

San José State University
Department of English & Comparative Literature
English 71, Section 05 (22893), Creative Writing, Spring 2022

Course and Contact Information

Instructor(s):	J. Michael Martinez
Office Location:	Faculty Office Building, Room 110
Telephone:	(408) 924-4425, English Office
Email:	jmichael.martinez@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	T/R, 11:30-1pm and by Appointment

Class Days/Time:	T/R 1:30 pm PST – 2:45 pm PST.
Room:	Boccardo Business Center 122

Course Description

3 unit(s): Examinations of works of poetry, creative nonfiction and short fiction as expression of human intellect and imagination, to comprehend the historic and global cultural contexts, and recognize issues related to writing of diverse cultural traditions. Students will also write poetry, creative nonfiction, and a short fiction. GE Area: C2

At its core, our course is an art course, similar to a Pencil Drawing or a Sculpture course; in our art class, instead of a pencil or clay, the material we use to make art is language. We will make art with *word*. Studying a variety of genres and conventions, writing processes, and techniques, we'll move between the genres of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, sliding between them, sometimes going completely beyond them. We'll be writing on the page, employing digital techniques, collaging with both word and image, performing erasures, generating multimedia writing, and exploring nonlinear storytelling.

English 71 GE Course Goals (GELOs):

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 Format: Synchronous Online (Jan. 27-Feb. 10th); in-person attendance from the week of Feb. 14 until the end of the semester.

While the first few weeks of class will require a computer and internet connectivity, students can expect begin meeting in person at our class time after February 14th. Our class will be employing Canvas throughout the course where nearly all of our PDF reading will be posted.

Our course will be run as a discussion seminar and writing workshop. You are responsible for coming to each and every class fully equipped with your reading and writing device, having fully prepared for class (see more below). **Approved devices** include laptop and tablet computers only; **phones will not be permitted.**

This course requires a great deal of reading and writing, and while I will give you time in class to work on some assignments, this time is not in lieu of, but in addition to the six hours per week SJSU expects you to spend on homework for each of your three-credit courses.

Course Materials, Canvas, and Communications

Our course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. will be found on our CANVAS SITE: <https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1476423>

As noted above, course materials such as syllabus, readings and handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on our Canvas Learning Management System course website, which you can access directly at <http://sjsu.instructure.com> and through your OneSJSU page (<https://one.sjsu.edu>).

You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU on [Spartan App Portal](#) (or other communication system as indicated by the instructor) to learn of any updates from your professors and the university. Always email your professors and other university staff from your SJSU account and not from your personal email.

Texts/Readings

- Course Readings: on Canvas as PDFs or Links.

There will also be handouts in class. All required readings, online or in print, must be brought to class.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Participation: while there may be lectures, the course will be organized as a single continuous discussion requiring everyone to voice their opinion. Please be in touch with me if you are going to miss a seminar. The quality of your class participation will be judged through the following: your effort at completing short assignments and, as necessary, sharing them; the effort you put into responding to the workshopped writing of your peers and your willingness to share your thoughts with the workshop as a whole; the effort you bring to reading critically; and, finally, how you contributed to our seminar's discussions.

All required readings, whether online or in our books, must be brought to class.

In class, you are being asked to respond to each other and to questions raised in class: I WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY DISRESPECTFUL CONVERSATION OF ANY MANNER WHETHER IN CLASS OR ONLINE.

Participation is essential to this course: we will work both in large and small groups.

Reading Like a Writer: during the semester you MIGHT pair up with a colleague to present some opening thoughts on the day's reading. Both of you must speak/present. Both of you will receive the same grade toward extra credit. A good discussion will include the following:

1. Introduction to the Author—Biography, Important Notes, Etc.
2. CONCISE Summary of Poem/Essay
3. Identification of the Author's Use of Prosody we are studying. This should be a close-reading that pays attention to a SPECIFIC passage of text and explicates the writing for significance of language, imagery, tone, etc. I will assign one such technique or point of emphasis; you must choose another interesting feature of the Poem/Essay.
4. A discussion of the Poem/Essay's significance, with special attention to the deeper questions the events and reflections prompt.

You must prepare a visual aid for this presentation. You may make a PowerPoint presentation. I will be evaluating these Presentations for their depth and sophistication, your abilities to engage the class, your speaking dynamics—volume, clarity, rate, etc., and your overall professionalism.

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Final Examination or Evaluation

The course will complete with each student turning in a final portfolio of their written work. More information will be provided nearer the time the assignment is due.

Due Dates

- Feb 1: In-class Exercise #1
- Feb 8: In-class Exercise #2
- Feb 15: In-class Exercise #3
- Feb 17: In-class Exercise #4
- March 17: Nonfiction Essay
- April 7: Short Fiction
- Dec. 9th: Final Portfolios Due by 10pm

Grading Information

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>A plus</i>	<i>96 to 100%</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>93 to 95%</i>
<i>A minus</i>	<i>90 to 92%</i>
<i>B plus</i>	<i>86 to 89 %</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>83 to 85%</i>
<i>B minus</i>	<i>80 to 82%</i>
<i>C plus</i>	<i>76 to 79%</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>73 to 75%</i>
<i>C minus</i>	<i>70 to 72%</i>
<i>D plus</i>	<i>66 to 69%</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>63 to 65%</i>
<i>D minus</i>	<i>60 to 62%</i>

- 25% **Weekly Writing Exercises**
- 25% **In-class Workshops/written critiques**
This includes both submitting and being present for your own workshop and submitting written workshop analyses of others' pieces.
- 10% **Participation** (including class discussion, preparation, attendance, class prompts, in-class presentation, etc.)
- 40% **Final Portfolio of Revised Creative Work**

Grades given conform to the English Department and university grading policy. The Department of English is committed to the differential grading scale as defined in the official 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.

Department of English and Comparative Literature Student Learning Goals

This course supports several of the English Department's Student Learning Goals. The Department of English and Comparative Literature seeks to foster the intellectual development of its majors by encouraging study of literature and writing—whether creative, technical, or other professional writing. The Department strives to make its majors familiar with a wide

range of works of British, American, and World literature, including folk and popular forms; and with the nature of the canon and of canon-formation, including issues of culture, history, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

Determination of Grades

Grades will be allocated according to the amount of work you put into the class. While talent will be rewarded, this is an introductory creative writing course. In order for you to feel free to "Try Again. Fail again. Fail better." as Samuel Beckett characterized the artistic process, I am not going to grade the quality of your individual pieces. Instead, **you will receive credit for completion.**

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Department of English and Comparative Literature BA Program Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate the ability 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.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](#), 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 [Syllabus Information web page \(https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php\)](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Workload

As ENGL 71 is a 3-unit course, success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Important Sites:	
CANVASE SITE: https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1476423	Zoom Room: https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/89631956340?pwd=YjdFeG9tMHdWb1pvMVR4byt2eGZkZz09 Password: 241964

Suggestions for Process, and for Doing Well in this Course

1. Never turn in your first draft of anything. Go back over your work, asking yourself if you've been applying the techniques we have been discussing in class. This will take concentration and focus. As we progress through the semester, you will be held accountable for more and more techniques. It's a lot to keep in mind, and writers very rarely get all of them right on the first try. It's best to do several re-readings, each focused on a different concept. (If you're wondering why your scores are not improving, this is the most likely reason why.)
2. While the assignments give you some direction you should try to approach these by writing about situations and experiences that matter to you. Write about the people, observations, experiences, and things that bother you, fascinate you, anger you, that you love, find joy in, etc.
3. Pay attention to what we're reading. Ask yourself the following: Which poems and essays inspire you? Who really lights your imagination on fire? If brain transplants were possible, whose (among writers) would you want to have? Try to find a few "masters," and read their work over several times. Try to discern how these writers build a work. Then try to do it on your own. This is how writers learn.
4. Pay attention to life in general. That's what all writers do. Look for nuances, the things that nobody notices at first glance. Always work with detail—that's where the magic is. Note this in your journal/daybook
5. While I wish you to write on topics of emotional risk, there are poem which are discouraged from being turned in for workshop or assignments: relationships (of any sort) with current classmates, suicide, threats of violence, etc. If you feel unsure of your work, please contact me.

English 71 Creative Writing Workshop, Spring 2022

(As the course progresses, we may get off schedule--this is natural—as such, our daily assignments may be revised as necessary with fair notice given by email or in class). All “PDF” readings will be available on Canvas.

Please be sure to have completed the assigned reading **before** that day’s class.

<p>WEEK ONE: January 27</p>	<p>First Day of Class: Course Overview, Introductions, Objectives</p> <p>Introduction:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Syllabus and Assignments <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Research-Creation: Semester Project. ii. Lera Boroditsky 2. Infinite and Finite Games Q & A 3. Conocimiento. <p>In-Class Exercise #1</p>
<p>Week TWO: February 1</p>	<p>Read: <i>Poetry Section</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetry selections: Day 2 PDF Selections • Prose: PDF Infinite and Finite Games, selection. <p>In-Class Exercise #2 (Contemplative Poem)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">DUE: IN-CLASS EXERCISE #1</p>
<p>February 3</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetry selections: Day 3 PDF Selections <p>In-Class Exercise #3</p>
<p>WEEK THREE: February 8</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetry selections: <i>Black Peculiar</i>, Khadijah Queen • Prose: PDF: Jose Esteban Munoz, Selections from <i>Disidentifications</i> <p>In-Class Exercise #4</p> <p style="text-align: right;">DUE: IN-CLASS EXERCISE #2</p>
<p>February 10</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernism and Erasures
<p>WEEK FOUR: February 15</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Humument: Todd Phillips • Prose: online selections <p style="text-align: right;">DUE: In-Class Exercise #3</p>

February 17	Hannah Hoch and Collage DUE: In-Class Exercise #4
WEEK FIVE: February 22	Read: Nonfiction Section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: CANVAS <i>Writing True</i> (WT) Short Shorts • Exercise: Objective/Subjective Name Exercise
February 24	Read: <i>On DETAIL:</i> “Attentiveness is the Prayer of the Soul”—Paul Celan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Canvas PDF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Writing True</i>, Chapter 1 (Why CNF) ○ <i>Writing True</i>, Chapter 3 (Ten Ways to Draft) ○ Jericho Parms “RED” ○ Jeff Oaks, “4 for Easter” • Exercise: Clustering
Week Six: March 1	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Writing True</i>, Chapter 10 (The Ethics of Creative Nonfiction) ○ <i>Writing True</i>, Colin Rafferty, “Ten Year Reunion: Writing ‘Boys Least Likely To’” ○ Harrison Candelaria Fletcher, “White” • Exercise: in-class expansion of the Clustering exercise.
March 3	<i>On DETAIL:</i> “Hyperrealism can create an atmosphere of surrealism because nobody sees the world in such detail.”—Salman Rushdie <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Writing True</i>, Chapter 4 (Taking Shape) ○ <i>Writing True</i>, Norma Elia Cantu, “Tito & Papi” • Bring to Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two photos of the same person at different ages (yourself, someone important, etc.) • Exercise: Portraits
Week SEVEN: March 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wayne Koestenbaum, “The Desire to Write About The Green Line” ○ Joe Bonomo, “The Blur Family” ○ Hilton Als, “Fats”
March 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Writing True</i>, Chapter 7 “The Craft of Revision • Roxanne Gay, “There are Distances Between Us” • Nicholas Montemarano, “No Results Found”
Week EIGHT: March 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Canvas</i>, Eula Bliss, “The Pain Scale”
March 17	Craft Talk Due: Nonfiction Essay
WEEK NINE: March 22	Read: <i>Canvas</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flash Fiction PDF
March 24	Read: <i>Canvas</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flash Fiction PDF

WEEK TEN: March 29	SPRING RECESS
March 31	SPRING RECESS

WEEK ELEVEN: April 5	Read: <i>Canvas</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Van Booy PDF</i>
April 7	Read: <i>Canvas</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speculative Fiction PDF <p style="text-align: right;">DUE SHORT FICTION DUE</p>
WEEK TWELVE: April 12	Workshop Group One--Poetry
April 14	Workshop Group Two--Poetry
WEEK THIRTEEN: April 19	Workshop Group One--Nonfiction
April 21	Workshop Group Two--Nonfiction
WEEK FOURTEEN: April 26	Workshop Group One--Fiction
April 28	Workshop Group Two--Fiction Discuss Final Portfolio and Contents.
WEEK FIFTEEN: May 3	Workshop Group One—Open
May 5	Workshop Group Two--Open
May 10	TBD
LAST CLASS MEETING: May 12TH.	Final Meeting: Reading
May 23rd	FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE by 5pm PST