

Dr. Mostafa Jalal  
San Jose State University

English 71-03  
Fall 2020  
Class Number: 41920  
Synchronous Online Class  
TR 4:30-5:45pm

Department of English and  
Comparative Literature  
Office: Faculty Office Building 224  
Office Hours: T 11am-1pm, and by  
appointment  
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**English 71**  
**Introduction to Creative Writing**



**Course Description:**

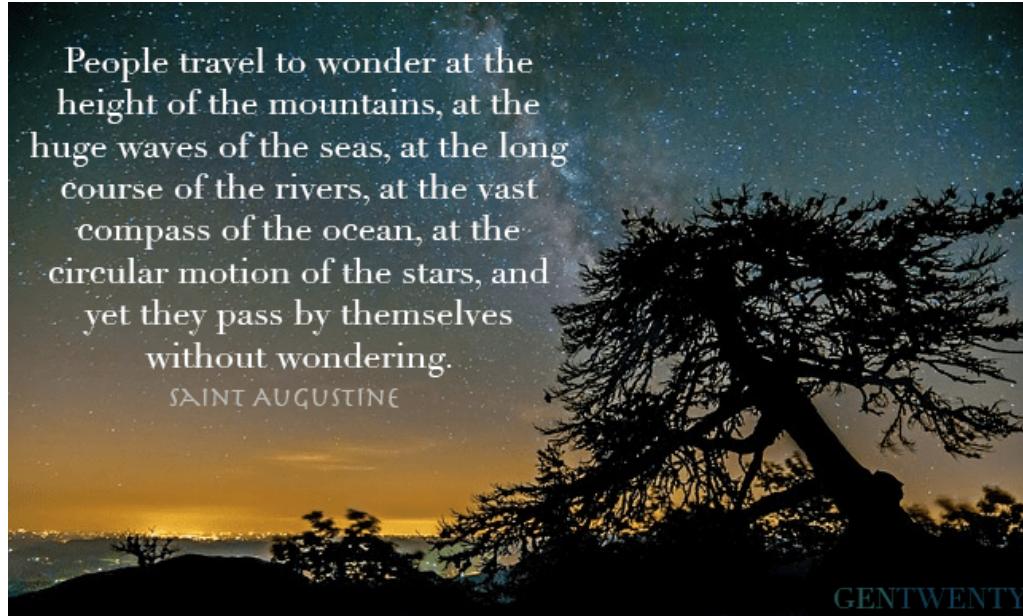
This class of introduction to creative writing considers the foundational genres of poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction. Most often, the works that inspire us contain both common and mysterious qualities, and we're often left in a sense of wonder. There are tangible qualities we can relate to, such as the images, setting, and various sensory details. There are also many intangible aspects that remain commonly unknown, including questions of psyche and theories of the larger universe. Students will discover what others have sought, and possibly found, in

their own explorations of creative writing through a thorough analysis of a variety of texts. Students will thoughtfully consider facets of these works by questioning their perspectives, whether these ideas have changed them in any way, and why these notions remain at the forefront of our human experiences. Over the course of this class, students will read creative, critical and complex texts from a variety of canonical and noncanonical authors, and will produce insightful, original and individual work, including poems, a short story, and a memoir, which will all further our understanding of creative writing.

This course will largely focus on readings, discourse, and clear, cohesive writing. We will learn how to encounter and enter these creative texts, discuss how and why they are written, and write our own personal, intimate, and important pieces inspired by these authors. We will discover the fundamentals of creative writing throughout it all. Poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction are cornerstones of creative writing, and we will learn the skills of studying them as we set forth on this magical journey of becoming creative writers ourselves.



At the end of this course, students will have gained a further understanding of creative writing, its influences on, and places in English literature, and its role in providing varying perspectives to those who seek larger answers. We will aim to consider these elements as we sharpen our analytical and authorial skills in our own expedition of becoming scholars and creative writers.



### **Faculty Web Page and Canvas Messaging:**

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, and assignment instructions can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. You are responsible for checking the messaging system through MySJSU to learn of any updates.

### **Catalog Description:**

Introduction to Creative Writing is a 3-unit, lower-division course designed, adopted, implemented, and administered by the Department of English and Comparative Literature at SJSU in accordance with the university's General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill Core General Education requirements in the Letters area of Humanities and the Arts. In this course, we will read and write poetry, creative non-fiction, and fiction. The course will be taught using a combination of discussion, in-class exercises, and writing workshops. For discussions, students are expected to participate in the analysis of both form and content of written work. In-class exercises will be drawn from texts, and workshops will require students to analyze and critique the creative work of their peers. Courtesy and honest critique will be paramount to the success of workshops.

### **Course Learning Outcomes:**

- Understand the form and content of assigned literary works;
- Comprehend the historical and cultural contexts of assigned literary works;
- Recognize the accomplishments of and issues related to writing by men and women representing diverse cultural traditions;
- Acquire through both individual and collaborative/workshop efforts of a written and oral nature the skills necessary for reading, discussing, analyzing, interpreting, and—most importantly—emulating and writing works of poetry, creative non-fiction, and short fiction;

- Communicate such skills with clarity and precision;
- Develop an appreciation of literary works as expressions of human intellect and imagination, and as representations of diverse human cultures;
- Develop the ability to write literary works that express intellect and imagination and that represent diversity in human cultures
- Respond to literature through clear and effective communication in both written and oral work;
- Read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility;
- Conduct library research in relation to writing creative non-fiction.
- Appreciate how literary works illuminate enduring human concerns while at the same time representing their particular cultures;
- Write works of poetry, creative non-fiction, and short fiction that are of interest and value to the writer, to other students in the course, and to a diverse reading audience.

### **English Department Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)**

#### **Student Learning Objectives:**

SLO 1: Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of creative writing.

SLO 2: Show familiarity with major literary works (of poetry), genres (styles), periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.

SLO 3: Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.

### **GE Area C2 Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)**

#### **Student Learning Objectives:**

SLO 1: Letters courses will enable students to recognize how significant works illuminate enduring human conditions.

SLO 2: Letters courses will enable students to respond to significant works by writing both research-based critical analyses and personal responses.

SLO 3: Letters courses will enable students to write clearly and effectively. Writing shall be assessed for correctness, clarity, and conciseness.

#### **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 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

### **Class Participation:**

We will complete daily work in class that goes toward your participation grade; you will not be able to complete these assignments if you do not come to class. I expect you to attend class daily and come on time. Absences and lateness will affect your grade because you will be missing class material and/or in-class activities. In addition, class participation does not simply mean that you are physically present in class. You must have all class materials, contribute to discussions, actively listen to your peers, and take notes as necessary.

### **Required Texts and Resources:**

- A. Oates, Joyce Carol. *Telling Stories: An Anthology for Writers*. (ISBN: 9780393971767)
- B. Oliver, Mary. *A Poetry Handbook*. (ISBN: 9780156724005)
- C. Printing and viewing resources for course readings, videos, assignments, and other material that are posted in Canvas.

### **Reading Assignments:**

In this class, we will be reading a series of creative, critical and complex texts. *They may often be challenging, so you should be prepared to read them more than once if necessary to fully understand their concepts.* Please be prepared to come to class with questions and comments to contribute to our discussion. Some of these reading assignments may focus on the mechanics, techniques and notions of language and rhetoric of creative writing. These will be valuable in our discourse and practice of constructing, drafting, finalizing, and revising creative pieces. Reading assignments are due on the day they appear on the course calendar and schedule. Please be responsible and do the readings beforehand.

### **Writing Assignments:**

At the end of the course, students are required to turn in a manuscript consisting of the work they have completed during the semester in the three genres required:

- A. Poetry (a selection of poems; 4 poems altogether)
- B. Fiction (a story; may also be a collection of flash fiction)
- C. Creative Non-Fiction (a memoir or creative essay; your own creative personal story)

### **Attendance:**

*Come to class—you know that.* Roll will be taken at the beginning of class, every class. If you arrive after roll has been called, it's your responsibility to notify me. It's a good idea to make friends and exchange contact information with one or more of your classmates to confer about that day's lessons. You should also contact me to review details of the class lecture. University policy F69-24: "Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefit for all members of the class."

**Participation:**

Participation is key to classroom success. I encourage you to interact, ask questions, provide insightful comments and contribute to the overall classroom discussion. *While attendance is mandatory, just attending doesn't automatically accrue participation points. A participation grade is unique to your attendance record.* Please be courteous and respectful of others while in the classroom and practice proper classroom etiquette and refrain from using mobile devices and laptops during lectures and discussions. You may use these devices for certain in-class activities when appropriate.

**Conferences:**

In lieu of regular class meetings on days when individual conferences are scheduled, we will instead prepare to meet one-on-one to discuss your current performance and grades in private. These meetings serve two primary goals: to critique a paper draft and to evaluate your overall progress as a writer. As with your attendance, these conferences are also mandatory. Please schedule a conference when dates and times are announced in class.

**Canvas and Technology:**

If you have not already done so, please visit SJSU's Canvas software. Here you will be able to find a special site devoted exclusively to our course. On this site, you will find files containing this syllabus and other class handouts as they become available. Additionally, we will regularly use the Discussion Board. You will also be able to communicate with fellow classmates, providing insight, answers or compounding questions when necessary. I will keep track of your participation and may use some of the material, including any linked texts, you and your classmates post as a starting place for in-class discussions.

**Class Grades:**

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| A. Poetry:                              | 20% |
| B. Fiction:                             | 20% |
| C. Creative Non-Fiction:                | 20% |
| D. Workshop participation:              | 20% |
| E. In-class activities and assignments: | 20% |

Grades will be based on the quality and quantity of your writing, and the quality and constructiveness of the criticism offered during the workshops.

Creative writing, though subject to the instructor's individual subjectivity, 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, rhythm; also, meter, rhyme, and other elements of poetic style and form. 8) Naturalness and believability. 9) Appropriateness of style to subject. 10) Compelling audience interest.

### **Final Manuscript:**

At the end of the term, you will turn in a manuscript consisting of the **revised** poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction pieces you completed during the semester. This manuscript will also contain a reflection piece on the composition of each form.

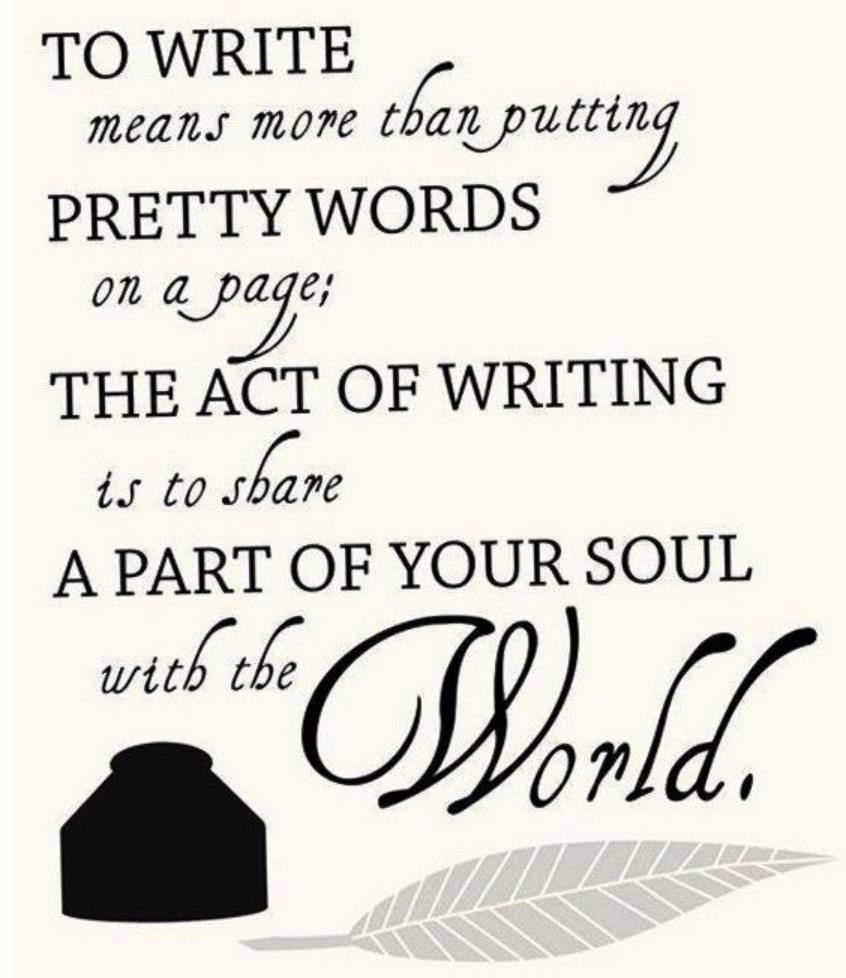
### **Late Policy:**

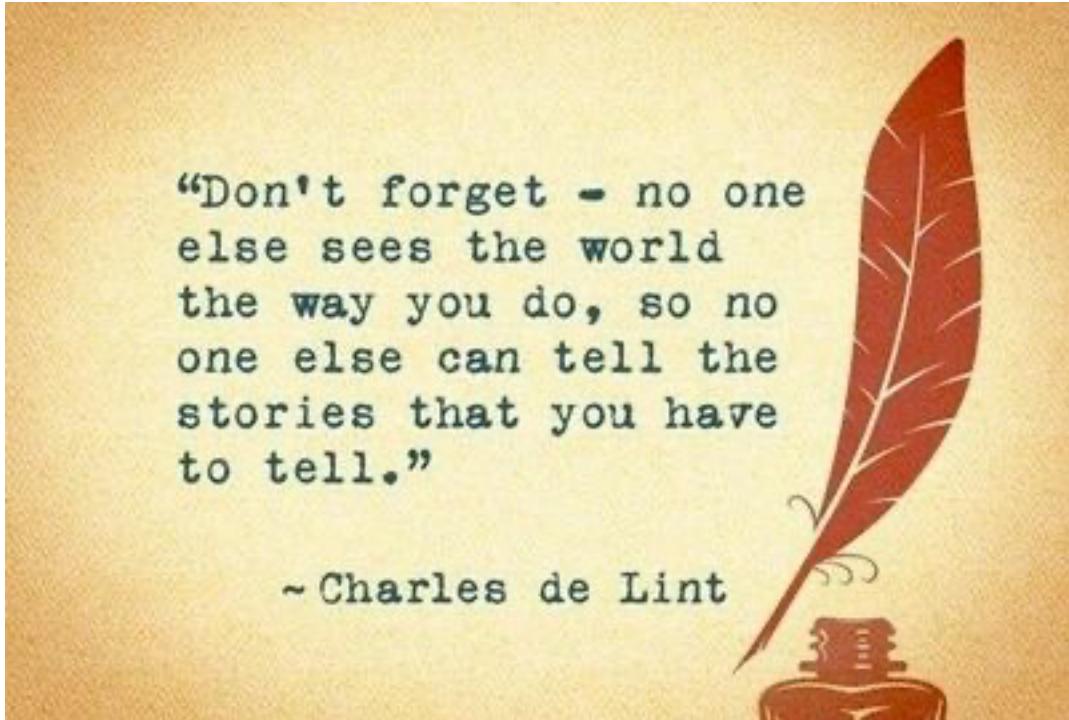
Assignments are due at the beginning of the class for which they are due. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

### **University Policies:**

The following link contains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, student success resources, etc.

<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>.





### Course Calendar and Schedule:

This is a tentative schedule for this quarter. Reading and writing assignments can and likely will change to better suit the needs of our class discussions. Please be sure to attend class regularly and visit our course information on Canvas to note any changes to the syllabus.

*\*In order to preserve course flexibility, only major assignment dates appear in the calendar below. A more detailed assignment calendar may be provided as the quarter progresses, and these calendar dates may be adjusted. Additionally, if and when schedule permits, we will try to visit the university's Writing Center and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library.*

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#### **Week 1:**

August 20  
Introduction of course & syllabus

#### **Week 2:**

August 25  
Introduce Favorite Work of Writing assignment

August 27  
Review and present on Favorite Work of Writing  
Begin poetry section  
Entering the conversation and understanding poetry

**Week 3:**

September 1

Continue discussion of selected poems & workshop

Read Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The Poet" and selections of Robert Frost

September 3

Continue discussion of selected poems & workshop

Read William Wordsworth's "Preface" and selections from *Lyrical Ballads* and *Prelude*

**Week 4:**

September 8

Continue discussion of selected poems & workshop

Read selections by Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson

September 10

Continue discussion of selected poems & workshop

Read selections by Mary Oliver, Wallace Stevens and Richard Wilbur

**Week 5:**

September 15

Continue discussion of selected poems & workshop

Read selections by Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Elizabeth Bishop, James Dickey, and Theodore Roethke

September 17

Continue discussion of selected poems & workshop

Read selections by Ovid, Gary Soto, and Carlos Cumpian

**Week 6:**

September 22

Conferences

Discuss revised poems

Read selections by Maxine Kumin, Joy Harjo, Natasha Trethewey, and Li-Young Lee

September 24

Continue conferences

Discuss revised poems

Read selections by E.E. Cummings, Randall Jarrell, and Dylan Thomas

**Week 7:**

September 29

Begin fiction section

Entering the conversation and understanding fiction

Read introduction by Joyce Carol Oates and selections by Anton Chekov, Ron Padgett, and Alan Lightman

October 1

Continue discussion of selected stories & workshop  
Read selections by Joyce Carol Oates and Emily Mann

**Week 8:**

October 6

Continue discussion of selected stories & workshop  
Read selections by Ernest Hemingway and Carson McCullers

October 8

Continue discussion of selected stories & workshop  
Read selections by James Joyce

**Week 9:**

October 13

Continue discussion of selected stories & workshop  
Read selections from the Bible, and by Ovid and C.K. Williams

October 15

Continue discussion of selected stories & workshop  
Read selections by Flannery O'Connor and William Faulkner

**Week 10:**

October 20

Conferences  
Discuss revised fiction story  
Read selections by E.L. Doctorow and Margaret Atwood

October 22

Continue conferences  
Discuss revised fiction story  
Read selections by Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville

**Week 11:**

October 27

Begin creative non-fiction section  
Entering the conversation and understanding creative non-fiction  
Read selections by Henry David Thoreau

October 29

Continue discussion of selected pieces & workshop  
Read selections by Nathaniel Hawthorne

**Week 12:**

November 3

Continue discussion of selected pieces & workshop

Read selections by Virginia Woolf

November 5

Continue discussion of selected pieces & workshop

Read *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

**Week 13:**

November 10

Continue discussion of selected pieces & workshop

Read selections by Zora Neale Hurston and Phyllis Wheatley

November 12

Continue discussion of selected pieces & workshop

Read selections by Richard Wright

**Week 14:**

November 17

Conferences

Discuss revised creative non-fiction pieces

Read selections by Jorge Luis Borges

November 19

Continue Conferences

Discuss revised creative non-fiction pieces

Read selections by Jack Kerouac

**Week 15:**

November 24

Discuss final manuscript and reflection

Read selections by Maxine Hong Kingston

November 26

Thanksgiving Day: no class

**\*Thanksgiving Break—November 25-27: Academic Holidays**

**Week 16:**

December 1

Workshop of manuscript

Read selections by Ralph Waldo Emerson

December 3

Continue workshop of manuscript

Read new selections by Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson

***Week 17:***

December (Finals Week)

**Final manuscript and reflection due**

Review Learning Objectives: How far have we come and where do we go from here?

Wrap-up of course

*\*Classes for the Fall 2020 semester end on Monday, December 7, 2020.*