

# American Literature, Film, & Culture

## ENGL 117A

Fall 2025 Section 01 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/19/2025

### Contact Information

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Instructor: Dr. Colton S Saylor

Email: [colton.saylor@sjsu.edu](mailto:colton.saylor@sjsu.edu)

Office: 112

Please give me 24 hours to return emails. If I do not respond within that window, please feel free to follow up!

### Office Hours

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30PM - 2:30PM

Office Hours Link: [https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/8767305039?](https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/8767305039?pwd=VWdZNGhFWitEazVFVit0aHhwZVp4UT09)

[pwd=VWdZNGhFWitEazVFVit0aHhwZVp4UT09](https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/8767305039?pwd=VWdZNGhFWitEazVFVit0aHhwZVp4UT09)

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Pass code for Zoom: 009822

All Office Hours will be on Zoom; Waiting Room will be activated, meaning I will let students in one at a time

### Course Description and Requisites

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Using both film and literature, course examines narratives that create and define cultural identities in the United States. A variety of cultural moments in the history of North America as depicted in both film and literature as well as the artistic practices used to shape those representations will be discussed.

GE Area: S

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all SJSU studies courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.

# \* Classroom Protocols

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## Extension Policy

I will grant extensions (no questions asked) for the following assignments. Extensions can be requested at any point **EXCEPT** not on the day that the assignment is due:

**Essay # 1 (Monster Analysis Essay)**

**Essay # 2 (Final Paper)**

All other assignments must be submitted by the times listed on this syllabus and Canvas.

Late papers for Major Essays will be docked 2.5% each day they are late.

Late papers for credit/half credit/no credit assignments (all responses, activities, etc.) will receive half credit if submitted late.

## Absence Policy

You do NOT need to excuse absences with me over email. I do not take attendance, meaning I do not require notification about when you miss class.

That being said, Attendance is REQUIRED in order to do well in this class.

If you are absent, please note that I DO NOT review what was missed over email. Instead, you can catch up with what you missed via any of the following options:

- email another person in the class
- schedule an office hours appointment with me

## AI Policy

In this class, we are working together to become better writers, readers, and thinkers. In that spirit, no use of any artificial intelligence will be allowed on any of your assignments. I know some of you use programs like Grammarly or Quill to check your assignments before submitting, but as these are also examples of AI, they are also not permitted in this class. I do not deduct points specifically for grammar mistakes, and I am more concerned with you writing in your own original voice. Despite their marketing, these programs damage that voice rather than enhancing it.

I will be using turnitin.com (SJSU's approved plagiarism detector) to help me check assignments for any use of AI. As I know turnitin is not perfect, I'll also be using my own knowledge of our course, our texts, and common sense.

Any usage of AI in any capacity to complete an assignment will be treated as plagiarism.

# Program Information

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Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

**Goal 1:** To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

**Goal 2:** To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

**Goal 3:** To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website](#).

## English Program Information

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

## Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able to:

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.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

#### Department Information:

**Department Name:** English and Comparative Literature

**Department Office:** FO 102

**Department Website:** [www.sjsu.edu/english](http://www.sjsu.edu/english) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

**Department email:** [english@sjsu.edu](mailto:english@sjsu.edu) (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

**Department phone number:** 408-924-4425

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

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### GE Area C2: Humanities

Area C Arts and Humanities courses help students to respond subjectively as well as objectively to aesthetic experiences and to develop an understanding of the integrity of both emotional and intellectual responses. C2 Humanities courses encourage students to analyze and appreciate works of philosophical, historical, literary, aesthetic, and cultural importance.

### GE Area C2 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of a C2 course, students should be able to:

1. analyze and understand works of philosophical and humanistic importance, including their temporal and cultural dimensions;
2. explore and articulate their own subjective aesthetic and intellectual responses to such texts;
3. analyze and assess ideas of value, meaning, and knowledge, as produced within the humanistic disciplines; and
4. research and write effective analyses of works of the human intellect and imagination

**Writing Practice:** Students will write a minimum of 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

## Course Materials

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### Books Available for Purchase through Canvas page, Bookstore, and Online

*Grendel*, John Gardner; ISBN-10: 0679723110, ISBN-13: 978-0679723110

*Dawn*, Octavia Butler; ISBN-10: 1538753715, ISBN-13: 978-1538753712

*Mongrels*, Stephen Graham Jones; ISBN-10: 0062412701, ISBN-13: 978-0062412706

### In addition, we'll screen the following films in class

*The Bride of Frankenstein* (dir. James Whale)

*Night of the Living Dead* (dir. George Romero)

*The Fly* (dir. David Cronenberg)

*A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night* (dir. Ana Lily Amirpour)

Other required readings/films can be found either linked in the syllabus or as PDFs in Canvas.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

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SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, you are expected to spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on.

All assignments due to Canvas unless otherwise instructed.

### Assignment Word Count and Assignment GELO

Assignment	Word Count	Learning Goals	Final Grade %
Essay # 1 (Monster Imagery Analysis)*	750-1000	GE 1, 2, 3; E 1, 2, 3	15
Essay # 2 (Final Paper)*	1,250-1,500	GE 1, 2, 3; E 1, 2, 3, 4	20
Monster Diagnostic	500	GE 1, 2, 3; E 1, 2, 3, 4	2.5

<i>Bride of Frankenstein</i> Response	250-500	GE 1, 2, 3; E 1, 2, 3, 4	5
<i>Dawn</i> Response	250-500	GE 1, 2, 3; E 1, 2, 3, 4	5
<i>Night of the Living Dead</i> Response	250-500	GE 1, 2, 3; E 1, 2, 3, 4	5
Group Monster Profile Presentation	-	GE 1, 2; E 1, 2, 3, 4	10
<i>The Fly</i> Response	250-500	GE 1, 2, 3; E 1, 2, 3, 4	5
<i>Mongrels</i> Response	250-500	GE 1, 2, 3; E 1, 2, 3, 4	5
<i>A Girl Walks Home...</i> Response	250-500	GE 1, 2, 3; E 1, 2, 3, 4	5
<b>Final Exam</b>	-	GE 1, 2, 3; E 1, 2, 3, 4	22.5

\* - assignment requires rough draft and final draft

**Bolded** – letter-grade assignments

All other assignments are Credit/Half Credit/No Credit

## ✓ Grading Information

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We will have two different kinds of assignments in this class: **letter-graded** and **credit/half-credit/no credit**.

A **credit/half-credit/no credit** assignment is meant to help you practice and/or reflect on a concept from our class. In general, I will grade these assignments based on the following criteria

**Full Credit:** the assignment is completed on-time, hits the required word count, and follows the instructions on the assignment description

**Half-Credit:** the assignment is submitted late OR the assignment does not meet word count OR the assignment does not follow the description's instructions (could be a combination of any of these three)

**No Credit:** the assignment is not submitted OR the assignment is submitted using AI in any capacity

We will have two **letter-graded** essays. In class, I will discuss specific requirements that each genre of essay demands, but in general, I grade essays based on the following three areas:

**Thesis** - a strong thesis has a clear and (in our case) argumentative stance and detailed supporting reasons that forecast the essay's general content and structure. A paper with a strong thesis makes it easy to identify what you're arguing and gives your reader a clear picture of how your essay will specifically and uniquely make that case

**Analysis** - strong analysis means both the inclusion of effective evidence to support your claim as well as clear and specific discussion of that evidence. In a strongly argued paper, each example/point you include from each piece of evidence feels unique in how it builds up your stance but still cohesive with the rest of your essay.

**Structure** - a paper with a strong sense of structure excels at two levels: the global (the essay as a whole) and the local (each paragraph). At a global level, strong structure means logical arrangement of paragraphs (intro, body, rebuttal, conclusion) in a way that clearly guides the reader from one section to the next (by use of strong topic sentences and, when appropriate, transitions). At a local level, strong structure means arranging each sentence in your paragraph in such a way that each new idea builds logically from the previous ones. In a body paragraph, for example, this means using topic sentences, inclusion of evidence/examples, analysis and/or discussion of those examples, and finally the lead-out of that paragraph.

Your grades for these papers will be out of 100 in 2.5% increments

An A range paper (90-100) is strong in all three of these areas (how high or low in the range depends on how strong or weak these areas are).

A B range paper (80-87.5) is strong in two of these areas, but weak in the third (here again, how or low in the range depends on the strength and/or weaknesses in all three areas)

A C range paper (70-77.5) is strong in one of these areas but weak in the other two (same note as above regarding where in the range the grade falls)

A D range paper (60-67.5) is weak in all three areas

An F grade (0-57.5) will only be given to a non-submitted assignment, a paper guilty of plagiarism (such as AI-use), or a paper submitted so late that the penalties take it to under a 60%.

Final Course Grade Breakdown (I round up or down to the nearest tenth of a decimal point)

A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (63-66); D- (60-62); F (<60)

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

## Course Schedule

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Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/22	<p><b>Listen:</b> <a href="https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-105-unreserved/clip/15945425-isaac-murdochs-wendigo-story">"Wendigo Story," Isaac Murdoch</a> (<a href="https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-105-unreserved/clip/15945425-isaac-murdochs-wendigo-story">https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-105-unreserved/clip/15945425-isaac-murdochs-wendigo-story</a>).</p> <p><b>Read:</b> <a href="https://www.bartleby.com/lit-hub/hc/rip-van-winkle-the-legend-of-sleepy-hollow/the-legend-of-sleepy-hollow-2/">"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," Washington Irving</a> (<a href="https://www.bartleby.com/lit-hub/hc/rip-van-winkle-the-legend-of-sleepy-hollow/the-legend-of-sleepy-hollow-2/">https://www.bartleby.com/lit-hub/hc/rip-van-winkle-the-legend-of-sleepy-hollow/the-legend-of-sleepy-hollow-2/</a>).</p> <p><b>First Half:</b> Intro</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Discuss "Wendigo"; Discuss Irving</p> <p><b>On Canvas:</b> Monster Diagnostic due 8/26, 11:59PM</p>
2	8/29	<p><b>Read:</b> <a href="https://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/WhatWas843.shtml">"What Was It?" Fitz-James O'Brien</a> (<a href="https://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/WhatWas843.shtml">https://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/WhatWas843.shtml</a>); <a href="https://archive.org/stream/thedamnedthingfr23172gut/23172.txt">"The Damned Thing," Ambrose Bierce</a> (<a href="https://archive.org/stream/thedamnedthingfr23172gut/23172.txt">https://archive.org/stream/thedamnedthingfr23172gut/23172.txt</a>).</p> <p><b>First Half:</b> Discuss O'Brien, Bierce</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Watch "The Masque of the Red Death," Edgar Allan Poe; Discuss film</p>
3	9/5	<p><b>First Half:</b> Watch <i>Bride of Frankenstein</i> (dir. James Whale)</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Discuss film</p> <p><b>On Canvas:</b> <i>Bride of Frankenstein</i> Response due 9/9, 11:59PM</p>



4	9/12	<p><b>Read:</b> <i>Grendel</i>, John Gardner (first half); <a href="https://www.softcover.io/read/6070fb03/beowulf/chapter_3">Beowulf</a> excerpt (<a href="https://www.softcover.io/read/6070fb03/beowulf/chapter_3">https://www.softcover.io/read/6070fb03/beowulf/chapter_3</a>).</p> <p><b>First Half:</b> Introduce <i>Beowulf</i>, <i>Grendel</i></p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Discuss Gardner</p>
5	9/19	<p><b>Read:</b> <i>Grendel</i>, John Gardner (second half)</p> <p><b>First Half:</b> Finish discussing Gardner</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Assign Essay #1</p>
6	9/26	<p><b>First Half:</b> Watch <i>Night of the Living Dead</i> (dir. George Romero)</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Discuss Film</p> <p><b>On Canvas:</b> <i>Night of the Living Dead</i> Response due 9/30, 11:59PM</p>
7	10/3	<p><b>Read:</b> <i>Dawn</i>, Octavia Butler (first half)</p> <p><b>First Half:</b> Discuss Alien Monstrosities</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Discuss Butler</p> <p><b>On Canvas:</b> <i>Dawn</i> Response due 10/7, 11:59PM</p>
8	10/10	<p><b>Read:</b> <i>Dawn</i>, Octavia Butler (second half)</p> <p><b>First Half:</b> Discuss Butler</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Peer Review Workshop #1 (Monster Analysis)</p> <p><b>On Canvas:</b> Monster Analysis due 10/16, 11:59PM</p>
9	10/17	<p><b>First Half:</b> Assign Monster Profiles</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Group Work Time</p>
10	10/24	<p><b>First Half:</b> Monster Profile Presentations</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Monster Profile Presentations</p>

11	10/31	<p><b>First Half:</b> Watch <i>The Fly</i> (dir. David Cronenberg)</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Discuss Film</p> <p><b>On Canvas:</b> <i>The Fly</i> Response Due 11/4, 11:59PM</p>
12	11/7	<p><b>Read:</b> <i>Mongrels</i>, Stephen Graham Jones (First Half)</p> <p><b>First Half:</b> Discuss the Werewolf, Introduce Jones</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Discuss <i>Mongrels</i></p>
13	11/14	<p><b>Read:</b> <i>Mongrels</i>, Stephen Graham Jones (Second Half)</p> <p><b>First Half:</b> Finish discussing Jones</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> JSTOR Workshop</p> <p><b>On Canvas:</b> <i>Mongrels</i> Response Due 11/18, 11:59PM</p>
14	11/21	<p><b>First Half:</b> Watch <i>A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night</i> (dir. Ana Lily Amirpour)</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Discuss film</p> <p><b>On Canvas:</b> <i>A Girl Walks...</i> Response Due 11/25, 11:59PM</p>
15	11/28	<b>HOLIDAY - NO CLASS</b>
16	12/5	<p><b>First Half:</b> Peer Review Workshop #2</p> <p><b>Second Half:</b> Office Hours</p> <p><b>On Canvas:</b> Final Draft Final Paper due 12/10, 11:59PM</p>
	12/10	<b>On Canvas: Final Exam due (12:45PM)</b>