't give up, because writing is a way to share reactions and feelings. Whether the pressure comes from society or from yourself, people should write and be able to write about what they want. After all, she says, "Imaginative and creative works matter. Who would we be without them? What's the point of life without expressions of love and creativity?"

To learn more about Kim Addonizio, go to her official website, www.kimaddonizio.com. For information about future events, visit the Martha Heasley Cox Steinbeck Center on the 5th floor of the King Library, or go online: www.sjsu.edu/steinbeck/.

Reed: Celebrating 150 Years of the Oldest Lit Journal West of the Mississippi

By Doaa Abdelrahman and Joe Patterson

Reed Magazine, the English Literary Journal for San José State University, is celebrating its 150th birthday this year. Professor Cathleen Miller, faculty advisor and editor-in-chief of *Reed* since 2012, announced a celebration on September 22, 2017. The original date in May was changed since "May is so packed with events already, with graduation and awards, that it becomes less special to attend yet one more ceremony," Professor Miller says. The *Reed* celebration will be "a welcome back-to-school event for the whole SJSU community, including alumni."

The journal, the university, and the city have grown together. *Reed* began as a small student literary journal in 1867 and grew into an international journal, receiving submissions from around the world. The university began as a small college for high school teachers at the California State Normal School. The Normal School grew into SJSU, the first campus in

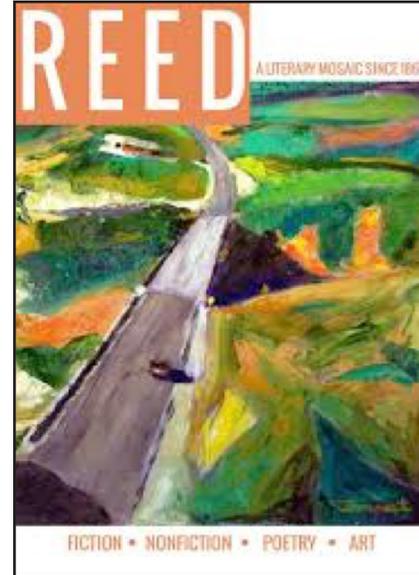
the California State University system. San José was a small farm town in 1867. Now it is the 10th largest city in the United States.



Reed takes its name from the Donner Party, the famous California story of settlers traveling over the Sierra Nevada mountains. They became stranded by snow storms for almost four months and to survive, they resorted to cannibalism. James Reed, a Donner Party survivor, went on to make a fortune during the gold rush. He unsuccessfully advocated for San José to become the capital of California. He donated 500 acres of San José farmland to the state, which became the campus of the Normal School, and later SJSU. The name of the journal has changed many times over the years. It began in 1867 as *The Acorn*. In 1895 it became *The Normal School Index* and in 1898, *The Normal Pennant*. It was renamed *The Quill* in 1920, followed by *The Portal* in 1932. Finally, in 1948 it became *The Reed*, which over time was shortened to *Reed*. This year *Reed* received “a complete makeover” for the 150th anniversary. It can be purchased as an e-book.

Professor Miller believes *Reed Magazine* “is more than an ordinary class since we create an actual magazine.” *Reed Magazine* is a year-long class, taken

in the fall and spring semester. In the fall semester, students read through thousands of submissions. These submissions can be different genres such as fiction,



non-fiction, and poetry. In the spring semester, the submissions are produced and copyedited, proofread, and printed, thus concluding the yearly process of the issue.

A great benefit for students is to have a class where they collectively create a product and market it. It also serves to market students themselves as their careers evolve. “Working on *Reed* has been a great asset for students when they go into the job market,” says Professor Miller. “They learn real-world skills that they can take to a variety of positions, and they can walk into the interview with the ultimate portfolio piece to show prospective employers: our beautiful journal with their name on the masthead.” After all, who doesn’t want their name on a masthead?

“*Reed* is constantly evolving,” Professor Miller says, “and I take suggestions from the students for each new issue.” One of the assignments she gives in the fall semester is for students to read another literary journal and give a presentation on it. Professor Miller and the students then determine if that journal has anything that can help *Reed*. The second main assignment is for students to do a marketing project. “These have

had tremendous impact on our forward momentum—everything from creating a digital version of *Reed*, to joining local festivals like SubZero and First Friday, to being in this year’s Cinequest,” she says. Anything and everything has helped *Reed Magazine* grow into the magazine it is today. SubZero is a part of First Fridays, the art walk through downtown galleries in San José. Cinequest is a San José film festival that is beginning to rival Cannes.

If you were to pick up random copies of *Reed* in the library’s 5th floor special collections room, the balance of art and politics is striking. Of course, in the 1968 issue of *Reed*, you would expect to find elements of political protest. There are photographs of police and protesters facing off and poems with lines like, “In America, land of the free, I could go on indefinitely protesting the late delivery of the mail and the wholesale slaughter of men for victory.”

President Donald Trump is now a catalyst for political ire in *Reed*. The last issue includes a report of *Reed* editors marching in Washington, D.C. to defend free speech. Along with other participants from the Association of Writers and Writing Programs conference they chanted, “Hey hey, ho ho, Donald Trump has got to go,” and “No Trump, no KKK, no fascist USA.” But, it would seem unexpected to discover an essay about nationalism in an issue from 1953 that could have been written to protest today’s nationalism of Donald Trump and other European leaders. Jean Wyatt writes in her essay, *Education for War*, “nationalism is disruptive to world harmony. It is, at least in practice, inconsistent with a sincere effort to understand the cultures, ideals, and political aspirations of other nations.” Multiculturalism as an alternative to nationalism is a continuous strand of thought, an institutional memory that runs through *Reed*.

Professor Miller says the biggest problem *Reed* faces is the change of staff every year. “It’s difficult to maintain some continuity from one issue to the next. Also, it takes a while for teams to find a rhythm...

we are on deadline so that rhythm has to be found quickly.” Continuity from issue to issue is the editor’s most important job. “I am the only person who remains as the institutional memory,” Professor Miller says. As the only person who remains in *Reed*, Professor Miller can maintain her rhythm every year to meet each deadline.

Professor Miller plans for the 151st issue to be “devoted to the theme of California...

California is not just a state. It’s a mythological fantasy for many people around the world, representing freedom, glamour, and natural beauty. I want to see what shape that takes and create in our 151st issue a mosaic of work dedicated to the Golden State.” Since *Reed* is an international journal, anyone from around the world may submit their pieces about California by the end of 2017.

English 116: Creatures and Other Such Oddities at SJSU

By Marcus Chapin

Could Osiris have been homosexual? Was Zeus worth praying to? Today, a class that answers those questions and more is part of the English Department curriculum and encourages the student to contemplate these concepts and explore their own. The class, ENGL 116: Mythology in Literature, encourages the student to dive into the mythos of their very surroundings and the different ideological viewpoints of others from the past. Whether the time period is Egyptian or Roman Catholic, this class will cover it and leave you star struck!

If you are looking for a nontraditional English class, then ENGL 116 is the perfect class for you. Students read assignments and then write response papers. There is a lot of freedom in choosing topics for response papers and students are encouraged to be creative with their topics and their approach.

ENGL 116 is a four-unit class that covers many historical eras. The Egyptian era is examined through the lens of their gods. Osiris and Isis are focused on, as well as their son Horus. There is a Jewish and Chris-



tian segment as well. From the Jewish faith, students read about Orpheus and the Saga of the Volsungs. And let's not forget Buddha; readings from this tradition will be included as well. After learning about different religious beliefs, the class ends with a segment titled "Adventure To the West" where students read some of the greatest mythos from our own nation. While English 116 moves fairly quickly, Dr. Nancy Stork tries to keep the transitions between eras as seamless as possible.

"I have been teaching for thirty-seven years. I have been teaching ENGL 116 pretty much since I arrived at SJSU twenty-three years ago," says Dr. Stork. Dr. Stork's love of mythology seems to be a family affair. "My son loves the human element of mythology and the idea of other creatures and gods, like Cthulhu, who are inconceivably vaster than we are," says Dr. Stork. She loves teaching her children and her students just how much mythology there is all around us. From the very first day, students learn how Disney, for example, has multitudes of mythology symbolism and enhanced meanings. Whether it is the rumored occult events that happen during Disneyland's off hours, or how each princess's story is connected to Ancient Egyptian times, the amount of depth is extensive and fascinating.

Students also learn about current traditions and how these same traditions have often been played in the past, such as how some people will pray to a higher god and give a tithe. In mythology, giving to certain gods helps grant unique rewards; for example, the benefits of giving to Poseidon may grant safe travels across the seas. The idea of paying for good fortune



Photo by Ahmed Monsour

lives on today, and it is amazing to see the similarities.

Dr. Stork has worked hard to make ENGL 116 a cost-effective class. There is only one book, and the rest of the readings are either handed out in class or available online for free.

If you are looking for a unique experience, then ENGL 116 is the class for you. After all, the curiosity of the unknown is far more interesting than that of the known, for we can rationalize and understand the known. ENGL 116 is the perfect journey into the unknown that you've been looking for, and Dr. Stork is the perfect guide.

Course Descriptions

Fall 2017

ENGL 10: Great Works of Literature - TechnoLiterature

Katherine Harris, TR 9:00 – 10:15

Technology has completely overtaken our lives, from interaction between and manufacture of human beings to the daily use of technology. How has this shifted our culture, our literature, our legacy? This semester, we will explore literary representations of biotechnology (mad scientists!), society's reactions to technological impositions (Luddites and punks!), and techno un-literature (hypertextual madness!). Along the way, we will discuss literary elements, historical context, readers' reactions, and the techno/digi/cyborg world of TechnoLiterature. GE Area C-2 (Letters)

ENGL 20: The Graphic Novel

Edwin Sams, F 9:30 – 12:15

This class focuses on the interplay of written and visual forms of narration in the illustrated texts that have come to be called "graphic novels," the styles and methods of which have come to have a profound impact on both literature and film production in the 21st century. English 20 will focus on a few of the graphic novel's obsessions: autobiography, war, and family—and the surprising frequency in which these three themes intersect.

ENGL 21: Mystery and Detective Fiction

John Engell, TR 1:30 – 2:45

Examines mystery or detective fiction from its inception in the 19th century and follows it across the globe as the genre has been taken on and developed by a variety of cultures.

ENGL 22: Fantasy and Science Fiction

Nancy Stork, MW 12:00 – 1:15

We will read some of the foundational texts in both fantasy and science fiction. Authors may include: H. G. Wells, Karl Capek, Philip K. Dick, J.R.R. Tolkien, William Gibson, Ursula K. LeGuin, Neil Gaiman. We will also look at modern mythologies being developed in graphic novels and video games.

ENGL 50: Beginnings to the "American" Experiment

Adrienne Eastwood, MW 10:30 – 11:45

Exploration of Anglo-Saxon, Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Colonial Writings in Britain and America. Class engages literary text, literary history, and historical events that shape the literature of the period.

ENGL 70: Emerging Modernisms and Beyond

Samuel Maio, MW 1:30 – 2:45

Part of the new survey sequence, English 70 is a 3-credit course that explores Modernist and twentieth-century writings of Britain and America. The class will engage literary texts, literary history, and historical events that shape the literature of the period, 1860 to the present.

ENGL 71: Creative Writing

Sally Ashton, TR 12:00 – 1:15

So you want to write? This course will introduce you to techniques writers in all literary genres use to craft works of memorable non-fiction, fiction, and poetry. We will use short form readings, small group workshop, studio assignments, and your own experimental writing—lots of it—to discover strategies common to all three forms. **Prerequisite:** At *minimum* the completion of English 1A. Excellent composition skills are the first step to any Creative Writing.

ENGL 71: Creative Writing

Samuel Maio, MW 12:00 – 1:15; M 4:30 – 7:15

Selena Anderson, MW 1:30 – 2:45

Nicholas Taylor, TR 9:00 – 10:15

Tommy Mouton, TR 10:30 – 11:45

Sheree Kirby, TR 1:30 – 2:45

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.

ENGL 100A: Writing Competency Through Genres

Owen Sonntag, MW 12:00 – 1:15

Allison St. Dennis, TR 7:30 – 8:45

Satisfies the WST requirement if passed with a C or better (C- or lower will not satisfy the WST). Prepares students for 100W through drafting, feedback, and revision to demonstrate writing competency. Develops ability to analyze written genres used in the students' chosen disciplines as well as write analytical and reflective essays. **Prerequisite:** Must have failed the WST at least twice. Note: A CR/NC option may not be used to satisfy the WST requirement.

ENGL 100W: Writing Workshop**Revathi Krishnasswamy, MW 10:30 – 11:45****John Engell, TR 12:00 – 13:15****Persis Karim, TR 4:30 – 5:45**

Advanced workshops in Reading and Composition.

ENGL 100WB: Written Communication – Business**John Hessler, M 6:00 – 8:45; T 6:00 – 8:45; W 6:00 –****8:45; R 6:00 – 8:45; F 9:30 – 12:15****Leanne Lindelof, T 12:00 – 2:45****Thomas Moriarty, R 12:00 – 2:45****Carlos Mujal, T 6:00 – 8:45; R 6:00 – 8:45**

This hands-on course is designed to simulate actual business communication scenarios (oral and written) that are encountered by business professionals daily during the course of their careers. Assignments will enable students to practice and immediately apply both practical and theoretical aspects of organizational communication directly in real-life work situations. Communication mechanics and style (practical) and the appropriateness of messages and methods based on specific organizational situations (theoretical) will be emphasized.

ENGL 101: Introduction to Literary Criticism**Noelle Brada-Williams, MW 12:00 – 1:15**

Study of various historical and contemporary approaches to literature, including New Criticism, structuralism and post-structuralism, New Historicism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, post-colonialism, feminism, queer theory, and ecocriticism. An emphasis will be placed on learning to apply these different methods of interpretation through a workshop format.

ENGL 101: Introduction to Literary Criticism**Katherine Harris, TR 10:30 – 11:45**

Do you see hidden meanings in literary texts? Movies? Games? There are many possible readings of all literary and visual texts. Even your own identity governs your interpretation of the material. For this course, we will discover and apply critical models to various literary, visual, and digital texts. Critical models will include foundational twentieth-century theory as well as contemporary approaches to literature (Feminist, Queer, Marxist, Post-Colonial, and Digital Humanities theories). Though we will apply these critical models to texts across several historical periods and literary genres, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* will be our ur-text. **Co-requisite:** ENGL 100W.

ENGL 103: Modern English**Linda Mitchell, MW 10:30 – 11:45**

This course provides a survey of Modern English phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, transformational grammar, and the universality of linguistic structures. Material in the course will also focus on some recurring problems of usage and/or correctness, regional and social varieties of English, the role of pragmatics in using language to communicate, and the historical development of English, especially as it affects the language today. The course also includes ReedKellogg Diagrams.

ENGL 107: Professional Technical Writing**Mark Thompson, TR 12:00 – 1:15**

In this survey of technical and professional writing, you'll learn how to write and design persuasive documents that get real things done in the real world. Projects include resumes and cover letters, proposals, instructions (video and writing), API dev guides, presentations, and user manuals for phone apps. We also learn a number of digital tools used to author and publish writing in the current tech landscape, such as Adobe InDesign, SnagIt, and Madcap Flare.

ENGL 109: Writing and the Young Writer**Kathleen Johnson, M 4:30 – 7:15**

This course is designed to strengthen participants' writing skills in both creative and expository genres, and to develop participants' knowledge and skill as future teachers of writing.

ENGL 112A: Children's Literature**Avantika Rohatgi, TR 1:30 – 2:45**

Study of literature for elementary and intermediate grades, representing a variety of cultures. Evaluation and selection of texts.

ENGL 112B: Literature for Young Adults**Mary Warner, T 4:30 – 7:15**

In ENGL 112B, we read *After the First Death*, *Speak*, *Whale Talk*, *Witness*, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, and *We Were Here*. Two additional texts --*Literature for Today's Young Adults* and *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning* --introduce YA literature's genres, demonstrate the complexity of the best YA lit, and provide author/book resources. Book Talks and a unit of study/annotated bibliography requirement deepen student knowledge of YA Literature.

ENGL 117A: American Literature, Film, and Culture**Noelle Brada-Williams, F 9:30 – 12:15**

The course will examine the representation of race, class, gender, and religion in American film and literature. Films and literary texts will be paired topically but sometimes from very different historical periods so that we can analyze both historical continuity and change over time.

ENGL 123A: Literature for Global Understanding: The Americas**Persis Karim, TR 12:00 – 1:15**

Course promotes global understanding by examining the cultures and literary arts of a selected region of the world, the Americas, and covers representative texts and authors from Latin America and the Caribbean/West Indies.

ENGL 123C: South Pacific Literature**David Mesher, TR 3:00 – 4:15**

Novelists from the South Pacific (including Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Fiji, and other island nations) have produced some of the most imaginative fiction written in English over the past hundred years or so. We will read six or seven novels or story collections by authors such as Miles Franklin, Joseph Furphy, Patrick White, David Malouf, Peter Carey, Witi Ihimaera, Keri Hulme, Albert Wendt, and Sia Figiel.

ENGL 125: European Literature: Homer to Dante**Linda Mitchell, MW 9:00 – 10:15**

This course offers an introduction to some of the major literary works of the first 2,000 years of Western Culture—works of great genius and superb craft. They are as much a part of our heritage as that which we receive from our parents. Our goal this semester is to take possession of that heritage—like heirs who have come of age—by understanding how these works are connected to each other and to us via a series of parallel and contrasting patterns of ideas and experiences that form a path of human continuity across time and place. Students will engage and explore the texts from a variety of contexts and viewpoints: textual, literary, political, social, and cultural; become familiar with a range of critical approaches to the texts; and demonstrate a working knowledge of the texts' influences within the Western literary tradition.

ENGL 126: Holocaust Literature**David Mesher, TR 1:30 – 2:45**

The German plan to murder all European Jews and other perceived enemies of the Reich during World War II, which we now know as the Holocaust, produced terror and suffering on a previously unimagined scale, as well as some of the most moving and powerful literature of the last century. Authors include Anne Frank, Primo Levi, Charlotte Delbo, Elie Wiesel, and Imre Kertesz, as well as Boubacar Boris Diop on the genocide in Rwanda.

ENGL 129: Introduction to Career Writing**Mark Thompson, TR 10:30 – 11:45**

In this course, students write to get published in the places that they read, drafting and revising about whatever they're into: food, video games, fashion, high-tech, science—whatever. Students also write and produce English Department magazines, an in-class podcast series, the ProfTech website, and their own blog. Expand your portfolio, learn some new skills, and march boldly forth with a publishable work in hand. Required class for the Professional and Technical Writing concentration.

ENGL 130: Writing Fiction**Samuel Maio, MW 10:30 – 11:45****Nicholas Taylor, TR 12:00 – 1:15**

English 130 is a fiction workshop class in which each student will write short stories. Each of these short stories will be workshopped in class, after which each story will be rewritten. Both drafts—pre-and post-workshop—will be included in each student's end-of-semester Portfolio. In addition to writing short stories and revising them, each student will be responsible for helping to workshop all stories written by classmates. And each student will be responsible for reading a number of assigned, published short stories that will serve as models for writing successful short fiction.

ENGL 131: Writing Poetry**Alan Soldofsky, MW 10:30 – 11:45**

ENGL 131 is primary an intermediate/advanced-level poetry writing workshop. Students will write poems for this class and then “workshop” them with their peers. Workshops will take place in the classroom and outside the classroom using Canvas (SJSU’s learning management system). This class includes exercises and assignments in creative reading as well as creative writing. Students will also each week read and practice analyzing a diverse selection of published poems—mostly written in open and some in closed forms. There will be assigned readings from a poetry handbook that I recently coedited, written by my mentor at the Iowa Writer’s Workshop, the poet Donald Justice. We will explore the craft of the poetic line and work toward gaining greater mastery of the craft of writing poetry in contemporary modes and styles as well as in traditional forms. The workshop’s emphasis will be on poetry that pays close attention, poems that contain closely observed details of the here and now that turn the world into words. We will also read and practice writing poems of “layered perception.” Poet Donald Revell believes that poems are “presences...the consequences of vivid presentations.” Students may also post audio or video files of their readings of their poems (if desired) on Canvas for facilitating workshop discussion. Grades will be based on a final poetry portfolio and two in-class presentations. Also required will be attending at least two poetry readings by published poets on campus and/or in the greater Bay Area (or readings that can be watched online). Students will write reviews of these readings after studying the work of the poets they’ve seen read. ENGL 131 can be taken twice for credit.

ENGL 133: Reed Magazine**Cathleen Miller, T 3:00 – 5:45**

As an encore to *Reed Magazine*’s 150th-anniversary edition for No. 151, we will create our first-ever themed issue, an ode to California, both the state and the state of mind. Students produce each edition of *Reed*, and in the process, create the ultimate portfolio piece for their future job aspirations, a copy of the West’s oldest literary journal with their name on the masthead. This course is ideally a two-semester sequence starting in the fall term, when we’ll focus on editorial duties, reading submissions, reviewing art, and communicating with submitters to gain hands-on experience in publishing. **Note:** enrollment is by instructor permission only. Please contact Prof. Miller to apply: cathleen.miller@sjsu.edu.

ENGL 135: Writing Nonfiction**Susan Shillinglaw, TR 10:30 – 11:45**

“Creative nonfiction” includes memoir, travel writing, biography, science and nature writing, personal essays, feature writing. This class considers that range, with the goal of improving students’ prose; honing interview and observational skills; discussing published work as well as your own and others’ prose. Texts: *The Journal Keeper*, Phyllis Theroux; *Citizen*, Claudia Rankine; *Creative Nonfiction*, Philip Gerard *On Writing Well, 30th Anniversary Edition: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*, William Zinsser; Course reader. **Prerequisite:** ENGL 71, ENGL 100W, ENGL 105, ENGL 129, or instructor consent.

ENGL 142: Chaucer**Nancy Stork, MW 9:00 – 10:15**

We will read Chaucer in his original language. As Ezra Pound once said, “Those who are unwilling to put in the small amount of effort to learn the original language of Chaucer to read him in the original should be shut out from the reading of good books forever.” While Pound sounds to me a bit mean-spirited, I do think you will enjoy very much the intricacies and subtlety of Middle English. In addition, Chaucer has it all—heroic romance, saints’ lives, folk tales, laments, elegies, and sex comedies.

ENGL 144: Shakespeare I**Adrienne Eastwood, MW 1:30 – 2:45****Shannon Miller, TR 12:00 – 1:15**

This course will introduce you to some of the major plays of William Shakespeare. Each play will be considered both within the context of the cultural and political atmosphere in early modern England and through the critical lenses provided by postmodern theories of literature. Students will gain a basic knowledge of Shakespeare’s thematic questions and a solid understanding of the language he used to explore these themes. For example, we will discuss the construction of the family as a mini-commonwealth and the political impact that added to Shakespeare’s dramatic productions. Similarly, we will consider the relationship between patriarchal and monarchical authority and the ways in which related ideologies circulated among Elizabethans.

ENGL 145: Shakespeare and Performance**Adrienne Eastwood, MW 9:00 – 10:15**

In this course, we will examine in-depth several of Shakespeare's plays, specifically addressing issues of performance and interpretation. Placing each play in the context of its original performance during Shakespeare's time, and its life on stage and screen in the ensuing centuries, encourages an engagement with the ways in which re-imagining Shakespeare's works helps them retain their vitality and cultural relevance. Paying particular attention to modern productions, we will analyze the ways in which production elements such as setting, casting, staging, costumes, editing, and individual performances shape and create meaning (or fail to do so) for the audiences of today. Placing these plays within this context of performance will raise larger issues about the complex relationships between the Shakespearean canon and its ever changing audiences. Students will respond to each Shakespearean play text through both writing and oral interpretation, integrating speech and dramatic performance with an understanding of the complexities of plot, characterization, and dramatic form. Required for the English Single-Subject Credential.

ENGL 150: The Victorian Age**William Wilson, MW 4:30 – 5:45**

Study of major British authors and poets from 1837 to 1900, tracing changes in philosophy, religion, society and culture represented in their works. **Prerequisite:** Upper division standing

ENGL 153: Studies in the British Novel Before 1900**Katherine Harris, TR 1:30 – 2:45**

With the Industrial Revolution in full swing, the nineteenth century saw many technological improvements and even more class disparity. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Dickens' lesser known *Old Curiosity Shop* aid in exploring the impact of technology. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* will introduce the "woman question." Stoker's *Dracula* arrives with a Decadent flourish of bloodsucking. Wilkie Collins introduces the first detective fiction with *Woman in White*. H. Rider Haggard rounds out the nineteenth century by declaring Britannia the first of all cultures in *She*, with its main character, She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed, inviting readers to unmapped regions of Africa. *Substitution for ENGL 56B.*

ENGL 162: Studies in American Literature Before 1865**Susan Shillinglaw, TR 3:00 – 4:15**

This course considers what is American about American literature. How did these writers describe the country, the citizen, "others," the environment? Why relevant today? Writers that may be considered include the Puritans, writers of "resistance", Emerson and Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Melville.

ENGL 167: Steinbeck**Susan Shillinglaw, TR 12:00 – 1:15**

This course considers Steinbeck's career and creative vision, with a focus on his ecological, social, and political sensibilities. Journal, reading groups, field trip, presentations. Texts: *To a God Unknown* (1933), *The Long Valley* (1938), *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *In Dubious Battle* (1936), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), *The Moon is Down* (1942), *Cannery Row* (1945), and *East of Eden* (1952).

ENGL 169: Ethnicity in American Literature**Persis Karim, TR 1:30 – 2:45**

Study of race and ethnicity in the literary arts of North America. Selected works of authors from such groups as African Americans, European Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, Latinos and American Indians.

ENGL 190: Honors Colloquium: Rhetorics of American Feminisms**Ryan Skinnell, TR 9:00 – 10:15**

In 2016, the first female candidate in US history ran for president on a major party ticket. In 2020, women's suffrage will celebrate its 100-year anniversary. Both of these momentous occasions resulted from feminist action, but feminism nevertheless remains controversial. In English 190, we will take the occasion of major advances in women's right to study feminist rhetorics—how feminists have persuaded audiences, how they have claimed the authority to speak and act, and what kinds of challenges they have faced in advocating for women's rights and equality for more than 200 years.

Letter from the Chair, Shannon Miller



Our newsletter will be hitting the “stands” as you face final projects, papers, and exams. Your focus now should be on finishing up the semester well, while looking toward a summer that may give you more time for reflection and relaxation. At that point, you

should make sure to catch up on—if you aren’t currently watching—the new Hulu series, “The Handmaid’s Tale.” Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* has been called a “feminist dystopia” novel since it was published in 1985; Atwood made an intervention into a longstanding genre that has received notable attention in the last year. *1984* by George Orwell recently surged to the top of the bestseller list sixty-plus years after its publication. The storyline of *The Handmaid’s Tale* and this series imagines a world—Gilead, a portion of the former U.S.A.—in which women’s fertility is controlled entirely by the state, homosexuality is punished by death, and women are forbidden to read. Do I recommend this series for its feminist push back against state efforts to intervene in women’s choices about their bodies? In part, of course. The publicity and excitement around the new TV version of “The Handmaid’s Tale,” though, has focused on how timely this series seems in 2017; it portrays a world marked by aggressive restrictions on women’s rights, violent assaults on the LGBTB community, and a “resistance” to an overweening (tyrannical) government.

But the real reason English majors should be watching “The Handmaid’s Tale” is because it shows the power of narrative, the power of story. What Atwood created was her own act of resistance to what she feared about the growth of fundamentalist readings of the Bible. Her story appropriated certain narratives from the Bible—specifically those of handmaids bearing children for infertile wives—in order to use narrative as a tool, even a weapon, against what she feared: a biblically-inspired oppression and limitation of women’s opportunities. Atwood further thematizes this issue by underscoring the power of reading and of one’s own “story.” Women are forbidden to read in the nation of Gilead because knowledge is power—if they cannot read, they will not be able to resist. But the novel highlights its own engagement with imaginative power in many ways. A female author imagines a horrific world

in which women are forbidden to read, write, or even think independently. In doing so, Atwood shows us that access to literacy makes possible active resistance. Further, and even more immediately poignant, Atwood illustrates the power of telling one’s own story. In the world of Gilead, one is forbidden from remembering or retelling one’s story; handmaids are renamed for the household in which they have been placed, consequently denied their name. Reading a story is outlawed. Telling one’s own story is criminal. Narrative is dangerous because of what it can accomplish. In the closing of the opening episode, Offred (“of” “Fred,” the wealthy man she now serves as an unwilling surrogate) states her name. She remembers her daughter’s name, her (now dead) husband’s name, and then her own: June. Recovering her own story becomes a revolutionary event.

Atwood illustrates for us, then, how powerful narrative is, especially around our own stories. Our own Professor Persis Karim underscored this same power in her April 28th speech at this year’s Honors Colloquium. She stressed the “power of story,” but specifically drew focus: “To your stories—to the story of how you got here, and the people who supported you, the people who sacrificed for you, and those who have paid a price for the rights and privileges you now enjoy.”

And just as Atwood fused the power of the narrative and its relation to politics, Professor Karim highlighted the potency of telling, and writing, your stories: “I ask you to write a story that puts to use your education, asks of you to commit your best, not just for your own success, but for the success and survival of others, and for the survival of our planet. Your next steps, your next job, won’t just be your paying job, but it will also be the work of true citizenry.”

She asks that we tell and live compelling stories about compassion, support for other people, and understanding. This seemingly very personal act is also a political act, and of the utmost importance right now. Let your story create imaginative possibilities, resist the closing of our minds, and help create a better world.

EDNL STAFF

Managing Editor: Mark Thompson

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Course Descriptions: Christopher Casey

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