

FALL 2025: ENGLISH 71

Professor Arnold: regina.arnold@sjsu.edu

TIME: M/W 9 AM – 10:15 AM

LOCATION: BBC 120

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will examine works of poetry, creative nonfiction and short fiction as expression of human intellect and imagination. Students will also write their own poetry, creative nonfiction, and a short fiction. This is a 3-unit lower-division course designed and administered by the Department of English & Comparative Literature at San José State University in accordance with the University's General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill Core General Education requirements in the "C2" Letters area of Humanities & the Arts.

This course will focus on the three major genres of creative writing, fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry. In addition to exploring how those genres are put together, we will ask ourselves what makes reading them, and writing them, important and necessary to understanding the world around us. In addition to reading and analyzing major works in all three genres, students will create new works of their own. Class will consist of a mixture of discussion of published works, writing exercises, and writing workshop-style discussion of student work.

Prerequisites:

Completion of English 1A or equivalent.

Department Student Learning Objectives (SLOs):

Learning Outcomes and Course Goals

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

SLO 1: Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.

SLO 2: Show familiarity with major literary works (of poetry), genres (styles), periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.

SLO 3: Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject

English 71 GE Course Goals (GELOs): Core General Education requirements in the Letters area of Humanities & the Arts

1. Decipher and understand the form and content of assigned literary works
2. Comprehend the historical and cultural contexts of assigned literary works
3. Recognize the accomplishments of and issues related to writing by men and women representing diverse cultural traditions

4. Acquire through both individual and collaborative/workshop efforts of a written and oral nature the skills necessary for reading, discussing, analyzing, interpreting, and—most importantly—emulating and writing works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction;
5. Communicate such skills with clarity and precision
6. Develop the ability to write literary works that express intellect and imagination and that represent diversity in human cultures
7. Respond to literature through clear and effective communication in both written and oral work
8. Read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility;
9. Appreciate how literary works illuminate enduring human concerns while also representing matters specific to a particular culture
10. Write works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction that are of interest and value to the writer, to other students in the course, and to a diverse reading audience.

Course Design

This class will consist of two strands, reading and writing. Each week, you will be asked to read and reflect on a piece of writing, essay, short story, or poem. One class per week will be devoted to discussing these works; you will be responsible for a reflection on each one, as well. I try to choose a variety of types of writers in all the genres we study, and at the end of the semester, you will find that you have a good working knowledge of some of the greatest writers of our era: you will be well-read.

We will also be doing our own creative writing. In general, we will be discussing reading on Mondays, and doing creative work on Wednesday. Reflections are due on Monday, before class starts.

Book: *There There*, by Tommy Orange.

Essays (all will be available online.)

Fitzgerald: Bernice Bobs Her Hair

O'Connor: A Good Man Is Hard to Find

Morrison: Recitatif

Alexie: What You Pawn, I Will Redeem

Egan: Black Box

Didion: Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream

Borges, The Garden of Forking Paths

Zauner, Crying in H Mart

Roupenian: Cat Person

David Sedaris, The Santaland Diaries

Selected poems by Plath, Collins, Tayi Tibble, Lockwood, Oliver, etc.

All readings will be available on Canvas. Authors/texts can be accessed under "Schedule" in pages or module.

Assignments

1. Nonfiction narrative
2. Short story
3. 10 1-page reflections, one per reading week.
4. Presentation
5. Class reflection
6. Short in-class writing assignments

Grades

Grades will be based on 3 measures: full completion of assignments, **full class participation**, and good course citizenship. To receive an A grade, students must turn in all assignments including in-class exercises, give a single presentation on one of the readings, and exhibit good citizenship, especially in the area of workshop participation, i.e. peer review and commentary. A B grade will indicate that the student has missed one or more of these milestones. A C grade will indicate that the student has not fully participated in class, in work-shopping, and/or has missed turning in a major assignment. A D grade indicates that a student has not fulfilled many of these assignments. An F is reserved for a student whose attendance and participation is deficient to fulfill learning goals.

***Note:** writing is a creative endeavor that is subjective, personal, and often difficult to accomplish. Therefore, your efforts in creative writing will not be judged by me in a hierarchical manner but will be fully assessed via written feedback. The goal is completion, not perfection.*

A.I. Use

This class is about creative writing. A.I. use *of any kind* is not permitted. I am not interested in what the internet thinks of these texts, only what you do. If I suspect that Chat GPT has been used for any portion of your reflection, you won't get credit for it.

Discussion and workshop rules:

In this class, you will be asked to give feedback, aloud. Please make a real attempt to add to discussions. For instance, when we are talking about authors, you may wish to bring up things you didn't understand, areas that you thought were weak, complicated, or distressing, or you may wish to suggest how passages made you feel, or related to your own experience. You may want to think about how writers achieved that effect. You may also wish to add praise, i.e. mention what you think reads especially well, or portions that you believe were moving, successful, or otherwise excellent.

Please address your fellow students as you yourself wish to be treated. If a student receives feedback that they feel is neither constructive nor civil, please report it to me.

Reading Schedule (in other words, this story must be read by this date):

M/25: Shooting an Elephant, George Orwell
W: 27: Instagram character/introduce first paper

M/3rd: OFF

W: Read Instagram Character/put it into a story (groups)

M/8: "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" (first pres)
W:10 Read Instagram stories

M/15: "A Good Man Is Hard To Find"
W/17: There There: discussion

M/22: "Recitatif"
W: 24:

M/29: What You Pawn, I Will Redeem
W: Native American Mascot stuff/There There

M/6: Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream
W/8: new journalism lecture plus exercise

M/13: The Garden of Forking Paths
W/15: First paper due? Introduce second paper

M/20 Black Box plus invent a character
W/22 Black Box character stories

M/27 Cat Person
M/29 Finish up There There?

M/3: Crying In H Mart: food stories
W/5: share food stories

M/10: Poems
M/12: write poems

M/17 Sedaris work stories
W/19 share work stories

M/24: writing (W off)

M/1: presentations

M/8: office

