

# Capstone Seminar In Creative Writing And Self Reflection English 193C, Section 1 – Spring 2013

**The truth is we write for love.  
That is why it is so easy to exploit us.  
— Erica Jong**

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

You are on the cusp of completing your degree in creative writing—congratulations! You have put your money where your heart is and followed a course of study that perhaps caused your more earthbound relatives to roll their eyes and wonder what you were thinking by your choice of major...and what would become of you after graduation. Well, this semester we will seek to answer both questions.

In this spirit of duality, this course will be divided into two halves:

- 1) exploring options on what to do after graduation to advance your professional life
- 2) how to keep your artistic machinery well-oiled so that you will look forward to a lifetime of creativity

This division will basically mimic the two sides of the successful writer's life, the prolific, passionate artist who coexists with the aggressive, wily businessperson. Our bipolar approach will even extend to week days, encompassing Show-Me-the-Money Mondays, an opportunity for us to talk about earning a living through art; in this regard we will be joined by guest lecturers who will share their insights and tricks of the trade. The-Artist's-Way Wednesdays will be our day to embrace our creative side.

## **STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- ❖ Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
- ❖ Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
- ❖ Become an active part of a literary community, through writing, editing, discussion, attending events and becoming a participant in our class dialogue.

## **REQUIRED TEXT**

The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity [10th Anniversary Edition]; Julia Cameron

## **ADDITIONAL READING**

Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Publishers, Editors, and Literary Agents; Jeff Herman

## ASSIGNMENTS

Each student will complete the following assignments:

1. Interview an individual who has followed the career path to which you aspire and combine this with your own research into said path. You will give a 10-15 minute presentation on your results.
2. Create a five-minute presentation and handout on a market for your work.
3. Write two two-page reviews of literary events on campus. See litart.org for scheduling details.
4. Complete the exercises from *The Artist's Way* including keeping the morning pages. The morning pages involve writing longhand in a journal and I will merely count the completed pages in your presence without reading them, so feel free to bare your soul in this private place. For the written exercises in the book, you may either handwrite them in the book or retype them to hand in if you prefer not to deface your text (us bibliophiles understand). All *Artist's Way* activities will be graded on percentage of exercises completed, not graded for content.
5. Hand in a final portfolio of work, 20-30 pages of material of your choosing. Your selection should take into account your goals after graduation. Options include *one* of the following:

- A book proposal
- A packet for application to a graduate program
- Poetry or prose for submission to publications or contests

Your portfolio material will be graded for form and content and should represent your most polished work. In this regard we will workshop and revise it during the latter half of the semester.

## WORKSHOP

As editors, you will be critiquing each others' work, which is a very different skill than being a talented writer. The trick is to 1) praise what's good 2) ascertain what's wrong with a piece 3) offer positive criticism and suggestions on how to fix it—while realizing the individual style and goals of the author may differ from your own. You will be divided into small workshop groups and will remain in these groups for the whole semester. Students should type a critique for each workshop submission, then provide a copy to the author and a second copy to Professor Miller. Critiques should be at least 200 words in length.

## ATTENDANCE

Required, because English 193C depends on your participation each day. You are allowed two unexcused absences before your grade can be dropped, and students who come in after roll call will be considered absent. If you are ill, or are presented with an emergency that will cause you to miss more than two classes, please contact me as soon as possible.

## CLASS ETTIQUETTE

Please observe the following: no eating during class, no laptop use, and of course, no cell phone use.

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**Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming,  
we lose the excitement of possibilities.  
Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.  
— Gloria Steinem**

## GRADES

Your final grade will be comprised of the following:

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Professional Path Presentation          | 20% |
| Artist's Way Assignments                | 20% |
| Short Assignments & Class Participation | 20% |
| Final Portfolio                         | 40% |

Grades are meant to reflect, quite simply, the quality of your work. Your writing assignments will be judged on their creativity, clarity, content, and the quality of the prose. Since this is the culminating course for the creative writing degree, it is a given that you have a fundamental mastery of the proper mechanics of standard written English, like punctuation and grammar. Misuses of these will count against your grade. Presentations will be judged on the quality and delivery of information, and your class participation grade is based on the contributions you bring to our discussions.

## DEPARTMENTAL GRADING POLICY

The Department of English reaffirms 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. 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.

## PAPER FORMAT

All material handed in should follow the same guidelines as those for submitting professional manuscripts:

- typewritten, double-spaced, black ink with copy dark enough to be easily read
- one-inch margins on all sides
- text on one side of the paper only
- 12-point type in a highly-legible font, preferably Times New Roman or Courier New
- your name and the assignment title single-spaced in the upper left-hand corner of the first sheet
- title centered on the first page
- pages numbers included
- pages stapled or paper clipped together (note that editors and agents prefer paper clips to staples)

Points will be subtracted for improper formatting.

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**You can only grow as an artist as long as  
you allow yourself the time to grow as a person.**

**— Sade**

### **SJSU ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty are required to report all infractions to the office of Judicial Affairs. The policy on academic integrity can be found at <http://www2.sjsu.edu/senate/S04-12.htm>. The SJSU rules against plagiarism are set forth in the SJSU Catalog, which defines plagiarism as the act of representing the work of another as one's own (without giving appropriate credit), regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements. Plagiarism at SJSU includes, but is not limited to: (1) the act of incorporating the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts thereof, or the specific substance of another's work, without giving appropriate credit, and representing the product as one's own work. It is the role and obligation of each student to know the rules that preserve academic integrity and abide by them at all times. This includes learning and following the particular rules associated with specific classes, exams, and/or course assignments. Ignorance of these rules is not a defense to the charge of violating the Academic Integrity Policy. All instances of violating the Academic Integrity Policy will be reported to the Dean of Student Services.

### **CAMPUS POLICY ON COMPLIANCE WITH AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need 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 register with the DRC to establish a record of their disability.

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**The two most beautiful words in the  
English language are 'check enclosed.'  
— Dorothy Parker**