

San José State University
Department of English and Comparative Literature
English 130, Fiction (40215), Section 02, Fall 2015

Instructor: Tommy Mouton, MFA, **Office Location:** Faculty Offices (FO) 112, **Telephone:** (408) 942-4479, **Email:** tommy.mouton@sjsu.edu, **Office Hours:** T/Th 10:00-11:15 a.m., and by appointment, **Class Days/Time:** T/Th 1:30-2:45 p.m., **Class Location:** Clark 306

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. You are responsible for regularly (at least once every other day) checking with the messaging system through MySJSU to learn of any updates.

Course Description:

This class has been designed for you to learn the necessary craft techniques that can help you become a better creative writer, whether you plan on studying further or plan on writing creatively as a hobby. You are expected to take risks and to have fun. Any unwillingness to wholly participate in this class will sour your overall writing and in-class experience.

In this course we will read and write in the genre of short, *realistic* literary fiction. Sub-genres such as romance/erotica, science fiction/fantasy, and horror/the Gothic will not be acceptable for workshop (i.e. for fulfillment of a course grade). If you enjoy writing in these genres, you are very welcome to ask myself or fellow classmates to read outside of class. Do not attempt to come to class and convince me whether or not your work fits the (literary fiction) mold. Submitted work (for workshop) that does not meet my genre-specific guidelines will not be accepted for credit and will otherwise adversely impact your grade.

Department Learning Outcomes:

In the Department of English and Comparative Literature, 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, and/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.

Required Texts and Materials:

Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft, 9th edition-Burroway-E. Stuckey-French and N. Stuckey-French ISBN: 978-0321923165

Imagining America: Stories from the Promised Land, Revised edition-Wesley Brown and Amy Ling: ISBN-13: 978-0892552771

Other Readings:

All other outside reading materials will be provided

Materials:

One college-ruled notebook

Pens and Pencils

Stapler

Classroom Protocol

Attendance/Professionalism: You will arrive on time and be ready to work. Regular attendance is expected of you. If you are not present, you cannot participate. A lack of participation will adversely affect your growth as a writer and your overall grade in this course. Consider this your workplace: appropriate language, dress, and behavior are expected. Technology excuses regarding the failure to compose/type or print work will not be tolerated. Do not text or make/receive phone calls during class. Laptops/ipads, e-readers, etc., will remain off/closed during lectures. Please eat and drink prior to coming to class. In most instances, however, bottled water will be allowed.

Grading and Assignments:

1st Person Story (20%):

You will write one story from the first person point of view (5-12 pages)

3rd Person Short Story (20%):

Written from the third person point of view, limited or omniscient (5-12 pages)

Experimental Story (10%):

Based on some social theme (race, assimilation, gender bias,) from *Imagining America...* textbook (2-4 pages)

Peer Reviews (20%):

3 Peer reviews/write-ups (at least 500 words) are to be turned in on the workshop date of the peer you choose to formally respond to.

Revision write-up + Presentation (10%):

Chosen from one of your 3 workshopped stories

Story Sketches (10%):

Approximately 5 assigned sketches, with maximum of 500 words

Quizzes and Reading Event (10%):

Note: when necessary, quizzes will be assigned

Grading Protocol:

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT 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.

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.

Creative writing, though subject to the instructor's individual interpretation, 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.

The following grading will apply: A (96-94%), A- (93-90%), B+ (89-87%), B (86-84%), B- (83-80%), C+ (79-77%), C (76-73%), C- (72-70%), D+ (69-67%), D (66-63%), D- (63-60%), F (0-59%)... Note: I do not, under any circumstance, round up.

Assignments

Short Stories (LO 3, 5): All prose/short stories are to be typed (12pt. font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, one inch margins, with page numbers present somewhere on the page and stapled). Failure to follow directions will adversely impact your grade. Final revised stories are to be turned in one week after they are workshopped. Your name and the story’s title are to appear on the first page.

About your experimental story/project: Influenced by a writer or writers’ work from our reading textbook, *Imagining America: Stories from the Promised Land, Revised edition*, you will attempt your hand at employing, from a thematic (related to race, assimilation, gender bias, etc.) and craft standpoint, that writer’s techniques. Be careful! Do not merely emulate that writer’s style, where your voice and creative point of view are lost. This is still *your* work. And remember, have fun!

Workshop Procedures (LO 1, 3):

In this class we will workshop once in September and once in October. Groups will be assigned (approximately 4 groups of six). Each student is responsible for printing out the necessary copies (five or six) to be distributed the week before workshop. All work is to be critiqued at home, wherein each student is to markup his/her peers’ drafts. I will allow you to (so that you might save paper) print workshop copies double-sided. However, all final revised drafts must be

single-sided when turned in to me. If you are absent the day you are to distribute copies, you must see me ahead of time. Failure to distribute copies (without the necessary absence documentation) will adversely impact your grade.

Peer Reviews/Critiques (LO 1, 3, 5): You are required to turn in two peer reviews over the course of the semester. Peer review write-ups are due on the workshop date. You are free to choose the group member's work you would like to formally respond to. Since this is a formal response, all the department guidelines related to grammar and mechanics apply. Your peer review should be *at least* 500 words in length. You will respond using that genre's specific craft elements (point of view, characterization, plot, setting, literary devices, etc.) discussed in class. Your critique should be focused and articulate. I will not tolerate non-constructive criticism, where you only find it within yourself to focus on the work's problem areas, without considering what *is* working in the piece. Condescension will not be tolerated!

Note: Although you are turning in one critique, you still must critique your other peers' work with the same critical astuteness. Failure to wholly participate in this process will negatively impact your grade.

Revision write-ups + Presentations (LO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5): Your ability to go back into your work (after my and your peers' comments have been returned) and very critically look back at your work is crucial. Revision and your commitment to doing so is what often sets published and unpublished writers apart. So, you will have the opportunity to share with the class the ways in which you have critically and creatively gone back into your work and have made the necessary decisions to improve your project. You are not presenting on the obvious; you are presenting to the class the real problem areas (i.e. the questions you have yet to answer) found by your peers and me, along with those problem areas that your artistic sensibilities continue to happen upon. A short write-up (between 300-500), along with a slide show, are due to me on your presentation day. If using a document camera works best (since I will have one) I will give the necessary credit in lieu of slides.

Story Sketches (LO 3, 5): Approximately 5 story sketches will be assigned as homework. Your first story sketch will be assigned the first day of class. Story sketches are simply exercises in the craft area (point of view, characterization dialogue, etc.) we are discussing. With your sketches, I expect you to have fun.

Homework/Readings and Quizzes (LO 1, 3, 5): Any assigned homework is due at the beginning of the class period. If you are late, your homework *will not* be accepted. If you are absent, you can pass your homework on to a classmate. If any homework is assigned (i.e. an addendum to what is on the syllabus) while you are absent, plan on contacting a classmate. Do not contact me! *Late* homework will not be accepted.

Concerning quizzes: I sense that the class as a whole has not read, I will quiz you! If you are late or arrive after the quiz has begun, or if you are absent, you forfeit that day's quiz. Quizzes *cannot* be made up.

Note: Concerning diversity, some assignments (reading and writing) may in fact address issues of race, class, and gender, etc. I expect you to have an open mind and respect the views of your peers as they will respect yours. Insensitivity will not be tolerated.

Participation: Class participation (being present; engaging in class discussions) is expected of you. An unwillingness to participate will more likely than not keep you from growing as a writer and enjoying the class.

Reading/Literary Events:

You are required to attend one literary event over the course of the semester. I do, however, encourage you to attend as many as your schedule will allow. I will post via Canvas all literary events at least a week in advance.

Events can be found at:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/english/community/index.html>

<http://www.sjsu.edu/steinbeck/index.html> (Center for Steinbeck Studies)

<http://www.pcsj.org> (Poetry Center San Jose)

<http://www.sjsu.edu/english/community/pwc/> (Poets and Writers Coalition)

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

[University Policy S12-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course:

- “Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor’s permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.”
 - It is suggested that the greensheet include the instructor’s process for granting permission, whether in writing or orally and whether for the whole semester or on a class by class basis.
 - In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.
- “Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.”

Academic integrity: PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> 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/>.

English 130: Fall 2015

Course Schedule

Note: I will teach to your needs. This schedule is subject to change. When the need arises, I will make the necessary amendments to this schedule.

Week	Date	Topics and Due Dates	Next Class Period's Readings/Homework and Assigned Essays
1	R 8/20	Course introductions Syllabus Review Student Introductions	Buy Textbooks Complete Sketch #1
2	T 8/25	Sketch 1 Due + Share-outs Intro. to Fiction The Character and Dialogue	Read from Writing Fiction (<i>WF</i>)-83-94, "Fiesta, 1980"-Diaz; read from Imagining America (<i>IA</i>)-145-152 "The Lesson"- Toni Cade Bambara
2	R 8/27	Dialogue Discussion Dialogue Exercise	Read <i>WF</i> Characterization Part II (116-137) Note: a quiz will come from this reading
3	T 9/1	Quiz #1 Direct and Indirect Characterization	1 st Person Point of View: Read <i>WF</i> 281-283; Read <i>IA</i> (254-264)-"Birthday"-Louie
3	R 9/3	1 st Person discussion "Birthday"; read and discuss "Barbie-Q"-Cisneros from <i>IW</i>	Sketch #2 assigned
4	T 9/8	Sketch #2 Share-outs Place and Character from <i>WF</i>	Read <i>WF</i> (156-165) Begin Drafting 1 st Person Story (2.5-6 pages)
4	R 9/10	Character and Place Read from "The Writer in the Family"-Doctorow	Read <i>WF</i> (316-324)
5	T 9/15	Revision Talk	Continue working on 1 st person Story Print Copies!
5	R 9/17	Read "What You Pawn I will Redeem"-Alexie 1 st Person Story Distributions	Leave comments/feedback for peers Complete Peer Review #1 (2 pages)

Week	Date	Topics and Due Dates	Next Class Period's Readings/Homework and Assigned Essays
6	T 9/22	1 st Person Workshop Peer Review #1 Due	Intro. to 3 rd person point of view (limited): "The Chrysanthemums"-Steinbeck
6	R 9/24	Introduction to 3 rd person: Limited vs. Omniscient Character and Setting	Revise 1 st Person Story (6-12 pages)
7	T 9/29	Story, Plot, Structure 1 st Person Final Due	Read <i>WF</i> (262-274) "Everything that Rises Must Coverge"-O'Connor Complete writing exercise 1 from <i>WF</i> (275)
7	R 10/1	O'Connor and exercise 1 discussion Complete exercise 2b <i>WF</i> (275)	Read <i>IA</i> (205-209) "The Man to Send Rain Clouds"-Silko Verb exercise...
8	T 10/6	Showing and Telling: Active Voice... <i>WF</i> (38-40)	Types of Metaphor/Prose Rhythm: <i>WF</i> (31-42)
8	R 10/8	Read from <i>WF</i> "We Didn't"- Dybek; Simile/Metaphor exercise	Sketch 3 Assigned!
9	T 10/13	Sketch 3 Share-outs Sensory Detail Discussion	Begin Drafting 3 rd Person Story (2.5-6 pages)
9	R 10/15	Metaphorical Pitfalls: <i>WF</i> (34- 38)... Cliché' and Mixing images...	Read from <i>WF</i> "Goal 666"-Richter
10	T 10/20	Discuss Richter Writing exercise TBD from <i>WF</i>	Continue drafting 3 rd Person story Print Copies!
10	R 10/22	Revision Talk 3 rd Person story distributions	Leave comments/feedback for peers Complete Peer Review #2
11	T 10/27	3 rd Person Workshop Peer Review #2 Due	Read <i>IA</i> (98-112) "Children of the Sea"-Danticat

Week	Date	Topics and Due Dates	Next Class Period's Readings/Homework and Assigned Essays
11	R 10/29	Story Form: Breaking the Rules Form deviation exercise...	Work on 3 rd Person story final revision
12	T 11/3	3 rd Person Final Draft Due! Stream of Consciousness: read from "Barn Burning"-Faulkner	Read from "Uncle Tom's Children"-Richard Wright... Sketch #4 Assigned!
12	R 11/5	Sketch #4 Share-outs Internal Dialogue External Dialogue "Girl"-Kincaid "How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie"-Diaz	Begin drafting Experimental Story
13	T 11/10	Two Points of View? "The Sky is Gray"-Gaines and others...	Continue drafting Experimental Story Print Copies
13	R 11/12	Read excerpt from <i>The Book of Night Women</i> -Marlon James Experimental Story distribution	Leave comments/feedback for peers Complete Peer Review #3
14	T 11/17	Experimental Story Workshop! Peer Review #3 Due	Revision Questions from <i>WF</i>
14	R 11/19	Revision Exercise	Getting Published handout Begin working on Revision write-up and presentation
15	T 11/24	Getting Published Talk	Continue revising Experimental Story
15	R 11/26	CAMPUS CLOSED	BE THANKFUL: HAPPY THANKSGIVING!
16	T 12/1	Experimental Story Due!	Complete Presentation write-up and presentation

Week	Date	Topics and Due Dates	Next Class Period's Readings/Homework and Assigned Essays
16	R 12/3	Begin Revision presentations/Write-ups Due!	Complete revision write-ups
17	T 12/8	Complete Revision presentations/Write-ups Due!	Prepare for Class Reading/Party
Final	F 12/10	12:15-14:30 End of Class Reading/Party	Enjoy Winter Break!

Important Dates for Fall 2015

Thursday, August 20

First day of instruction

Tuesday, September 1

Last day to drop a class without a "W" grade

Monday, September 7

Labor Day - Campus Closed

Wednesday, September 9

Last day to add Last day to submit [Audit option\(PDF\)](#)

Last day to submit [Credit/No Credit grading option\(PDF\)](#)

Last day to submit [Instructor Drops\(PDF\)](#)

Thursday, September 17

Enrollment census date

Wednesday, November 11

Veterans Day - Campus Closed

Friday, November 13

Last Day to withdraw - [Withdrawal from the Semester Request on AARS website](#)

Thursday, November 26 - Friday, November 27

Thanksgiving holidays - Campus Closed

Tuesday, December 8

Last day of instruction

Wednesday, December 9

Faculty web access for Fall grade posting opens at 8am

Thursday-Friday, December 10-11 & Monday-Wednesday, December 14-16

Final Exams (Exam Schedule)

Monday, December 21

Fall 2015 grades due from Faculty (Preliminary Deadline)

Tuesday, December 22

Fall 2015 [grades viewable on MySJSU\(HTML\)](#)

Tuesday, December 22 – Tuesday, January 26

Winter Recess