

**San José State University**  
**College of Humanities and the Arts/ Department of English & Comparative Literature**  
**ENGL 71, Introduction to Creative Writing, Section 36, Spring, 2021**

**Course and Contact Information**

Instructor(s):	Johnny Damm
Office Location:	Online
Telephone:	408-924-5046
Email:	john.damm@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	M/W11:00-11:45 (Zoom link in Canvas)
Class Days/Time:	Online/ Asynchronous
Classroom:	Online
GE Category:	Letters C2

**Course Description**

General Course Description

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

Section-Specific Course Description

Developing as a writer requires a commitment to two inseparable activities: reading and writing. We read in order to discover what we most value in writing and to get a glimpse of the full range of possibilities in the current literary scene.

So, these will be the two activities of this class. You will read and discuss contemporary writers of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction—analyzing the writers’ craft and how it might apply to your own work. In parallel, you will be practicing and experimenting with writing—completing regular writing exercises in most classes. Finally, you will produce your own polished work of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction and, in workshop, critique the work of your peers.

**Course Format**

This is an **asynchronous online course** with two Canvas course modules required to be completed each week. As such, the course requires a computer, access to Canvas, and reliable internet connectivity.

## **MYSJSU Messaging**

All course materials such as syllabus, readings, handouts, notes, and assignment instructions can be found on the [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](http://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. Most importantly, we will be having discussions and critiquing each other's work through Canvas. Please set your Canvas notifications so that you receive announcements, which will be sent out regularly. You are responsible for monitoring Canvas throughout the semester. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through [MySJSU on Spartan App Portal](http://one.sjsu.edu) <http://one.sjsu.edu> (or other communication system as indicated by the instructor) to learn of any updates. For help using Canvas, see the [Canvas Student Resources page](http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/student_resources) ([http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/student\\_resources](http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/student_resources)).

## **GE Learning Outcomes (GELO)**

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

- 1) Decipher and understand the form and content of assigned literary works;
- 2) Comprehend the historical and cultural contexts of assigned literary works;
- 3) Recognize the accomplishments of and issues related to writing by men and women representing diverse cultural traditions;
- 4) Acquire through both individual and collaborative/workshop efforts of a written and oral nature the skills necessary for reading, discussing, analyzing, interpreting, and—most importantly— emulating and writing works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction;
- 5) Communicate such skills with clarity and precision;
- 6) Develop an appreciation of literary works as expressions of human intellect and imagination, and as representations of diverse human cultures;
- 7) Develop the ability to write literary works that express intellect and imagination and that represent diversity in human cultures;
- 8) Respond to literature through clear and effective communication in both written and oral work;
- 9) Read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility;
- 10) Appreciate how literary works illuminate enduring human concerns while also representing matters specific to a particular culture;
- 11) Write works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction that are of interest and value to the writer, to other students in the course, and to a diverse reading audience.

## **Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)**

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

- 1) Appreciate the wide breadth of contemporary writing in poetry, fiction, and essay;
- 2) Express themselves creatively in poetry, fiction, and essay;
- 3) Associate reading as a crucial component to writing;
- 4) Consider writing—their own and others'—as contributing to a larger community both inside and outside the university;
- 5) Place their own creative output within the larger contemporary writing community.

## Required Texts/Readings

### Textbook

You aren't required to buy any books, but you will be assigned reading for almost every module. All readings are PDFs available through Canvas and linked through your syllabus.

### Other Readings

All readings are PDFs available through Canvas and linked through your syllabus. Included authors:

Poetry: Danez Smith, Hanif Abdurraqib, Morgan Parker, W. Todd Kaneko, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Colette Arrand, Fatimah Asghar, Christopher Soto, Jenny Zhang, Timothy Yu, CA Conrad, Raquel Salas Rivera, Layli Long Soldier, Ashraf Fayadh, Jayy Dodd, Terrance Hayes, Mónica de la Torre, Claudia Rankine, Jos Charles, Jordan Abel, Marilyn Chin, Vanessa Angélica Villarreal, Jay Besamer, Nikki Wallschlaeger, Jennifer Tamayo, Bhanu Kapil, Simone White, Eileen Myles

Fiction: Lydia Davis, Toni Cade Bambara, Ursula K. Le Guin, Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, Carmen Maria Machado, Clarice Lispector, Tommy Orange, Casey Plett, Sandra Cisneros, Jenny Zhang, Amparo Dávila, Sabrina Helen Li

Creative Nonfiction: Jamaica Kincaid, Joe Brainard, Joseph Han, Kiese Laymon, Carmen Maria Machado, Hanif Abdurraqib, Valeria Luiselli, Shamala Gallagher, Julia Madsen, Brandon Shimoda

### Course Requirements and Assignments

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

#### Writing Assignments

*Poems*: Three poems. Two will be workshopped, and an additional third will be included in your portfolio.

*Short Story*: One piece of short fiction

*Essay*: One piece of creative nonfiction.

Your pieces are due to Canvas three times during the course of the semester. Late submissions will not be workshopped.

*Creative Wildcard*: One poem/poem sequence, short story, literary essay, or hybrid form of your choice. Throughout the semester, you will regularly complete writing exercises in class—encouraging you to try new forms, techniques, etc. Your creative wildcard—which will be included in your final portfolio but not workshopped—should be drawn from these exercises or inspired by our outside reading. This piece should be free of errors but doesn't need to be as polished or revised as the other work: use this submission to demonstrate your openness to experimentation and (previously) unfamiliar modes of writing.

## Workshop Assignments

For each day of workshop, you must fully annotate and critique in Canvas the work of your peers assigned to you. You are required to both mark on the text (suggestions, errors) and to write a developed critique as a comment in Canvas. This critique should be one to two *full* paragraphs, a minimum of 100 words. You will be typically be critiquing 6 works of your peers on workshop weeks, so you must be careful to budget enough time to do them properly. Additionally, you are required to be active in class discussion, regularly sharing your critiques with the class as a whole. No late critiques will be accepted.

## Reading Assignments

Alongside reading and critiquing the work of your peers, you will be reading the work of outside writers, with a substantial number of pages assigned every week. These readings will provide the material for our discussions of craft and form; they provide the framework for the discussion of *your* work. So, completing all the assigned reading is absolutely crucial.

## Final Portfolio

At the end of the semester, you will turn in a portfolio that consists of edited/ final versions of your creative work; a collection previous drafts will also be turned in separately. It is crucial that all pieces be substantially revised from their earlier, workshopped drafts. The quality of your revisions will be a significant factor in your portfolio grade.

## Assignment Word Count and Learning Goals

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Word Count</b>	<b>GELO</b>
3 Poems (two drafts each)	Varies	4,5,7,8,11
1 Short Story (two drafts)	1,500-2,000	4,5,7,8,11
1 Literary Essay (two drafts)	1,500-2,000	4,5,7,8,11
1 Creative Wildcard	Varies	4,5,7,8,11
Workshop Critiques	100-200 each	3, 4, 5, 8, 9
Revised Portfolio of Work	Varies	4,5,7,8,11

## **Final Examination or Evaluation**

As the culminating activity for this course, your final portfolio will be due during our assigned final exam period.

## **Grading Information**

Final portfolio grade: 60%

Poems: 17%

Story: 17%

Literary Essay: 17%

Creative Wildcard 9%

Participation (Module Completion): 25%

Participation (Workshop Critiques): 15%

Due to the workshop format, neither your creative pieces nor your workshop critiques can be submitted late. Late critiques will not be accepted, and creative pieces submitted late to Canvas will not be workshopped. The pieces you submit to workshop will not receive a grade; they will only be graded as part of your revised final portfolio.

If you do not turn in a piece to workshop, but then submit that piece to your portfolio, your non-workshopped pieces will receive an automatic 50% deduction from that portion of your final portfolio grade.

### About Grades

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.

A (92-100); A- (90-91); B+ (88-89); B (82-87); B- (80-81); C+ (78-79); C (70-77); C- (70-71); D+ (68-69); D (62-67); D- (60-61); F (<60)

### **Classroom Protocol**

You need to participate, complete the modules on time, and be courteous to your peers and to your teacher.

### **University Policies**

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

## ENGL 71 / Introduction to Creative Writing, Spring, Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change with fair notice and how the notice will be made available. If a change occurs, you'll be informed via Canvas announcements, and the change will be reflected in the Canvas modules.

### Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	Jan 27/28	Introduction: "Tell it slant," Creative Introduction
2	Feb 1/2	Topic: (Un)Defining Poetry Reading: Poetry Reading 1 (Danez Smith, Hanif Abdurraqib, Morgan Parker, W. Todd Kaneko, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Colette Arrand) Craft Talk: Poetry & Pop Culture/ Poetry & Now
2	Feb 3/4	Topic: Poetry & "Tell it slant" Reading: Poetry Reading 2 (Fatimah Asghar, Christopher Soto, Jenny Zhang, Timothy Yu, CAConrad, Raquel Salas Rivera, Layli Long Soldier, Ashraf Fayadh, Jayy Dodd) Craft Talk: Compression
3	Feb 8/9	Topic: Form & Formlessness in Poetry Reading: Poetry Reading 3 (Terrance Hayes, Fatimah Asghar, Mónica de la Torre, Layli Long Soldier, Claudia Rankine, Jos Charles, Jordan Abel) Craft Talk: Power of Fragment, Mismatched Parts
3	Feb 10/11	Topic: Poetry & the Self Reading: Poetry Reading 4 (Marilyn Chin, Vanessa Angélica Villarreal, Jay Besamer, Nikki Wallschlaeger, Jennifer Tamayo, Bhanu Kapil, Simone White, Eileen Myles) Craft Talk: Image and Circling
4	Feb 15/16	Workshop: Poetry Group 1 & 2
4	Feb 17/18	Workshop: Poetry Group 3 & 4
5	Feb 22/23	Topic: Responding to Readers and Critique No Reading Craft Talk: Orality & Performance
5	Feb 24/25	Workshop: Poetry Group 5 & 6

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
6	Mar 1/2	Workshop: Poetry Group 7 & 8
6	Mar 3/4	Topic: (Un)Defining Fiction Reading: Fiction Reading 1 (Lydia Davis, Toni Cade Bambara, Ursula K. Le Guin) Craft Talk: The Question of Conflict
7	Mar 8/9	Topic: Fiction and “Tell it slant” Reading: Fiction Reading 2 (Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, Carmen Maria Machado) Craft Talk: Show <i>and</i> Tell
7	Mar 10/11	Topic: Building Character in Fiction Reading: Fiction Reading 3 (Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, Clarice Lispector, Tommy Orange) Craft Talk: Conflicting Traits & the Power of Fragment
8	Mar 15/16	Topic: The (Non)Importance of Plot in Fiction Reading: Fiction Reading 4 (Casey Plett, Sandra Cisneros, Jenny Zhang) Craft Talk: Dialogue, Revisiting the Power of Fragment & the Question of Conflict
8	Mar 17/18	Workshop: Fiction Group 1 & 2
9	Mar 22/23	Workshop: Fiction Group 3 & 4
9	Mar 24/25	Topic: Revisiting “Tell it slant” & Finding Poetry in Fiction Reading: Fiction Reading 5 (Amparo Dávila, Sabrina Helen Li) Craft Talk: Techniques Fiction Shares with Poetry
	Mar 29-Apr 2	HOLIDAY
10	Apr 5/6	Workshop: Fiction Group 5 & 6
10	Apr 7/8	Workshop: Fiction Group 7 & 8
11	Apr 12/13	Topic: Workshop Biz and Where We’re At
11	Apr 14/15	Topic: (Un)Defining Creative Nonfiction Reading: CNF Reading 1 (Jamaica Kincaid, Joe Brainard, Joseph Han)

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</b>
		Craft Talk: Fiction Techniques and ‘True Stories’
12	Apr 19/20	Topic: Memoir and Examining the Self in CNF Reading: CNF Reading 2 (Kiese Laymon, Carmen Maria Machado) Craft Talk: Self as Character and The Power of Fragment
12	Apr 21/22	Topic: Looking Outward in CNF Reading: CNF Reading 3 (Hanif Abdurraqib, Valeria Luiselli) Craft Talk: Observation, Research, & Reportage
13	Apr 26/27	Topic: “Tell it Slant” & Finding Poetry in CNF Reading: CNF Reading 4 (Shamala Gallagher, Julia Madsen, Brandon Shimoda)
13	Apr 28/29	Workshop: CNF Group 1 & 2
14	May 3/4	Topic: Workshop Biz and Where We’re At Workshop: CNF Group 3 & 4
14	May 5/6	Workshop: CNF Group 5 & 6
15	May 10/11	Workshop: CNF Group 7 & 8
15	May 12/13	Topic: Revision Craft Talk: Starting with the End & Other Techniques for Revision
	May 17	Last Class Class Reading (video of you reading due by May 15)
Final	May 21	PORTFOLIO DUE Friday, May 21 by 5:15 pm