

San Jose State University
Department of English and Comparative Literature
Fall 2013
English 71, Introduction to Creative Writing
Section 2
MW 12:00 – 1:15
SH 411

Instructor: Leanne Lindelof
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 R 5:30 – 6:00
 and by appt.

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“Artists are intensely aware of the chaos implied by the moment-to-moment sensual experience of human beings. . . they also, paradoxically, have an intuition that behind the chaos there is meaning; behind the flux of moment-to-moment experience there is a deep and abiding order.”

----- Robert Olen Butler

“Can’t dreams be applied to the resolution of questions fundamentally important to life?”

-- André Breton

Required Texts and Materials:

The Making of a Story, LaPlante, Alice

Course Reader -- available at Maple Press (10th and San Carlos)

A full-volume dictionary

Blank paper/notebook for notes and in-class assignments

Blank notebook to be used as “Idea Book”

Canvas:

All students are required to regularly check the class Canvas group. Announcements and assignment reminders will be posted in Canvas, and students may exchange information, post articles, and share ideas through the system. The syllabus and a course calendar will also be available on the site.

Course Description:

Introduction to Creative Writing is a 3-unit, lower-division course designed, adopted, implemented, and administered by the Department of English and Comparative Literature at SJSU in accordance with the university's General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill Core General Education requirements in the Letters area of Humanities and the Arts. In this course, we will read and write poetry, creative non-fiction, and fiction. The course will be taught using a combination of discussion, in-class exercises, and writing workshops. For discussions, students are expected to participate in the analysis of both form and content of written work. In-class exercises will be drawn from texts, and workshops will require students to analyze and critique the creative work of their peers. Courtesy and honest critique will be paramount to the success of workshops.

Learning Objectives :

- Understand the form and content of assigned literary works;
- Comprehend the historical and cultural contexts of assigned literary works;
- Recognize the accomplishments of and issues related to writing by men and women representing diverse cultural traditions;
- 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 non-fiction, and short fiction;
- Communicate such skills with clarity and precision;
- Develop an appreciation of literary works as expressions of human intellect and imagination, and as representations of diverse human cultures;
- Develop the ability to write literary works that express intellect and imagination and that represent diversity in human cultures
- Respond to literature through clear and effective communication in both written and oral work;
- Read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility;
- Conduct library research in relation to writing creative non-fiction.
- Appreciate how literary works illuminate enduring human concerns while at the same time representing their particular cultures;
- Write works of poetry, creative non-fiction, and short fiction that are of interest and value to the writer, to other students in the course, and to a diverse reading audience.

WRITING REQUIREMENTS :

At the end of the course, students are required to turn in a manuscript consisting of the work they have completed during the semester in the three genres required.

Poetry:

You are required to turn in four poems. Your final poetry manuscript must include the following form requirements.

- Three poems should be written in unrhymed free verse.
- One poem should be written in patterned verse: a sonnet (English or Italian), sestina (Italy), or other form.

Fiction:

You are required to complete two works of short fiction.

- One short-short story (i.e. flash fiction), one to three pages in length (400 - 600 words).
- One short story eight to twelve pages in length (2,000 -3,000 words).
- The two stories should be written from different narrative points of view.
- Stories should emphasize character development as well as plot.
- There are only two content restrictions : no violence and no porn.

Creative Non-Fiction:

You are required to turn in one work of creative non-fiction, three to five pages in length (750 to 1,250 words). Suggested topics include :

- A familiar essay about a friend or a family member.
- A humorous essay or satire.
- A memoir based on personal experience.
- A piece of nature or travel writing.

To complete the nonfiction assignment, you are required to do some preliminary research which in part must be done in the library, but which may as well include interviews and Internet sources. Go to the library or use the Internet to gather source material from other writers. If you travel, take notes and/or find published material about the place you have visited. If you write a profile piece, get background

material on your subject from the library or Internet, and if possible, interview the subject. You must acknowledge in the body of your text the source(s) of the material you found while doing your research.

FINAL PORTFOLIO :

At the end of the term, you will turn in a manuscript consisting of the **revised** poetry, creative non-fiction, and fiction pieces you completed during the semester. You will also include an annotated bibliography with your non-fiction piece in the portfolio. This manuscript must contain four poems, one non-fiction piece, two short stories as previously described, and a one-page reflection piece on the composition of each form.

GRADES :

Grades will be based on quizzes, the quality and quantity of your writing, and the quality and constructiveness of the criticism offered during the workshops.

Creative writing, though subject to the instructor's individual subjectivity, can be evaluated according to general standards used to determine how well a piece of writing works. These include: 1) Textual and/or technical competence and eloquence. 2) Imaginative risk. 3) Energy and freshness of language. 4) Effective use of metaphor and other forms of figurative language. 5) Clarity and precision of detail. 6) Capacity for mixed feelings and uncertainty. 7) Effective use of grammar, syntax, rhythm; also meter, rhyme, and other elements of poetic style and form. 8) Naturalness and believability. 9) Appropriateness of style to subject. 10) Compelling audience interest.

Final grades will be the product of the following factors:

- Poetry 20%
- Creative Non-fiction 20%
- Fiction 20%
- Workshop participation 20%
- In-class exercises 20%

Grades given conform to the English Department and university grading policy. The Department of English is committed 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.

GRADING STATEMENT: In English Department courses, instructors comment on and grade the quality of writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All your writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs

PLAGIARISM is the unacknowledged or improper use of sources. Penalties for plagiarism in this course will be in accordance with university policy.

DISABLED STUDENT SERVICES: Any student needing special assistance should contact Disabled Student Services, located in Administration 110, and discuss with the instructor the sort of assistance involved.

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/. 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/>.

ATTENDANCE :

You must be in attendance to complete all in-class assignments. Also, while in class you must participate, i.e. give feedback, ask questions, add to discussion. You and your classmates will learn more from the course and enjoy the content more if everyone participates. This means not only attending class but refraining from texting and/or e-mailing or otherwise removing yourself from the discussion.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Late assignments will not be accepted without prior consent of the instructor. There are no exceptions; this is not a joke. Also, please don't e-mail me to inquire about what transpired during class when you were absent. I really don't like that. And when the prof aint happy, aint nobody happy. (That's a joke.)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1
8/21 Course introduction – syllabus, expectations, success Writing creatively: what we know, what we want, what we need.
Week 2
8/26 Getting creative Diagnostic
8/28 “What is this Thing Called Creative Writing?” MOAS, pp. 23 – 38 In-class exercise. Intro to idea book.
Week 3
9/2 LABOR DAY – NO CLASS
9/4 Poetry Definitions “Reading Poems,” CR “Poetry,” CR Collins and Hughes, CR *Poetry assigned
Week 4
9/9 “The Fish,” Bishop, CR Details
9/11 “Some Given Forms,” CR “Sestina,” Bishop, CR Shakespeare (handout) Couplets (handout)
Week 5
9/16 “Road Trip” “Revisionist Dream” “Road Trip” “Blues” CR
9/18 Variations on poetry
Week 6
9/23 Poetry workshop

9/25	Poetry workshop
Week 7	
9/30	Intro to fiction and non-fiction “The Splendid Gift of Not Knowing” MOAS, pp. 57 – 62 Robert Olen Butler and yearning *Short story assigned *Poetry DUE
10/2	“Raising the Curtain” MOAS, pp. 465 – 471 and “People Like That are the Only People Here,” Moore in MOAS
Week 8	
10/7	“The Shapely Story” MOAS, pp. 152 - 178 In-class exercise
10/9	“Gryphon,” CR “Referential,” CR
Week 9	
10/14	“Agreeable,” CR “No Name Woman,” MOAS pp. 453 - 464
10/16	Storyboards *In-class exercise
Week 10	
10/21	Flash fiction (handouts) *Flash fiction assigned
10/23	Flash fiction (handouts)
Week 11	
10/28	Fiction workshop
10/30	Fiction workshop
Week 12	
11/4	Intro to Non-fiction “Getting Beyond Facts To Truth” MOAS, pp. 619 - 633 *Fiction DUE *Non-fiction assigned
11/6	Students’s experiences In-class exercise
Week 13	

11/11	"Learning to Drive," CR "The Learning Curve," CR
11/13	Travel writing (handout)
Week 14	
11/18	Documentaries "Inside Job"
11/20	"The Lives of Others," CR *In-class exercise
Week 15	
11/25	Non-fiction workshop
11/27	Non-fiction workshop
Week 16	
12/2	Course review
12/4	Reflection

FINAL EXAM: 12/12 9:45 – 12:00

*Note: assignments, but not due dates, are subject to change.