

# SYLLABUS

**San José State University, Fall 2009**  
**Metropolitan University Scholar's Experience (MUSE) Seminar**  
**Department of English and Comparative Literature**  
**ENGL 961Q: Board Games—History, Culture and Strategy (48266)**

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<b>Office Hours:</b>	T-Th: 1:30-3:00
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<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	T-Th: 3:00-4:15
<b>Classroom:</b>	CL 135
<b>Class Web Page:</b>	<a href="http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/muse">www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/muse</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/muse](http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/muse). 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, journals, and other written assignments. 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 looks at the inter-cultural phenomenon of board games—common (in some form) to societies around the world—their history, development, rules, strategies, and what they have to tell us about the people who originated or played them. Board games provide an interesting entry into various aspects of a culture: the amount of leisure time available to play them (and therefore, usually, the class structure and wealth of a society); the competing social values of cooperation and competition; beliefs about skill and luck (or fate), and so on. We will begin with Senet, a board game rediscovered in an ancient Egyptian tomb, include such traditional games as Chess and Go (both of which originated in eastern Asia), Backgammon (eastern Mediterranean), and Mancala (Africa), and also look at such modern “classics” as Monopoly, Stratego, and Scrabble. For a final project, students will create their own “Game of SJSU,” incorporating ideas about board games, culture, and life at this university they have encountered during the semester.

## **Introduction to MUSE**

University-level study is different from what you experienced in high school. The Metropolitan University Scholar's Experience (MUSE) is designed to help make your transition into college a success by helping you develop the skills and attitude needed for the intellectual engagement and challenge of in-depth university-level study. Discovery, research, critical thinking, written work, attention to the rich cultural diversity of the campus, and active discussion will be key parts of this MUSE course. Enrollment in MUSE courses is limited to a small number of students because these courses are intended to be highly interactive and allow you to easily interact with your professor and fellow students. MUSE courses explore topics and issues from an interdisciplinary focus to show how interesting and important ideas can be viewed from different perspectives.

## **Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives**

This course qualifies as an Area D1 (Human Behavior) course in your General Education requirements. Social Science courses should increase the student's understanding of human behavior and social interaction in the context of value systems, economic structures, political institutions, social groups, and natural environments. Human Behavior (D1) students will be able to recognize the interaction of social institutions, culture, and environment with the behavior of individuals.

## **Learning Objectives and Activities for this Course**

As an Area D1 (Human Behavior) course, the content and activities are designed to enable you to achieve the following learning outcomes

1. Students will be able to place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts [GE]. Since, for the most part, we will be studying games that originated in Africa and Asia and developed over several thousand years, students will have the opportunity to learn about other cultures in other periods, and to compare those with our own, in class discussions and projects, as well as in formal essays. One assignment, for example, will be to adapt the model of Snakes and Ladders, originally developed to inculcate the values of South Asian religions, to express the academic and social lessons students encounter at SJSU.
2. Students will identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them.[GE] The phenomenon of board games often correlates to social conditions and developments, including gender roles, class structure and a relative increase in leisure, and
3. Students will evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues. [GE] Many of the assigned readings will be from a wealth of different perspectives in the social sciences, including history, anthropology, psychology, and so on. Students will need to incorporate those readings and other research into their written work, especially the short research essay.
4. To understand the learning process and their responsibility and role in it. [MUSE] The course will have frequent sessions specifically devoted to helping students make the transition from high school to university, and students will reflect on that process and their experiences at SJSU in their assigned journals.
5. To know what it means to be a member of a metropolitan university community. [MUSE] The culminating assignment of the course, a small-group project to create a "Game of SJSU," provides students with an opportunity to analyze, discuss, and present those ideas and values they think are most important, most efficacious, or most representative for students at SJSU.

## Required Texts/Readings

### Textbooks

Botermans, Jack. *The Book of Games: Strategy, Tactics, and History*. New York: Sterling, 2007. ISBN: 9781402742217.

Hamamura, John. *The Color of the Sea*. New York: Random House, 2007. ISBN: 9780307386076.

Course Reader (available online on the course web page).

*San José State University 2008-10 Catalog*.

### Other Readings

Online web pages (links available on the course web page):

Soubeyrand, Christine. "The Game of Senet." [www.gamecabinet.com/history/Senet.html](http://www.gamecabinet.com/history/Senet.html).

Kowalski, Wally J. "Roman Board Games." [ablemedia.com/ctcweb/showcase/boardgames.html](http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/showcase/boardgames.html).

Schädler, Ulrich. "Some critical remarks on an Internet Site about Roman Board Games."

[www.boardgamestudies.info/research/notes.shtml](http://www.boardgamestudies.info/research/notes.shtml).

Articles from the SJSU Library Electronic Reserves (also available through the course Blackboard site; you will need your library card number and PIN for Electronic Reserves):

Austin, R. G. "Roman Board Games."

Capen, George S. "Wei-chi: The Game of War."

Chalup, S. K., et al. "The Machine Intelligence Hex Project"

Cho, Adrian. "Program Proves That Checkers, Played Perfectly, Is a No-Win Situation."

De Voogt, Alex. "Going: How Board Games Travel" and "Mancala: Games That Count."

*Economist, The*, "Thrills and Skills."

Febey, K., and M. Coyne, "Program Evaluation: Board Game."

Finkel, Irving. "On the Rules for the Royal Game of Ur."

Gale, David. Review of *A Beautiful Mind*.

Gobet, F., and G. Campitelli, "The Role of Domain-Specific Practice, Handedness, and Starting Age in Chess."

Murakami, Takeshi. "Othello, Game of the Century."

Petrik, Paula. "The House That Parchisi Built: Selchow & Righter Company"

Ray, Romita. "The Beast in the Box."

Seymour, Richard and Charles Johnson. *The Compleat Gamester* (selections).

Topsfield, Andrew. "The Indian Game of Snakes and Ladders"

Townshend, Philip. "African Mankala in Anthropological Perspective."

In addition to the required texts, listed after the calendar, you should have access to a dictionary, thesaurus, and composition handbook (from English 1A or the equivalent). That dictionary, incidentally, should not be reserved for essays alone. You are expected to look up unfamiliar words encountered in the texts, and to be able to define them when called upon to do so in class. This is particularly important in a class like ours, dealing with distant parts of the world, since many of the settings, concepts, items, and expressions may be new to you.

### Other Equipment / Material Requirements

The course reader consists of printed boards for many of the games to be studied. Students will be given information in class on how to obtain inexpensive game pieces and dice to use on those game boards.

### Library Liaison (Optional)

Toby Matoush. Email: [Toby.Matoush@sjsu.edu](mailto:Toby.Matoush@sjsu.edu). Students will meet their liaison at the class's library orientation session early in the semester.

## Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes. Information on add/drop deadlines is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/registrar/calendar/>. Information about late drops is available at: <http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/>. **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

### *Graded Work:*

Essays:	
Games in your life essay (250 words)	5%
Game theory essay (500 words)	10%
Research essay (1000 words)	20%
Oral Presentation	10%
Journals (5 total)	20%
The Game of SJSU	15%
Participation (including quizzes)	20%

The participation grade includes quizzes, the timely submission of work, and knowledgeable participation in class discussions, especially when called upon. For final marks in the course, 100-90 is an A, 89-80 is a B, 79-70 is a C, 69-60 is a D, and below 60 is an F. Pluses and minuses are the top and bottom third of each range, respectively; so, for example, 89-87 is a B+, 86-83 is a B, and 82-80 is a B-.

*Submission of Written Work:* All written work must be double-spaced, follow standard MLA or APA format (depending on the student's major), and be submitted online through the course Blackboard page by the beginning of class on the day it is due. Additionally, a copy of each essay assignment 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: 2787904, chess. 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. 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, and assignment name: for example, "Smith John MUSE 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.

**Class Presentation:** You will be assigned one game to present to the class, which will require researching the historical and cultural background of that game, and mastering the fundamentals of play. Depending on the complexity of a game and its history, more than one student may be assigned to present specific aspects of it.

**Journal:** You will be asked to keep a journal detailing reactions to things you read (including *Color of the Sea*) and attend (including MUSE workshops and campus events), as well as commentaries on games you play, both in and out of class, and information about SJSU and university life generally that you

encounter. Class time will be devoted to discussion of those reactions on a regular basis, and you will be asked to submit your journal for review four times during the semester. Besides those four, you will also be asked to start your journal with a “Letter to My Future Self” at the beginning of the semester.

*The Game of SJSU.* Working in groups of three or four, students will utilize what they have learned about board games and the university, to create a “Game of SJSU.” The nature, rules, and construction of that game will be up to the group; the project will be graded on the quality of game play, on the aesthetics of design, and on the utilization of information about academia generally and this university in particular. In addition, students will be asked to create a Snakes-and-Ladders-type game and the hex-board war game during the semester.

*MUSE Workshops.* Students are required to attend at least three MUSE workshops during the semester (or two MUSE and one other campus event, such as one related to *Color of the Sea*), and to describe those events in their journals. A list of workshops for the semester and registration forms can be found online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/>. Announcements about other events on campus will be made regularly in class.

## **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 web site is located at: <http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor/>.

## **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 instructors.

### **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/>.

## Course Calendar

*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/muse](http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/jwss/mesher/muse)*

### Major Assignments

**Oral Presentation**, one per student, throughout the semester.

**Essay #1** (“Games in My Life”): 250 words, 9/10.

**Essay #2** (“Game Theory”): 500 words, 10/6

**Essay #3** (submitted in three parts: proposal, rough draft, final draft): 10/20, 11/5 and 11/19

**Journals** (five during the semester): 9/1, 9/24, 10/15, 11/12, 12/3

**Five Year Planner**: 9/29

**Games**: Snakes and Ladders (10/8), Hex-Board War Game (11/24), Game of SJSU (12/1)

Day	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Tues	Aug 25	Introduction
Thurs	Aug 27	<u>Monopoly</u> . Read: Ray; <i>Economist</i> , “Thrills and Skills.”
Tues	Sept 1	<u>Senet</u> . Read: Bottermans, 163-72; Soubeyrand. Online tutorials: Library Basics, Plagiarism, and Peer-Reviewed Articles at <a href="http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org">tutorials.sjlibrary.org</a> . **“Letter to My Future Self” (first journal) due.

Day	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Thurs	Sept 3	Library Orientation in MLK 217. Read: <i>Color of the Sea</i> , pp. 1-66.
Tues Thurs	Sept 8 Sept 10	<u>The Royal Game of Ur</u> . Read: Bottermans, 711-22; Finkel. <u>Parcheesi, Sorry</u> . Bottermans, 187-98, 393-402; Petrik. <b>Discussion: The Perspective of Academic Disciplines.</b> **First essay (“Games in My Life”) due.
Tues Thurs	Sept 15 Sept 17	<u>Thaayam</u> . Read: Bottermans, 722-32; Gobet and Campitelli <u>Backgammon</u> . Read: Bottermans, 7-18, 287-98; Kowalski; Schädler. <b>Discussion: Can You Trust Information on the Internet?</b>
Tues Thurs	Sept 22 Sept 24	<b>No class (Furlough).</b> <u>Backgammon</u> , <u>Tabula</u> , <u>Coan Ki</u> , <u>Nardshir</u> . Read: Bottermans, 557-59, 677-98. <i>Color of the Sea</i> , pp. 79-146. **Journal (2) due.
Tues Thurs	Sept 29 Oct 1	<u>Snakes and Ladders</u> . Read: Bottermans, 19-32; Topsfield; Rushdie (handout). <b>Discussion: Learning from Board Games.</b> **Five Year Planner Due <u>Mancala</u> . Read: Bottermans, 349-64; Townshend. <b>Discussion: The Anthropology of Academic Integrity.</b>
Tues Thurs	Oct 6 Oct 8	<u>Mancala</u> . Read: De Voogt; **Second essay (“Game Theory”) due. <u>Nine Men’s Morris</u> . Read: Bottermans, 55-68; **SJSU Snakes and Ladders due.
Tues Thurs	Oct 13 Oct 15	<u>Tafl</u> . Read: Bottermans, 235-50, 485-96; <i>Color of the Sea</i> , pp. 146-208. <b>Discussion: The Reality of Games.</b> <u>Alquerque</u> , <u>Fanorano</u> , <u>Jinx</u> . Read: Bottermans, 153-62, 199-210, 379-92. **Journal (3) due
Tues Thurs	Oct 20 Oct 22	<u>Checkers</u> , <u>Chinese Checkers</u> . Read: Bottermans, 475-84, 569-84; Cho. <u>Chess</u> . Read: Seymour and Johnson. **Third essay proposal due.
Tues Thurs	Oct 27 Oct 29	<u>Chess</u> . Read: Bottermans, 211-35. <u>Shogi</u> , Chinese Chess. Read: Bottermans, 107-40. <i>Color of the Sea</i> , pp. 209-279.
Tues Thurs	Nov 3 Nov 5	<b>No class (Furlough).</b> <u>Hex</u> . Read: Bottermans, 449-61; Gale; Chalup. <b>Discussion: Games as Research.</b> **Third essay rough draft due.
Tues Thurs	Nov 10 Nov 12	<u>Hasami Shogi</u> , <u>Othello</u> . Read: Bottermans, 513-40. <u>Go</u> . Read: Bottermans, 299-335; Capen; SJSU Catalog, pp. 442-55. **Journal (4) due. <b>Discussion: War Games and Games as War.</b>
Tues Thurs	Nov 17 Nov 19	<i>Modern Lifecycle Games: Game of Life, Payday, Careers</i> . Read: SJSU Catalog, pp. 460-64; <i>Color of the Sea</i> , pp. 285-320. <i>Modern Knowledge Games: Trivial Pursuit, Scrabble</i> . Read: SJSU Catalog, pp. 474-482. **Third essay due.
Tues Thurs	Nov 24 Nov 26	<i>Modern War Games: Stratego, Risk</i> . Read: SJSU Catalog, 483-89. **Hex-board war game due. <b>Thanksgiving — No class</b>
Tues Thurs	Dec 1 Dec 3	<u>Game of SJSU</u> : **Preliminary game project due. <u>Game of SJSU</u> : Critiquing game projects. **Journal (5) due
Tues	Dec 8	<u>Game of SJSU</u> : **Final game project due.
Final	Friday Dec 11	2:45 – 5:00

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