

Lit Practicum

ENGL 291

Fall 2025 Section 01 Hybrid 4 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/13/2025

Course Information

This 4-unit CR/NC practicum course prepares Creative Writing graduate students to take the MFA Comprehensive exam; also, to develop and begin writing an MFA thesis. The practicum will provide a forum for peer review to assist MFA candidates as they customize the MFA exam reading list and prepare to take the MFA comprehensive exam. The practicum will also provide a forum for MFA candidates for drafting the thesis abstract and thesis preface. MFA candidates will consult with their individual thesis directors and thesis readers on their Thesis Committees at the start of the semester to create a thesis completion plan. The candidates will be guided by their MFA thesis directors during the semester, sharing thesis drafts with other students in the same primary genre via Canvas. Students will post texts of their thesis abstracts and introductions and portions of their thesis project. During the semester, students will receive comments on their drafts from other MFA candidates working in the same genre, and from the candidate's thesis director and thesis readers.

This course meets Thursday evenings from 7pm - 9:45pm, either on Zoom or in person. See Schedule for details.

Course Description and Requisites

This course prepares Creative Writing graduate students to take the MFA exam and develop and begin writing an MFA thesis, customize the MFA exam reading list, prepare to take the MFA comprehensive exam, draft the thesis abstract and thesis preface.

Prerequisite: Approval of thesis proposal.

CR/NC/I Graduate

Classroom Protocols

Students are expected to log in to the Zoom sessions on time and be ready to work at the beginning of class. When class meets in person, for example to attend a CLA Event, students are expected to attend the event in person.

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

Upon successful completion of the MFA in Creative Writing, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a high level of ability to propose and complete a publishable, full-length work of literature in a primary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
2. Demonstrate high level of proficiency to write works of literature in a secondary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
3. Demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.
4. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.
5. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to:
 - a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion;
 - b) formulate and defend original arguments;
 - c) employ effectively the language of their discipline;
 - d) write under time constraints.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

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

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Goals

A degree candidate in the MFA program must complete a book-length work of publishable quality in the candidate's primary genre (or a full-length play or screenplay). Also, an MFA candidate must demonstrate a substantial ability to articulate and analyze the literary influences on their writing.

To gain such an understanding, MFA candidates will accomplish the following objectives in this practicum course:

- Devise an MFA thesis completion plan, assisted by your thesis director.
- Customize the MFA exam reading list to prepare for taking the MFA comprehensive exam, consulting with your thesis director (if you haven't taken the exam).
- Take the Fall MFA comprehensive exam or sign up to take the Spring exam.
- Write an MFA thesis abstract—may be revised if your thesis project changes substantially after you finish writing
- Draft the Preface to your thesis, reflecting on and analyzing important literary influences on your thesis. This should build on your Thesis Proposal.
- Post your thesis introduction on Canvas for other candidates to read or comment on.
- Revise MFA abstract and thesis Preface in response to peers' and thesis committee members' comments.
- Post sections (chapters, scenes, poems,) of your thesis on Canvas for other MFA candidates in the practicum to read and comment on.
- Consult during the semester with your MFA director and thesis readers on the progress you're making to complete your thesis
- Submit portions of your thesis manuscript to journals for publication.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

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

Student Learning Objectives	Skills & Knowledge Acquired	Activities

<p>SLO 1: Students will demonstrate a high-level of ability to write and complete a publishable, full-length work of literature in a primary genre concentration (fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry, or a scriptwriting).</p>	<p>1. Recognize what makes a successful MFA thesis abstract and introduction.</p> <p>2. Recognize what material works for your MFA thesis; recognize what material needs to be revised.</p>	<p>1. Write an MFA thesis abstract and thesis introduction.</p> <p>2. Draft material (chapters, stories, scenes, essays, poems, etc.) for your MFA thesis.</p> <p>3. Comment on peer's MFA thesis sections posted to peer group forums on Canvas.</p>
<p>SLO 3: Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.</p>	<p>1. Recognize historically relevant trends in modern and contemporary works of creative writing (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and dramatic writing).</p> <p>2. Identify developments within creative writing genres, and the development of individual authors and schools/styles of writing.</p>	<p>1. Read works from the MFA exam reading lists (in candidate's primary and secondary genre) to prepare for taking the MFA exam.</p> <p>2. Research works and authors which have significantly influenced the MFA candidate's thesis project.</p> <p>3. Self-selected candidates take the Fall MFA exam.</p>

<p>SLO 4: Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 1. Apply and improve close reading skills. 3. Recognize and apply formal terms to describe and analyze literary elements and qualities in the works read. <p>Apply close reading skills to evaluate the quality of peers' and published literary texts.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read texts from the MFA exam reading list under the supervision of MFA thesis director. 2. Take the Fall MFA exam or prepare to take Spring MFA exam. 3. Write introduction to your MFA thesis. 4. Write MFA thesis introduction works cited list.
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<p>SLO 5: Students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to:</p> <p>a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion;</p> <p>b) formulate and defend original arguments;</p> <p>c) effectively employ the language of their discipline; write under time constraints.</p>	<p>1. Recognize elements necessary to be present in a successful MFA thesis abstract and MFA thesis introduction.</p> <p>2. Recognize rhetorical and literary elements, and literary styles used in successful literary essays commenting on works by modern and contemporary authors.</p> <p>3. Understand criteria used for evaluation of MFA exam essays.</p>	<p>1. Write an MFA thesis abstract and MFA thesis introduction, and post on Canvas for peer comments and comments by MFA thesis director and thesis committee members.</p> <p>2. Close read works on candidate's customized MFA exam reading list.</p> <p>3. Self-selected students to take the Fall MFA exam; others prepare to take and sign up for the Spring MFA exam.</p>
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Course Materials

Pitch Craft: The Writer's Guide to Getting Agented, Published, and Paid

Author: Laura Goode

Publisher: Ten Speed Press

Edition: Paperback or eBook

Year: 2025

ISBN: 978-0593837122

Price: \$11.99 - \$16.99

Course Requirements and Assignments

At the start of the practicum course, the group of MFA candidates enrolled will meet with the practicum supervisor for a group course orientation. Each candidate will subsequently meet with and coordinate their semester's activities with their individual MFA thesis directors and thesis committee members. Each candidate will work with their individual MFA thesis director to devise a thesis completion schedule. Each candidate will also work with their MFA thesis director to customize their MFA exam reading lists, and to determine when (Fall or Spring term) they will take the MFA comprehensive exam. Each candidate will prepare for their MFA exam, making notes on the works they've chosen from the reading lists. During the semester, the MFA candidates in the course will write portions of their MFA theses, including their thesis abstract, thesis introduction, and portions of the creative work that shall comprise the primary substance of their thesis manuscript.

✓ Grading Information

The course is graded CR/NC. Students who fail to complete the required assignments, notably a Thesis Proposal and attendance at all events, will not receive credit for the course and will have to repeat it the following fall.

University Policies

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

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1 08/21/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM Zoom	Thesis Planning	<p>In this class meeting, we will discuss what makes a good MFA Thesis project; how to recruit a committee; how to write and submit your Thesis Proposal; and how to make sure your thesis is approved in time for graduation.</p> <p>We will use this class session to write a description of your project and a list of potential works for your Annotated Bibliography.</p>
Week 2 08/28/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM Zoom	MFA Exam and Graduation Candidacy	<p>This class meeting will cover everything to do with the MFA Comprehensive Exam, including the exam, the MFA Reading List, the format of the examination, and how you should prepare.</p> <p>In this class meeting, we will also cover the other steps necessary to graduate (ie, other than the MFA exam), including the Petition for Advancement to Graduate Candidacy form (https://www.sjsu.edu/gape/docs/Petition%20for%20Advancement%20to%20Graduate%20Candidacy%20form).</p>

When	Topic	Notes
Week 3 09/04/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM On Your Own	No Meeting	Independent Work on Thesis Proposal
Week 4 09/11/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM Zoom	Thesis Proposal Workshop	Students will break into small groups to read and suggest improvements to draft thesis propo
Week 5 09/18/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM	Reed Magazine Gala	We will join the staff of Reed Magazine to celebrate the launch of Issue 158.
Week 6 09/25/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM On Your Own	No Meeting	Independent work to finalize thesis proposals.
Week 7 10/02/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM Zoom	Contests	SJSU professors Brook McClurg and J. Michael Martinez will visit to discuss literary contests are, how to find and evaluate them, and how best to apply.
Week 8 10/09/2025 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM Hammer Theatre	CLA Reading: GennaRose Nethercott	CLA Reading: GennaRose Nethercott (poetry and fiction), Hammer Theatre, 7pm (also Craft T: Steinbeck Center at 12pm)
Week 9 10/16/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM Zoom	Writing Fellowships	A panel of current Steinbeck Fellows will visit to discuss writing fellowships available after gr to find and evaluate them, how to apply, and other tips.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 10 10/23/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM On Your Own	No Meeting	Independent work on your thesis.
Week 11 10/30/2025 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM Hammer Theatre	CLA Reading: Natalie Diaz	CLA Reading: Natalie Diaz (poetry), Hammer Theatre, 7pm.
Week 12 11/06/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM	No Class - Instructor Absence	There will be no class held this week. Prof. Taylor is attending the Fall AWP Board Meeting.
Week 13 11/13/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM Zoom	Literary Agents	Literary agent and SJSU MFA alumna Liz Kracht will visit class to answer your questions about the publishing business.
Week 14 11/20/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM On Your Own	No Meeting	Independent work on your thesis.
Week 15 11/27/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM	No Class - Thanksgiving	
Week 16 12/04/2025 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM Zoom	Pitch Craft, with Laura Goode	Author and former SJSU Steinbeck Fellow Laura Goode will discuss her book <i>Pitch Craft: The to Getting Agented, Published, and Paid</i> .