

San José State University  
Humanities & Arts/English & Comparative Literature

**English190: Nation, Narration, Globalization:  
Imagining America in the 21st century**

Fall 2013

<b>Instructor:</b>	Revathi Krishnaswamy
<b>Office Location:</b>	FO 125
<b>Telephone:</b>	(408) 924-1384
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:Revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu">Revathi.krishnaswamy@sjsu.edu</a>
<b>Office Hours:</b>	MW 11.45-12.45 and by appointment
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	MW 10.30-11.45
<b>Classroom:</b>	BBC 124

The first global President of America: the first African-American President, the man from Africa/Kenya, Asia /Indonesia and Polynesia/Hawaii, the closet Muslim, the European style socialist, the first third-world leader of the first-world, the cosmopolitan American. Clearly, Barack Hussein Obama is many things to many people. Using the figure of the President as a focal point, this course will explore a larger cultural narrative about America's global image, identity, and role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Does Barack Obama represent the historical culmination of the Emancipation Proclamation that freed the slaves a hundred and fifty years ago or does he mark the moment of America's historic decline from superpower status? What kind of American is Barack Hussein Obama? Is he the quintessential American, an un-American American, or a new kind of (cosmopolitan, global) American? What do labels such as "black," "African-American," "Kenyan," "Muslim," and "socialist" tell us about the struggle to imagine America in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Does the Obama presidency mark a shift away from a long-standing narrative about American "exceptionalism" toward a new narrative redefining America's relationship with the rest of the world? What do the different representations of and responses to Obama tell us about the changing identity of America and its role in the emerging world order? We will take up these and other questions by closely examining a constellation of key texts in a variety of genres and media.

In addition to works written by Obama himself, we will read and discuss seminal African-American texts by Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, and Martin Luther King Jr. We will also analyze the writings of contemporary authors such as Shelby Steele, Dinesh D'Souza, Ta-Nehisi Coates and others. Additionally, students will have the opportunity examine visual media representations of Obama, including posters, cartoons, films and TV shows.

## **Required Texts/Readings**

Course Reader (available at Maple Press, 481 E. San Carlos; ph: 297-1000)

*Dreams from my Father* by Barack Obama

**Library Liaison:** Contact Toby Matoush via email: Toby.Matoush@sjsu.edu, or phone: (408) 808-2096 if you have library research questions that have not been answered in class.

## **SJSU Department of English Student Learning Objectives**

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 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.

## **Assignments and Grading Policy**

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty-five hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

## **Assignments**

- 1. Presentations:** You will make three formal presentations on assigned readings. For each presentation, you will prepare a written handout/ppt containing your main ideas and then orally elaborate on those ideas during your presentation. You will also answer questions and lead the class discussion. (SLO 5)
- 2. Papers:** You will write two formal essays, one at mid-term and another at the end of the semester, using both primary and secondary sources. Your success on these papers will be directly proportional to your knowledge of the texts and understanding of class discussions. Detailed guidelines/rubrics for all of these assignments will be distributed in class. (SLO 3 & 4)
- 3. Participation:** Your participation is imperative. To receive an A or a B in participation, you must do more than simply be present. You must have the materials read on time, and be prepared to discuss your thoughts and ideas.

## **Grading Breakdown:**

Participation	100
Presentations	300
Essay 1	300
Essay 2	300
Total points	1000

**Note:** In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas conveyed. In other words, your grade will depend not only on what you say but also on how (well) you say it. All student writing should therefore be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

### **Classroom Protocol**

Being on time, **participating** in class discussions and listening to and taking notes on class lectures are necessary for the successful completion of this course. **Cell phones are shut off and put away.**

### **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](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) 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/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/) web page located at [http://www.sjsu.edu/academic\\_programs/calendars/academic\\_calendar/](http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/). The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/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 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 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.

**Credit hours**

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty-five hours per the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or 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. Credit Hour Policy: <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>

**SJSU Writing Center**

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 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 website](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/) is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/>.

## Tentative schedule

CR = Course Reader

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
0	08/21 W	Introduction to course
1	08/26 M 08/28 W	Obama: <i>Dreams from my Father</i> (Origins) Obama: <i>Dreams from my Father</i> (Chicago)
2	09/02 M 09/04 W	Labor day holiday Bernard: <i>The First Black President</i> (ch 1-3; ebook King library). <b>Presentations</b>
3	09/09 M 09/11 W	Bernard: <i>The First Black President</i> (ch 4-7; ebook King library). <b>Presentations</b> Bernard: <i>The First Black President</i> (ch 8-10; ebook King library). <b>Presentations</b>
4	09/16 M 09/18 W	Obama on the American stage (lecture) <i>The Emancipation Proclamation</i> <a href="http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/">http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/</a> Du Bois: <i>The Souls of Black Folks</i> (ch 1-3; ebook King library). <b>Presentations.</b>
5	09/23 M 09/25 W	Obama: <i>The Audacity of Hope</i> (“Prologue”; “Politics”; “Race”) (CR) <b>Presentations.</b> Obama: <i>The Audacity of Hope</i> (“World beyond our Borders”) (CR) <b>Presentations.</b>
6	09/30 M 10/02 W	Elison: <i>Invisible Man</i> (ch 1; CR). <b>Presentations.</b> Hughes: Poems (CR). <b>Presentations</b> MLK: <i>I Have a Dream</i> speech <a href="http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/martin-luther-kings-speech-dream-full-text/story?id=14358231">http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/martin-luther-kings-speech-dream-full-text/story?id=14358231</a> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEqnklfYs">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEqnklfYs</a>

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
7	10/07 M  10/09 W	<i>Fear of a Black President</i> by TaNihisi Coats. <b>Presentations.</b>  <a href="http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/09/fear-of-a-black-president/309064/">http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/09/fear-of-a-black-president/309064/</a>  <i>Obama and the Burden of Exceptionalism</i> by Shelby Steele. <b>Presentations.</b>  <a href="http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111904787404576532623176115558.html">http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111904787404576532623176115558.html</a>
8	10/14 M  10/16 W	Pop Culture Images of Obama (bring sample). <b>Presentations.</b>  Pop Culture Images of Obama (bring sample). <b>Presentations.</b>
9	10/21 M  10/23 W	Writing Workshop (Essay 1)  Writing Workshop (Essay 1)
10	10/28 M  10/30 W	Obama on the global stage (lecture). <b>Essay 1 Due</b>  <i>Obama: Dreams from my Father</i> (Kenya). <b>Presentations</b>
11	11/04 M  11/06 W	Maraniss: <i>Obama</i> (CR). <b>Presentations.</b>  Maraniss: <i>Obama</i> (CR). <b>Presentations.</b>
12	11/11 M  11/13 W	Veterans' day holiday  <i>Obama's America: Unmaking the American Dream</i> (Video)
13	11/18 M  11/20 W	D'Souza: <i>Obama's America: Unmaking the American Dream</i> , Ch 1-2 (CR). <b>Presentations.</b>  D'Souza: <i>Obama's America: Unmaking the American Dream</i> , Ch 15 (CR). <b>Presentations.</b>
14	11/25 M  11/27 W	Sharma: <i>Obama in Hawaii and Indonesia: the making of a global president</i> , Prologue (CR). <b>Presentations.</b>  Sharma: <i>Obama in Hawaii and Indonesia: the making of a global president</i> , ch 1 (CR). <b>Presentations.</b>
15	12/02 M  12/04 W	Writing Workshop (Essay 2)  Writing Workshop (Essay 2)
16	12/09	Overview. <b>Essay 2 Due</b>

