

**San José State University**  
**Department of English & Comparative Literature**  
**ENGL 71, Intro to Creative Writing**  
**Summer 2016**

**Instructor:** Nick Taylor  
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**Office Hours:** Tues/Thurs 1:00pm - 2:00pm and by appointment.  
**Class Days/Time:** Tues/Thurs 9:00am – 12:45pm  
**Classroom:** Sweeney Hall 347

### **Course Description**

Introduction to Creative Writing (English 71) is a 3-unit lower-division course offered in accordance with the University's General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill Core General Education requirements in the Letters area of Humanities & the Arts (Area C2).

In this course we will read, discuss, and write poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. The course will be taught using a combination of discussion and writing workshops. In the discussion, published works of creative writing will be read closely and analyzed. In the writing workshops, creative work by class members will be analyzed and critiqued for revision.

### **Student Learning Objectives**

SLO 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.

SLO 3 - Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.

### **Required Texts**

- Handler, Daniel, ed. *Best American Nonrequired Reading 2014*.
- Photocopied packet of handouts (supplied by instructor)

### **Writing Assignments**

#### ***Poetry***

- A self-portrait poem
- A poem containing sensory images and concrete details
- A villanelle
- A narrative poem

#### ***Fiction***

- Character sketch (2pp)
- Scene (2-4pp)
- Short story (4-10pp)

#### ***Creative Nonfiction***

- Memoir/family essay (2-4pp)

- Work essay (2-4pp)

### ***Final Portfolio***

- Revised versions of all writing assignments

## **Assignment Format**

All material handed in should be **typed and double-spaced with page numbers**. Multi-page assignments must be **stapled**. Your name, the assignment title, and the date should be included at the top of the first page.

## **Class Workshop Procedures**

For each unit (poetry, fiction, nonfiction) I will divide the class into groups of at least four students each. I will shuffle the groups each unit, so you will get to read work by all of your classmates. Every time you turn in a piece of writing, you will bring enough copies for everyone in your workshop group *and* your teacher *and* yourself. We will critique the pieces in class or at home (writing directly on the manuscripts) and discuss them in workshop groups. At the end of the discussion, you will get to keep the marked-up copies of your work.

So what do you comment on? You have two responsibilities. The first is to indicate what you got out of the story, poem, or essay. What's your interpretation of it? If the piece were in the textbook, what would you say about it? This helps the writer understand what came across and what didn't. The second responsibility is to suggest avenues for improvement. How can the writer make this story better? Often this requires putting yourself in the writer's shoes. Remember that you can help a fellow writer with thoughtful commentary even if you would not have chosen the same topic or style in your own work.

In a workshop, writers must feel safe sharing their work with the group. Please keep your critiques confined to the work, not the author. Hostile, threatening, or personal criticism will not be tolerated.

## **Grading**

Grades will be based on the quality and quantity of writing you do as well as the quality and constructiveness of the criticism offered during the workshops and class discussions.

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% |
| • Non-fiction     | 20% |
| • Fiction         | 20% |
| • Final Portfolio | 20% |

- Class participation (incl. reading quizzes) 20%

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT GRADING STATEMENT: The Department of English 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 (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a + or - grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

## Schedule and Assignments

Reading assignments meet SLO #1, writing assignments SLO #3.

*BANRR = Best American Nonrequired Reading 2014*

Handout = Photocopied poetry handout

### Tues, June 7

#### **Topic**

Introduction; sensory images and concrete details; still write; self portrait poems

#### **Reading Due**

Emily Dickinson, "Hope' is the thing with feathers" (Handout)

Marsha de la O, "Under the Lemon Tree" (Handout)

Rae Armantrout, "Exit Row" (Handout)

Sandra M. Castillo, "Letter to Yeni on Peering into Her Life" (Handout)

Billy Collins, "Litany" (Handout)

Adam Zagajewski, "Self Portrait" (Handout)

Linda Pastan, "Self Portrait" (Handout)

### Thurs, June 9

#### **Writing Due**

Self portrait poem

#### **Topic**

Workshop self-portrait poems; more on imagery; structured poetry; the villanelle form

#### **Reading Due**

Lucie Brock-Broido, "Two Poems" (*BANRR* 181)

Matthew Dickman, "Sidewalk Poem" (*BANRR* 86)

Kyle G. Dargan, "The Robots Are Coming" (*BANRR* 134)

"Poetic Form: Villanelle" (Handout)

Dylan Thomas, "Do not go gentle into that good night" (Handout)

Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art" (Handout)

Sylvia Plath, "Mad Girl's Love Song" (Handout)

Dan Lechay, "Ghost Villanelle" (Handout)

### Tues, June 14

#### **Writing Due**

Villanelle

**Topic**

Workshop villanelle; elements of narrative (character, conflict, setting); write narrative poem in class

**Reading Due**

Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (Handout)

Emily Dickinson, "Because I could not stop for Death" (Handout)

Francine Sterle, "Consider Lu Chang" (Handout)

Yusef Komunyakaa, "Crossing a City Highway" (Handout)

Ali Liebegott, "Shift #6" (*BANRR* 197)

**Thurs, June 16**

**Writing Due**

Narrative Poem (copy for teacher only)

**Topic**

FICTION UNIT BEGINS; modes of characterization; the importance of the protagonist; listen to Junot Diaz

**Reading Due**

Junot Diaz, "How to date a brown girl (black girl, white girl, or halfie)" (Handout)

Adam Johnson, "Nirvana" (*BANRR* 326)

**Tues, June 21**

**Writing Due**

Character Sketch

**Topic**

Workshop character sketch; conflict

**Reading Due**

Amoz Oz, "Two Women" (*BANRR* 88)

Thomas Pierce, "The Real Alan Gass" (*BANRR* 268)

**Thurs, June 23**

**Writing Due**

Scene

**Topic**

Workshop scene; setting; landscape write; point of view

**Reading Due**

Rebecca Rukeyser, "The Chinese Barracks" (*BANRR* 228)

**Tues, June 28**

**Writing Due**

Short Story

**Topic**

Creative nonfiction; memoir

**Reading Due**

Gabriel Heller, "After Work" (*BANRR* 264)

Maia Morgan, "The Saltwater Twin" (*BANRR* 317)

**Thurs, June 30****Writing Due**

Memoir/family essay

**Topic**

Workshop short story; writing about work; listen to David Sedaris and "Squirrel Cop"

**Reading Due**

Karen Maner, "Hugo" (*BANRR* 44)

**Tues, July 5****Writing Due**

Work essay

**Topic**

Workshop memoir/family essay; travel writing; revision

**Reading Due**

Janine di Giovanni, "Seven Days in Syria" (only section 1, "Hossam," *BANRR* 94-99)

**Thurs, July 7****Writing Due**

Final portfolio

**Topic**

Publication; class reading and celebration

**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
- copying from another source or using a source too closely when paraphrasing

In other words, **submit only your own work.**

### **Peer Connections**

Peer Connections is an on-campus center that provides peer tutoring for San José State University students. They offer assistance with writing, and if you feel you need intensive help beyond what I can provide during office hours, please request a writing tutor. Peer Connections has two locations on SJSU's main campus: in the Student Services Center (SSC) 600, on the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and San Fernando (inside the 10<sup>th</sup> Street parking garage building), and in the Academic Success Center in Clark Hall, on the first floor next to the Computer Lab.

### **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.