

San José State University
Department of English & Comparative Literature
ENGL 241, Fiction Workshop for MFA Students
Fall 2014

Instructor:	Nick Taylor
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Office Hours:	Mon/Weds 2:00PM – 3:45PM and by appointment.
Class Days/Time:	Weds 4:00PM-6:45 PM
Classroom:	Music 161

Course Description

This is the most advanced fiction workshop offered at SJSU. It is designed for students pursuing writing as a vocation. Students enrolled in the MFA Program in Creative Writing have registration priority. If there is extra space, graduate students in other disciplines may enroll.

The majority of our class time will be spent discussing student work ("workshopping"). We will also read published pieces of fiction selected by members of the workshop. Students will lead these discussions.

Additionally, we will discuss aspects of the writing profession. Topics include finding time to write, managing "free" time, finding an agent or publisher, and networking with other writers and publishing-industry people.

Student Learning Goals

This course addresses the following Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) approved for the MFA in Creative Writing:

SLO 3: Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.

SLO 4: Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.

SLO 5: Students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to: a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion; b) formulate and defend

original arguments; c) employ effectively the language of their discipline: d) write under time constraints.

The list of all approved SLOs are listed on the English Department's website:
<http://www.sjsu.edu/english/undergraduate/studentlearninggoals.html>

Course Requirements

Attendance at all class meetings is essential. Because the real value of this course is the class discussions, you are only hurting yourself if you miss class. You are graduate students, and serious writers, and I will treat you as colleagues.

You will submit at least **two new pieces of work** for discussion over the course of the semester. There may be time to turn in additional pieces if you choose. In place of a final exam, you will turn in a **significant revision** of one of the pieces you workshopped.
[SLO #5]

You will be graded on your effort in this course. This includes not only the attention you give your own stories, but also **your comments on your classmates' work and your participation in class discussions**. [SLO #4]

In addition to your own submissions and regular and timely responses to your classmates' work, you will be required to **lead one class discussion** on a published story of your choice. [SLO #3]

Finally, you will be required to **attend at least two literary readings** over the course of the semester, and to turn in 1-2pp responses [SLO #3, #4, #5]. Your response papers can cover the substance of the reading, the author's presentation style, the author's wardrobe—anything. But you must attend these readings. Here are some of the readings being offered on campus this semester:

Weds, September 10, 7:30pm, New Student Union

Khaled Hosseini (fiction writer) accepting the 2014 Steinbeck Award

Weds, September 24, 7pm, MLK 225/229

David Shields (fiction and nonfiction writer)

Thurs, September 25, 1pm, MLK 225/229

David Shields in Conversation with Ethan Nosowsky

Weds, October 1, 7pm, MLK 590

Julia Reynolds (nonfiction writer and former Steinbeck Fellow) reading from *Blood in the Fields: Ten Years Inside California's Nuestra Familia Gang*

Thurs, October 16, 7pm, MLK 225/229

Maggie Nelson (poet and nonfiction writer)

Weds, October 29, 7pm, MLK 225/229

Tracy K. Smith (poet)

Weds, November 12, MLK 225/229

Ru Freeman (fiction writer)

Weds, December 3, MLK 225/229

Cara Bayles, Yalitza Ferreras, and Reese Okyong Kwon (fiction writers)

2014-2015 Steinbeck Fellows Reading

Grading

Final grades will be the product of the following factors:

- Your Fiction (2 stories and a revision) 60%
- Class Participation 20%
- Leading the Discussion on a Published Story 10%
- Responses to two literary readings 10%

Workshop Procedure

At the first class meeting, I will pass around a sign-up sheet for workshops. Each of you will choose at least two dates when you want to hand in your stories. On those dates, you will pass out photocopies of your story to everyone in the class. Your story must be **double-spaced, single-sided**, and it must include **page numbers**.

Your classmates will read your story, make comments in the margins, and write a one-page commentary on the back of the last page or attach a typed version of their comments. At the next class meeting, we will discuss your story. We will discuss up to three stories per class. At the end of the discussion, everyone will hand the author their marked-up manuscripts and commentaries.

Procedure for Discussing Published Fiction

One of the most useful skills you can learn in graduate school is how to lead a discussion. I will ask each of you to lead a class discussion this semester on a published story of your choice. Please bring a clean photocopy of your chosen story to the second class meeting. I will take the stories to the print shop and have them make copies for everyone. I will bring the copies to the third class meeting, where you can buy them. Expect the copies to cost around \$15.00.

When it is your turn to lead discussion, please come prepared with enough questions to keep the class going for approximately twenty minutes. I would like to approach these stories from a writer's perspective, so questions should lean more toward craft issues than thematic ones. I will talk more about what I have in mind during the first couple of weeks of class.

Late Assignment Policy

It is important that you turn in your stories when you say you're going to. This is your most important responsibility. **Late or emailed stories will not be accepted.** If you need to change your workshop date, it is your responsibility to find someone willing to trade dates with you, and to tell me that you've switched.

Required Texts

- Strout, Elizabeth and Heidi Pitlor, eds. *Best American Short Stories 2013*. ISBN: 978-0547554839
- Photocopy packet of published short stories selected by your classmates (available at the third class meeting).

Schedule

Class meetings will be held every Wednesday afternoon from August 27 through December 10 with the exception of September 10 (Steinbeck Award presentation) and November 26 (Thanksgiving holiday).

When the workshop and story-discussion schedules are set, I will pass out copies of both so you will know who's up each week.

You will turn in your final revisions on the last day of class, December 10. We will not meet for a final exam.

Academic Honesty

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy 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 Policy on academic integrity can be found at: <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of somebody else's words or ideas and is considered an instance of academic dishonesty that instructors must report. You commit plagiarism by:

- buying, stealing, or borrowing a paper (or story);
- hiring someone to write a paper (or story);
- building on someone's ideas without providing a citation;
- or copying from another source or using a source too closely when paraphrasing.

In other words, submit only your own work.

LARC (Learning Assistance Resource Center)

The Learning Assistance Resource Center is an on-campus facility that provides peer tutoring for San José State University students. LARC offers assistance with writing, and if you feel as if you need intensive help beyond what I can offer during office hours,

please request a writing tutor. The Center is located in The Student Services Center in the 10th Street Parking Garage, Room 600. The phone number is (408) 924-2587.

Disabilities Policy

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.