



# English Graduate Newsletter

San José State University

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Volume XXXIX, Number 1 October 2016: Noelle Brada-Williams, Graduate Coordinator;  
Alan Soldofsky, Director of Creative Writing

## **FALL OFFICE HOURS**

MA Advising: Professor Brada-Williams' drop-in office hours this semester are Mondays 2-4 PM as well as additional times by appointment. Please feel free to call or to stop by her office at FO 102. Phone: 924-4439; email: [Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu](mailto:Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu). Professor Soldofsky's hours are Monday, Tuesday, & Wednesday 3-4:30; and Thursday afternoons by appointment in FO 106. His office phone is 924-4432 and his email is [alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu](mailto:alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu). Professor Soldofsky's Wednesday office hours may sometimes be cancelled due to Graduate Committee Meetings.

## **DEADLINE FOR MA & MFA THESIS PROPOSALS**

Thesis proposals must come to the Graduate Committee at least five weeks before the end of the semester preceding the semester in which you will enroll for 299 credits. If you plan to write your thesis or project in the Spring 2016 term, you must get your proposal to the Graduate Committee no later than **Tuesday, November 1**. Do not wait until the deadline approaches to get started. For guidelines for MFA theses and on how to write thesis proposals, see <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/mfa/mfathesis.html>. If you are an MA student you must see the guidelines for theses and the cover sheet at <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/mathesis.html>. Once you have secured a thesis advisor or "first reader," and the thesis advisor has carefully read and approved your proposal, you can submit your proposal electronically to the chair of the Graduate Committee ([Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu](mailto:Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu)). Be sure to cc your thesis advisor in the email so that the Graduate Coordinator knows that the first reader has approved of the proposal being submitted to the Graduate Committee and has stated that it is ready for that step.

## **THE MA IN ENGLISH: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS**

"The MA in English: A Guide for Students" has been turned into a list of frequently asked

questions that is available on the web at <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/mafaq.html>.

### MA & MFA FOREIGN LANGUAGE EXAMS

Both degree programs require a level of fluency in a second language equivalent to two years of college study of a language. If within five years of filing your program (achieving Candidacy), you have completed the fourth semester (or sixth quarter) of an approved university-level foreign language course sequence with a grade of “B” or better, you have already satisfied this requirement. Please bring that to the attention of your adviser when you file for candidacy. Students who have taken coursework longer than five years previous to filing for candidacy or who have acquired their language skills and knowledge outside of an academic institution can satisfy the foreign language requirement in French, German, or Spanish, by taking the following steps:

1. Contact a language advisor (see below) and request authorization to take a foreign language placement test administered in our Media Center.
2. If the placement test results show a level of 4th semester or higher, the student will take a proficiency exam administered by a faculty member in the World Languages department in order to confirm his or her level and discuss a path to improvement, if needed.
3. If placement test results show a lower than 4th semester language level, the student will have to take the appropriate level language course, based on a conversation with the appropriate World Languages faculty member.

<b>Adviser/Examiner</b>	<b>email</b>	<b>phone</b>
Professor Jean-Luc Desalvo (French)	<a href="mailto:jean-luc.desalvo@sjsu.edu">jean-luc.desalvo@sjsu.edu</a>	924-4620
Romey Sabalius (German):	<a href="mailto:romey.sabalius@sjsu.edu">romey.sabalius@sjsu.edu</a>	924-4616
Professor Eleanor Marsh (Spanish):	<a href="mailto:eleanor.marsh@sjsu.edu">eleanor.marsh@sjsu.edu</a>	924-4614

(it is usually best to call Professor Marsh or meet her in person in office hours)

*Evidence of a first-language literacy other than English also satisfies the requirement.* For answers to questions about this requirement, or to satisfy this requirement in a language other than French, German, or Spanish, please contact Professors Brada-Williams or Soldofsky for more information.

### MA COMPREHENSIVE EXAM SCHEDULE

The Spring 2017 MA exam will be given February 4, 2016 (Part 1) and February 11, 2016 (Part II). Please let Professor Brada-Williams 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 guidelines: [www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html](http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html)).

### 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 2017 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 2017 graduate course offerings.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Day &amp; Times</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
203	Narrative Craft & Theory	Wednesday 4-6:45 PM	Professor Taylor
224	Age of Elizabeth	Monday 4-6:45 PM	Professor Eastwood
233	The Victorian Period	Wednesday 7-9:45 PM	Professor Wilson
240	Poetry Workshop	Monday 7-9:45 PM	Professor Soldofsky
241	Fiction Workshop	Tuesday 4-6:45	Lurie Visiting Author Vendela Vida
254	Genre Studies in Am. Lit.	Tuesday 7-9:45 PM	Professor Brada-Williams
257	History of Rhetoric	Thursday 4-6:45 PM	Professor Skinnell

Since enrollment is earlier than usual this year, we will include course descriptions in this edition of the newsletter.

#### **ENGL 203 - Narrative Craft & Theory: Extremely Contemporary Fiction (Professor Taylor) W 4-6:45 PM**

In this graduate literature seminar, we will read a selection of American fiction published in the last three years. I ask that participants in the seminar come prepared to read these books as critics and as writers. As critics, we will explore whether there is a “school” of contemporary American fiction. As writers, we will dissect each work in terms of form, aesthetics, and material, to determine how these authors—who are our contemporaries, if not our peers—are capturing the attention of early twenty-first-century readers. The reading load is heavy in this course (nearly four thousand pages of fiction). Writing requirements include short weekly response papers (500-1000 words) and a seminar paper or creative project (3000-5000 words).

Assigned reading may include:

Diaz, Junot, and Heidi Pitlor, eds. *Best American Short Stories 2016*.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *The Sympathizer*.

Whitehead, Colson. *The Underground Railroad*.

Groff, Lauren. *Fates and Furies*.

Klay, Phil. *Redeployment*.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Another Brooklyn*.

Palaia, Marian. *The Given World*.

Galm, Ruth. *Into the Valley*.

Watkins, Claire Vaye. *Gold Fame Citrus*.

Almeddine, Rabih. *An Unnecessary Woman*.

Greenwell, Garth. *What Belongs to You*.

**ENGL 224: Seminar in English Early Modern Literature: The Age of Elizabeth (Professor Eastwood) M 4-6:45 PM**

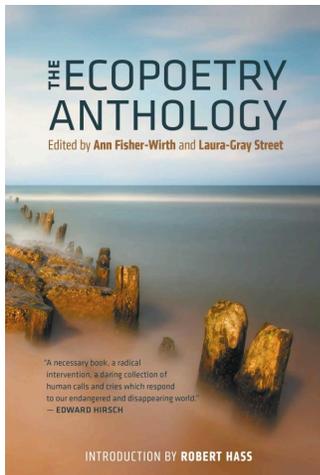
Elizabeth I had an enormous impact on early modern English culture. Although she proved herself a capable, efficient, and politically shrewd monarch, Elizabeth's reign was fraught with struggles and tensions due to her status as unmarried (and therefore heirless), female ruler in an emergently patriarchal culture. This seminar provides students with the opportunity to explore representations of this fascinating and controversial figure in a variety of early modern texts. Students will examine and discuss the deft manner in which the Virgin Queen represented herself to her people in her speeches, portraits, and court entertainments, analyzing the ways in which she turned her culture's assumptions about gender to her advantage (or was unable to do so as was sometimes the case). We will also explore the more complex ways in which Elizabeth I was represented by the major poets and playwrights of her day including Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare. Secondary texts will include biographical material, some historical essays, and a variety of criticism on the topic of Elizabeth's representation.

**English 233: Seminar in the Victorian Period (Professor Wilson) W 7:00 – 9:45PM**

The seminar will focus on selected major works and figures from the 1830s to the end of the nineteenth century. The assigned works are chosen for their literary merit as well as for their socio-cultural significance in an age that gave us Darwin, Marx and Freud. Works include: Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*; Dickens, *Bleak House*; Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*; Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; selected poetry of Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Christina Rossetti, the Pre-Raphaelites, and Hardy. When appropriate, we will supplement our readings with samples of Victorian art and music. Requirements: class presentation(s); one short explication (3-4 pp.); and one comparative seminar paper (12-15 pp.).

**English 240: Poetry Workshop and Seminar on Environmental Poetry and Eco-Poetics (Soldofsky) M 7-9:45**

Students in this MFA-level poetry writing workshop and seminar will not only produce new work but will also investigate the traditions of environmental poetry, from its roots in the pastoral to modernist poetry of place to postmodern and experimental eco-poetics. MFA students will create a portfolio of new poems plus blog entries and a presentation on the work of an environmentally-engaged poet. MA students may create new poems and/or conduct literary research--write several short papers and blog entries on individual poets or schools/traditions of ecopoetry. All students will give close attention to poetic craft and techniques of composition. (Experienced writers interested in environmental studies, earth and marine science, or in poetry from outside the English Department are encouraged to apply to enroll in this course.). MFA and MA students will participate together in weekly class workshops in which new work by class members (poetry and essays on environmentally-engaged poets and poetics) will be read and discussed with an eye toward revision. MA students and students outside of the English Department should submit three sample poems and/or short critical papers on poetry or environmental literature prior to enrolling in the course. Enrollment is by permission only (MFA students whose primary or secondary genre focus is poetry will have automatic enrollment priority. The course is capped at 16. Email writing samples as an attachment to the instructor at [alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu](mailto:alan.soldofsky@sjsu.edu).



**Vendela Vida**

**English 241: Fiction Writing Workshop (Lurie Distinguished Visiting Author-in-Residence Vendela Vida)**

This is the most advanced fiction workshop offered at SJSU. The workshop will be lead by Vendela Vida, the 2017 Lurie Distinguished Visiting Author-in-Residence, author of four novels and one book of nonfiction. Her latest novel is *The Diver's Clothes Lie Empty*. She also is a founding editor of *The Believer*. Students will benefit from the careful feedback of a community of writers with varied perspectives and aesthetics, so that they may start to see their work from the outside and begin to revise their original ideas and approaches. By closely reading the work of other students and articulating their responses, students will hone their analytical skills and strengthen their sense of what makes a good story. Workshops will avoid the "diagnosis" of "problems" with a text and instead focus on readers' experiences with a story and their understanding of the writer's goals and strategies.

**254: Seminar in Genre Studies in American Literature: Short Story Collections, Cycles, Sequences and Novels of Linked Stories (Professor Brada-Williams) T 7-9:45 PM**

Many key works of twentieth-century American literature seem to straddle the border between a short story collection and a novel. Writers such as Jean Toomer, Louise Erdrich, and Sandra Cisneros have used genre-bending styles to represent ethnic American communities and experiences. This course will explore both the impact of ethnic Americans in shaping the genres between short story collections and novels and the impact of these boundary- defying genres on ethnic American literature. It will be a semester-long examination of the interrelationship of form and content. While we will discuss the various definitions of these forms, the emphasis of the class will be on exploring the aesthetic and political uses of a variety of American author's choices, rather than on determining set genre definitions.

**257 Seminar in the History of Rhetoric (Professor Skinnell) R 4-6:45 PM**

Rhetoric is one of the longest lasting and furthest ranging subjects in Western culture, dating back more than 2500 years. History, in more ways than one, predates it. It would seem by now that these two so-called "meta-disciplines" would be relatively settled. Fortunately for us, they are not. Additionally, in recent years historians from a variety of fields have reimagined

civilization's western roots and have started to develop broader, "worldly" perspectives on histories, rhetorics, and histories of rhetorics (perspectives, it should be noted, which are not new to many other people from many other places). In this class, therefore, we will study the history of rhetoric by studying the ongoing disagreements about what "rhetoric" is and how best to study its history. Taking our cue from a variety of scholars and sources, we will try to understand what some of the historical and historiographical disagreements are, what is at stake in these disagreements, why they matter, why they continue, why we should care, what we can learn, and perhaps even what we might contribute.

Check the schedule for additional upper division undergraduate course offerings that may be of interest, such as **Professor Harris's 181** class on **Digital Dickens**, her **113** class on the **Gothic Novel**, or **Professor Soldofsky's 151 on American Poetry**. These classes are either special topics or rarely taught, so this is likely to be the only chance you have in your graduate career to take them. People interested in further study of Old English should note that **140B Beowulf** is offered T/Th at 1:30 in the Spring.

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.

### **GRADUATE STUDENT AND ALUMNI ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Let us know what you have been up to since the May newsletter. Have you had any publications, awards, or conferences that you have attended?

### **KEEP INFORMED**

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 **GAPE 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/)



### **SOME IMPORTANT DATES FOR 2016-2017:**

- Oct. 1:** Deadline for May 2016 Graduates to have their “Departmental Request for Candidacy” form in to GAPE. Requires the MA or MFA advisor’s signature. If you have missed this deadline, file this as soon as possible.
- Nov. 1:** Deadline to submit thesis or project proposals (for Spring 2017 299 units) to the English Department Graduate Committee.
- Nov. 4:** Deadline for December graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office.
- Dec. 9:** Deadline for signing up to take the Spring 2017 MFA Comprehensive Exam. Recommended for May, August, and December 2017 MFA graduates.
- Jan. 21:** Deadline to submit reading lists to sign up for the Spring MA exams (see the “Guidelines” at <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/ma/macomps.html>)
- Jan. 12:** Deadline for December 2016 graduates to submit thesis for publication (or embargo).
- Jan. 26:** First day of Instruction for the Spring semester.
- Feb. 1:** Deadline for August 2017 Graduates to have their “Departmental Request for Candidacy” forms signed and submitted to GAPE.
- Feb. 1:** Deadline for applications for 2017-2018 TAships due to the Graduate Coordinator
- Feb. 4:** Spring MA comprehensive exam, Part 1, SH 229, 9-12:30. Deadline for May 2016 graduates to submit application for award of Master’s Degree to the Graduate Studies Office. (or Graduation Date Change Request).
- Feb. 10:** May graduates must have their “Application for award of Masters degree” filed.
- Feb. 11:** Spring MA comprehensive exam, Part 2, SH 229, 9-12:30. MFA Comprehensive Exam Distributed (9:00 A.M.) MFA Comprehensive Exam Due (5:00 P.M)
- Feb. 17:** MFA Comprehensive Exam Distributed (9:00 A.M.)
- Feb. 20:** MFA Comprehensive Exam Due (5:00 P.M)
- April 1:** Approximate deadline for December 2017 graduates to file their “Request for Candidacy” forms (requires MA or MFA Advisor’s signature).
- April 1:** Deadline for applications for 2017-2018 GAships due to the Graduate Coordinator.
- April 7:** Deadline for May 2016 graduates to submit signed theses to the Graduate Studies Office.
- May 13:** MFA Graduation Reading and Celebration, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m., MLK Library rms. 225-229.