

San José State University Department of English and Comparative Literature

English 165: Street Literature in Diaspora- Gilded Age-WWII; WWII-Present
(Section 01) – Fall 2020

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Office Hours: Tues. 4:15-6:15PM

Class Days/Time: T/TH 3-4:15PM

Virtual Classroom

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

*Must be purchased

Gilded Age-WWII

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

**Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape* (anthology)

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets by Stephen Crane

**Jews Without Money* by Mike Gold

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: *Jews Without Money*; *How the Other Half Lives* (selected chapters); *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* (selected chapters); *Ghetto: Invention of a Place, History of an Idea* (selected chapters); *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 *Jews Without Money* or *How the Other Half Lives* (selected chapters) and *Ghetto: Invention of a Place, History of an Idea* (selected chapters); historicizing urban literature in America referencing *Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape* (selected chapters); 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.

I. English Department Student Learning Objectives (as they are evoked in the English 165 Course Goals)

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of ethnic American literature.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to ethnic American literature, gaining an awareness of the range of cultural experiences and productions that make up women and non-binary writers of color within American literary and cultural history, focusing on the self-representations of these writers and their communities.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, strengthening their abilities to engage ethnic American literary text and to analyze both its form and content as well as its social and historical contexts.

II. Grades

Final grades will be reported as: A+/A/A-/B+/B/B-/C+/C/C-/D+/D/D-/F. The department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale defined in the SJSU Catalog (“The Grading System”).

A+ = 194-200 points

A = 184-193 points

A- = 180-183 points

B+ = 174-179 points

B = 164-173 points

B- = 160-163 points

C+ = 154-159 points

C = 144-153 points

C- = 140-143 points

D+ = 134-139 points

D = 124-133 points

B- = 120-123 points

F = 119 points or lower

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>A+</i>	<i>194-200</i>	<i>96 to 100%</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>184-193</i>	<i>93 to 95%</i>
<i>A-</i>	<i>180-183</i>	<i>90 to 92%</i>
<i>B+</i>	<i>174-179</i>	<i>86 to 89 %</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>164-173</i>	<i>83 to 85%</i>
<i>B-</i>	<i>160-163</i>	<i>80 to 82%</i>
<i>C+</i>	<i>154-159</i>	<i>76 to 79%</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>144-153</i>	<i>73 to 75%</i>
<i>C-</i>	<i>140-143</i>	<i>70 to 72%</i>
<i>D+</i>	<i>134-139</i>	<i>66 to 69%</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>124-133</i>	<i>63 to 65%</i>
<i>D-</i>	<i>120-123</i>	<i>60 to 62%</i>

III. Essay Grade Descriptions

In written assignments for English 165, this scale is based on the following criteria:

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 that 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.

D[60-62=D-, 63-66=D, 67-69=D+] = Below average: The "D" essay is poorly organized and generally unclear. It has inappropriate or inadequate examples, is noticeably superficial or simplistic, and/or contains some serious mechanical and grammatical problems. A "D" essay may also reveal some misunderstanding of the assignment requirements.

F = Failure: An "F" essay has not addressed the requirements of the assignment and is unacceptable work in terms of both form and content.

*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 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.”

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](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf>.

X. General Expectations, Rights and Responsibilities of the Student

As members of the academic community, students accept both the rights and responsibilities incumbent upon all members of the institution. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with SJSU's policies and practices pertaining to the procedures to follow if and when questions or concerns about a class arises. To learn important campus information, view University Policy S90-5 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S90-5.pdf> and SJSU current semester's Policies and Procedures at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. In general, it is recommended that students begin by seeking clarification or discussing concerns with their instructor. If such conversation is not possible, or if it does not address the issue, it is recommended that the student contact the Department Chair as the next step.

XI. Student Technology Resources

(The following is subject to change due to pandemic-related restrictions, which are likely to fluctuate. The following represents only a best case scenario.)

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.

XII. SJSU Peer Connections

(The following is subject to change due to pandemic-related restrictions, which are likely to fluctuate. The following represents only a best case scenario.)

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](http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu) at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu> for more information.

XIII. SJSU Writing Center

(The following is subject to change due to pandemic-related restrictions, which are likely to fluctuate. The following represents only a best case scenario.)

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the Writing Center website: <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook.

XIV. SJSU Counseling Services

(The following is subject to change due to pandemic-related restrictions, which are likely to fluctuate. The following represents only a best case scenario.)

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>.

XV. 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 section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year cal-

endards document on the Academic Calendars webpage at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/. The Late Drop Policy is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/late-drops/policy/>. February 3rd is the last day to drop classes in Spring 2015. Information about the latest changes and news is available at the Advising Hub at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>. English

XVI. Acquisition and Relative Importance of Texts:

Ghetto: Invention of a Place, History of an Idea by Mitchell Duneir (selected chapters)

Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape (selected chapters)

How the Other Half Lives by Jacob Riis (pdf available free on Canvas; selected chapters)

Jews Without Money by Mike Gold

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets by Stephen Crane (pdf available free on Canvas)

WWII-Present

Cotton Comes to Harlem by Chester Himes

Pimp by Iceberg Slim (audiobook available on YouTube)

The Coldest Winter Ever by Sister Souljah

The Last Street Novel by Omar Tyree

Uptown Thief by Aya de Leon

XVII.

Reading & Viewing Schedule:

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

WEEK 1: Street lit scholar interview: <https://www.keenannorris.com/blog-1/blog-post-title-four-tak3r>

Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape (intro)

WEEK 2: *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*

How the Other Half Lives (overview)

WEEK 3: *Jews Without Money*

WEEK 4: *Jews Without Money*

WEEK 5: *Ghetto: Invention of a Place, History of an Idea* (Chapters 1-2)
“The Simple Art of Murder”/ “I’ll Be Waiting”

WEEK 6-7: *Cotton Comes to Harlem*

Cotton Comes to Harlem book and film (see YouTube)

Chester Himes podcast: <https://www.keenannorris.com/blog-1/f22uj17blfrin-b3d7wnhm6vsw4a7np>

WEEK 8-9: *Street Lit: Representing the Urban Landscape* (selected chapters)

Pimp book/audiobook (see YouTube) and film (provided by instructor)

Iceberg Slim scholar interview: <https://www.keenannorris.com/blog-1/08>

WEEK 9: MID-TERM ESSAY DUE

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: Dennis Winston