

San José State University
Humanities and Arts

Department of English and Comparative Literature
English 100W, Writing Workshop

Sections 1 and 4 , Fall 2012

Instructor:	Cynthia M. Baer
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Office Hours:	MW 1-3; TTh 1-3; and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	MW 9 to 10:15. TTh 10:30 to 11:45
Classroom:	Engineering 401 (MW) Sweeney Hall 414 (TTh)
Prerequisites:	A passing score on the Writing Skills Test (WST), upper-division standing (56 units), and completion of core GE.
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	Area Z

Course Description

Literary theorists, critics, and teachers . . .are not so much purveyors of doctrine as custodians of a discourse. Terry Eagleton, "Political Criticism"

And what, in fact, is the main effort of the analytical interpreter . . . if not . . . to extort the secret of the text, to compel the language of the text--like that of a child--to confess or to avow: to avow its meaning as well as its pleasure; to avow its pleasure and its meaning to the precise extent that they are unavowable. Shoshona Felman, "Henry James: Madness and the Risks of Practice."

English 100W is, according to the official department course description, "an integrated writing and literature course in which students will develop advanced proficiency in college-level writing. . . . to include mastery of the discourse specific to the field of English studies." The purpose of the course is to introduce you to the tools, procedures, protocols, modes, and methods of writing in our discipline.

Terry Eagleton would, I believe, describe English 100W as a course that teaches you to talk and write in certain ways—the ways of the literary critic: "Becoming certificated by the state as proficient in literary studies is a matter of being able to talk and write in certain ways." The task of those who teach it is "to preserve this discourse, extend and elaborate it as necessary, defend it from other forms of discourse, initiate its newcomers into it, and determine whether or not they have successfully mastered it."

Eagleton's description, coming from a Marxist perspective, emphasizes the conservative forces that operate to define this course—its power politics—and places you in the role of initiate to/of that politics of mastery. Another way to think about this same process is to consider those who do English studies as a group of people who gather to use language for a very particular and specialized job: discussing and explaining literature. What defines this group, no matter their politics or position in the hierarchy of literary knowing , is a keen interest in how words work and have worked within the traditions of literary exchange. The forces at work in such a literary conversation are, thus, not solely coercive and conservative, but communal and productive.

Viewing the profession this way, you can consider yourself as a new member of that group, yes, but one who shares with your audience a common motivation and interest. In this course you are going to learn how to enter a literary conversation with this group and become part of the dialogue about literature that has gone on for centuries.

Your Role as Writer-Critic

The position you will take up in this class, the position of writer-critic, will demand of you a new relationship to the books you read and to the people with whom you share those books. It is the position Shoshona Felman describes, enacts, in her reading of Edmund Wilson's reading of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*: the position of the reader-analyst-correspondent uncovering the meanings available to us in texts and responding to the meanings others have located in those same texts. You will not only read and enjoy texts, but also read and explain how, why, to what extent texts engage you as reader, how texts work on your head—what meanings you find there and why those meanings are important to the community of the text. Not only everything you read but also everything you think and feel as you read is the subject of your study. Not only your reading but also the reading of others is matter for your pen.

As you enter this course, you are part of a community of readers and writers interested in what literature is, how it works, and why we read. As you participate in this community and engage its discourse, you will find that you have to start honing your reading skills, defining your audience and the conversation in which you are engaged, and, ultimately, extending your written language skills.

Honing Your Reading Skills: In this course your main job is to engage each text you read fully and critically. As a writer your job is to locate those moments of reading that arrest your attention, engaging you in new and interesting ways. Your writing will in turn seek to engage your readers in that same experience of the text—to reproduce the experience of that reading for us, to capture its turns and twists—and ultimately the

meaning that it produces. To do this, you will need to learn to read texts analytically, to attend to the forms of the text and their effect on your head—to practice the sort of literary analysis, close textual analysis, that is the foundation of successful critical writing.

Defining your audience and the conversation: The topics you explore as you read will be defined by your own instincts and angles of vision, by your own presence in the text and among your fellow readers. The arguments you engage in your critical papers will be defined by the conversation you discover as you listen to and read what other writer critics say and have said about the text you are exploring—as you discuss texts with your peers in class and as you research other critics' and scholars' discussions of those texts. Critical writing, like any other genre, can, in fact, be defined by the peculiar relationship it establishes between audience and writer, reader and the text being shared—by the nature of the conversation that it defines among those three elements of the rhetorical moment: audience, writer, text/subject.

As you write you will need to remember that your response to a text is only one voice in a much larger literary conversation about that text. You will need to research that conversation and reference it as you write. Your essays will define for your readers the conversation in which you find yourself involved as a reader, not only to explain your own response to a text but to locate your contribution to the conversation about the text: how does your reading extend, elaborate, redirect the dialogue that readers have so far shared about this text?

For every critical essay you write, I will ask that you define clearly your subject, occasion, audience, purpose—and the particular conversation in which you are engaging your audience as they contemplate your subject.

Extending your language skills: Like all good writing, good critical writing demands that you understand the craft of writing well. It will demand that you learn to convey complex responses clearly, accurately, directly—that your writing be “clear and strong”:

Good writing has an aliveness that keeps the reader reading from one paragraph to the next, and it's not a question of gimmicks to "personalize" the author. It's a question of using the English language in a way that will achieve the greatest clarity and strength. William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*.

As you read critical essays this term you will begin to appreciate how difficult a job this is—“clarity and strength” is sometimes a stretch even for an experienced literary critic!

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

As a course that satisfies the SJSU Area Z general-education requirement and counts toward the academic majors housed in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, English 100W has two sets of Student Learning Objectives, as follow.

English 100W Area Z Student Learning Objectives (GE SLOs):

1. Students shall be able to refine the competencies established in Written Communication 1A and 1B (as summarized below):

1A Student Learning Objectives:

- * Students should be able to perform effectively the essential steps in the writing process (prewriting, organizing, composing, revising, and editing).
- * Students should be able to express (explain, analyze, develop, and criticize) ideas effectively.
- * Students should be able to use correct grammar (syntax, mechanics, and citation of sources) at a college level of sophistication.
- * Students should be able to write for different audiences (both specialized and general).

1B Student Learning Objectives:

- * Students should be able to use (locate, analyze, and evaluate) supporting materials, including independent library research.
- * Students should be able to synthesize ideas encountered in multiple readings.
- * Students should be able to construct effective arguments.

2. Students shall be able to express (explain, analyze, develop, and criticize) ideas effectively, including ideas encountered in multiple readings and expressed in different forms of discourse.

3. Students shall be able to organize and develop essays and documents for both professional and general audiences, including appropriate editorial standards for citing primary and secondary sources.

English 100W Department of English and Comparative Literature Student Learning Objectives (E&CL SLOs): Students will demonstrate the ability to

1. read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric;

2. show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature;

3. write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and the nature of the subject;

4. develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively;

5. articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

To these ends, we will engage in all phases of those 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.

Required Texts/Readings

Your Tools for Exploring Critical Writing

You will have several tools for exploring the form:

Texts. There are two required text for this class:

Booth, Alison and Kelly J. May, eds. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, the portable 10th edition.

Baer, Cindy, Ed. English 100W, Course Reader. (Available at Maple Press, on San Carlos between 10th and 11th. Phone: 297-1000.)

I also recommend that in the next month you read *A Poetry Handbook* by Mary Oliver. It is a very short, readable discussion of how poetry works and will help you learn a vocabulary for analysis that you will find useful in your first essay. (Two of the chapters are reproduced in the reader.)

You should supplement these texts with some texts of your own: a comprehensive handbook of grammar, punctuation and usage; a college-level dictionary (unabridged); and an MLA handbook. No writer's library is complete without at least one of each of these essential reference tools.

As an English major, you will also find useful books like Richard Lanham's *Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* and Hohman's *Handbook to Literature* (which you can order yourself, if you do not already have such reference tools). The handlist offers definitions of literary and rhetorical terms used for critical analysis. The handbook provides full definition and discussion of literary terms and concepts, including historical periods, genres, critical theories.

Library Liaison (Optional)

Our library liaison is Toby Matoush.

Our library orientation date has yet to be confirmed. A tentative date is listed on the schedule below; I will announce in class when we have confirmation and a room number for our session.

My Professional Policies

I have developed these policies over the last thirty years of teaching composition. They are intended to ensure the smooth operation of the class and to encourage a professional working environment congenial to all.

- Office hours are yours: you paid for them; use them. (Make this YOUR policy.)
- I do not accept late work. Deadlines are to be honored.

- I cannot accept papers via email. Nor is email a suitable vehicle for student-teacher conferencing. Please, use email to schedule appointments or to advise me of an absence. I will use email to update you on schedule changes or to advise you of my absence.
- Please, to conserve paper, type all papers single-spaced. (Note that this is a required modification of MLA form for this class specifically. Don't try this in your other classes without clearing it with your professor first.)
- I reserve the right to publish your work to the class as part of our workshop activities.
- Work completed in class cannot be made up. Workshops are an essential part of the writer's working experience. Your participation in workshops is mandatory. You must bring to workshops 3 typewritten copies of your completed draft, and you must turn in to me the 3 workshop copies as well as the final, revised draft of the essay.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Graded coursework includes 6 writing assignments and a final exam. Workshops are mandatory: essays not accompanied by workshopped drafts will not earn credit.

Writing Assignments. You will complete six writing assignments: 3 on poetry, 3 on fiction and/or drama. You will write three different kinds of essays on each form: an explication, a bibliographic essay, and a critical paper. These three types of essays will work together in a series: explication of the text will precede mapping of the critical conversation, and these two will be combined to produce a critical essay.

All writing will be based on readings selected from the *Norton Introduction to Literature*; you will choose the text and the focus for your analysis, research and argument.

Explications. You will write two explications. These will be short essays, written in class, which provide your readers with a close analysis of the text you've chosen to discuss. The purpose of these essays will be to illustrate the meaning of the text as you experience it, highlighting for your audience the key features of the text—those textual elements that produce the experience of reading this particular text. These papers will not involve any research beyond the text.

Bibliographic Essays. You will write two bibliographic essays. These essays will be two to three pages typed single-spaced, and they will summarize the critical conversation on the text that you explicated in your previous paper. They will also explain briefly the insight you will contribute to that conversation in the critical essay that will follow. These are research essays and must follow the MLA guidelines for research papers.

Critical Papers. You will write two critical essays. These essays will be longer, four pages typed single-spaced, combining close textual analysis that documents your own

reading of the text, in conversation with other critics' responses to the text; these essays will, then, build on the two earlier papers in the series to provide your audience a clear and fully developed literary argument—one that is effectively informed by a specific critical conversation in the field. These are research essays and must follow the MLA guidelines for research papers.

The Final Exam and In Class Essays. On Saturday, December 8, at high noon, you will sit for the final exam in this course: a board-graded common final, which will count as 10% of your course grade.

To prepare you for this writing challenge, you will write two of your essays, the explications, in class. These are listed on the Schedule of Readings and Assignments. You must be present to complete these essays in class.

Workshops. All the out of class writing you do this term will be workshopped in class. Workshops are listed on the Schedule of Reading and Writing Assignments, and workshops are mandatory. That means that I will not accept the essay for a grade unless it is accompanied by workshop drafts. You should come to the workshops prepared to present openly your work and to respond critically to the work of your peers. You should bring to each workshop session 3 clean, typewritten copies of a *complete* draft of your essay in progress.

How I Determine Course Grades

There is no extra credit. I will determine your grade in the course based on the assignments outlined above and using the following criteria to evaluate individual performances. Grades will be assigned in accordance with the official department policy on grading.

Grading Criteria: The following paragraphs sum up the meaning of each grade A through F. Individual assignments will be evaluated using a scoring guide. Scoring guides will be available to you before you turn in each assignment.

An "A" is awarded to work that is consistently excellent. The essay is thoughtfully developed and designed to engage a real literary audience in a carefully defined conversation on the chosen text. That subject is treated intelligently, as is the audience, and the language does justice to the complexities of the subject matter, occasion, audience, and purpose of the piece.

A "B" is awarded to work that is consistently above average—and occasionally excellent. While a "B" essay may not exhibit the same flawless control of material, audience, or language as the "A" essay, it consistently demonstrates a grasp of the principles of literary analysis and composition that will, with revision, produce excellence.

A "C" is awarded to work that is rigorously competent. The author, while not yet accomplished in the craft of literary writing and analysis, is developing a command of these specialized forms. The writer already commands the basic forms and principles of effective composition—the various forms and genres of the essay, the paragraph and the sentence, their coordination and subordination, the role of audience, purpose and conversation in shaping prose—even as he or she struggles to produce effective analytical writing. The struggle is clear, but so is the vision.

A "D" is awarded to work that is developing competence. The author does not clearly command the forms and principles of literary analysis or composition and may have trouble articulating a coherent vision of the text, though he or she is in command of the mechanics of competent writing—sentences, grammar, punctuation, documentation.

An "F" is awarded to work that demonstrates incompetence. The author commands neither the forms and principles of literary analysis and composition, nor the mechanics of good writing.

Relative Weights for Determining the Final Course Grade: To compute final grades, I will weigh the grades for individual assignments as follows. (Yes, I do some math here. Trust me.)

Workshop Participation	10%
Explications (in class writing)	20%
Bibliographic Essays	25%
Critical Essays	35%
Final Exam	10%

The Department Policy on Grading

The Department of English affirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the official 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,NoCredit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC, for NoCredit, shall replace D or F. In A,B,C,NoCredit courses NC shall also substitute for W (for Withdrawl) because neither NC nor W affects students' grade point averages. In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of the ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](#) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the

[current academic calendar](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/Academic_Calendars/) web page at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/Academic_Calendars/. The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latdrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latdrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

University Policies

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University's Academic Integrity policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm), located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm>, requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Integrity Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. [Presidential Directive 97-03](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Disability Resource Center](http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/) (DRC) at <http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/> to establish a record of their disability.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the [Academic Success Center](http://www.at.sjsu.edu/asc/) at <http://www.at.sjsu.edu/asc/> located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital

still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Suite 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. The [Writing Center staff](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/) can be found at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/>.