

ENGLISH 130-1 “WRITING FICTION” FALL 2016

(This syllabus is online: www.sjsu.edu/english/ENGLgreensheets/2016ENGLfall/index.html)

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Hours: M 9:20–10:20 a.m.; W 2:50–3:50 p.m.; and Wednesday By Appointment
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Required Texts:

Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Tales* (Signet 978-0451530318)
Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* (Signet 978-0451524485)
Hemingway, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Stories* (Scribner 978-0684804446)

Course Description and Objectives: English 130 focuses on the craft of writing literary short fiction. Students will learn the basic techniques and conventions of character development and narrative structure through close readings of exemplary creative work and by writing stories designed as exercises in the aesthetics of short fiction as well as writing original stories. Literary Fiction: For this course you only are allowed to write literary fiction – *realism*, fiction about real, human people in credible circumstances and situations that take place in our actual world, and about the attendant emotions, desires, and internal and external conflicts that drive those people and create those situations. It is fiction written for adult humans that is designed to be memorable, complex, and true about life and what it means to be living in the real world.

To that end, you will *not* be writing about: zombies, vampires, wizards, elves, werewolves, mutants, shape-shifters, space-colonists, time-travelers, dimension-hoppers, monsters, talking animals, conscious-but-inanimate objects (such as toasters or shoes that think), artificial intelligences, ninja turtles, or . . . *zombies*. Ask yourself: Would the characters and situations you plan to write about fit well in a video game, comic book, monster flick, or a fantasy or sci-fi movie? If so, they will not fit well in this course – *and will not be accepted for credit*. However, suggestions of the supernatural as presented in the fictions of Edgar Allan Poe meet the definition of Literary Fiction and, therefore, *are* acceptable.

Course Student Learning Objectives (SLO): The Department of English and Comparative Literature has established the following Student Learning Objectives (SLO) for its baccalaureate courses, such as English 130: 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 Correspondence to SLO, Grading, and Due Dates:

- 1) Opening Paragraph of First Story (not graded), due **Monday, September 19th**.
Meets SLO 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- 2) First Story Draft (not graded), due to Small Group **Monday, October 3rd**.
Meets SLO 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- 3) First Story Final Draft (graded), due **Monday, October 17th**.
Meets SLO 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- 4) Second Story (graded) due *in final form* one week after your class workshop date.
Meets SLO 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- 5) Lead Discussant Critique (graded), due at the assigned story's class workshop date.
Meets SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Each of the two (2) original stories must be at least 10 pp., 12 pp. maximum.

The critique, written as the Lead Discussant of one of your classmate's stories for the class workshop segment of the course, must be a minimum of 3 pp., 4 pp. maximum.

Course Grade Distribution and Percentage Value by Assignment:

40% = First Story

35% = Second Story

15% = Lead Discussant Critique

10% = Participation in Class Workshop (when not the Lead Discussant)

100%

Grading:

The Department of English and Comparative Literature reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined by the SJSU Catalog ("Grades - Letter Grading"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: **A+/A/A-** = excellent; **B+/B/B-** = above average; **C+/C/C-** = average; **D+/D/D-** = below average; **F** = failure. Within any of the letter grade ranges (*exempli gratia*, **B+/B/B-**), the assignment of a + (plus) or - (minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment. In English and Comparative Literature 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.

Department Policy on Grading Written Assignments:

Grades issued will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment:

The “ ‘A’ Range ” essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student’s ability to use language effectively and construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The “ ‘B’ Range ” essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the “ ‘A’ Range ” essay. The chief difference is that the “ ‘B’ Range ” essay will show some slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The “ ‘C’ Range ” essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the “ ‘B’ Range ” essay.

The “ ‘D’ Range ” essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment – that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The “ ‘F’ ” essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

Procedures:

- 1) **All due dates are absolute.** Failure to hand in an assignment on its due date will result in a lowered grade or, in the case of the nongraded Opening Paragraph and First Story Draft assignments for the small group workshops, exclude you from participation. Your Second Story for class workshop must be distributed no later than the class meeting *before* your workshop date or else you will lose your workshop turn as well as lose the benefit of my critique before your story is due in final form, which remains one week after your scheduled workshop date – no exceptions.
- 2) **All assignments must be typed.** Use 14-point in a readable font style, double-space and paginate the manuscript on standard white 8.5” by 11” paper. Make certain that your name is on the first page and that you title your stories. You must turn in to me a **hard copy** of each assignment on its due date; emailed assignments are not accepted and will be treated as failing to meet the due date. You must distribute **hard copies** of your Second Story for class workshop to the assigned Lead Discussant and to me; however, you may email your story to everyone else in the class. Your Opening Paragraph and First Story Draft may be emailed to the participants in your small group.
- 3) **All assignments must be your own work and must be written exclusively for this course.** By University policy, you may not hand in any work for which you were

previously given credit in another course, including mine should you happen to be a former student or currently enrolled in another course of mine this semester.

- 4) **Concerning Attendance:** You must make a friend in the class from whom you can get handouts and notes for any lecture or discussion you should happen to miss and to distribute the required hard copies of your class workshop story should you not be able to attend class the meeting before your workshop turn. I will not distribute your class workshop story for you, so if you are absent the meeting before your workshop date you must make another arrangement or else lose your turn, as indicated above. I cannot conduct private tutorials with you, either by email or during office hours, in order to replicate what you missed by not attending class. Do not ask me to do so. However, after you have caught up on the reading and thoughtfully considered your friend's notes, feel free to ask me specific questions should you need clarification.
- 5) **Please do not ask for special treatment** of any kind or to be exempted from any class policy or procedure - any such request will not be granted.
- 6) **Adherence to the fundamental tenets of literary is expected**, as noted in the "Grading" section above. You must have - and be able to articulate - viable aesthetic reasons for deviating from proper usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

University Policies: The link below contains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc.: www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/

130-1 FALL 2016 ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Aug. 24	Course Overview
29	<u>Opening Paragraphs</u> Poe, "The Black Cat" (p. 99)
31	Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (p. 172)
Sept. 05	Labor Day (Campus Closed)
07	Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado" (p. 152)
12	Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" (p. 217)
14	Chopin, "The Kiss" (p. 225)

- 19 Chopin, "At the 'Cadian Ball" (p. 178)
Opening Paragraph of First Story Due
- 21 Small Group Workshop of Opening Paragraph
- 26 Small Group Workshop of Opening Paragraph
- 28 Chopin, "The Storm" (p. 267)
- Oct. 03 Opening Paragraphs (handout)
First Story (Draft) Due
- 05 Small Group Workshop of First Story
- 10 Small Group Workshop of First Story
- 12 Narrative Structures
Hemingway, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (p. 3)
- 17 **First Story (Final Draft) Due**
Hemingway, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (continued)
- 19 Hemingway, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" (p. 121)
- 24 John Cheever, "O Youth and Beauty!" (handout)
- 26 Class Workshop of Second Story (2 Students)
- 31 Class Workshop (2 Students)
- Nov. 02 Class Workshop (2 Students)

- 07 Class Workshop (2 Students)
- 09 Class Workshop (2 Students)
- 14 Class Workshop (2 Students)
- 16 Class Workshop (2 Students)
- 21 No Class
- 23 Non-Instructional Day
- 28 Class Workshop (2 Students)
- 30 Class Workshop (2 Students)
- Dec. 05 Class Workshop (2 Students)
- 07 Class Workshop (2 Students)
- 12 Class Workshop (3 Students)
- 15 Final Examination, 12:15 - 2:30pm, Thursday, December 15th.