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Eighty people pack themselves into a small room of the Steinbeck Center like it's the Obama inauguration . . . page 10



# Department of English & Comparative Literature Newsletter

Spring 2009

## Concentrating on Creative Writing English Department Offers a New Creative Option

Jackie Smith

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The BA in creative writing is one of the fastest growing degrees according to the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, and San Jose State has jumped on the bandwagon. Birthed in Fall 2008, SJSU's new creative writing concentration was designed to pull



Max Mann

students into the English department that might not otherwise join the major. The new kid on the block, SJSU's concentration is young compared to other well-established and prestigious creative writing programs. Co-founder Professor Alan Soldofsky talks about the program's goals, students, as well what it offers that other programs don't.

One of the tricks of a creative writing curriculum is deciding what material should be taught to the students. Keeping a solid background in literature is important, which is one advantage to having creative writing as a concentration instead of a separate department and a problem SJSU doesn't have to face. Creative writing cores can circumvent some of the traditional literature courses, keeping the students from being exposed to material that graduate programs are looking for. By keeping SJSU's creative writing emphasis as an extension of the regular English department, the school is ensuring its students will have the literature credits necessary to qualify for any graduate program.

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**SAN JOSÉ STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

SJSU's creative writing concentration also addresses the key subjects of "creative reading," and the "business of writing" that students need to make it in the profession. Professor Soldofsky says that SJSU students will still be exposed to literature, but will be approaching it from the viewpoint of understanding how a text is created, not just what it means, giving students the "creative reading" insight. While SJSU doesn't have a business course in creative writing, students have the opportunity to cover much of the same material concerning the publishing world by taking the *Reed* magazine course. *Reed* allows students to get hands-on experience with a real publication that is publicly distributed.

Professor Soldofsky and Chair John Engell designed the undergraduate program. It began with writing a proposal outlining the curriculum requirements. The proposal then had to fit the requirements of any university degree program by being approved by the Departmental Curriculum Committee, the university's College of Humanities and the Arts Curriculum Committee, the University Curriculum Committee, and finally, it had to be approved by the President and the Chancellor's Office. All new California State University programs must be signed by the Chancellor, but the real approval comes from the University Curriculum Committee. The whole approval process took about six months (spring and summer semesters of 2007). The program was approved quickly because the department didn't need to request funding for new courses. The department only needed a change in requirements because the required courses were already in place.

With the concentration still so new, the faculty members are looking ahead to what the future will bring. The first goal of the program is to get more

students. Currently, there are about 20 to 25 who have declared a creative writing emphasis. This number is blurry because there are always students who are undeclared, undecided, or are just investigating what the program has to offer. "I became a creative writing major because I wanted to refine and master my skills as a fiction writer," says Tull Jordan, a student in the new concentration. "I like how they've gathered all the different writing styles together. I also like *Reed* magazine. There are lots of different ways to be creative as a writer, and the department categorizes the different styles so it's easy to find the courses I need." The department would like to have enough students entering each year to fill two workshops in poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Because most curriculums offer beginning, intermediate, and advanced level workshops, SJSU hopes to attract enough students to support multiple workshops. The long-term goal is to be able to add advanced workshops and courses on special topics. To do this, the program would need about eighty new students a year. The hope is that there will be enough interest in the program that the students will overlap with the other English majors.

The Capstone Senior Seminar Course (Engl 193C) for creative writing has yet to be offered. Professor Engell thinks that the course won't be available for at least another year. Because the university requires a minimum of 20 students enrolled to offer any course, it could be a while before the program has enough students ready to take the class. The course will have its students generate a collection of creative work as their portfolio. Because SJSU's master's program in English is looking for students who can produce publishable work, the capstone classes are geared toward producing a portfolio that meets this qualification. Creative writing students' portfolios will hold several pieces of poetry, fiction, and

nonfiction as opposed to the analytical writing in literature portfolios. "A creative writer approaches a text to see how it's made. A scholar tries to understand the precedence that it represents," explained Soldofsky, which is why literary analysis doesn't make it into the portfolio.

The curriculum's most exciting selling points are its balance between writing and a literature background, and the opportunity to learn from the visiting author in residence. In addition to their creative writing, the students are immersed in traditional literature. SJSU doesn't undervalue the power of reading like many other creative writing programs do.

As Soldofsky says, "Our program, more than most, integrates the experience of reading literature with learning to write literature." A creative writing major from SJSU can expect to be fully prepared to apply to any graduate program because of the repertoire they are expected to learn.

The visiting writer's position (the Lurie Author) lasts for one semester each year, and is also a huge selling point for both the new concentration and the entire English department. Recent visiting authors include Simon Winchester, James Kelman, and Ishmael Reed. Although the Lurie position started in 2000, eight years before the new concentration, its advantages are catered to creative writing students. The funds for this position came from a gift from Connie L. Lurie, an alumna and education major who took creative writing courses. The department matched the endowment that she donated, and the combined resources fund the position.

Each year, the visiting writer comes to SJSU for a semester and teaches two semester classes -- an undergraduate literature seminar and a creative writing graduate level course. The visiting professors have a hand in choosing which classes they would like to teach depending on their area of

# Scholarships!

*Julie Ann Tolentino*

Mark your calendars and plan ahead for next semester! The English Department has several awards for non-fiction, fiction, and poetry, as well as awards for scholarly papers. Not only is submitting creative work fun, but it can be lucrative and good for your resume. Applications are available at the English Department; see the bulletin board in the Faculty Offices or check online: <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/undergraduate/scholarship/>. For more information, please contact Professor Shillinglaw.

**Bonita M. Cox Award for Creative Nonfiction.** A scholarship awarded to an SJSU student who writes the best essay of no more than 2,500 words in one of the following areas: travel or scientific writing; memoir; vignette; profiles. Open to junior, senior, and grad students taking 6+ units.

**The Lois King Thore Short Story Scholarship.** A scholarship awarded to an English major who shows promise in short-story writing. Submit two copies of the application form with two copies of a) a statement of eligibility and b) a representative short story.

**The James O. Wood Shakespeare Award.** A scholarship that goes to the best essay, reading, scene representation, musical presentation, costume, painting, sculpture, or other appropriate work related to any of Shakespeare's plays. Submissions must include application and one-page statement about the project.

**The Marjorie McLaughlin Folendorf Award for Creative Writing.** A scholarship awarded to an SJSU

student for outstanding achievement in creative writing. Applicants must have completed at least 24 units at SJSU. Please submit two copies of the application form and two copies of a) a work in creative nonfiction, fiction or poetry and b) a brief statement of eligibility.

**James Phelan Literary Awards.** Categories include: Metrical verse (under 30 lines); free verse (under 30 lines); free verse (30+ lines); metrical verse (30+ lines); short story (under 2000 words); short story (2000+ words); familiar essay; critical essay; humorous and satirical essay. All undergraduates and graduates are eligible. Please submit the application and three copies of each entry, with student ID number and award category on each page.



*Max Mann*

## Introducing Your New BFF

*Reasons to meet your major and GE advisors*

*Al Breneman*

Professor Susan Shillinglaw, one of the two advisors for the Department of English and Comparative Literature, offers many significant reasons to see an advisor. Professor Shillinglaw says that students frequently make the mistake of waiting until near graduation before visiting an advisor. Sophomores and undecided students should seek out academic advice as they do not receive as much attention as freshmen do. Some of the benefits from speaking with an advisor are that he or she can help students define useful short-term plans as well as map out important long-term plans to optimize their time at SJSU.

Professor Shillinglaw says an ap-

pointment with an advisor is imperative when a student declares a major or decides upon a minor. An advisor supplies constructive answers to questions about courses such as 100W and related requirements, and will scrutinize available options to select an emphasis. This includes checking other departments' minor options beyond the choice of a minor in English. Moreover, an advisor is an experienced source for exploring career options and opportunities that utilize and foster a student's knowledge of English.

In addition, Professor Shillinglaw says that English majors need to see their advisor a year in advance of graduation in order to fill out the necessary triuplicate-page worksheet required for graduation. The advisor will then

provide students with an application for graduation. When these documents are completed, the advisor will put them into a sealed envelope, which needs to be turned in at Window "E" in Admission and Records. The student will be provided a pink copy from the triuplicate forms. Is graduation reason enough to see an advisor? Yes, and soon!

An appointment with an advisor can be secured by either visiting the Faculty Offices on campus at room FO 102 or by telephoning the offices at (408) 924-4425. Ask for an appointment with either of the two major advisors: Dr. Shillinglaw or Dr. Persis Karim. Students should bring their questions, transcripts, and a printed copy of their academic progress, which is listed on MYSJSU, to their first appointment with an advisor. Set up an appointment. See an advisor!

# Glimpse at Honors English Fall 2009

## An Exploration of Power, Class, Sexual Status and Gender Roles

Kristin Yurkovich

In fall of 2009, an Honors course will be available to upper-division students who are majoring in English and have a GPA of 3.5 or better. The class is usually taken by students in their senior year. It will be taught at a graduate level, so be prepared to be challenged. For a little sneak peak into the class, read the course description and some of the readings provided below:



Julie Ann Tolentino

### English 190

#### Honors Colloquium

Course Description: The course will trace the emergence of what we now proudly (post Stonewall) claim as “homosexual” identities as they have appeared in literature from the 16th century to today. It will feature a variety of literary and cultural texts that address issues of homoeroticism, cross-

dressing, sodomy, and female masculinity. Whenever possible, the course will include reception of such texts. Ideally, this course will enable an examination of the shifting cultural attitudes about same-sex desire to more thoroughly ground our contemporary appreciation of queerness in a nuanced understanding of its history. The central discussion will take shape around the consideration of

(1592): Marlowe’s tragedy about the monarch whose desire to spend time with his court favorites trumps his duty to his country.

◆ *The Baines Note* (containing the allegations leveled against Marlow, particularly accusing him of sodomy and atheism).

◆ Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl* (1611): A city comedy about Moll Frith, a notorious London cross-dresser (and former thief).

◆ Henry Fielding, *The Female Husband* (1746): A pamphlet about the life and punishment of Mary Hamilton, a woman who impersonated men and married three different women.

◆ *The Well-known Troublemaker: A Narrative of the Life of Charlotte Charke* (1755): An autobiographical account of the life of Charke, the daughter of Colley Cibber, who played breeches parts on the stage and also sported men’s clothing on the streets. She set up house with a woman, and the two around town were known as “Mr. and Mrs. Brown.”

◆ *The Diaries of Ann Lister* (1791-1840): A frank autobiography of the life of a woman with homosexual tendencies.

#### Exploring the Closet:

◆ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

◆ Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

◆ E.M. Forster, *Maurice*

#### Escaping the Closet:

◆ Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*

◆ Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*

◆ Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. (A Bildungsroman about a lesbian in graphic-novel form).

◆ Some other critical works by Michel Foucault, Valerie Traub, Jonathan Dollimore, Allen Bray, Mario diGangi, Emma Donoghue, and Terry Castle will be read during this course.

the ways in which literature serves both to express and to suppress homosexual desire.

There are many readings for this course, including novels, plays, poetry, diaries, political pamphlets, and critical texts. A few of the readings follow:

#### Early Modern:

◆ Christopher Marlowe, *Edward II*



# Taking English to the Land Down Under

Major opportunity to explore Australia and New Zealand

*Tia Rath*

For those majoring in English and feeling confined to campus, Dr. David Mesher has a way to spend three weeks in two foreign countries while earning General Education (GE) credits. Thirteen applications have been received from students who are interested in this chance to explore Australia and New Zealand from June 1st to June 22nd. Dr. Mesher and his faculty partner, Dr. Shannon Bros-Seemann, will be leading the pack to explore the region's land, culture, and art.

Each participating student will earn 3 to 6 units. Three units will cover GE Area V (if taking the trip for ENGL 117: Film, Literature, and Cultures) or GE Area S (if taking the trip for ENGL 123C: South Pacific Literature). The other three units will cover GE Area R (if taking the trip for BIOL 110, BIOL 180, or BIOL 280). Because this trip is not simply a vacation, students are expected to complete course work that includes participating in discussions about Maori and Aboriginal films and novels. Students will also present and write about the conservation of the area's land and natural resources for the

biology portion of the trip.

Since these are upper division courses, those who are interested will need to have passed the Writing Skills Test, completed all lower division GE courses, and have upper-division standing to receive upper-division GE credit. Students must also comply with the travel prerequisites, which include obtaining a passport and the necessary Australia-New Zealand visa well in advance. Current lower division students should be aware of these requirements now and plan ahead for future trips, which Dr. Bros-Seemann hopes will become an annual opportunity.

This Australia-New Zealand tour entails staying in hotels as well as campsites. Even if you do not plan on having cultural or environmental studies as a major component in your future career, this is a chance to experience two new worlds and a different way to experience literature.

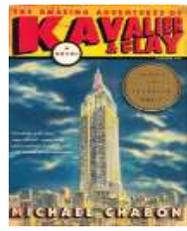
For additional information, contact Dr. Mesher at [mesher@email.sjsu.edu](mailto:mesher@email.sjsu.edu) or Dr. Bros-Seemann at [sbros@science.sjsu.edu](mailto:sbros@science.sjsu.edu).

# Unassigned Reading

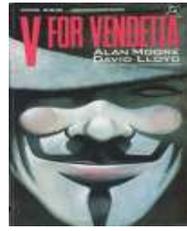
Besides the stuff professors want us to read...

*Wyatt Brafford*

Students from various majors and grade levels weighed in on their current favorites:



- ◆ *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*
- ◆ By Michael Chabon
- ◆ Suggested by Brandon Moore, Senior, English Creative Writing



- ◆ *V for Vendetta*
- ◆ By Alan Moore
- ◆ Suggested by Samson Habib, Junior, Religious Studies



- ◆ *Water for Elephants*
- ◆ By Sara Gruen
- ◆ Suggested by Nick Rotella, Freshman, Public Relations

### Other hot titles include:

- ◆ *Dying Well* by Ira Byock
- ◆ *True Colors* by Karen Traviss
- ◆ *Ender's Shadow* by Orson Scott Card
- ◆ *Writing for Comics with Peter David* by Peter David
- ◆ *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- ◆ *A Child Called It* by David Pelzer
- ◆ *Angels and Demons* by Dan Brown
- ◆ *Confucius Lives Next Door* by T.R. Reid
- ◆ *Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits, and How Baseball Got Big* by Jose Canseco

# Budget Cuts:

*Joy Njema Vickers*

## The economy's direct effects on campus, course offerings, instructors, and individual students

If you have been keeping up-to-date with the battle over the state's budget, you know that the economy is facing a downturn and the CSU is dealing with budget cuts. If you're a student, you've probably already experienced fewer course sections. If you are like me, you've been on a waiting list that was fifteen students long, with very little promise that you'll get in or that the department will open a new section. Scrambling for course sections and worrying about fee hikes can be difficult.

Yet, how difficult is it in comparison to witnessing qualified students being turned away or saying farewell to beloved lecturers? It is exactly these two groups that are affected the most by the budget cuts.

As Dr. Engell, the English & Comparative Literature Department Chair, pointed out, there will be fewer classes, but "there will be far fewer students competing for classes."

Students who are already enrolled will have to cleverly craft class schedules with the selection of courses provided and compete for scholarships.

However, for the many students who will be denied access to San José State and the lecturers who will be let go, the upcoming semester looks more grim. There is no clever crafting to be done to work around the Chancellor's decision to cut costs by cutting enrollment.

Here are the facts: San José State University is at an all-time high for the number of enrolled students. According to the Office of Institutional Research website, the university has increased its enrollment from 29,975 students in 2005 to about 32,746 students in 2008. Increased interest generating more applicants sounds like a great thing.

However, what normally would be a great accomplishment for any university has turned into a disadvantage. The economy is in turmoil; the Democrats and Republicans can't agree; and the CSU system has declared system-wide impaction.

But what does this all mean for the English Department? It means strategic planning by the CSU Chancellor's Office to cut costs during the state's fiscal crisis and to prepare for the prospect of additional cuts. According to the Chancellor's office, the CSU system is over-enrolled because it "is serving 10,000 students for whom the state provides no funding."

impacted by the cuts in enrollment more than other departments across campus. The English department offers approximately 130 sections of freshmen composition courses, in addition to a number of lower GE courses.

According to Dr. Engell, the English department "will be asked to cut at least 40 class sections and perhaps more from



*Max Mann*

In a memo Chancellor Reed states, "We are limiting the number of new students admitted in 2009 by 10,000 to align with the enrollment funded by the state."

Cutting enrollment by 10,000 students across a span of 23 campuses doesn't sound so bad, except when you take into consideration that "San José State alone will account for approximately 3,000-3,500 of the total enrollment cut," says Dr. John Engell.

This cut sets us back to enrollment numbers of four to five years ago and puts more than one-third of the burden on San José State. It is exactly this strategic planning by the Chancellor's Office to cut enrollment that affects the English Department.

Departments like English & Comparative Literature, which teach large numbers of freshmen, will be

the Fall 2008 schedule when planning the Fall 2009 schedule."

The students already enrolled at San José State will have to scramble for classes and rework their schedule, but that's more of an inconvenience than a burden. According to Dr. Katherine Harris, who serves on the curriculum committee, the major requirement courses will still be available, as well as some electives (although not as many as in the past).

However, it will be cuts to our freshmen composition courses, the big-ticket items, which will hurt the department the most. The CSU, in its effort to cut costs, is limiting enrollment, which hampers the ability of lecturers to do their job. In translation, fewer students mean fewer classes, which means more lecturers without classes to teach.

*... continued on page 7*

# Are Publishers Surviving Today's Economy?

*How companies in the industry prepare for and respond to current economic changes*

*Kebyn Morrison*

The current economic crisis has taken a toll on everything from automobile manufacturers to Starbucks, with people worldwide feeling the effects of the economic downturn. Millions have lost their jobs and their homes, and some unlucky individuals have even lost everything they had while trying to survive in today's economic crisis. But what about the businesses that aren't publicized in the media? Are they surviving? Being that we are English majors, it seems fitting to find out about local book publishers for all the aspiring writers who intend on pursuing a career by writing novels, short stories, or poems.

I interviewed a couple of publishers based in San Francisco on this topic. The California Publishing Company and GLB Publishing offered contrasting information regarding the economic effects on their current business. One publisher appears to be greatly affected, while the

other appears to be unaffected and optimistic about the future.

It's only right that I begin with the first company that was willing to answer my questions without reluctance: GLB Publishers. They specialize in the publishing of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry expressing the personalities and problems of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals--hence the company name. Unfortunately, catering to a unique niche is also what Bill Warner, editor and publisher of GLB, attributes to being the reason why they are greatly affected by the economic crisis. When asked about the effects of the economy on his business, his voice became somber and concerned: "Bookstores are all closing, and being that we are a gay, lesbian, and bisexual publisher, we've been greatly affected by what's going on."

The local or small bookstores that sell their books are going out of business, and Bill Warner is concerned about the future of his company. He describes his company as being "more

intimately tied to the Internet" because their books are usually sold on Internet bookstores. According to their website ([www.glbpubs.com](http://www.glbpubs.com)), "On the Internet we can be the bookstore that closeted and rural gays, lesbians, and bisexuals can venture into."

The California Publishing Company (CPC) is extremely optimistic about what the future may hold. The CPC is a self-publishing company based in San Francisco and appears to be very dedicated to helping their clients publish their own books. According to Sasha, the receptionist at CPC, they are more than willing to work with their clients and allow them to write at their own pace.

When I posed the question about the economic effects on CPC, Sasha replied with so much enthusiasm as if to say "what effects?" According to Sasha, business varies from year to year, and, even with the economic crisis, business has been steady. She attributes people's goal of saving money to their success. "I don't know what

will happen in the next six months, but right now things are good," Sasha excitedly replied. The California Publishing Company appears to be surviving for now and, assuming Sasha's co-workers share her enthusiasm, is looking forward to the future of the company.

Though each publisher endures differing effects from the economy, they ultimately have the same concern: Will the company survive?

The effects of the economy on the two book publishers seem to vary based on their uniqueness. GLB Publishers have been affected because of the niche that separates them from other publishers. Though CPC's business is good at the moment, their situation can change if people become more and more reluctant to spend money on their books.

It appears that what separates these two businesses is exactly what's making them or breaking them.

## Budget Cuts *continued from page 6*

Unlike staff members, the faculty's jobs are dependent on teaching courses. In an email to faculty and staff, President Whitmore assured "that despite budget uncertainties, we are committed to doing all we can to avoid layoffs at San José State. You, our faculty and staff, are our most important asset and the heart of our enterprise."

Although many lecturers have taught at San José State for anywhere between 5 to 25 years or more, they are defined as temporary employees. Instead of a layoff, the university defines the dismissal of a lecturer as a failure to renew the

contract. Dr. Engell describes this semantic distinction between a layoff and a failure to renew a contract as absurd. "In my department there are twice as many lecturers as there are tenure-track and tenured faculty. In Fall 2009, students lucky enough to be already attending San José State will discover that a number of their former teachers have disappeared from the campus."

Many factors have contributed to the economic hardship that the English department faces. We also have to look closer to home. "San José State administrators did not foresee the huge

increase in our enrollment and, therefore, made no attempt, until too late, to request that the Chancellor's office increase our enrollment target," says Dr. Engell.

No matter who shares in the responsibility for our situation, it is our lecturers and those never-admitted students who will share the burden. It's a hard realization to accept: The budget cuts are affecting a targeted group of people and there is little to nothing the English Department can do. When faced with this harsh reality, waiting in line for a class doesn't seem so bad. Unlike some of our lecturers, I always have next year.

# Visiting the Past With Bonnie Cox

*An SJSU alumna and professor shares memories and advice*

*Tull Jordan*

It's hard to believe that the university is always in flux. Yet, it does subtly change, shifting and altering itself to meet the demands placed upon it by the society that surrounds it. But those changes are difficult to see. In many ways, it is like trying to watch a forest grow. Only by looking back at it from the perspective of many years can a proper picture be seen. I did not think it would be possible for me to see how the forest of this campus has changed, but I could concentrate upon one of its trees, the English department. In order to see the changes that the English department and its students have gone through, I would need the experience and perspective of one of its long-time professors.

I felt that Professor Bonnie Cox could offer some of the insight I was looking for. When I was in Professor Cox's class, I found her to be a confident, relaxed speaker with a certain coiled energy. She was direct, answering frankly, bluntly, and honestly. Furthermore, she possessed a loving passion for the English language, as well as for teaching it. It was this mix of passion, honesty, and bluntness, tempered over 27 years of teaching, that I felt would offer a good perspective on the English department.

A native Northern Californian, Professor Cox has seen a lot of changes on the campus between her time as both an undergraduate and graduate student, and as a faculty member



today. The changes that stand out the most to her are the changes in English major students. "[The student is very different now from what the students were... back in the day... mostly everybody who was majoring in English was born here, white... it was very rare that we would have a non-native speaker on campus, let alone as an English major." Professor Cox points out that we reflect the demographics of the area. As the demographics of California have changed, so has the student body. Along with the changes in student demographics, the English major itself is "significantly different," shifting from a canonical format to one that is multicultural.

As high schools adopt more ethnic texts into their English classes, college English instructors are less certain of what texts incoming students will be familiar with. "[We] didn't have courses in ethnic American literature [when I first came here]," Professor Cox says, describing how the major was structured.

"We could assume that students knew certain things when they got here... who Socrates was, [that they] had some familiarity with the Bible, that everybody had read... Oedipus Rex [and] at least four Shakespeare plays. [T]here was a certain curriculum that we could... build on, and that's no longer the case." Over time, Professor Cox has noticed a decline in certain basic skills of incoming students. "Students used to come in knowing a whole lot more than they know now. They were better read, their writing skills were stronger, [and they had a better] understanding of the [English] language." Many students major in English believing that the skills they possess will be adequate for graduation. Yet, Professor Cox doesn't agree: "I have difficulty understanding how someone can get a degree in English and not have a firm grounding in English grammar, syntax, punctuation, usage, etc." She points out that "students come in less prepared to read Shakespeare; they come in with poor reading skills; they don't concentrate well."

Some of that she attributes to "living in a virtual age," which she feels has created problems with students' ability to focus and concentrate. Professor Cox says the problem originates with a general trend in education that started in the late '60s to early '70s. It came down to "this idea that everybody need[ed] to feel good about themselves." It was during this time that "they shifted to whole language, to new math. They

made all of these changes away from traditional methods and traditional requirements." This has shifted the emphasis from hard work to building self-esteem. The result is that "students now come in thinking anything is okay as long as it makes them feel good about themselves. [They] expect that they should get A's in everything, and that... simply showing up should make them eligible to at least get a B."

Society's focus on instant gratification is another factor. This, she says regretfully, causes the students to be lazier, placing the reward of a piece of paper over learning. "[T]hey want to be happy right now, and they want it all, and they want it all at the same time. And I tell students, you can have it all; you just can't have it all at the same time." Yet, the trend continues to grow, infecting about two-thirds of the incoming student body. She notes that many of her working students feel that "they should be able to cut corners" on their school work because they also have a job. Furthermore, she receives many petitions to skip the campus writing requirement classes, 1A, 1B, and 100W in order to graduate.

Through all of the changes, Professor Cox remains stalwart in her praise of the English major. "I think students who choose to major in English are special people," and that if their goal is to use language effectively and beautifully, then they can be successful in anything.

# Writers Associations:

## *A Professional Networking Opportunity*

*Pam Stair*

“Sometimes it’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” This old saying is the basis for networking – be it for personal or professional purposes. Think about it: wouldn’t you rather work with someone you know? For writers there is a plethora of professional associations that offer the opportunity to connect with other writers, editors, publishers, and potential employers.

Belonging to a professional association isn’t just about completing a form and plunking down your dues, however. As with most things in life, what you gain from a membership is in direct correlation to what you contrib-



ute: attending meetings, arriving early and socializing, participating in discussions, serving on committees, and being an active, involved member. People do business with people they know and like. They can’t get to know and like you if you don’t show up or if you do and isolate yourself.

So, how do you find a professional association worthy of your time and energy? Check your library’s reference section for the *Encyclopedia of Associations*. Most large libraries also offer the *Associations Unlimited* database to cardholders. Ask other writers about groups they belong to. You can find professional groups that serve a broad spectrum of members and others that

cater to a niche membership. Check out their websites to get an idea of what programs and events they offer to members and to locate a chapter in your area. Attend a few meetings as a guest to experience the group and determine if it’s a good fit for you. Most importantly, when you make a selection, participate.

When you are researching professional associations, you will find that some are national organizations and some are regional or local in scope. There are pros and cons to each. You will need to define your membership priorities before making a selection. A national association with local chapters, for instance, will offer you the advantages of a large annual conference and a network that crosses geographic boundaries (especially important in this age of web-based publications). A regional or local group, on the other hand, may be more knowledgeable about the local market, and members will more likely have personal connections in that local market.



Here is a sample of the many professional associations available for writers:

**Academy of American Poets**

[www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org)

**American Copy Editors Society(ACES)**

[www.copydesk.org](http://www.copydesk.org)

**Associated Writing Program**

[www.awpwriter.org](http://www.awpwriter.org)

**Educational Writers Association**

[www.ewa.org](http://www.ewa.org)

**Horror Writers Association**

[www.horror.org](http://www.horror.org)

**National Association of Independent Writers and Editors**

<http://naiwe.com>

**National Writers Union**

[www.nwa.org](http://www.nwa.org)

**Northern California Publishers & Authors**

[www.norcalpa.org](http://www.norcalpa.org)

**PEN American Center**

[www.pen.org](http://www.pen.org)

**Romance Writers of America**

[www.rwanational.org](http://www.rwanational.org)



# Celebrating the Alumni

An event for SJSU's English Department Graduates

Vincent Woodruff

On the fifth floor of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library is the Steinbeck Center. About 80 people pack themselves into a small room within the Center, like it's the Obama inauguration, to listen to a reading by fellow alum and professor at San José State University, Kate Evans. She is the author of a collection of poetry entitled *Like All We Love*, a book about gay and lesbian teachers called, *Negotiating the Self*, and her first novel, *For the May Queen*. This is deemed an alumni event but, amazingly, about 75% of those who attended were either creative writers in the English department or students of Evans herself. Indeed, this event was a way to bring former English majors home to share with future graduates the success of a former student of SJSU.

Tim Peck, a former SJSU graduate, became a high school English teacher in the Dublin, California area and taught for twenty years. He even taught a young lady whom technical writing and editing students now know as Professor Cindy Baer. Twenty years after Peck became a teacher, he felt the need to change careers and is now a science writer.

When asked what that entails he said, "I do a variety of things... the research that goes on in these laboratories needs to be documented and these documents have to go to government agencies, so they have to be accurate and they have to be well written, and fortunately for me several of the scientists and the engineers aren't that great at writing." Any student who has taken Professor Baer's classes in technical writing can relate.

Students who attend these events will find a variety of inspirations, new ideas, writing topics, and employment paths



Kate Evans  
with mentor  
Gabriele  
Rico

Mike Adams

that could lead to a great career in anything, even in the medical field.

Kelly Harrison, an English department lecturer and SJSU MFA graduate says, "You think... 'I have an English Degree, I'm limited to English', and that's not true at all. The English degree gives you such a solid foundation for so many things that you can do, including all different kinds of graduate work, going into any kind of legal work, even medicine... of course you would have to go and do a science minor, but there are some fantastic medical writers out there, Matt Ridley for example."

**"...Fortunately for me  
several of the scientists and  
the engineers aren't that  
great at writing,"**

**-- Tim Peck**

Ellen Young also graduated from the SJSU MFA program and is now running her own online business at [Ellenyoung.com](http://Ellenyoung.com) in which she helps writers of all sorts hone their skills. This idea was spawned from helping fellow students fine-tune their essays.

When asked what current students could look for in the job market, she responded, "Be creative, see what you can do online, try to develop [abilities like critiquing work, editing work, giving advice to students] who need all that help with their essays, with their work, with their applications, all kinds of things. And they may not all be writing in your town, in your neighborhood. So that's what I've been trying to do, to build a web presence and a model

where I can work with people through the phone, through email. So that might be a direction you could go."

Students should not ignore the resources of their own professors. Evans, who was introduced to the audience by her former instructor from the MFA program here at SJSU, said that, "Gabriel Rico was a great teacher and it's in part because of her that I am here right now." When asked what she would say to students who are looking to the future, Evans replied, "You just have to keep doing what you love, no matter what..."

Gabriel Rico says about Evans, "I am so impressed that Kate has never doubted what she needs to do...she went on to get a tenure track position here at San José State, and she gave that up because she said 'I want to write' and that is what she has been doing." Looking back on her teaching days at SJSU, Rico reflected on her motivation to develop the Clustering Method: "I discovered that if I was learning my students would learn also...my doctoral work at Stanford really has San José State in it."

The English Department chair, Professor John Engell, opened the Alumni event on a positive note, so it is only fitting to finish with his words of inspiration to future alumni, "You might be interested to know ...that the top business administration masters programs in the country prefer far more to accept English majors than business majors, that law schools consider English one of the two top majors for acceptance into law schools. And then there are all the wonderful possibilities, including the publishing industry."

# Undergraduate Requirements Starting Next Fall

## Some New Courses Become Necessary While Others Become Optional

*Peter Gambrill*

Starting in fall of 2009, there will be several changes to the undergraduate requirements for the BA degree in English. The new requirements will only be mandatory for students enrolling in the university during or after next fall. Students who are already enrolled can choose either the preexisting requirements or the new requirements. The changes in the English BA degree are the following:

- ◆ Both English 56B (British Lit 18th C. to Present) and 68B (American Lit 1865 to Present) will be required courses. English 56A (British Literature to Late 18th C.) and 68A (American Literature to 1865) will remain required.
- ◆ English 101 (Intro to Literary Criticism) will be grouped into a core requirement category along with English 102 (History of the English Language) and 103 (Modern English). Students will have to choose one of the three.

- ◆ Required English electives will be reduced from eight to seven, six of which must be upper division.

The Concentration in Career Writing will have the same changes to the core curriculum. The BA in English education will remain unchanged.

The requirements for the new Concentration in Creative Writing are on the English Department website. These requirements will likely be changed next fall. The proposed changes are as follows:

- ◆ Both English 56B and 68B will become part of the core curriculum.
- ◆ English 56A and the English 102/103 category will no longer be required.
- ◆ In the required literature electives, the British and American literature categories will be removed. Instead, the nine units of required literature courses will be listed together in one menu.

If you have any questions about the new graduation requirements, see Dr. Shillinglaw or Dr. Karim.

## Useful Supplemental Courses

*Max Mann*

So you think you're a writer, eh? Be forewarned my friend, it's one of those "road less traveled" sort of things. The career of a professional writer is one that will be damned competitive, but SJSU does offer a few classes that may help give you an advantage on the rest of the world's prospective scribes.

Here's a short list of four classes that may help give you an advantage over the next aspiring writer.

**Journalism 132C:** Magazine Reporting. If you're interested in narrative non-fiction writing, chances are you may one day write a feature for a magazine. This class will teach you the basics of magazine writing: interviewing skills, reporting, and article types.

**Journalism 153:** Magazine Writing and Editing. It never hurts to get something published, and this class will give you that chance. Journalism 153

is a class where students will write and edit stories for SJSU's own publication, *Access Magazine*. Pitch your story ideas to *Access* editors, write your story, and then see it in the magazine. A great experience to learn how to work with editors, deadlines, photographers, and artists.

**RTVF 175:** Film and Screen Writing-What's that? You have a great idea for a new TV show? This class will help you take your short story and turn it into a hit movie. Perhaps you've got a great idea for a movie, but have no idea how to transform your English writing skills into ways in which a Hollywood director could use them. Well, learn how in this class from our friends at the Radio, Television, Film, and Theatre school.

**Biology 65:** Human Anatomy. We know you've always wanted to write your very own forensics-style detective



novel, but have absolutely no clue as to which organs are effected when you shoot somebody in the stomach. Well, Biology 65 is here to help. This class will let you examine actual human organs and a real cadaver. How can your crime drama be authentic if you misplace the body parts?

# ENROLL EARLY!

To ensure getting (and keeping!) the courses you need, make sure to register at your first opportunity and pay your tuition on time.

## Fall 2009 Course Descriptions:

### ENGL 100W, Section 1

Advanced workshops in Reading and Composition, Creative Arts, English Studies, and Technical Writing. Prerequisite: Completion of Core GE, satisfaction of WST, and upper division standing. The English Studies Writing Workshop is required of all English majors before they achieve senior standing. English majors cannot receive credit for the Technical Writing Workshop.

MW: 0900-1015 Krishnaswamy  
T: 1630-1915 Wilson

### ENGL 100W, Section 2

This course will focus on close and careful reading of literary texts from a range of periods and locations of English literary production. We will take the same care in reading and apply it to our own writing and argumentation as we develop persuasive, polished, and well-supported essays of literary analysis.

MW: 1200-1315 Brada-Williams

### ENGL 100W, Section 3

Students will engage in the reading, thinking, researching, and writing processes that produce clear and purposeful critical essays that demonstrate an understanding of

and illuminate for others how literature contains and conveys its effects and meanings. Approximately one half of the semester will be spent on the study of poetry. Prerequisite: Passing score on WST.

TR: 0900-1015 Harris

### ENGL 101. Intro to Literary Criticism, Section 1

Study of various historical and contemporary approaches to literature, including New Criticism, structuralism and post-structuralism, New Historicism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, post-colonialism, feminism, and queer theory. An

emphasis will be placed on learning to apply these different methods of interpretation through a workshop format. Prerequisite: ENGL 100W  
F: 0900-1145 Brada-Williams

### ENGL 101. Intro to Literary Criticism, Section 2

Application of critical models to various literary, visual, and digital texts. Critical models will include foundational twentieth-century theory, feminism, Queer theory, Marxism, post-colonialism, etc. Though we will apply these critical models to texts across several historical periods and literary genres, Joseph Conrad's

*Heart of Darkness* will be our ur-text. Prerequisite: ENGL 100W  
TR: 1030-1145 Harris

### ENGL 103. Modern English Grammar Course

Material covers standard American English sounds, word forms, sentence patterns, regional and social dialects, issues of usage and/or correctness, punctuation, and those aspects of its historical development that are pertinent to its current forms and functions. Prerequisite: Upper division standing.  
MW: 0900-1015 Cox  
TR: 1030-1145 Stork

### ENGL 106. Editing for Writers

Copy editing, substantive editing and reorganization of technical documents. Review of grammar and punctuation to ensure technical mastery and ability to justify editing decisions. Graphics editing, access aids and professional skills of an editor. Prerequisite: ENGL 1A and ENGL 1B.

MW: 1330-1445 TBA

### ENGL 109: Writing and the Young Writer

This course is designed to strengthen participants' writing skills in both creative and expository genres and to develop students' knowledge and skill as future teachers of writing. The course includes a field experience component allowing students to observe the teaching of writing in middle and high schools and to work with adolescent writers.

M: 1630-1915 TBA

**ENGL 112A. Children's Literature**

Study of literature for elementary and intermediate grades, representing a variety of cultures. Evaluation and selection of texts.

TR: 1500-1615 Rice

M: 1630-1915 Krishnaswamy

**ENGL 112B: Literature for Young Adults**

This course will acquaint students with YA books and authors. We will read six books as a class: *After the First Death*, *Speak*, *Whale Talk*, *Witness*, *Prisoner of Azkaban* and *First Crossing*. The texts for the class are *Literature for Today's Young Adults* and *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story*.

W: 1630-1915 Warner

**ENGL 116. Myth in Literature**

Relations between archetypes, artistic style and cultural context in masterworks, ancient through modern. Prerequisite: Upper division standing.

TR: 1200-1315 Stork

**ENGL 117: Film, Literature, and Culture, Section 1**

Will focus on English-language fiction from outside the United States as a context for films that are in some way connected. The relative strengths and weaknesses of fiction and film as art forms will be discussed, as will the achievements and insights of each particular work, and the cultural background against which it can be seen.

T: 1630-1915 Meshner

**ENGL 117: Film, Literature, and Culture, Section 2**

An exploration and comparison of narrative in film and literature, the focus of the class will be on cultural definition, change and the interaction between cultures. We will examine film and literature from five different continents and compare their representations of colonialism, gender, sexuality, and their use of narrative form.

W: 1800-2045 Brada-Williams

**ENGL 118. Modern European Fiction**

Representative European novels in English translation from the French, German, Scandinavian, Russian, Central European, Spanish and Italian. Prerequisite: Upper division standing.

R: 1800-2045 Wilson

**ENGL 123C: South Pacific Literature**

Writers from the South Pacific have produced some of the most impressive fiction written in English over the past century. We will read six or seven novels or story collections by authors such as Miles Franklin, Joseph Furphy, Patrick White, David Malouf, Peter Carey, Witi Ihimaera, Keri Hulme, Albert Wendt, Sia Figiel, and others.

R: 1630-1915 Meshner

**ENGL 123D. Literature for Global Understanding – Asia**

Examines the cultures and literary arts of Asia, covering representative texts and authors from various sub-regions of Asia. Prerequisite: Completion of core GE, satisfaction of WST, and upper division standing. Students who begin continuous enrollment at a CCC or

a CSU in Fall 2005 or later, completion of, or co-requisite in, a 100W course is required. GE: V  
MW: 1030-1145 Krishnaswamy

**ENGL 125A: European Literature: Homer to Dante.**

Euro-lit's classic hits, from Homer and Sappho to Dante's *Inferno*. An epic course of drama queens and poetic justice.

TR: 1030-1145 Meshner

**ENGL 129. Intro to Career Writing**

Practice in professional writing (please note that this is NOT a creative writing course). We will create two newsletters and students will participate in a variety of tasks aimed at producing both the literary content and the publication's production, e.g. editing, proofreading, layout, photography. Prerequisite: Upper division standing.

TR: 1330-1445 Miller

**ENGL 130. Writing Fiction**

Workshop in short stories or other short fiction. Beginning the novel in individual cases. May be repeated once for credit. Prerequisite: ENGL 71 (or equivalent) or instructor consent.

MW: 1330-1445 Taylor

T: 1630-1915 TBA

**ENGL 131. Writing Poetry**

Workshop in verse forms. Study of traditional and contemporary models. May be repeated once for credit. Prerequisite: ENGL 71 (or equivalent) or instructor consent.

R: 1630-1915 Karim

**ENGL 133. Reed Magazine**

Student-edited and managed literary magazine. Contents selected from local, national and international

submissions. Students urged to work on the magazine for the two semesters required for publication. Open to all majors. May be repeated once for credit.

M: 1630-1915 Taylor

### **ENGL 135. Writing Nonfiction**

Advanced writing workshop in creative nonfiction. In this class we will experiment with four subgenres of nonfiction: the personal essay, travel writing, profiles and feature articles. Prerequisite: ENGL 71, 100W, 105, 129, or instructor consent. Repeatable once for credit. T: 1800-2045 Miller

### **ENGL 140A. Old English**

Introduction to the language, with short selections for translation. TR: 0900-1015 Stork

### **ENGL 144: Shakespeare I**

This course will introduce some of the major plays of William Shakespeare. Play will be considered within the context of the cultural and political atmosphere of Elizabethan England and by postmodern theories of literature. Students will gain a basic knowledge of Shakespeare's thematic questions and a solid understanding of the language he used to explore these themes.

MW: 1030-1145 Eastwood

TR: 1500-1615 Fleck

### **ENGL 145: Shakespeare and Performance**

We will examine in-depth several of Shakespeare's plays, specifically addressing issues of performance and interpretation. Paying particular attention to modern productions, we will analyze the ways in which production elements such as setting, casting, staging, costumes, editing,

casting, staging, costumes, editing, and individual performances shape and create meaning (or fail to do so) for the audiences of today.

Required for the English Single-Subject Credential.

MW: 0900-1015 Eastwood

### **ENGL 146. The Later English Renaissance**

English poetic forms and prose styles from the accession of James I to the fall of the Commonwealth. Writers may include Donne, Bacon, Wroth, Lanyer, Browne and Marvell.

TR: 0900-1015 TBA

### **ENGL 149, Techno Romanticism**

The British Romantic-era was the most intellectually and technologically productive era in all of England: The Industrial Revolution forced citizens to abandon agrarian life and embrace an urban existence that was full of prostitutes, raw sewage, cholera, and scientific experimentation. To capture this, we'll focus our semester on Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*. Prerequisites: WST & 100W TR: 1330-1445 Harris

### **ENGL 166: American Lit Since 1945**

We will read works of modern and contemporary American drama, fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, beginning with the post-World War II era. We will continue reading works depicting social and cultural conditions in the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and 90s. We will also read writers who reconceive and rework literary styles and genres, culminating with representations for the new millennium.

MW: 1330-1445 Soldofsky

### **ENGL 167. Steinbeck**

Major works of John Steinbeck. Use of Steinbeck Center for research.

MW: 1030-1145 Shillinglaw

### **ENGL 168. The American Novel**

Selected American novels from the Revolution to the present.

TR: 1030-1145 TBA

### **ENGL 169. Ethnicity in American Literature**

Study of race and ethnicity in the literary arts of North America. Prerequisite: Completion of core GE, satisfaction of WST, and upper division standing. For students who begin continuous enrollment at a CCC or a CSU in Fall 2005 or later, completion of, or co-requisite in a 100W course is required. GE: S TR: 0900-1015 Chow

### **ENGL 174. Literature, Self, and Society**

Study of literary works written throughout our national history in order to explore depictions of self, society, equality, and structured inequality. Prerequisite: Completion of core GE, satisfaction of WST, and upper division standing. For students who begin continuous enrollment at a CCC or a CSU in Fall 2005 or later, completion of, or co-requisite in a 100W course is required. GE: S TR: 1500-1615 Chow

### **ENGL 180. Individual Studies, Sections 1 – 3**

By arrangement with instructor and department chair approval. Prerequisite: Upper division standing. Repeatable for Credit/No Credit TBA Cox

**ENGL 190: Honors Seminar –**

Pride and/or Prejudice: The Emergence and Suppression of Queer Identities in Literature. This course will trace the emergence of what we now proudly (post Stonewall) claim as “homosexual” identities as they have appeared in literature from the sixteenth century to today. The central discussion will take shape around the consideration of the ways in which literature serves both to express and to suppress homosexual desire.

MW: 1200-1315 Eastwood

**ENGL 193: Senior Seminar**

This course invites students to reflect on their experiences in the English major and in light of the department’s Learning Goals. Assignments will include: A portfolio, revisions and expansions on previous works, writing a research paper, read and respond to regularly assigned texts, and write a research-informed critical or creative paper. Readings will focus on representation of the self and self-evaluation.

MW: 1030-1145 Cox

W: 1630-1915 Douglass

**ENGL 199. Writing Internship and Seminar, Sections 1 – 3**

Internship at a local industry, publisher, arts or public agency. Discussion of experiences and problems in the internship. Study of professional practices and demands, including those of career preparation and development. Prerequisite: 3.0 GPA both overall and in English; no credit in English major. Repeatable for Credit/No Credit

TBA Cox

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# Letter from the Department Chair

*John Engell*

This has been a rewarding year in the department. We have instituted the new Concentration in Creative Writing and a number of students have already declared that concentration as their major. We have revised the basic literature major, emphasizing a thorough grounding in both British and American literature as well as reaffirming our commitment to World and Comparative Literature. We have enjoyed record enrollments, especially in Freshman Composition and lower-division General Education, but the major and its concentrations have also been successful. Our graduate programs—M.A. and M.F.A.—are thriving. The Center for Literary Arts under the direction first of Kelly Harrison and later Charles McLeod has brought many superb writers to campus; readings have been well attended. The Publicity Committee, chaired by Cathleen Miller, has coordinated several events including Creative Writing Week (with thanks to Persis Karim and Nick Taylor for organizing the Career Fair that introduced the week) and Kate Evans's superb reading followed by a celebratory party for faculty, students, and alumni. The Steinbeck Center and its director, Paul Douglass, have sponsored several splendid speakers, including Susan Shillinglaw.

In Fall 2009 there will be a few changes among the tenure-line faculty. Bonnie Cox will be stepping down as Composition Coordinator and Nancy Stork will be returning to full-time teaching. Bonnie will assume the duties of Associate Chair, and Cathy Gabor will begin her work in a newly named and defined position: Director of Writing Programs.



I thank Bonnie for her work as Composition Coordinator and Nancy for her efforts as Associate Chair. Allison Heisch will retire in May; she has been a fine teacher and member of the department; her colleagues and students will miss her. Finally, I trust we will also have a new Director of the Center for Literary Arts, though I cannot as of the time of writing this letter tell you the name of the new director.

But in many ways, the situation in Fall 2009 will be grim. Because of the cuts mandated for San José State by California State University Chancellor Charles Reed—enrollment and budget cuts involving one-third of all such cuts in the 23-campus CSU system—our department has been told to offer approximately 50 fewer sections than we offered in Fall 2008. I have to date cut approximately 42 sections and may have to cancel more. Because the university is attempting to decrease freshman enrollment by 25% in a single year, the majority of these cuts involve Freshman Composition. I have attempted to spread the additional cuts over all areas of the department's offerings, so as to retain the integrity of each of our programs. However, nothing I or anyone else can do will save the jobs of a number of our dedicated and excellent lecturers. The mandated cuts are so severe that some layoffs will be inevitable.

As many of you know, I have publicly and repeatedly opposed the size of the enrollment and budget cuts to San José State on the grounds that they are unfair and far greater than the cuts mandated for each of the other 22 campuses in the CSU system. I do not, however, anticipate that my efforts, or those of many others, will significantly change the situation. It is extremely difficult to reverse mandated enrollment and budget cuts—even grossly unfair and disproportionate ones—during the current economic crisis in the State of California and the United States.

## Creative *continued from page 2*

specialization (e.g. Sandra Gilbert, the visiting writer this year, is a poet). If there isn't a literature course available in that area, they can create a special topics course (Engl 181). Undergraduates in the literature course often have a creative writing option where the visiting author will let the students do at least one creative assignment.

With a required nine units of literature courses, 15 units of creative

writing courses (including the workshops and *Reed*), and 24 units of core requirements (18 of which are shared with the other English concentrations), this new addition is in full swing. For a complete list of requirements, visit the department website, <http://www.sjsu.edu/english>, and click on "Creative Writing Concentration" under the heading "Top Ten Reasons to Apply to the Undergraduate Programs."

The faculty members at San Jose State are excited about the new creative writing concentration. Not only does it attract more students to the major, but it offers an artistic and balanced option for students interested in careers in writing. And best of all, it's only a matter of time before SJSU students' names start showing up on book jackets.