

# SYLLABUS

## San José State University Department of English and Comparative Literature ENGL 123C: South Pacific Lit (47467), Fall 2009

<b>Instructor:</b>	David Mesher
<b>Office Location:</b>	FO 220
<b>Telephone:</b>	(408) 924-4440
<b>Email:</b>	mesher@email.sjsu.edu
<b>Office Hours:</b>	T-Th: 1:30-3:00
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	Th: 4:30-7:15
<b>Classroom:</b>	BBC 123
<b>Class Web Page:</b>	<a href="http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/engl/123c">www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/engl/123c</a>

### Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Copies of the course materials such as the syllabus, major assignment handouts, and so on, may be found on the class web page at [www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/engl/123c](http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/engl/123c). The same information is available on the course Blackboard page ([sjsu6.blackboard.com](http://sjsu6.blackboard.com)), which you will need to access in order to submit your essays online. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU for any messages that may be sent pertaining to this class.

### Course Description

This course will survey works written in English by writers originating in areas of the South Pacific, including Australia, New Zealand, and Samoa. We will be interested in the linguistic and thematic differences in the writings of these “other Englishes,” as well as on their artistic similarities to British, American, and other literatures.

### Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

First, to train students in reading, discussing, analyzing, and writing about literature, with emphasis as much on form as on content. Second, to expose students to wealth of contemporary literature from the South Pacific region. Third, to enhance students’ understanding of the history, demography, geography, and cultural background of South Pacific nations and their peoples.

### GE/SJSU Studies Learning Outcomes (Area V—see p. 7 for more information)

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

1. compare systematically the ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological developments, and/or attitudes of people from more than one culture outside the U.S.
2. identify the historical context of ideas and cultural traditions outside the U.S. and how they have influenced American culture
3. explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external pressures.

### **Course Content Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. learn to value individual experiences and perspectives, develop skills to work both individually and together in a cooperative manner, as they are grappling with very difficult materials, and come to appreciate differing viewpoints and ways of knowing.
2. understand some of the history, demography, geography, and culture of the South Pacific region and its colonial past, so as to appreciate the achievements of those societies and the obstacles that they face, and, in particular, to recognize these writers' contributions to the public dialogue about their societies' past, present, and future.
3. appreciate and analyze the literary texts, and be able to discuss them logically, with insight and creativity. Students will apply their comprehension and thinking skills in working with research materials to help them reach a level of understanding that leads to clarity, conciseness and coherence in writing.

### **Student Learning Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, students:

1. will have attained sufficient background in the literature of the South Pacific to pursue more advanced studies in this area, as well as to appreciate the contributions and influences of traditional, colonial and postcolonial culture on writers from the region and their works;
2. will be able to transfer that knowledge of the South Pacific experience to the literatures of other nations, from those which endured a colonial experience (similar to that of Samoa and Fiji), as well as to those, especially in Australia and New Zealand, which more closely resemble American experiences, including the involvement in colonialism or neocolonialism, which is reflected in their literatures;
3. and will have demonstrated an understanding of the literary, historical, and cultural elements contained in these works, as well as expressed that understanding, logically and with insight, through their own analysis and arguments in their writing about the texts.

### **Required Texts**

Joseph Furphy, *Such Is Life* (excerpt online)  
Miles Franklin, *My Brilliant Career* (Penguin, 978-0143105053)  
David Malouf, *Remembering Babylon* (Vintage, 978-0679749516)  
Murray Bail, *Eucalyptus* (Picador, 978-0312427313)  
Witi Ihimaera, *The Whale Rider* (Harcourt, 978-0152050160)  
Keri Hulme, *The Bone People* (Penguin, 978-0140089226)  
Albert Wendt, *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* (Hawaii, 978-0824815844)  
Sia Figiel, *Where We Once Belonged* (Kaya, 978-1885030276)

### **Other Texts**

In addition to the required texts, students should have access to a dictionary, thesaurus, and composition handbook (from English 1A or 100W. for example). That dictionary, incidentally, should not be reserved

for essays alone. Students are expected to look up any unfamiliar words encountered in the texts that are not explained in the notes, and to be able to define them when called upon to do so in class. Obviously, this is particularly important in a class covering works originally written at quite a distance from us in time and space, since many of the places, concepts, items, and expressions may be unfamiliar.

## Library Liaison

Toby Matoush, toby.matoush@sjsu.edu, 808-2096

## Classroom Protocol

**Preparation and Participation:** Students should come to class having read the day's assignment and prepared to discuss it (and be quizzed on it). Opportunities for such contributions may take the form of small-group or full-class discussions; in either situation, individual students may be called upon by the instructor to answer a question, interpret a passage, or express an opinion.

**Quizzes:** The best way to measure how carefully you are reading the texts, and how much of that reading you retain (at least for a day or so) is with short quizzes at the beginning of the class period. The quizzes will only cover significant information from that day's reading assignment, though that information may not be the sort readily accessible to you in plot summaries, outlines, or synopses, but only through personally experiencing the text for yourself. If you read well ahead of the assigned schedule, be sure to review your notes and come to class with a fresh and detailed impression of the works. A pattern of doing poorly on these quizzes should be taken as an indication that you are not doing the reading, or not reading attentively enough, or not reading with the care and analysis necessary to be successful as an English major and literary devotee.

**Written Work:** There will be two short essays, each counting 25% of the final grade, and a comprehensive final examination, also counting 25%. In addition, there will be a series of short quizzes—one or two per book—which, together with other measures of student participation, will total 15% of the class mark; and an oral presentation to the class, worth the remaining 10%. Each assignment is graded on a 100-point scale. For the final mark, a course average of 100-97 will be an A+, 96-94 an A, 93-90 an A-, 89-87 a B+, 86-84 a B, 83-80 a B-, 79-77 a C+, 76-74 a C, 73-70 a C-, and so on.

**Submission of written work:** The two essays will be about 1500 words (or six pages) each. They must be double-spaced (and without a cover page), follow standard MLA format, and be submitted online through the course Blackboard page (at [sjsu6.blackboard.com](https://sjsu6.blackboard.com)) by the beginning of class on the day it is due. Additionally, a copy of each essay must also be submitted to Turnitin.com, so please create a (free) account there, and link to this class by putting in the course number and password: 2787907, Australia. Late work can only be submitted to either site by prior arrangement. Do not email or leave at my office any work for this class, unless I specifically tell you to do so. Corrected papers will be returned online in pdf format. Please keep a copy of all work submitted on disk, and retain all graded work returned until the end of the semester; English majors should save the graded copies of their essays in all department classes, since these will be required for the portfolio in their senior seminar. Students should anticipate a significant delay in the return of late work. Please note that many people find it harder to proofread work on a computer screen than in printed form, so you may want to print out your final draft and make corrections to that, before submitting the finished file online. Also note that the file name for any work you are submitting should begin with your last name, first name, course number, and assignment name: for example, "Smith John 123C Essay1.doc." Finally, remember that I will also be keeping a copy of your marked work during the semester so that, when you submit your second essay, I will begin by reviewing the technical mistakes you made in the first one, and looking to see if you have made any progress in those areas on the second. You, too, should take the time to review those errors, and improve your

writing—you know I will be checking.

**Classroom conduct:** Please do not read non-course related materials during class, and refrain from conversations or inappropriate comments while the instructor or classmates are speaking. Turn off cell phones, music, pagers, and other likely distractions while in class. Laptops may be used only for note-taking in class; otherwise they must be turned off.

## Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about adding and dropping classes, including deadlines and penalties. Deadlines for adding and dropping are listed on the course calendar, below. Other information about academic policies is available at <http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-18.html>. Information about late drops is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/>. Exceptions to these policies must be granted by administrators, not instructors. **This semester, the last day to drop courses without an entry on your permanent record is September 3<sup>rd</sup>. The last day to add courses or register late is September 11<sup>th</sup>.**

## Assignments and Grading Policy

1. Class participation, quizzes, annotations, and timely completion of work: 15%
2. Oral presentation: 10%
3. First essay (1500 words): 25%
4. Second essay (1500 words) 25%
5. Final exam: 25%

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. Grades issued will represent a full range of student performance and will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment:

The “**A**” essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student’s ability to use language effectively and construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The “**B**” essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the “**A**” essay. The chief difference is that the “**B**” essay will show some descriptibly slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The “**C**” essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the “**B**” essay.

The “**D**” essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment—that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The “**F**” essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

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. Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC shall replace D or F. In such cases, NC shall also substitute for W (or Withdrawal) because neither grade (NC or W) affects students’ GPA.

## **University Policies**

### **Academic integrity**

Students should know that the University's Academic Integrity Policy is available at [http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial\\_affairs/Academic\\_Integrity\\_Policy\\_S07-2.pdf](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University's integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at [http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial\\_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html).

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of all instructors involved.

To discourage plagiarism and contribute to the student's awareness of this issue, both essays for this class will be submitted online to Turnitin.com (in addition to copy submitted online to the instructor). More information about this will be contained in the essay assignments.

### **Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.

### **Student Technology Resources**

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Clark Hall and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

### **Learning Assistance Resource Center**

The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) is located in Room 600 in the Student Services Center. It is designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. The center provides support services, such as skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. The LARC website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/>.

### **SJSU Writing Center**

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges.

Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. The Writing Center website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/>.

### Peer Mentor Center

The Peer Mentor Center is located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Clark Hall in the Academic Success Center. The Peer Mentor Center is staffed with Peer Mentors who excel in helping students manage university life, tackling problems that range from academic challenges to interpersonal struggles. On the road to graduation, Peer Mentors are navigators, offering “roadside assistance” to peers who feel a bit lost or simply need help mapping out the locations of campus resources. Peer Mentor services are free and available on a drop-in basis, no reservation required. The Peer Mentor Center website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor/>.

## ENGL 123C: South Pacific Literature, Fall 2009

### Course Schedule

*This schedule is subject to modification. If you miss class, please check for changes to the greensheet on the class web page at [www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/engl/123c](http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/engl/123c)*

#### Major Assignments

**Class Reports**, one per student, throughout the semester.

**Essay #1** (on *My Brilliant Career*, *Remembering Babylon*, and *Eucalyptus*): essay due Oct. 15th.

**Essay #2** (on *The Whale Rider* and *The Bone People*): essay due Nov. 19th.

**Final Exam** (two essays: one comprehensive, one on *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* and *Where We Once Belonged*). Question possibilities will be distributed on the last day of class, Dec. 3rd.

Aug	27	Th	Intro; <i>Such Is Life</i> , ch. 3
Sept	3	Th	<i>My Brilliant Career</i> , Intro-Ch. 19
	10	Th	<i>My Brilliant Career</i> , Ch. 20-38
	17	Th	<i>Remembering Babylon</i> , Ch. 1-9
	24	Th	<i>Remembering Babylon</i> , Ch. 10-20
Oct	1	Th	<i>Eucalyptus</i> , Ch. 1-9
	8	Th	<i>Eucalyptus</i> , Ch. 10-39
	15	Th	<i>Bone People</i> , pp. 3-154
	22	Th	<b>No class:</b> <i>Bone People</i> , pp. 155-332
	29	Th	<i>Bone People</i> , pp. 333-445
Nov	5	Th	<i>The Whale Rider</i>
	12	Th	<i>Leaves of Banyan Tree</i> , pp. 1-202
	19	Th	<i>Leaves of Banyan Tree</i> , pp. 203-413
	26	Th	<b>No Class:</b> Thanksgiving
Dec	3	Th	<i>Where We Once Belonged</i>
	10	Th	17:15-19:30: <b>Final Exam--please bring an 8-1/2" x 11" exam booklet.</b>

## **G.E. AREA V LEARNING OBJECTIVES** **CULTURE, CIVILIZATION, & GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING**

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1

Students shall be able to compare systematically the ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological developments, or attitudes of people from more than one culture outside the U.S.

This learning objective will be met by systematically comparing the indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and cultures that make up modern Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, and other island nations of the South Pacific, as they are represented in their literatures, as well as by studying how writers have adapted art forms such as the novel to serve the specific needs of the societies of this area. The second essay, in particular, with its focus on the struggle to retain Maori traditions and values in modern New Zealand, as portrayed in the novels *The Bone People* and *The Whale Rider*, will give students an opportunity to express their understanding of that culture and of the ways the authors order or present those values within their art.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2

Students shall be able to identify the historic context of ideas and cultural traditions outside the U.S. and how they have influenced American culture.

Many of the intellectual and cultural influences between the South Pacific and the United States have tended to flow in the other direction. The First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay in 1788 – not coincidentally, about a decade after American independence – and Australia, New Zealand, and other independent states of the South Pacific have developed under the shadow of the American experience, not always to their benefit. These historic parallels have fostered close ties between North America and the South Pacific, and many areas in which the leadership has come from “down under,” from women’s suffrage (New Zealand was the first nation to give women the vote, in 1893), to Polynesian cultural survival and global warming. Many of these topics find expression in the literature we will be reading.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3

Students shall be able to explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external pressures.

This learning objective will be met through discussions of the prehistoric and historic migrations of specific groups to the area, including the arrival of Aborigines in Australia as part of the first wave of human exploration out of Africa, Maori and Samoan migrations which figure into the Polynesian themes of works by Hulme, Ihimaera, Wendt, and Figiel, and the colonization and settlement of Australia and New Zealand by Europeans and others in the modern era, as found in works by Franklin, Malouf, Bail, and Hulme. Though there are many parallels here with the American experience—for example, the British colonization of North America and the South Pacific or, more recently, the success of lawsuits brought by First Peoples in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand based on treaty violations—the emphasis of the course will be on ways in which these modern South Pacific societies have each developed a unique blending of cultural and modern traditions, as expressed both in and by their literary works. The first essay, on Australian novels, will be a particularly good opportunity for students to address these concerns, since Australia has the longest prehistory in the region, was the region’s earliest colonized area in the modern, and is today the most populous and developed nation in the South Pacific.

The final exam in English 123C is cumulative, with one essay question specifically about the Samoan works read in the course and a more general question, and addresses all of the G.E. learning objectives covered throughout the term, in addition to the specific learning objectives embodied in the course itself.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STUDENT LEARNING GOALS: DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH &amp; COMPARATIVE LITERATURE</b></p>
--

*I. SKILLS*

- Ability to read texts closely and to articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature and rhetoric.
- Ability to explicate texts written in a wide variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes.
- Ability to recognize and appreciate the importance of major literary genres, subgenres, and periods.
- Ability to respond imaginatively to the content and style of texts.
- Ability to write clearly, effectively, and imaginatively, and to adjust writing style appropriately to the content and nature of the subject.
- Ability to develop and carry out research projects and to articulate them within appropriate conceptual and methodological frameworks, including the ability to recognize when information is needed, and to locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
- Ability to analyze texts other than literary or rhetorical: for example, political, journalistic, commercial, technical, etc.
- Ability to read and speak a language other than English.

*II. KNOWLEDGE*

- Understanding of the historical development of the English language and of literature written in English from Old English to the present.
- Understanding of the relations between culture, history, and texts, including ideological and political aspects of the representation, economic processes of textual production, dissemination and reception, and cross-fertilization of textual representations by those of other arts: architecture, sculpture, music, film, painting, dance, and theatre.
- Understanding of the twofold nature of textual analysis: 1) objective study from varied analytical perspectives; 2) subjective experience of the aesthetic reality of the text.
- Familiarity with a wide range of British and American literary works, as well as with selected authors and works of other literatures, including folk and popular forms.
- Familiarity with a wide range of literary terms and categories relating to literary history, theory, and criticism, including figurative language and prosody.
- Familiarity with the nature of the canon and of canon-formation, including issues of culture, history, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.
- Familiarity with basic practices of literary research and documentation, including electronic forms of information retrieval and communication.

*III. EXPERIENCES*

- Face-to-face exchange of ideas with faculty and fellow students in a classroom, in office visits, and in shared activities on and off campus.
- Cooperative projects with other students in discussion groups, writing activities, and study sessions.
- Cultural resources of the University: interest groups, public lectures, readings by creative writers, theatrical productions, music and dance performances.
- Involvement in the life of the University, connection with its physical environs, participation in a dynamic, rich, diverse intellectual community.
- Achievement of independently-conceived research projects, including the stating of a problem or issue and all steps involved in organizing, synthesizing, summarizing, and analyzing information in order to communicate conclusions.

*IV. UNDERSTANDINGS, INTERESTS, AND VALUES*

- An enduring interest in language and literature.
- A sense of the presence of the literary and rhetorical past.
- Greater awareness of the depth and complexity of human existence, perceived across the boundaries of time, place, culture, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation
- Long-term interest and involvement in aesthetic, cultural, and intellectual matters as well as in social and political issues.
- Understanding of the ability of great literature and of concentrated language study to awaken and challenge readers and auditors to struggle with the profound questions of human identity and values.
- A personal critical perspective, and sense of intellectual independence and momentum.