

# ENGLISH GRADUATE NEWSLETTER

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Revathi Krishnaswamy, Graduate Coordinator

Alan Soldofsky, Director of Creative Writing



Don George

## Office Hours

MA Advising: Professor Revathi Krishnaswamy's drop-in office hours for Fall 2017 are Mondays 1:00-3:00 PM. Additional times are available by appointment. Please feel free to call or to stop by her office in FO 109. Contact her at [revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu](mailto:revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu) or (408) 924-1384.

MFA Advising: Professor Alan Soldofsky's hours are Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays 2:30-4:00 PM, and Thursdays in the PM by appointment in FO 106. Contact him at [alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu](mailto:alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu) or (408) 924-4432.

Note: Email is the best way to contact us during the winter break. We will resume office hours when the spring semester begins in January.

## Deadlines for May 2018 MA and MFA Graduates

Please consult the GAPE website for current candidacy and graduation deadlines: [http://www.sjsu.edu/gape/current\\_students/deadlines/](http://www.sjsu.edu/gape/current_students/deadlines/) Note that if you are planning to graduate in May 2018, you should file your official 'Petition for Advancement to Graduate Candidacy' by October 1, 2017. Applications (or reactivations of applications) for May 2018 graduation must be filed by February 10, 2018. The relevant forms can be found at the GAPE forms website: <http://www.sjsu.edu/gape/forms/>

## Introducing Lurie Chair: Don George

National Geographic has called Don George "a legendary travel writer and editor." Don has visited more than ninety countries on six continents, has published hundreds of articles in dozens of magazines and newspapers around the world, and regularly speaks and teaches at conferences, campuses, and companies from San Francisco to Singapore to London. Don's most recent book is *The Way of Wanderlust: The Best Travel Writing of Don George*. This award-winning collection presents 35 stories from Don's 40 years of traveling and writing. Don also wrote the bestselling travel writing guide in the world, *How to Be a Travel Writer*, published by *Lonely Planet*. In addition, Don has edited ten acclaimed literary travel anthologies, including *An Innocent Abroad*, *Better Than Fiction*, and *The Kindness of Strangers*. Don has been Travel Editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, founder and editor of Salon.com's *Wanderlust* travel site, and Global Travel Editor for *Lonely Planet*. He is currently Editor at Large for *National Geographic Traveler*, Special Features Editor for BBC Travel, and editor of Geographic Expedition's literary blog, *Wanderlust: Literary Journeys for the Discerning Traveler*. He is also co-founder and chairman of the renowned Book Passage Travel Writers & Photographers Conference. Don grew up in Connecticut, and lived in Paris, Athens, and Tokyo before settling in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is a graduate of Princeton University and the Hollins College graduate program in creative writing. His website is [www.don-george.com](http://www.don-george.com).

## University Policy Changes

University Policy now requires that graduate students must be enrolled in classes when they finish their culminating experiences (such as theses and exams). Note that it is already a policy that students must finish their theses while they are enrolled in their 299 units (or else enroll in 1290 which is basically just a fee, not a class). MA students not doing a thesis should make sure they are enrolled in a class during the semester they plan to take the exam.

## MA Comprehensive Exam Schedule

Spring 2018 MA exam will be given on the following consecutive Saturdays in Feb: 17th (Part 1) and 24th (Part II). The time and place for both exams is Saturday 9:00-12:30 AM in Sweeney Hall 229 (unless you are notified of a change). Please let Professor Krishnaswamy know at least two weeks in advance if you plan to take one or both parts by submitting a completed self-survey of your reading (available on the web as part of the MA exam guidelines: <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html>)

Computers will be supplied for the exam. Please indicate when you sign up whether you would prefer an Apple or a PC.

## MA Comprehensive Exam Format

Questions on the first part of the exam cover the reading list through the 18th century and those on the second part cover material from the Romantic period onward. Expect questions on or informed by literary theory in both parts. Each of the two parts takes three and a half hours and asks for three separate essays. Students may take one or both parts of the exam in any term and in any order. The reading list and guidelines for the exam are at <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html>

Copies of some previous exams are also posted on the website. Please note that section C of the Part 1 exam is a close reading of a poem and section C of the Part 2 exam is on World Literature.

## Spring 2018 Graduate Courses

At least 21 of the 30 units of classes required for the MA program should be in 200-numbered English courses. Of the 30, only 6 units can be taken as credit/no credit independent study of thesis units. Upper-division English coursework (100 level) may count for graduate students if you have received permission of the instructor as well as the MA or MFA Coordinator. Classes taken outside the department will not count except in unusual circumstances. Get prior approval from your advisor before you take such courses.

Here are the courses, faculty, and meeting times for our seven Spring 2018 graduate course offerings:

<b>Class</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Professor</b>
208 Seminar in Comparative Literature	M	7:00-9:45 PM	Revathi Krishnaswamy and Alan Soldofsky
215 Seminar in Myth and Symbolism	T	7:00-9:45 PM	Nancy Stork
228 Seminar in Genre Studies	W	7:00-9:45 PM	Adrienne Eastwood
240 Poetry Writing Workshop	M	4:00-6:45 PM	Sam Maio
241 Fiction Writing Workshop	R	4:00-6:45 PM	Nick Taylor
242 Nonfiction Writing Workshop	W	4:00-6:45 PM	Don George, Lurie Chair
255 Thematic Studies in American Literature	T	4:00-6:45 PM	Paul Douglass

### *Spring 2018 Graduate Courses, cont.*

Check the schedule for additional upper division undergraduate course offerings that may be of interest, and which will not be covered by the Graduate Curriculum, such as ENGL 115 (Bible as Literature), ENGL 141 (Medieval Literature), ENGL 163 (American Literature 1865-1945), and ENGL 165 (Topics in Ethnic American Literature).

Conditionally classified students must complete their required undergraduate course work before enrolling in graduate seminars. When you are eligible for classified status, the change is not automatic; you need to see the MA Coordinator to file the necessary form and await approval.

## **Spring 2018 Course Descriptions**

### **English 208: Comparative Literature, M 7:00-9:45 PM (Professors Soldofsky and Krishnaswamy)**

America has cultivated a popular narrative about being a "land of immigrants," and American immigrant literature is widely acknowledged as a significant expression of American culture. Yet, the very category of "American immigrant literature" is not clearly defined. In addition to fundamental questions about whether or not slave and refugee writings belong in the category, some writers/scholars contend the category is too broad to be useful when applied universally to all immigrant groups, while others claim it is too narrow and pertains only to particular ethnic or refugee/diaspora group it represents. In ENGL 208, we will engage this debate creatively and critically by reading a wide range of works by immigrants or their next-generation descendants (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and dramatic literature). In doing so, we will trace the authors' literary histories and aesthetic conventions. We will also engage in curriculum design by seeking to determine which immigrant works would be best suited for teaching Silicon Valley undergraduates.

### **English 215: Myth and Symbolism, T 7:00-9:45 PM (Professor Stork)**

Comparative study of mythic and symbolic forms in literature, focusing on theory and a variety of texts. With prior permission of graduate advisor may be repeatable once for credit. Prerequisite: Classified standing or instructor consent. Note: This course satisfies graduate-level GWAR in this master's program.

### **English 228: Genre Studies, W 7:00-9:45 PM (Professor Eastwood)**

*Genre Play: The Uses of Form in Early Modern English Literature*

Genre, or form, is not a static, as one might think. Rather, forms are dynamic, shifting categories that are historically determined. Meanings are shaped through genre "play," complex intersections among author, culture, form and genre, and therefore, studying genre can reveal important nuances about literary texts and the cultures that produce them. In this course, we will explore current genre theory, and interrogate the various ways in which early modern authors deploy form and genre, and we will analyze the ways in which they function in literary texts. We will look specifically at dramatic modes (comedy, tragedy, history, and romance), the pastoral (both in poetry and prose), the epic, the epithalamion, and the sonnet. Authors we will cover will include Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Philip Sidney, and John Donne.

### **English 240: Poetry Writing Workshop, M 4:00-6:45 (Professor Maio)**

Poetics and poetry writing as preparation for thesis. Includes theory and practice of major trends in contemporary poetry. Intensive workshop experience. With prior permission of graduate advisor may be repeatable twice for credit. Prerequisite: Graduate standing and admission via portfolio acceptance to the Writing Focus.

### **English 241: Fiction Writing Workshop, R 4:00-6:45 PM (Professor Nick Taylor)**

This is the most advanced fiction workshop offered at SJSU. Experimentation, risk-taking, and stretching of all kinds will be encouraged. Students submit two original pieces of fiction plus a significant revision in lieu of a final exam. The texts for the semester are *Best American Short Stories 2017* (eds. Meg Wolitzer & Heidi Pitlor) and an anthology of published short stories chosen by the class. Registration priority goes to MFAs with a primary concentration in fiction, followed by those with a secondary concentration in fiction, and finally graduate students in other programs. If you are not in the MFA program, you must submit a writing sample to the instructor before you may register. English 241 is repeatable twice for credit.

### **English 242: Nonfiction Writing Workshop, W 4:00-6:45 PM (Lurie Chair Don George)**

For me, nonfiction writing is a way to create a three-way connection between yourself, your experience in the world, and your reader. I have been a travel writer and editor for almost four decades, and my goal in this workshop is to pass on the lessons I have learned – from both sides of the writer-editor relationship -- about how to make this connection as compelling and complete as possible. The workshop will focus on craft, with special attention devoted to structure, development, takeaway, and the writing process. I will also cover how to prepare for a trip, take notes in the field, and determine your story after you return. In addition, the class will include discussion of outlets/markets for travel and other nonfiction writing, and advice on how to work with editors. Class assignments and activities will include reading and discussing exemplary travel stories, writing exercises, and critiquing each other's submitted work. While the class will focus on travel writing, all nonfiction writers are welcome. My goal is to inform, entertain, and inspire – and as a writer, that should be your goal too. I will do my best to teach you what I've learned in four decades, and I expect you to do your best to pour your heart, passion, and intelligence into your work and into your critiques of your classmates' work. Writing requirements: In addition to writing exercises, students will be required to create at least two substantive articles.

### **English 255 Thematic Studies in American Literature, T 4:00-6:45 PM (Professor Douglass)**

#### *Road Trip!: Dreams and Nightmares of American Culture*

The Open Road symbolizes Americans' longing to recreate themselves, to leave the past behind: "Nothing behind me, everything ahead of me," as Kerouac put it. Perhaps it began with Lewis and Clark's expedition. More likely it came packed in the trunks and cases that crossed the ocean with pilgrims and convicts in America's first wave of colonizers. Immigrant experience plants the seeds of the Road Trip in American Culture, which has always had a dark and light character—a journey of loss mingled with hope, as in *The Grapes of Wrath*. This seminar will explore the Road Trip as image, theme, motif, and method in American Fiction, Poetry, and Song. If the Road Trip symbolizes an American Dream of mobility and freedom, it also reflects an American Nightmare of ceaseless wandering, a (usually) male-centric vision of perpetual youth and escape. The course will deal with core novels and poems in the American Road Trip Canon by writers like Whitman, Twain, Frost, Kerouac, and Steinbeck; and also more recent works by writers like Hunter Thompson, Cynthia Kadohata, Mona Simpson, Bill Bryson, William Least Heat-Moon, and Cormac McCarthy; as well as popular songs from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It will touch on film and TV's contributions to the Road Trip mystique. Class members will make presentations of their research as they write seminar papers and help to put together online resources for students, teachers, and independent researchers wanting to know more about the topic.



## Graduate Assistant and Teaching Associate Positions for 2017-2018

Both current MA and MFA students and applicants who are eligible for admission to the program in Fall 2018 are invited to apply to our Teaching Associate and Graduate Assistant positions. New admits to the department and applicants with little or no teaching experience may be assigned as Graduate Assistants for a semester or for a year. They will assist faculty teaching composition courses or large sections of literature courses, or sometimes other duties. Applicants who have served as Graduate Assistants or who have otherwise acquired the necessary experience may be assigned as Teaching Associates. They will usually teach one section of composition, English 1A, under the guidance of the Teaching Associate Coordinator, Professor Ryan Skinnell. Graduate Assistants can expect to work an average of 10 hours a week and gross about \$489 a month during the academic year (about \$2,934 per semester). Teaching Associates earn \$534 a month (\$3,204 per course). Teaching Associates are also given fee reimbursements, which pay for state and campus fees at the California-resident level for up to 6 units per section taught (if the TA is not already covered by a grant for fees). TAs must successfully complete English 259 (Seminar in Composition Studies) during or before their first semester of teaching.

To apply, write to Professor Revathi Krishnaswamy and submit a résumé, a writing sample, a cover letter describing your goals and your experience, and three letters of reference from faculty in the department. If you are currently applying for admittance to the program in the Fall, you may use letters from people outside SJSU, preferably faculty who know your undergraduate work or who have supervised you in some kind of employment related to education. Also include your undergraduate GPA in English and a list of any English graduate courses you have taken with the grade you earned in each. All materials should be sent directly to Professor Revathi Krishnaswamy. Applications for Teaching Associates must be received no later than February 1st, 2018. Applications for Graduate Assistants must be received no later than April 1st, 2018. You may write a single letter of application to cover GA and TA positions— simply tell us your preference and let us know if you would accept the alternative if offered (all applications for both must meet the earlier deadlines for the TAsip). We will conduct interviews during the first and second week of February for 2018-2019 appointments. Appointments are generally for the full academic year and we will not consider applications for TAsips again until Spring 2019. For more information, please visit <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/TA/>.

## Graduate Student and Alumni Accomplishments

MFA alumna **Kym Cunningham** has just published a book of poems, *L'appel du vide*, with Finishing Line Press. She also has an upcoming publication: <https://www.finishinglinepress.com/product/lappel-du-vide-by-kym-cunningham/>

**Shirindokht Nourmanesh**, a former student who is Development Manager at Pars Equality Center (a non-profit serving Persian immigrants from Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan), has published her fourth book of poems, *Chalice of My Imagination* with Coyote Creek Books (available on Amazon) and also co-edited a collection of short stories by Iranian, British and Tasmanian writers for Transportation Press.

Current student **Irma Garcia** has published an essay titled "Confessions on Crossing Racial Spheres" in *Intercultural Press*, a small magazine starting up in LA.

## English Graduate Google Group

Please be sure to sign up for the google group for our English Graduate Program. To sign up, send a blank email to: [enggrad-group+subscribe@sjsu.edu](mailto:enggrad-group+subscribe@sjsu.edu). Key information is sent out via the google group that is essential for all MA and MFA students. Program descriptions, course descriptions, the most recent Newsletter, and other documents are posted on the Department website: <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/>. The SJSU Graduate Studies Office website publishes important deadlines, forms, and information for current students at: [http://www.sjsu.edu/gape/current\\_students/deadlines/](http://www.sjsu.edu/gape/current_students/deadlines/)

## Important Dates in 2017-2018

<b>Dec. 18</b>	Deadline for signing up to take the Spring 2018 MFA Comprehensive Exam.
<b>Jan. 14</b>	Deadline for December 2017 graduates to submit thesis for publication (or embargo)
<b>Feb. 1</b>	Deadline for August 2018 graduates to file their "Request for Candidacy" forms (requires MA or MFA Advisor's signature).
<b>Feb. 10</b>	Deadline for May 2018 graduates to submit application for award of Master's Degree to the Graduate Studies Office. (or Graduation Date Change Request).
<b>Feb 17</b>	Spring MA comprehensive exam, Part 1, SH 229, 9-12:30.
<b>Feb 24</b>	Spring MA comprehensive exam, Part 2, SH 229, 9-12:30.
<b>Feb. 23</b>	MFA Comprehensive Exam distributed electronically (9:00 AM)
<b>Feb. 26</b>	MFA Comprehensive Exam due (5:00 PM)
<b>Mar. 24</b>	Deadline to submit reading lists to sign up for the Spring MA exams (see the "Guidelines" at <a href="http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html">http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html</a> )
<b>April 1</b>	Approximate deadline for December 2018 graduates to file their "Request for Candidacy" forms (requires MA or MFA Advisor's signature).
<b>April 1</b>	Deadline for applications for 2018-2019 TA and GAships due to the Graduate Coordinator.
<b>April 8</b>	Tentative Deadline for May 2018 graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office.
<b>May 12</b>	MFA Reading

## Legacy of Poetry Day - May 3, 2017



**Alan Soldofsky with Maxine Hong Kingston, Al Young, and members of the San Jose Arts Commission.**



**Author Maxine Hong Kingston was the keynote reader at the 2017 Legacy of Poetry Day Festival.**