

San José State University Department of English and Comparative Literature
English 130: Writing Fiction (Section 01) – Spring 2018

Selena Anderson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Creative Writing
Class Days/Time: MW 12:00-1:15PM
Classroom: Boccardo Business Center 130

Email: Selena.Anderson@sjsu.edu
Office Location: FOB 105
Office Hours: MW 2:00PM-3:00PM
Telephone: (408) 924-4449

“If there is a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, you must be the one to write it.”

—Toni Morrison

Course Description

In the fiction workshop, students will examine how literary fiction works. Some questions students will begin to uncover include the following: What makes a character unforgettable? What makes for a musical sentence? What makes a scene transport the reader in such a way that they forget that they are reading? What is it about a story that evokes an emotional response in the reader? How do writers create and reinvent these moments? Through lecture, discussion, assigned reading, writing exercises, and peer feedback, students will investigate elements of craft including plot and story structure, characterization, point of view, and voice among other topics to write and revise two short stories.

Prerequisites: ENGL 71 (or equivalent) or instructor consent. Upper division standing.

Learning Outcomes and Course Goals

This course addresses the following Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) approved for the BA in English. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 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

We will not be using a textbook in this course. All reading materials will be uploaded to Canvas or passed out during class. Students are required to check Canvas regularly, print the readings, and bring them to class. Directions on when and where to access specific reading materials will be provided by your professor.

Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

Grading Information

Creative writing 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, and rhythm.
8. Naturalness and believability.
9. Appropriateness of style to subject.
10. Compelling audience interest.

Student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

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. Please be courteous and team-oriented when it comes to submitting your work on time and within the page count (going way over will result in point deduction).

Final grades will be the product of the following factors:

- 2 Short stories, 8-10 pages in length 20% each
- 1 Major Revision of a Short Story 30%
- Writing Exercises, Peer Feedback, Participation 30%

The maximum values of the above assignments total 100% that graduates, in accordance with University policy as follows: 100-98=A+; 97-94=A; 93-90=A-; 89-87=B+, 86-84=B; 83-80=B-; 79-77=C+; 76-74=C; 73-70=C-; 69-67=D+; 66-64=D; 63-60=D-; 59-0=F.

Determination of Grades

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 (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a + or - grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

Departmental 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.

This course must be passed with a C or better as a CSU graduation requirement.

Note that “All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades.” See [University Policy F13-1](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf> for more details.

Attendance at Literary Readings

You are required to attend two readings by poets or prose writers presented on the SJSU campus or elsewhere. The Bay Area is one of the world's great literary regions, where seven days a week one can attend a reading by a renowned writer at a bookstore, college, community center, or library. Readings are listed in the Sunday editions of the San Jose Mercury News and San Francisco Chronicle, and in Metro. After attending each reading, you will write a brief response (1-2pp). You may respond to any aspect of the reading, for example the speaker, the venue, the material performed, or the Q&A with the audience. These two assignments will go toward your participation grade; completion is mandatory to passing the course.

Participation

Students are expected to attend regularly and thoughtfully engage in class discussion. Be open to relating to the stories in various ways. This includes through your lived experience, previous reading, the way you respond to a character, likeable or not, or a particular, unexpected turn of phrase—all of which you can adapt to your own writing. Allow your work (and yourself) to undergo a positive change. Thoughtful peer feedback and self-reflection is vital to succeeding in the course.

Late Work

Late or electronic submissions will not be accepted. Papers are due in hard copy, in class, on the dates indicated. In case of a documented emergency, contact me before the assignment is due.

Attendance

Students are required to attend class regularly and to come prepared and ready to work. More than three absences will negatively affect your grade. Skipping the class when your story is going up for workshop will be an automatic F for that assignment. Make a friend in the class. If you happen to miss a class meeting, get notes from that friend. After you've caught up on the reading and consulted your friend's notes, feel free to ask me specific questions should you need clarification.

Course Procedure

A large aspect of the course is conducted in workshop format, which requires active student participation. You are expected to prepare written commentary before class and engage in discussion with your peers about a) your understanding/interpretation of a given piece and b) your suggestions for improvement.

To that end, you must provide copies of your work for discussion. On the class meeting before the date of your workshop, bring a hard copy for me and the rest of the class. This is one of your most important responsibilities in the class. Failure to distribute your prose narrative the class meeting before your workshop date will result in losing your turn – and a corresponding grade reduction for the assignment.

Manuscript Prep and Procedure

All student work is to be typed (12pt. font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, one-inch margins, with page numbers present somewhere on the page and stapled) and printed single-sided. Failure to follow directions will negatively impact your grade. Your name and the work's title (even if it is *untitled*) are to always appear on the first page of the work's final draft. If in doubt, just follow MLA guidelines: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/24/> (links externally)

Workshop Etiquette

Workshop is a place for respectful and constructive criticism. It is also a place where students practice articulating what makes creative writing distinctive, interesting, and fun to read. The author should take notes and remain silent as their work is being discussed. Spoken and written commentary from peers must always be directed at the work, not the writer. Personal attacks and offensive or inappropriate language will not be tolerated. Students who cannot follow these guidelines will be dismissed from the course. If you receive any offensive comments on your work, please let me know as soon as possible so I can address the problem.

Student code of conduct (SJSU and classroom policies)

Students are responsible for maintaining a respectful environment in the classroom. San Jose State is committed to maintaining a safe education and working environment free of discrimination, harassment and sexual violence. Policies are available online at: <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/policies/> http://notalone.sjsu.edu/policy_information/index.html

Per Title 5, the university prohibits “[activities] that substantially and materially disrupts the normal operations of the University” and “conduct that threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person within or related to the University community, including physical abuse, threats, intimidation, harassment, or sexual misconduct.” Please keep this in mind as you submit work for this course. The work you create in this class should aspire to resemble in quality the work we read. The work should

be literary and character driven (this class is not the place for cat poems, romances, fan-fiction, fantasy, horror, crime, and the like.) **I will not tolerate any work that is gratuitously violent, pornographic. If you aren't sure about your work, see me before distributing it to your classmates.**

University Policies

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

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the [Academic Calendars webpage](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/) at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/. The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

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 and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

- “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

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/>.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make 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](#) at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center \(AEC\)](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

Accommodation to Students' Religious Holidays

San José State University shall provide accommodation on any graded class work or activities for students wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require students to be absent from class. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor, in writing, about such holidays before the add deadline at the start of each semester. If such holidays occur before the add deadline, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. It is the responsibility of the instructor to make every reasonable effort to honor the student request without penalty, and of the student to make up the work missed. See [University Policy S14-7](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf>.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the [Academic Success Center](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/> located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112.

These items include DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Peer Connections

Peer Connections, a campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring, strives to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. You are encouraged to take advantage of their services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, and campus resource referrals.

In addition to offering small group, individual, and drop-in tutoring for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other related topics. A computer lab and study space are also available for student use in Room 600 of Student Services Center (SSC).

Peer Connections is located in three locations: SSC, Room 600 (10th Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando Street), at the 1st floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. Visit [Peer Connections website](#) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling>.

ENGL 130 / Writing Fiction (Section 01), Spring 2018, Course Schedule

Note: This schedule is subject to change. Announcements will be made in class and on Canvas.

- W 1/24 Welcome & Introduction; Course Overview; “The First Day” & “Bad Neighbors” by Edward P. Jones
- M 1/29 Narrative: First Person, Third Person; Excerpts from *The Famished Road* by Ben Okri, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Herzog* by Saul Bellow, *Atmospheric Disturbances* by Rivka Galchen, *Reflections in a Golden Eye* by Carson McCullers, *Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James, and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf
- W 1/31 Narrative: Second Person, First Person Plural; “How to Date a Brown Girl” by Junot Diaz; “Whites” by Julie Otsuka, and “We Can Do a Lot: the Rise of First-person Plural Narration”; How-To Exercise
- M 2/5 Voice; Excerpts from *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *The Sympathizer* by Viet Than Nguyen, *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers* by Yiyun Li, “Escapes” by Joy Williams, “God’s Gym” by John Edgar Wideman, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark, *In Our Time/The Nick Adams Stories* by Ernest Hemmingway, “Conversion of the Jews” by Philip Roth, *Cosmicomics* and *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino; “The Werewolf” by Alice Carter; “On Writing Fiction” by David Jauss; 2 Poems by Analicia Sotelo and Harmony Holiday; Voice Exercise
- W 2/7 Character; “Sexy” by Jhumpa Lahiri; “All the Lonely People” by James Alan McPherson; “Gideon” by ZZ Packer; “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid; Character Exercise
- M 2/12 Detail, Imagery, Metaphor; “A Shinagawa Monkey” by Haruki Murakami; “A Country Doctor” by Franz Kafka; Workshop Etiquette; **Story #1 is DUE!**
- W 2/14 Story #1 Workshop
- M 2/19 Story #1 Workshop
- W 2/26 Story #1 Workshop
- M 2/28 Story #1 Workshop
- M 3/5 Story #1 Workshop

- M 3/12 Story #1 Workshop
- W 3/14 Story #1 Workshop
- M 3/19 Story #1 Workshop
- W 3/21 Story #1 Workshop
- M 3/26 -- W 3/28 SPRING BREAK
- M 4/2 Narrative: Unreliable/Reliable; “Why I Live at the PO” by Eudora Welty; *Catcher in the Rye* by JD Salinger; *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov; “Tell-tale Heart” by Edgar Allen Poe; *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis
- W 4/4 Narrative: Omniscience; Excerpts from *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison; *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith; *Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens; *Death of Ivan Ilyich* by Leo Tolstoy
- M 4/9 Narrative: Free Indirect Discourse; Excerpt from *How Fiction Works* by James Wood; “The Art of Close Writing” by Jonathan Russell Clark; **Story #2 is DUE!**
- W 4/11 Story #2 Workshop
- M 4/16 Story #2 Workshop
- W 4/18 Story #2 Workshop
- M 4/23 Story #2 Workshop
- W 4/25 Story #2 Workshop
- M 4/30 Story #2 Workshop
- W 5/2 Story #2 Workshop
- M 5/7 Story #2 Workshop; Revising Prose: Matthew Salesses’ *Pleiades* Revision Exercises
- W 5/9 Story #2 Workshop; Revising Prose: Various Authors on Revision; Awesome Author Interviews Saul Bellow’s “Primitive Communicator”; Ursula Le Guin’s Best Wishes to Next Gen. Writers; Toni Morrison/Bill Moyers Interview
- M 5/14 Last Class Day; Story #2 Workshop; Revising Prose: Raymond Carver’s “The Bath” and “A Small Good Thing”; “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” and “Beginners”
- W 5/16 Final Exam Wednesday, May 16 9:45am-12:00pm: **Final Revision is DUE!**