

San José State University

English and Comparative Literature

English 254, Seminar in Genres of American Literature

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

**Section 1, Fall 2020**

**Course and Contact Information**

Instructor(s):	Professor Noelle Brada-Williams
Office Location:	FOB 102 but remote (by zoom or phone for Fall)
Telephone:	(408) (924-4439)—forward from campus line, does not allow texts
Email:	Noelle.Brada-Williams@sjsu.edu (direct emails preferred to messaging via Canvas)
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 3-5 PM via zoom or phone
Class Days/Time:	Monday 7 -9:45 PM
Classroom:	Zoom sessions via Canvas
Prerequisites:	Graduate or Honors standing

**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.

**Course Format of Online Course**

Class discussions will be synchronous (everyone participating at the same time on Mondays from 7 to 9:45 PM) via zoom. We will also be doing a good deal of writing and posting on Canvas. You will be expected to use a web camera and microphone to both visually and orally interact with the professor and your classmates. If you have any valid reason for not using your camera, please speak to the professor privately.

## Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, selected course readings, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on the [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](http://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com> for English 254. You are responsible for ensuring that Mysjsu and thus Canvas has your most up to date email address. For technical help with Canvas, see <https://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/support/>

## 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.

## Ten Required Texts plus Additional Readings on Canvas:

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

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

Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* Vintage. ISBN: 978-0-307-27676-6

Tommy Orange, *There, There*. 2018 ISBN: 978-0-525-43614-0

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

Lois-Ann Yamanaka, *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers*. 978-0-312-42464-0

Karen Tei Yamashita. *Tropic of Orange*. Minneapolis. MN: Coffee House P, 1997. ISBN: 978-1-566-89486-9

**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	10%
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>	15%
CANVAS Participation	Posting of your own responses and comments on at least one other person's responses for each of the 10 books.	10%

Note that although we meet the same hours a week that a 3-unit class meets, this is an enhanced 4-unit course. The enhancement is in taking you more in-depth into the research process with additional assignments such as the proposal and annotated bibliography, and the review of another critic's work.

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 have 3.0 GPA or better to obtain their degree.**

According to University 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 three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Thus a 4-unit (undergraduate) course would require 12 hours of work a week on average.

Faculty members are required to have a culminating activity for their courses, which can include a final examination, a final research paper or project, a final creative work or performance, a final portfolio of work, or other appropriate assignment.

In this class the culminating experience will be the presentations of your research papers which will begin at our last class and continue on at a meeting during finals week.

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 Peggy Cabrera via email: [peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu](mailto:peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu) if you have library research questions that have not been answered in class.

### **Classroom Protocol**

You are required to be courteous and professional to both classmates and the professor. Most people take this as a requirement in their daily lives and this statement does not need to be reiterated here. However, people sometimes forget that the classroom—even a virtual one—is a professional setting and rules that govern a business meeting apply here. For example, devices such as cell phones need to be put on mute or turned off if they are not being used to connect to the class; beginning class late is unacceptable. If an emergency arises that requires your absence from class, please contact the professor. Simply prioritizing your education behind other time commitments does not constitute a valid excuse. Participating in class discussions and listening to and taking notes on class lectures are absolutely necessary for the successful completion of this course. Protocol for written work requires that all quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks or, when more than three lines, put in an indented block. Full citation of the original author and source must also be included. For all papers, review an MLA style guide for how to properly cite and integrate your research materials into your own work. Also see the University policy on “[Academic Integrity](#)” for help defining and avoiding plagiarism of all kinds. This course uses turnitin for written work and the instructor will be forced to report any infringements through plagiarism or other forms of cheating to the [office of student conduct and ethical development](#). For this online version of the course, students will be expected to visually check in for each synchronous class meeting and are requested to use their web cameras as much as possible.

### **University Policies**

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](#) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>).

### **Additional Information**

This course expects all formal student work to follow MLA format.

*E Pluribus Unum:***Short Story Collections, Cycles, Sequences and Composite Novels****Fall 2020 Course Schedule**

If any changes need to be made to this schedule, you will be notified via email or Canvas announcement a week in advance of the scheduled discussion/due date.

<b>Week/Lesson /Module</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</b>
1	Aug. 24	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	Aug. 31	Read Jean Toomer, <i>Cane</i> (1923) and an additional essay on <i>Cane</i> (TBA).
3	Sept. 7	Labor Day Holiday
4	Sept. 14	Read William Faulkner, <i>As I Lay Dying</i> (1935)
5	Sept. 21	Read first half of Louise Erdrich, <i>Love Medicine</i> (1984-2009) through "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).
6	Sept. 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."
7	Oct. 5	Read Maxine Hong Kingston, "No Name Woman" section of <i>Woman Warrior</i> and <i>China Men</i> up through "The Laws" (5-19, 213-381) and an excerpt from Dunn & Morris.
8	Oct. 12	Finish reading <i>China Men</i> (382-541). Read Rocio Davis, "Introduction: Asian American and Asian Canadian Short-story Cycles."
9	Oct. 19	Read all of Toni Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> (2008)
10	Oct. 26	Read Tomas Rivera, <i>And the Earth Did Not Devour Him</i> (1971)
11	Nov. 2	<b>Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due.</b> Read Sandra Cisneros, <i>House on Mango Street</i> (1984).
12	Nov. 9	Read Lois-Ann Yamanaka, <i>Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers</i> (1996)
13	Nov. 16	Read Karen Tei Yamashita, <i>Tropic of Orange</i> (1997).
14	Nov. 23	Read Tommy Orange, <i>There There</i> (2018) to page 145 (through "Tony Loneman")
15	Nov. 30	Tommy Orange, <i>There There</i> (2018)
16	Dec. 7	Research Presentations (Day 1)
Final's week meeting	Dec. 14 7:45 to 10 PM	Research Presentations (Day 2). <b>Research Paper Due.</b>

Some additional books for future study of this odd space between genres within American literature:

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903. Mix of fiction and nonfiction)

Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919)

John Steinbeck, *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932)

Toshio Mori, *Yokohama, California* (1949)

N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969)

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976)

Leslie Marmom Silko, *Storyteller* (1981 Mix of fiction and nonfiction)

Gloria Naylor, *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982)

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990)

Jessica Hagedorn, *Dogeaters* (1990)

Julia Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* (1991)

Christina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992)

Robert Olen Butler, *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* (1992) or *Severance* (2006)

Junot Diaz, *Drown* (1996) or *This is How You Lose Her* (2012)

Jhumpa Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) or *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999)

Elizabeth Strout, *Olive Kitteridge* (2008)

Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010)

Karen Tei Yamashita, *I- Hotel* (2010)

