

ENGLISH GRADUATE NEWSLETTER

Volume L, Number 14

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SJSU DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Fall Office Hours

MA Advising



Revathi Krishnaswamy

Graduate Coordinator
revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu
Virtual office hours: M 11-12p.m.; 6:45-
7:30 p.m. & by appointment

MFA Advising Fall 2023



Alan Soldofsky

Director of Creative Writing and
MFA Program Coordination
alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu
Virtual office hours: W 3:30-4:30 p.m.
& Th by appointment

MFA Advising Spring 2024



Nick Taylor

Director of Creative Writing and
MFA Program Coordination
nicholas.taylor@sjsu.edu
Thursdays 2-4p.m.

2024 Lurie Chair Distinguished Writer-In-Residence



Marcelo Hernandez Castillo

Marcelo Castillo is a graduate of the Canto Mundo Latinx Poetry fellowship, and teaches in the creative writing program at St. Mary's University, and the Ashland Low-Res MFA Program. He was the first undocumented student to graduate from the Helen Zell Writers Program at the University of Michigan. As the Yuba and Sutter County poet laureate, he conducts poetry workshops for incarcerated youth in Northern California. In addition, Marcelo has taught at literary organizations such as the Chautauqua Institution, Tin House, The Writers Center in D.C., Hugo House in Seattle, 92Y in NYC. He was awarded a distinguished fellow position for the Marshall Project's "Art For Justice" initiative from the University of Arizona which advocates for prison reform. He has received fellowships to attend the Vermont Studio Center and the Community of Writers Workshop, and served as a guest editor for the Poem-A-Day project from the Academy of American Poets. Marcelo is a founding member the UndocuPoets campaign which successfully eliminated all citizenship requirements from every major first book poetry prize in the nation and for which he received the Writers for Writers Award from Barnes and Noble and Poets and Writers Magazine.

His most recent book is *Children of the Land: a Memoir* (Harper Collins) which received acclaim

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from Vanity Fair, Entertainment Weekly, the LA Times, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and was finalist for the International Latino Book Award. He is also the author of poetry book *Cenzontle*, winner of the A. Poulin, Jr. prize (BOA editions 2018), which was awarded the Great Lakes Colleges Association's New Writer Award for poetry, the 2019 Golden Poppy Award from the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association, and the FOREWORD INDIE bronze prize for best book of the year. *Cenzontle* was also a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award, the California Book Award, the Publishing Triangle's Thom Gunn Award for Gay Poetry, and the Northern California Book Award. *Cenzontle* received star reviews from *Publisher's Weekly*, *Harvard Review*, *The San Francisco Chronicle* among many others and was listed as one of NPR's and the New York Public Library top books of 2018. His first chapbook, *Dulce*, was the winner of the Drinking Gourd Prize (Northwestern University Press).

Marcelo Hernandez Castillo will be teaching ENGL 240, the Graduate Poetry Workshop, in Spring 2024.

Important Policies

Continuous Enrollment

University Policy requires that graduate students must be continuously enrolled until they finish their culminating experiences (such as theses and exams). Note that students must finish their theses while they are enrolled in 299 units (or in UNVS 1290R, which is basically just a fee, not a class).

Deadlines for MA and MFA Graduates

Please consult the GAPE website for current candidacy and graduation deadlines: www.sjsu.edu/gape/deadlines/index.php

Note that if you are planning to graduate in May 2024, you should file your official "Petition for Advancement to Graduate Candidacy" by October 1, 2023. Applications (or reactivations of applications) for May 2024 graduation must be filed by February 1, 2024. The relevant forms can be found at the GAPE forms website: www.sjsu.edu/gape/forms/index.php

Deadline for MA and MFA Thesis Proposals

Thesis proposals must come to the Graduate Committee at least five weeks before the end of the semester preceding the semester in which you will enroll for 299 credits. If you plan to write your thesis or project in the Spring 2024 term, you must submit your proposal to the Graduate Committee by Nov 1, 2023. If you plan to write your thesis in the Fall 2024 term, you must get your proposal to the Graduate Committee no later than April 3, 2023.

Guidelines for MFA thesis and thesis proposals: www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/mfa/thesis-guidelines.php

Guidelines for MA thesis and cover sheet: www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/thesis.php

After you have secured a thesis advisor or "first reader," and the thesis advisor has read and approved your proposal, you may submit your proposal electronically to the chair of the Graduate Committee (revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu). Be sure to cc your thesis advisor in the email so that the Graduate Coordinator knows that the first reader has approved the proposal being submitted to the Graduate Committee.

Spring 2024 MFA Exam

Exam Distributed 9:00 AM, Friday March 8;

Exam due by 5:00 PM, Monday March 11

Spring 2024 MA Exam

Part 1 February 23 Fri 10am-12pm on Canvas

Part 2 Exam Distributed on Canvas 9:00 AM, Friday March 8; Exam due on Canvas by 5:00 PM, Monday March 11

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Deadline to sign up for Spring 2024 MA exam – Dec 1 2023. Full Details including Deadlines and Readings Lists: <https://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/comp-exam.php>

MA Foreign Language Exam

The MA degree program requires a level of fluency in a second language equivalent to one year of college study of a language. If you were conditionally admitted and asked to satisfy this requirement, you can take the language placement exams for the most commonly taught languages in the SJSU World Languages Media Center in Clark 206. See www.sjsu.edu/wll/proficiency-exams/index.php.

If you score higher than a 2nd semester level in a given language, take the printout to the World Language office and the department chair will sign off on it. If you place at the level of 2nd semester or below, you must do whatever coursework is needed for you to achieve a level of language skill equivalent to one year of study. As always, native fluency in a language as shown by schooling in that language or attestation by an academic skilled in that native language are also ways to satisfy this requirement. Evidence of equivalent first-language literacy in languages other than English also satisfies the requirement. For questions about this requirement, or to satisfy this requirement in a language not tested by the World Languages Department, please contact Professor Krishnaswamy.

Spring 2024 Schedule of Classes

Here are the tentative courses, faculty, and meeting times for our Spring 2024 graduate course offerings:

English 203	R	FOB 104	16:00 - 18:45	Nicholas Taylor
English 204	M	Online	16:00 - 18:45	Revathi Krishnaswamy
English 254	M	Online	19:00 - 21:45	Alan Soldofsky
English 240	T	FOB 104	16:00 - 18:45	LURIE
English 241	T	FOB 104	19:00 - 21:45	Keenan Norris
English 242	W	FOB 104	16:00 - 18:45	Brook McClurg

At least 21 of the 30 units of classes required for the MA program should be in 200-numbered English courses. Of the 30, only 6 units can be taken as credit/no credit independent study of thesis units. Upper-division English coursework (100 level) may count for graduate students if you have received permission of the instructor as well as the MA or MFA Coordinator.

Check the schedule for upper division undergraduate course offerings that may be of interest, and which will not be covered by the Graduate Curriculum.

Conditionally classified students must complete their required undergraduate course work before enrolling in graduate seminars. When you are eligible for classified status, the change is not automatic; you need to contact the MA Coordinator, file the necessary form, and await approval. Classes taken outside the department will not count except in unusual circumstances. Get prior approval from your advisor before you take such courses.

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Spring 2024 Course Descriptions

English 203

Narrative Craft and Theory - "Extremely Contemporary Fiction"

R 16:00 - 18:45 (Professor Taylor)

In this graduate literature seminar, we will read a selection of fiction published between the beginning of 2021 and the end of 2023. I ask that participants in the seminar come prepared to read these books as critics and as writers. As critics, we will assess any identifiable "schools" of contemporary fiction and explore how these might follow, or react against, previous literary movements. As writers, we will dissect each work in terms of form, aesthetics, and material, to determine how these authors—who are our contemporaries, if not our peers—capture the attention of early twenty-first-century readers. The reading load is extremely heavy in this course (nearly four thousand pages of fiction). Writing requirements include short weekly response papers and a seminar paper or creative project.

English 204

Literary Theory and Criticism

M 16:00 - 18:45 Online (Professor Krishnaswamy)

The field of Literary Theory & Criticism is a vast and complex multilingual, interdisciplinary field that cuts across disciplines like philosophy, psychology, sociology, economics, political science, history, and biology, and encompasses many different literary traditions with long, diverse histories across the world. This course, however, focuses primarily on contemporary Western theory and criticism, though relevant connections to older western theories as well as non-western traditions will be made to situate contemporary Western theory in a global context. Our goal will be to understand influential schools of contemporary Western Theory/Criticism such as New Criticism, Structuralism, Deconstruction, New Historicism, Marxism, Feminism, Postcolonialism, Ecocriticism etc., and engage with fundamental questions about language, literature, reading, and writing. While this is an extremely intensive course that will challenge you to engage with abstract ideas and complex materials, it will give you a deeper understanding of literary study and equip you with the tools you will need as a professional in the field. It will also help those planning to take the MA comprehensive exam in Literary theory & criticism.

English 240

Poetry Writing Workshop

T 16:00 - 18:45 Lurie Chair Marcelo Hernandez Castillo

Poetics and poetry writing as preparation for thesis. Includes theory and practice of major trends in contemporary poetry. Intensive workshop experience.

English 241

Fiction Writing Workshop

T 19:00 - 21:45 (Professor Norris)

This class is divided into two thematics, ghosts and dreams. The "ghosts" represent memory, how we are visited by history and our personal experiences and how we as storytellers metabolize these memories in the narratives that we create. The "dreams" represent imagination as it is manifested in experimentation with different narrative structures and surprises and the pure virtuosity of language. Within this two-part prism, we will take a tour of different styles of creative writing. We'll look deeply at the ghosts and dreams of writers past and present, learning what's been invented, what's trending, and, ultimately, we will press forward with writing that is informed by other literature but that is all our own.

Additionally, we will discuss aspects of the writing profession, with visits from literary professionals to-be-announced. Topics of these discussions will include finding time managing writing time, finding and building literary community, finding an agent or publisher, and networking.

Students will workshop their work as many as three times during the term (2,000-5,000 words) and will also be required to provide written feedback to their classmates when their classmates are the focus of the workshop. The objectives of this course are to study and work toward establishing our voice(s) as writers, to learn in nuanced fashion the deep lives of our characters, and to learn how to creatively corral history and the unknown.

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English 242

Nonfiction Workshop

W 16:00-18:45 (Professor McClurg)

Memoir is the perennial underdog of the literary world—works that critics and writers love to hate and hate on—yet, as a genre, it remains amongst the bestsellers year after year. In this course we will navigate the history of memoir, highlight the “rise of the nobody memoir,” and explore postmodern approaches to conveying a true-life story, all to inform and further develop your own work. As such, we will face the questions that plague the genre: what differentiates literary memoir from the schtick-lit varietal? Are these narcissistic narratives or should they be seen as acts of agency? And finally, how do we carefully craft truth when memory becomes fuzzy, contested, or otherwise can't be known? Whether you have a memoir bubbling up that urgently needs to be told, or if you simply want to dwell at the intersection where storytelling craft bumps up against notions of truth, this course will explore the various methods, craft tools, ethics, and theory pertaining to the particular magic/problem of turning your real life into story. Classes will contain both discussion and workshop.

Brenda Hillman, Jane Hirshfield, Ada Limón (current U.S. Poet Laureate), Craig Santos Perez, Gary Soto, and Arthur Sze. Many of the poems we'll examine can also be read as “poems of place,” a number of these poets having written from locations in Northern California. Also New Mexico and the Hawaiian Islands. The seminar will include options for creative assignments as well as required research assignments. The course will help students prepare for both the MFA Exam and the M.A. Part II. Also fulfills the College of Graduate Studies' GWAR requirement.

English 254

Seminar in Genre Studies in American Literature: Readings in the Poetry of Resilience and Resistance— from Imagism to Eco-poetry

M 19:00-21:45 Online (Professor Soldofsky)

In this online seminar we will explore the work of poets who represent politically and socially engaged traditions within modern and contemporary poetry. We will unpack the work of these poets within a historical/biographical and also a wider geographical literary context. We'll examine these poets historically, beginning with William Carlos Williams' influential imagist and post-imagist poetry. We'll also read the California proto-environmentalist poet Robinson Jeffers; and the social-activist poetry of Langston Hughes. In addition, we'll read works by mid- and late-twentieth century poets including Kenneth Rexroth, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Joanne Kyger, Sylvia Plath, and W. S. Merwin. And finally, we'll read works by more recent poets who grapple with issues of resilience in the Anthropocene, including Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Camille T. Dungy, Forrest Gander, Robert Hass, Juan Felipe Herrera,

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MA/MFA Reminders and Guidelines Stay Informed!

Please be sure to sign up for the google group for our English Graduate Program. To sign up, send a blank email to: enggrad-group+subscribe@sjsu.edu. Key information is sent out via the google group that is essential for all MA and MFA students. Program descriptions, course descriptions, the most recent Newsletter, and other documents are posted on the English Department website: www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate.



The SJSU Graduate Admissions and Program Evaluations (GAPE) Office website publishes important deadlines, forms, and information for current students at: www.sjsu.edu/gape

GRADES

Graduate Resource and Academic Development for English Studies (GRADES) is up and running. Two socials and a professional workshop on how to make an academic CV with Dr. Skinnell have already been held. The next workshop in November is about Ph.D applications with Dr. Johnson. GRADES will continue to organize once a month workshops and twice a month socials. Look out for announcements!

GRADES has two social media accounts:

Discord:

discord.gg/E3kTZr9z

Instagram:

[instagram.com/sjsu.grades?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=](https://www.instagram.com/sjsu.grades?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=)

For more information, please email

Aleksandra.Gorka@sjsu.edu

Spring 2024 Graduate Student Conference

Be on the lookout for a Call for Papers for the Spring 2024 graduate student conference! Share a seminar paper or creative piece during a mini-conference in April with other SJSU English MAs and MFAs. Full details will be announced soon.

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Important Dates in 2023-2024

Oct 1	Deadline for May 2024 Graduates to submit their "Departmental Request for Candidacy" form to GAPE. Requires the MA or MFA advisor's signature.
Nov 1	Deadline to submit thesis or project proposals (for Spring 2023 ENGL 299 units) to the English Department Graduate Committee.
Nov 13	Deadline for December 2023 graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office.
Dec 1	Deadline for signing up to take the Spring 2024 MA Comprehensive Exam.
Dec 14	Deadline for signing up to take the Spring 2024 MFA Comprehensive Exam.
Jan 29	Deadline for December 2024 graduates to submit thesis for publication (or embargo).
Feb 1	Deadline for May 2024 graduates to submit graduation application to Graduate Studies Office. OR request change in graduation date; MFA applications due. Submit to CSU Apply.
Feb 23	MA Part 1 Exam 10-12pm online via Canvas.
Mar 1	Deadline for applications for 2023-24 TAships due to Prof. Ryan Skinnell.
Mar 8	MA (Part 2) and MFA Comprehensive Exam given (9:00am).
Mar 11	MA (Part 2) and MFA Comprehensive Exams due (5:00pm).
Mar 14	MFA theses (May & Aug graduates) due to faculty committee readers.
Apr 1	Deadline for December 2024 graduates to file their "Request for Candidacy" forms (requires MA or MFA advisor's signature); Deadline for applications for 2024-2025 GAship due to the Graduate Coordinator; Deadline to submit MFA Thesis Proposals to the Graduate Committee for review and approval to take 299/299D units in Fall.
Apr 8	Submission deadline for Creative Writing Awards and Scholarships; Deadline for May 2024 graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office pr to the English Department for Departmental Thesis (298D).
May 11	New admitted MFA student orientation.
May 18	MFA thesis reading (Fall '23, May '24, & Aug '24 graduates).

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Brag Time!

Graduate Faculty, Student, and Alumni Accomplishments

Hilary King

MFA student Hilary King has poems out or forthcoming in *SWWIM*, *Quartet*, *Mom Egg Review* and *Ink in Thirds*.

M. Olivas

MFA student M. Olivas published a short story, "The Prince of Oakland," this past September in *Weird Horror Magazine's* 7th issue. He will be reading by invitation at SF Lit Crawl on October 21st as part of a science fiction group called Club Chicxulub.

Anne Cheilek, Tim Cech, and alums Allie Maier and Ryan Smith

MFA students Anne Cheilek and Tim Cech, along with alums Allie Maier and Ryan Smith, are unveiling the first issue of *Midnight Chem*, their brand-new literary journal, on October 15. Submissions for the second issue will open the same day. Please visit them at <https://www.midnightchem.org/>.

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Departmental Awards Recipients (Spring 2023)

The Academy of American Poets / Virginia De Araujo Prize

Hilary King

Jane Berg (Honorable Mention)

Kichung Kim Scholarship

Dylan Khieu

The Shirley Nelson Iverson Scholarship

Ken Banh

Hannah Le

The Lois King Thore Scholarship Fund

Rye Lomax

Alexander Luis Osorio

The Dr. Jack E. Fink and Maxine hunt Fink Scholarship Endowment

Victoria Thorp

Elaina Davey

The Dorrit A. Sibley Writing Scholarship Award Fund

Hilary King

Melissa Reyes

Marjorie McLaughlin Folendorf Award

Bekah Lazar

Jane Berg

Brianna Mac-Thai

Anne Lillis Memorial Scholarship Fund

Melissa Reyes

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The Robert H. Woodward Memorial Scholarship

1st: Jaena Jaug

2nd: Alma Hernandez

3rd: Kiara Schuette

3rd: Daniela Sanchez Martinez

The Abraham and Eleanor H. Bezanker Scholarship

1st: Jane Berg

2nd: Emily Coletta

2nd: Charlotte Kunde

English and Comparative Literature Award for Criticism

Alyssa Long

Alma Hernandez

English and Comparative Literature Award for Poetry

Thao Thanh Nguyen

Zoe Prodromides

English and Comparative Literature Award for Fiction

Samantha Ruelas

Sophie Aust

English and Comparative Literature Award for Nonfiction

Hazel Griffin

Ching Ching Tan

Ida Fay Sachs Ludwig Memorial Scholarship

Nalana La Framboise

English and Comparative Literature Award for Research

Amanda Shipman