

San José State University Department of English and Comparative Literature

English 165: Street Literature in Diaspora- Gilded Age-WWII; WWII- Present (Section 01) – Fall 2019

Prof. Keenan Norris
Email: keenan.norris@sjsu.edu
Class Days/Time: T/TH 1:30-2:45PM
Office: FOB 128
Office Hours: TU 5-7PM
Classroom: BBC 221

Course Description

This class will explore, over the course of two distinct time periods (Gilded Age to WWII, WWII-Present), the genre of street literature as defined in *Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape*: “Street lit was the work of Riis and his fellow muckrakers in New York City and Chicago and America’s other major cities at the turn of that century... A bit later on, street lit was also the work of white noir novelists of the 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s— most notably Raymond Chandler (taking as his setting the streets of Los Angeles) and Dashiell Hammett (a post-WWI San Francisco centering his stories)... [today] street lit is a body of American literature produced by post-1980s black and Latino writers and deriving its formal structure, narrative technique, and themes from the determinists and naturalist fiction of past epochs in African American and American literature.” We will read works by writers who chronicle the urban experiences of Americans of many different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

List of Readings

Gilded Age-WWII

Ghetto: Invention of a Place, History of an Idea by Mitchell Duneir

Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape (anthology)

How the Other Half Lives by Jacob Riis

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets by Stephen Crane

WWII-Present

Cotton Comes to Harlem by Chester Himes

Pimp by Iceberg Slim

The Coldest Winter Ever by Sister Souljah

The Last Street Novel by Omar Tyree

Uptown Thief by Aya de Leon

Assignments

Mid-Term Essay

100 Points

The mid-term essay will be an analytical essay that proposes and defends a thesis based on key themes in one of the following texts, or a comparison and contrast essay about intersecting themes in two of the following texts: *How the Other Half Lives*; *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*; *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (book/film); *Pimp* (book/film).

Final Exam Essay

100 Points

The final exam essay will be an analytical essay that proposes and defends a thesis based on key themes in one of the following texts, or a comparison and contrast essay about intersecting themes in two of the following texts: *Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape*; *Ghetto*; *The Coldest Winter Ever*; *The Last Street Novel*; *Uptown Thief*.

Presentation

50 Points

The presentation can be completed either by individuals or in groups of 2 persons.

The presentation will focus on one of the following topics: early street lit, referencing *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*; ethnicity and the American slums referencing *How the Other Half Lives* and *Ghetto: Invention of a Place, History of an Idea*; historicizing urban literature in America referencing *Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape*; femininity in urban narratives referencing

Pimp/The Coldest Winter Ever/Uptown Thief; African-American urban literature, referencing *Cotton Comes to Harlem/ Coldest Winter Ever/Last Street Novel*.

Students can do their presentation in any of several ways. They can make a PowerPoint or write a traditional essay. They can record audio or video. Be creative.

Weekly Response Papers

50 Points

Students will be required to complete a weekly response paper on the week's assigned reading. These papers should be analytical in nature but do not have to follow a rigid formal structure.

*All assignments are subject to change of due date, assignment substitution, and cancellation.

III. Essay Grade Descriptions

An "A" essay is a paper that:

follows effectively the assignment instructions; presents an argument with an analytical thesis; shows sophisticated and original thought/analysis; demonstrates clear and excellent organization and development of ideas according to the purpose of the assignment; is coherent; is without excessive grammatical errors.

A "B" essay is a paper that:

follows effectively the assignment instructions; presents an argument with an analytical thesis; shows good, original thought and analysis; demonstrates clear and excellent organization and development of ideas according to the purpose of the assignment; is coherent; is without excessive grammatical errors.

A "C" essay is a paper that:

follows effectively the assignment instructions; presents an argument with an analytical thesis; shows original thought/analysis; is coherent; has several grammatical errors.

A "D" or "F" paper is one that:

fails to follow the assignment's instructions; lacks a distinct argument; lacks thought, originality, organization, development of ideas; has excessive grammatical errors; is incoherent; is plagiarized; or is turned in past the due date.

*Essays are subject to change of due date, assignment substitution and cancellation. Failure to submit any of the major essay assignments may result in a failing grade. All major essays must be turned in for the student to be considered for a passing grade.

IV. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional illegal appropriation of "ideas or writings of another as one's own" (Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary). As a rule, you should document word-for-word quotations from a source, ideas from a source that you simply put in your own words, tables, charts, graphs and statistics.

*Any student caught plagiarizing any assignment will face appropriate disciplinary action.

V. 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.

VI. University Policies Per University Policy S16-9 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' Syllabus Information web page at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

VII. 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 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 is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

VIII. 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](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) 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](http://www.sjsu.edu/aec) (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

IX. 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>.

X. 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.

XI. 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 Hous-

ing Building B. Visit [Peer Connections website](http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

XII. 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>.

XII. Required Texts:

Gilded Age-WWII

Ghetto: Invention of a Place, History of an Idea by Mitchell Duneir

Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape (anthology)

How the Other Half Lives by Jacob Riis

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets by Stephen Crane

WWII-Present

Cotton Comes to Harlem by Chester Himes

Pimp by Iceberg Slim

The Coldest Winter Ever by Sister Souljah

The Last Street Novel by Omar Tyree

Uptown Thief by Aya de Leon

XIII.

Reading & Viewing Schedule:

*Disclaimer: This list may change dramatically due to time constraints, etc.

WEEK 1: *Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape*

How the Other Half Lives

WEEK 2: *How the Other Half Lives*

WEEK 3: *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*

WEEK 4: *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*

WEEK 5: *Ghetto: Invention of a Place, History of an Idea*

“The Simple Art of Murder”/ “I’ll Be Waiting”

Excerpt from *Donald Duk*

WEEK 6: *Cotton Comes to Harlem*

Cotton Comes to Harlem the film

WEEK 7-8: *Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape*

Pimp book/film and related articles

WEEK 8-9: MID-TERM ESSAY

Stories from *masha'allah*

Poems by Jimmy Santiago Baca, et. others

WEEK 10: *The Coldest Winter Ever*

WEEK 11: *The Coldest Winter Ever*

WEEK 12: *The Last Street Novel*

WEEK 13: *The Last Street Novel*

WEEK 14: *Uptown Thief*

Presentations

WEEK 15: *Uptown Thief*

Presentations

WEEK 16: FINAL EXAM ESSAY

Visiting Author: Aya de Leon