

**San José State University**  
**Department of English and Comparative Literature**  
**ENGLISH 240: Poetry Workshop**  
**Spring 2017**

Instructor: Prof. Alan Soldofsky

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Office Hours: M, T, W 3:00 – 4:30 PM, and Th by appointment

Class Days/Time: M 7:00 – 9:45 PM

Classroom: Clark Hall 111

**Course Description**

English 240 is an MFA-level poetry workshop in which students write, revise, and complete new poems. The course will include regular discussions of poetics and the theory and craft of poetry, as well as an examination of trends in contemporary poetry in the United States and internationally. Students will also learn to how submit poems for publication in small magazines, literary journals, and Web sites. The course may be taken four times for credit (toward the MFA degree).

**Thematic Focus**

Members of this MFA-level poetry writing workshop and seminar will not only produce new work but will also investigate the traditions of environmental poetry, from its roots in the pastoral to modernist poetry of place to postmodern and experimental ecopoetics. MFA students will create a portfolio of new poems plus blog entries and a presentation on the work of an environmentally-engaged poet. MA students may create new poems and/or conduct literary research--write three short research papers and additional Discussion Blog posts on individual poets or schools/traditions of ecopoetry. All students will give close attention to poetic craft and techniques of composition. MFA and MA students will participate together in weekly class workshops in which new work by class members (poetry and essays on environmentally-engaged poets and poetics) will be read and discussed with an eye toward revision. We will read a number of published poems from *The Ecopoetry Anthology* and other poems by those poets online. We'll also read a few poems some poems translation from Pablo Neruda and from classical Chinese and Japanese poets. There will be one short poetry craft paper required for all students in addition to your poetry portfolio. MA students will produce a final portfolio made up of three short term papers on the poets and poems read during the semester.

## Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

### Course Goals:

- Complete a portfolio consisting of (depending on length) of **eight** finished (revised) original poems, at least **four** of which should be engaged environmental or eco-poetic concerns
- Explore varied modes and forms of eco-poetry—from traditional nature and experimental postmodern poetry. Read a wide range of poets, close reading specimen poems, and writing new poems in a variety of modes, forms, and styles.
- To workshop early drafts student poems in small writing groups whose members post their poems on Canvas for peer comments throughout the semester.
- Workshop classmates’ poems on a weekly basis, finding ways to improve the work through critique and successive revisions.
- Read the critical, craft and eco-poetic essays poetry assigned via online hyperlinks in Canvas during the semester.
- Give two multimedia in-class presentations, workshopping and analyzing individual poems included in *The Eco-poetry Anthology*. I will list these poems and background critical readings and supplemental critical readings as Playlists on the weekly Course Activities pages in Canvas.

### English Department Students Learning Goals

This course supports several of the English Department’s Student Learning Goals. The Department of English and Comparative Literature seeks to foster the intellectual development of its majors by encouraging study of literature and writing—whether creative, technical, or other professional writing. The Department strives to make its majors familiar with a wide range of works of British, American, and World literature, including folk and popular forms; and with the nature of the canon and of canon-formation, including issues of culture, history, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

### Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

Student Learning Objectives:	Skills/Knowledge Acquired:	Activities:
SLO 1: Students will demonstrate a high-level of ability to write and complete a publishable, full-length work of literature in a primary genre concentration (poetry).	1. Students will learn to apply the craft of poetry writing in free verse and traditional meters and forms. 2. Students will learn the differences between types and modes of eco-poems.	1. Write at least eight original poems, four of which will be written as eco-poems, and one of which will be at least 30 lines long.

SLO 2: Students will demonstrate high-level of proficiency to write works of literature in a secondary genre concentration (poetry).	See above.	See above.
SLO 3: Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognize trends in contemporary creative writing (poetry).</li> <li>2. Identify developments within poetry, and the development of individual authors and schools/styles of writing—particularly ecopoetry.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write blog entries each week commenting on, evaluating, and analyzing poems assigned to be read for the workshop.</li> <li>2. Give two in-class presentations on individual poems published in <i>The Ecopoetry Anthology</i> along with any supplemental poems or critical readings listed on Canvas</li> </ol>
SLO 4: Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Close read peers' poems and essay's on poetic ecopoetic theory.</li> <li>2. Evaluate strengths (successes) and weaknesses (problems) in peers' poems as well as published poems by notable authors.</li> <li>3. Interpret and apply theories of ecopoetry poetry describe in literary supplemental literary essays linked on Canvas or included in the recommended reading list.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Workshop peers' poems weekly.</li> <li>2. Workshop published poems weekly.</li> <li>3. Give two in-class presentations on poems included in The Ecopoetry Anthology or in work from the recommended reading list.</li> </ol>

### Required Texts

Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street, ed. [The Ecopoetry Anthology](#), paper or Ebook

### Recommended Texts

Kim Addonizio, [Lucifer at the Starlite](#), paper.

Kim Addonizio, [Mortal Trash](#), paper.

John Felstiner, [Can Poetry Save the Earth](#), paper.

Brenda Hillman, [Cascadia](#), paper.

[The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry, 3th Edition, Vol. 1 and 2.](#)

[Poetry Flash](#)

[REED Magazine](#), Issue 69.

Alan Soldofsky, *In the Buddha Factory*, paper.

#### ON-LINE RESOURCES:

Course Homepage on Canvas URL	Update to date course information, syllabus, class activities, worksheets, reading/writing assigned, instructor and student blogs, presentation notes and slides, etc.
Academy of American Poets URL	Large resource with thousands of poems, essays, biographies, weekly features, and poems for special occasions. <a href="http://www.poets.org">www.poets.org</a>
The Poetry Foundation URL	Publisher of <i>Poetry</i> magazine, an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in American culture. A large website containing thousands of poems, biographical essays, teaching ideas, blogs, and archived issues of Poetry. <a href="http://www.poetryfoundation.org/">http://www.poetryfoundation.org/</a>
Associated Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) URL	AWP provides community, opportunities, ideas, news, and advocacy for writers and teachers of writing. <a href="http://www.awpwriter.org">http://www.awpwriter.org</a>
Poets & Writers Online URL	Information, support, and guidance for creative <i>writers</i> . Find <i>writing</i> contests, grants for <i>writers</i> , news, small presses, and much more. <a href="http://pw.org">http://pw.org</a>

#### Overview of Workshop Procedures

This class is conducted primarily as a writers' workshop, which requires active student participation. For the workshop, students will write (and revise), new poems (or essays) for other class members to read and discuss on the Canvas course site. The instructor will moderate the workshop discussion. All students are expected to actively participate as critics except when their own work is under discussion. In class we will also discuss poems published in *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. We will conduct this portion of the class meeting as a seminar, where students present reading material assigned each week.

The poems you post should be single-spaced, with a double space between stanzas. Out of respect for yourself and your classmates, please observe the courtesy of proofing your poems before post them. Please follow standard conventions for usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. If you deviate from conventional textual practice for aesthetic reasons, you must be able to defend your work to the instructor.

All poems submitted to the workshop must be your own original work (no translations), and written for this course exclusively. You may not hand in any poem you wrote for another course.

## **Seminar Presentations on Ecopoetry and Poets**

Each student will give two class presentations, unpacking and workshoping poems published in *The Ecopoetry Anthology*. The first presentation will be based on the Instructor's suggestions (see course calendar). The second presentation should be determined by each class member, based on a list of possible poets to read/workshop from *TEA*. A list of these poets is included at the end of the Syllabus. Include any relevant secondary critical readings from Felstiner's book or from articles reprinted on the Internet and hyperlinked in our Canvas course site. Presentations should be no longer than 15 minutes, designed to stimulate questions and further discussion. *One week prior to the class date, the presenters should announce which poems class members will be assigned to read and discuss in the following week's class.* Each week presenters will put additional links to the poem(s) and, if relevant, critical works they will present as postings on Canvas. Also post any of your presentation slides, handouts, notes and links to relevant supplemental critical articles used in the presentation.

## **Required Writing**

### Poetry Portfolio

By the end of the semester, you will submit a completed portfolio of at least 8 revised and completed poems, which are of publishable quality.

### Blog Discussion on Canvas

Each student is required contribute a minimum of 8 Discussion Blog posts on Canvas—and reply to 4 Discussion Blogs--on poems read in class from *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, or other poems by linked via the Internet on Canvas. The weekly Discussion Blogs will be used to extend the classroom discussion of these poems, before and after the live in-person class meeting.

### Reporting on Two Poetry Readings (Extra Credit)

You can write reviews of two poetry readings you attend during the semester (on or of campus). Write a thumbnail review of each reading, mentioning a few specifics about the poems and the presentation. The reports or reviews should be approximately 250 – 500 words. Post these reviews to the Reading Reviews Extra Credit uplink in Canvas.

## **Due Dates**

You will turn in the poems in two sets: The instructor will provide you with critical comments and a grade-in-progress for the first set.

- Set 1 Due: March 20 (a minimum of 4 completed poems).
- First Presentation: By March 20
- Set 2 Due: May 15: (At least 8 completed poems, including any Set 1 revisions, and a second set of 4. Your portfolio should include at least 4 ecopoems or poems that address themselves in some direct or indirect way to environmental concerns.
- Second Presentation: By May 15
- Critical Paper: May 22

## **Grades**

- 60% -- Final poetry portfolio. (3 critical papers may be substituted by MA students).
- 10% -- Participation in the workshop; in class and on Canvas.

- 10% -- Seminar presentations, including notes, presentation slides, handouts, etc.
- 10% -- Blog Discussion posts.
- 10% -- Critical paper
- 10% EXTRA CREDIT – Two poetry reading reviews

A NOTE ON GRADES: 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 (stanzas).

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.

*University policy requires Graduate Students to maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA to remain in good standing in their degree program.*

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs, stanzas, or poetic form. Grades issued will represent a full range of student performance and will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment. Academic Integrity:

"Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University's Integrity Policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs." The policy on academic integrity can be found at: [http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial\\_affairs/index.html](http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html)

## University Policies

### Academic integrity

**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. Repeated instances of plagiarism will result in a student’s expulsion from the University. You commit plagiarism by:

1. Buying, stealing, or borrowing a paper or creative work;
2. Hiring someone to write a paper or creative work;
3. Building on someone’s ideas without providing a citation;
4. Or copying from another source or using a source too closely when paraphrasing.

In other words, submit only your own work. To learn how to cite sources accurately and forthrightly, consult your handbook.

The instructor reserves the right to revise the requirements and to notify students of such revision in a timely manner, e.g., “subject to change, announced at least one class meeting in advance. Students should know that the University’s [Academic Integrity Policy is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial\\_affairs/Academic\\_Integrity\\_Policy\\_S07-2.pdf](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require 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 website for [Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial\\_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html).

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

### **More University Policies**

The link below contains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as additional information on academic integrity, accommodations, etc.

<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

## Course Calendar

We will conduct an on-going poetry workshop in class until the end of the semester. Poems to be workshopped should be uploaded our Canvas course Workshop Discussion We will workshop students' poems mostly in alphabetical order—except when students have been very active submitting work. Please upload poems as Word files (.doc format preferred) or .docx to Canvas in the appropriate week's Workshop Discussion. Seminar readings and presentations will be assigned by the instructor for the first part of the semester. Then students will select the poems/poets to be read for the ecopoetry seminar.

<p><b>Week 1</b> <b>Jan. 30:</b></p>	<p>Orientation; introduction the subject of ecopoetry and environmental poetry. Seminar Readings: "<a href="#">Why Ecopoetry? There's no Planet B.</a>" (Link emailed to students before class begins.)</p>
<p><b>Week 2</b> <b>Feb. 6:</b></p>	<p>POETRY WORKSHOP: First poems (can be from anyone out of alpha order) SEMINAR READINGS: from <i>Can Poetry Save the Earth</i>, "<a href="#">Introduction: Care in Such a World</a>"; from <i>The Ecopoetry Anthology (TEA)</i>, "<a href="#">Preface: Geology, Biology, Astronomy, and a Poem, Robert Hass.</a>" PLAYLIST: Han-shan: <a href="#">Cold Mountain translated by Gary Snyder</a>; In <i>TEA</i>, Walt Whitman, "<a href="#">Song of Myself pt. 6,</a>" 3 - 4; "<a href="#">Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,</a>" 4 - 9; "<a href="#">Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,</a>" 10 - 15.</p>
<p><b>Week 3</b> <b>Feb. 13:</b></p>	<p>POETRY WORKSHOP: (Begin alpha order workshop) SEMINAR READINGS: John Felstiner, "<a href="#">Care in Such a World</a>," (online); "<a href="#">Earth's Most Graphic Transaction: The Syllables of Emily Dickinson</a>" (JSTOR through MLK Library). PLAYLIST: <a href="#">Emily Dickinson</a> in <i>TEA</i>: #116, 16; #126, 16 - 17; #184, 17 - 18; #209, 18; #498, 19; #537, 19 - 20.</p>
<p><b>Week 4</b> <b>Feb. 20:</b></p>	<p>POETRY WORKSHOP: Continues. SEMINAR READINGS: John Felstiner: "<a href="#">The necessary angel of earth</a>" <a href="#">Wings of Wallace Stevens</a>"; "<a href="#">source then as blue as</a>" <a href="#">Williams and the Environmental News</a>" (JSTOR through MLK Library); PLAYLIST: Wallace Stevens in <i>TEA</i>: "<a href="#">Sunday Morning,</a>" 27 - 30; "<a href="#">Anecdote of the Jar,</a>" 31; "<a href="#">The Snow Man,</a>" 31; <a href="#">The Rivers of Connecticut,</a>" 32. William Carlos Williams in <i>TEA</i>: "<a href="#">Spring and All,</a>" 33; "<a href="#">The Sea Elephant,</a>" 34 - 36; "<a href="#">Between Walls,</a>" 36; "<a href="#">Raleigh Was Right,</a>" 36 - 37; "<a href="#">The High Bridge above the Tagus River at Toledo,</a>" 37.</p>
<p><b>Week 5</b> <b>Feb. 27:</b></p>	<p>POETRY WORKSHOP: Continues. SEMINAR READINGS: Alan Soldofsky, "<a href="#">Prophet as Confessionalist</a>"; Aaron Yoshinobu, "<a href="#">Robinson Jeffers • poet, stone mason &amp; earth scientist</a>"; John Felstiner, "<a href="#">not man/Apart</a>" <a href="#">Ocean, Rock, Hawk, and Robinson Jeffers</a>" (JSTOR through MLK Library). PLAYLIST: <a href="#">Robinson Jeffers in TEA</a>: "Shine, Perishing Republic," 42; "Hurt Hawks," 43; "The Purse-Seine," 44 - 45; "Carmel Point," 45; "The Deer Lay Down Their Bones," 46 - 47. "<a href="#">Apology for Bad Dreams</a>"; "<a href="#">Oh, Lovely Rock</a>" "<a href="#">The Place for No Story</a>" "<a href="#">Rock and Hawk.</a>"</p>

<p><b>Week 6</b> <b>March 6:</b></p>	<p>POETRY WORKSHOP: Continues. SEMINAR READINGS: John Felstiner, "<a href="#">Marianne Moore's Fantastic Reverence</a>"; "<a href="#">Elizabeth Bishop Traveling</a>." PLAYLIST: <a href="#">Marianne Moore in TEA</a>: "The Fish," 48 – 49; "A Grave," 49 – 50; "The Paper Nautilus," 49 – 51; "<a href="#">The Pangolin</a>." Elizabeth Bishop in <i>TEA</i>: "<a href="#">At the Fishhouses</a>," 99 – 101; "<a href="#">The Moose</a>," 101 – 106. "<a href="#">The Fish</a>."</p>
<p><b>Week 7</b> <b>March 13:</b></p>	<p>POETRY WORKSHOP: Continued. SEMINAR READINGS: Steve Bradley, "<a href="#">Reading Rexroth Rewriting Tu Fu in the "Permanent War</a>." John Felstiner, "<a href="#">Things Whole and Holy for Kenneth Rexroth</a>"; "<a href="#">George Oppen's Psalm of Attentiveness</a>;" "<a href="#">Can Poetry Save the Earth?</a>" PLAYLIST: Kenneth Rexroth in <i>TEA</i>: "<a href="#">Toward an Organic Philosophy</a>," 78 – 81; "<a href="#">Lute Music</a>," 81 – 82; "<a href="#">Lyell's Hypothesis Again</a>," 82 – 83; "<a href="#">Andree Rexroth</a>," 84. <a href="#">Tu Fu</a>, tr. Kenneth Rexroth. George Oppen in <i>TEA</i>: "<a href="#">Eclogue</a>," 88; "<a href="#">California</a>," 88 – 89; "<a href="#">Psalm</a>," 89; "<a href="#">The Occurrences</a>," 90. Robert Hass, "<a href="#">Santa Lucia</a>."</p>
<p><b>Week 8</b> <b>March 20:</b></p>	<p><b>First Set of Poems Due</b> POETRY WORKSHOP: Continues. SEMINAR READINGS: John Felstiner, "<a href="#">Life Illumined Around Denise Levertov</a>"; "<a href="#">W. S. Merwin's Motions of Mind</a>." "<a href="#">The Palm Trees and the Poetry of W. S. Merwin</a> (<i>The New Yorker</i>). PLAYLIST: Denise Levertov in <i>TEA</i>: "<a href="#">O Taste and See</a>," 128; "<a href="#">Souvenir d'amitie</a>," 126 -127; "<a href="#">The Past III</a>," 127 – 128. Online: "<a href="#">In California: Morning, Evening, Late July</a>"; "<a href="#">Settling</a>." W. S. Merwin in <i>TEA</i>: "<a href="#">For a Coming Extinction</a>," 401; "<a href="#">The Vixen</a>," 402, "<a href="#">Nocturne</a>," 403; "<a href="#">Recognitions</a>," 403 – 404; "<a href="#">The Laughing Thrush</a>," 404. (Online only) "<a href="#">The Last One</a>"; "<a href="#">The Blind Seer of Ambon</a>"; "<a href="#">The Rain at Night</a>"; "<a href="#">Hearing the Names of the Valleys</a>"; "<a href="#">The Asians Dying</a>."</p>
<p><b>March 27 – April 2:</b></p>	<p><b>SPRING BREAK</b></p>
<p><b>Week 9</b> <b>April 3:</b></p>	<p>POETRY WORKSHOP: Continued. SEMINAR READINGS: TBD by student selections. PLAYLIS: From <i>TEA</i>: TBD by student selections.</p>
<p><b>Week 10</b> <b>April 10:</b></p>	<p>POETRY WORKSHOP: Continued. SEMINAR READINGS: TBD by student selections. PLAYLIST: From <i>TEA</i>: TBD by student selections.</p>
<p><b>Week 11</b> <b>April 17:</b></p>	<p>POETRY WORKSHOP: Continued. SEMINAR READINGS: TBD by student selections. PLAYLIST: From <i>TEA</i>: TBD by student selections.</p>
<p><b>Week 12</b></p>	<p>POETRY WORKSHOP: Continued.</p>

<b>April 24:</b>	SEMINAR READINGS: TBD by student selections. PLAYLIST from <i>TEA</i> : TBD by student selections.
<b>Week 13 May 1:</b>	POETRY WORKSHOP: Continued. SEMINAR READINGS: TBD by student selections. PLAYLIST: From <i>TEA</i> : TBD by student selections.
<b>Week 14 May 8:</b>	POETRY WORKSHOP: Continued. SEMINAR READINGS: TBD by student selections. PLAYLIST: From <i>TEA</i> : TBD by student selections.
<b>Week 15 May 15:</b>	<b>Final portfolio due: (Set 2 plus revisions of any poems from Set 1).</b> POETRY WORKSHOP: Continued. SEMINAR READINGS: TBD by student selections. PLAYLIST: From <i>TEA</i> : TBD by student selections.
<b>Final Week May 22</b>	<b>Critical Paper Due</b>