

English 254, Seminar in Genres of American Literature

E Pluribus Unum: Short Story Collections, Cycles, Sequences and Composite Novels

Section 1, Spring 2017

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Professor Noelle Brada-Williams
Office Location:	FO 102 (inside main English Department Office)
Telephone:	(408) 924-4439
Email:	Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 3-5 and other days by appointment
Class Days/Time:	Tuesdays 7 to 9:45 PM
Classroom:	FO 104

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You are responsible for regularly checking the email you have listed in [MySJSU](#) for class updates.

Course Description

Many key works of twentieth-century American literature seem to straddle the border between a short story collection and a novel. Writers such as Jean Toomer, Louise Erdrich, and Sandra Cisneros have used genre-bending styles to represent ethnic American communities and experiences. This course will explore both the impact of ethnic Americans in shaping the genres between short story collections and novels and the impact of these boundary-defying genres on ethnic American literature. It will be a semester-long examination of the interrelationship of form and content. While we will discuss the various definitions of these forms, the emphasis of the class will be on exploring the aesthetic and political uses of a variety of American authors' choices, rather than on determining set genre definitions.

Student Learning Outcomes and Course Goals

This course will engage four of the five learning outcomes for the MA program:

1. Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Students will demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research.
3. Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. 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 and d) write under time constraints.

and three of the six learning outcomes for the MFA program:

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

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

Course Learning Outcomes for English 254:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will

254 CLO 1: acquire a deeper (if still introductory) understanding of American literature, ethnic American literature, and how form has shaped American literary culture and history as a whole. (see MA PLO 1 and MFA PLO 2)

254 CLO 2: be able to demonstrate the ability to evaluate sources and perform professional level research in support of their analyses of literary text (see MA PLO 2 & 3 and MFA PLO 3)

254 CLO 3: demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of American literary texts (see MA PLO 3 & MFA PLO 4)

254 CLO 4: 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. (Verbatim from MA PLO #4 & MFA PLO 5)

CLO 1 will be acquired via the reading assignments and class participation, while CLO's 2-4 will be acquired and demonstrated through each and every one of the written course assignments.

Eleven Required Texts:

Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage, 1984. ISBN: 978-0-679-73477-2

Junot Diaz, *This is How You Lose Her*. Riverhead, 2012. 9781594487361

Louise Erdrich. Newly Rev. Ed. *Love Medicine*. New York: Harper Collins, 1984/2009. ISBN: 978-0-06-178742-3.

William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, Norton Critical Edition ISBN: 978-0-393-93138-9

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior/China Men*. New York: Everyman's Library, 1976/1980. ISBN: 978-1-40000-4384-2

Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*. Mariner 978-0395927205

N. Scott Momaday. *Way to Rainy Mountain*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1969. ISBN: 0826304362

Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* Vintage 978-0307276766

Tomas Rivera, *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*. Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 1971/Trans. 1987. ISBN: 978155 8850835

Jean Toomer. *Cane*. 1923. Norton Critical 2nd Edition. New York, Norton, 2011 ISBN: 978-0-393-93168-6

Karen Tei Yamashita. *Tropic of Orange*. Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House P, 1997.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICY:

presentation on a work of criticism (254 SLO 2 & 4) Due dates depend on what text you sign up for.	Write a one to two page review of a work of criticism in order to inform our class discussion and give an oral presentation of your review	15%
Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (254 SLO 3 & 4)	One-page proposal (for long research paper) plus min. of 10 annotated bibliographic entries	20%
Research Paper (254 SLO 1-4)	10-15 page essay	35%
Paper presentation (254 SLO 1-3)	15-20 minute presentation on a condensed/edited version of your research paper	10%
Class Participation (254 SLO 1-3)	Participation in 15 classes & a final meeting, <u>including prepared questions and comments on each week's readings.</u>	10%
CANVAS Participation	Posting of your own responses and comments on at least one other person's responses for each of the 11 books.	10%

Grading is based on A [90-92=A-, 93-96=A, 97-100=A+] = Excellent: The "A" essay is articulate and well developed with fluid transitions and a clear and persuasive use of evidence, which is drawn from the literary text itself, lecture materials (when appropriate), and research materials. An "A" essay contains a fresh insight which teaches the reader something new about the subject matter.

B [80-82=B-, 83-86=B, 87-89=B+] Above average: The "B" essay demonstrates a good understanding of its subject, a clear and persuasive use of evidence, a certain level of ease of expression, and solid organization. However, it usually lacks the level of originality and creativity that characterizes the insight found in an "A" essay.

C [70-72=C-, 73-76=C, 77-79=C+] = Average: The "C" essay makes a good attempt at all the assignment's requirements. It has a reasonable understanding of its subject matter but its ideas are frequently simplistic or over-generalized. The writing style is also more bland and repetitive than the style shown by "A" and "B" essays and it often contains flaws in grammar, punctuation, spelling and/or word choice. It may also use textual evidence out of context.

Please note that graduate students have to a have 3.0 GPA or better to obtain their degree.

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: 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.

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.

Late Penalties and Extension Policy

As long as you give me the request in writing (complete with a new deadline) before the assignment's due date, most requests for an extension will be granted. If the original deadline is passed by a student who has not received an extension or an extended deadline has been passed, 10% of the total points possible will be taken off for lateness. If the original or extended deadline is passed by 14 calendar days, the assignment will not be accepted. Please note that anything which receives an extension (or is simply late) will not be graded and returned to its author until after all of the papers for that assignment which were turned in on time are graded.

Library Liaison

Contact Toby Matoush via email: Toby.Matoush@sjsu.edu, or phone: (408) 808-2096 if you have library research questions that have not been answered in class.

Classroom Protocol

Students are expected to arrive on time with at least one question on that day's reading written out. As it is a seminar, students will be expected to be fully engaged in class discussion. The student's role will be as a participant, not as an observer. Unless instructed otherwise, please turn cell phones and internet connections off during class. In English 254, in addition to literary genre, we will be discussing some very controversial subjects such as race and religion. Please keep in mind the necessity of the academic classroom to be a safe, civil and comfortable space for open discussion when interacting with your classmates or the instructor.

University Credit Hour Requirement Policy

“Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.”

Final Examination or Evaluation

Please note that we will meet during finals week for the second half of our presentations. This is a required meeting.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>”

English 254 / Genres of American Literature, English 254, Seminar in Genres of American Literature
E Pluribus Unum: Short Story Collections, Cycles, Sequences and Composite Novels
 Spring 2017 Course Schedule

If the schedule changes for any reason, students will be informed in class and via email at least one week ahead.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	Jan 31	Introduction. Have read by our first meeting excerpts from Forrest Ingram and Dunn & Morris (to be distributed as PDF's via email and Canvas).
2	Feb. 7	Read Jean Toomer, <i>Cane</i> (1923) and an additional essay on <i>Cane</i> (TBA).
3	Feb. 14	Read William Faulkner, <i>As I Lay Dying</i> (1935)
4	Feb. 21	Read first half of Louise Erdrich, <i>Love Medicine</i> (1984-2009) though "The Red Convertible" (1-189). Read Michelle Pacht, excerpts from <i>The Subversive Storyteller: The Short Story Cycle and the Politics of Identity in America</i> (on Canvas).
5	Feb. 28	Finish <i>Love Medicine</i> (including the first 32 pages of the P.S. section). Read Hertha D. Sweet Wong, "Louise Erdrich's <i>Love Medicine</i> : Narrative Communities and the Short Story Cycle."
6	Mar. 7	Read Maxine Hong Kingston, "No Name Woman" section of <i>China Men</i> and <i>China Men</i> up through "The Laws" (5-19, 213-381).
7	Mar. 14	Finish reading <i>China Men</i> (382-541). Read Rocio Davis, "Introduction: Asian American and Asian Canadian Short-story Cycles."
8	Mar. 21	Read all of Toni Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> (2008)
9	Mar. 28	Spring Break-- no classes meet this week.
10	Apr. 4	Read N. Scott Momaday, <i>Way to Rainy Mountain</i> (1969). Read Momaday, "The Man Made of Words" and selections by Berner and Oandasan.
11	Apr. 11	Read Tomas Rivera, <i>And the Earth Did Not Devour Him</i> (1971)
12	Apr. 18	Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due. Read Sandra Cisneros, <i>House on Mango Street</i> (1984).
13	Apr. 25	Read Karen Tei Yamashita, <i>Tropic of Orange</i> (1997).
14	May 2	Read Jhumpa Lahiri, <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> (1999).
15	May 9	Read Junot Diaz, <i>This is How You Lose Her</i> (2012).
16	May 16	Research Presentations (Day 1)
Final Exam	May 23 7:45 -10 PM	Research Presentations (Day 2). Research Paper Due.