

**San José State University**  
**Department of English & Comparative Literature**  
**English 240-Poetry Writing Workshop, Section 01**

**Fall-2021**

**Course and Contact Information**

Instructor(s):	J. Michael Martinez
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Virtual Office Hours:	M/W, Noon-1pm and by Appointment

Class Days/Time: Zoom Meetings: 7:00pm PST - 9:45 pm PST.

Classroom: Online

<https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84281827395?pwd=Yms3ZiVqUzBqQIRLQVhHNFV Sa2lvQT09>

Password: **155516**

**Course Description**

4 unit(s): Poetics and poetry writing as preparation for thesis. Includes theory and practice of major trends in contemporary poetry. Intensive workshop experience. May be repeatable for credit for up to 12 units.

“Art—as images, as words, as rhythm—,” Maurice Blanchot writes (*The Space of Literature*, 1955), “...points into a sordid absence, a suffocating condensation where Being ceaselessly perpetuates itself into nothingness.” Blanchot’s claim, with its emphasis on how language “points” outside the traditional dualism of Being and Nothingness, belongs to the contemporary investigation into the meaning of art divested of the customary terms of metaphysics: being, totality, presence, truth, beauty and value. Following Blanchot’s lead, our course will inquire into the greater consequences and manifestations of a poetics after metaphysics through research-creation.

In our course, we will examine how modern poetics and aesthetics might advance a parallel investigation into post-foundational thought—being outside of dualism. We’ll look at non-dualistic metaphysics as they occur in indigenous spaces and writing, such as in the writing systems of the Mexica/Aztec—most importantly, we will write. We’ll use class workshops, peer-review, and multiple drafts and revisions to achieve that goal. The course is demanding, and based on a certain kind of intense, exigent reading, requiring prolonged— in fact, repeated— attention to specific poems. We will see poetry as an artistic practice: as the great Paul Celan writes, “Attentiveness is the prayer of the soul.” We will be attentive and practice the process of poetry.

In addition to primary readings drawn from literature, particularly modernist poetry, “experimental” poetry, digital poetics, and the fragment, we will also devote time to 20th century art: modern performance (Ronaldo Wilson), avant-garde cinema (Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, Kenneth Anger, Andrew Busti), and music (John Cage, Steve Reich, My Bloody Valentine).

We will write poetry and generate art objects mirroring our theoretical concerns.

## Course Format: *Synchronous Online*

While a synchronous seminar meeting will regularly occur on Thursdays, requiring a computer and internet connectivity, students can also expect various classes to also contain an asynchronous component. I will be regularly assigning small group work and asking you to meet with me on Zoom one-on-one to check in about your participation and writing. Our class will be employing Canvas throughout the course.

## Course Materials and Canvas

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MyJSU on [Spartan App Portal](#) (or other communication system as indicated by the instructor) to learn of any updates.

CANVASE SITE: <https://jsu.instructure.com/courses/1433553>

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

- Complete a portfolio consisting of one finished original project (whose content will be discussed and approved by and with the professor).
- Explore varied modes and forms of contemporary poetry.
- Present early drafts of poems for feedback in workshop.
- Give feedback to peers' poems.
- Read essays on the craft of poetry, and on aesthetics.
- Read collections of poems by contemporary poets.

## Texts/Readings

- Black Peculiar by Khadijah Queen. ISBN: 1934819204
- Cenzontle, Marcelo Hernandez Castillo ISBN: 1942683537
- Be Recorder, Carmen Gimenez Smith ISBN: 1555978487
- Tertulia by Vincent Toro ISBN: 0143135341
  
- A Physical Journal/Daybook
- Poetry Course Readings: on Canvas as PDFs or Links.

*There will also be handouts in class All required readings, whether online or in our books, must be brought to class.*

## Course Requirements and Assignments

**Participation:** while there may be lectures, the course will be organized as a single continuous discussion requiring everyone to voice their opinion. Please be in touch with me if you are going to miss a seminar. The quality of your class participation will be judged through the following: your effort at completing short assignments and, as necessary, sharing them; the effort you put into responding to the workshopped writing of your peers and your willingness to share your thoughts with the workshop as a whole; the effort you bring to reading critically; and, finally, how you contributed to our seminar's discussions.

*All required readings, whether online or in our books, must be brought to class.*

In class, you are being asked to respond to each other and to questions raised in class: I WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY DISRESPECTFUL CONVERSATION OF ANY MANNER WHETHER IN CLASS OR ONLINE.

Participation is essential to this course: we will work both in large and small groups.

**Reading Like a Writer:** during the semester you MIGHT pair up with a colleague to present some opening thoughts on the day's reading. Both of you must speak/present. Both of you will receive the same grade toward extra credit. A good discussion will include the following:

1. Introduction to the Author—Biography, Important Notes, Etc.
2. CONCISE Summary of Poem/Essay
3. Identification of the Author's Use of Prosody we are studying. This should be a close-reading that pays attention to a SPECIFIC passage of text and explicates the writing for significance of language, imagery, tone, etc. I will assign one such technique or point of emphasis; you must choose another interesting feature of the Poem/Essay.
4. A discussion of the Poem/Essay's significance, with special attention to the deeper questions the events and reflections prompt.

You must prepare a visual aid for this presentation. You may make a PowerPoint presentation. I will be evaluating these Presentations for their depth and sophistication, your abilities to engage the class, your speaking dynamics—volume, clarity, rate, etc., and your overall professionalism.

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.

### **Final Examination or Evaluation**

The course will complete with each student turning in a final portfolio of their written work. More information will be provided nearer the time the assignment is due.

### **Due Dates**

- Aug 26: In-class Exercise #1
- Sept. 2: In-class Exercise #2
- Sept 9: In-class Exercise #3
- Sept 16: In-class Exercise #4
- Sept 30: In-class Exercise #5
- Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>: Zine #1 Due
- Oct 15<sup>th</sup>: First Workshop submission date-*due the Friday before your workshop, 5pm.*
- Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>: Zine #2 Due
- Oct. 29: Second Workshop submission date-*due the Friday before the scheduled workshop, by 5PM.*
- Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>: Third Workshop submission date-*due the Friday before the scheduled workshop, by 5PM.*
- Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>: Fourth Workshop submission date-*due the Friday before the scheduled workshop, by 5PM.*
- Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>: Final Portfolios Due by 10pm

## Grading Information

Grade	Percentage
<i>A plus</i>	96 to 100%
<i>A</i>	93 to 95%
<i>A minus</i>	90 to 92%
<i>B plus</i>	86 to 89 %
<i>B</i>	83 to 85%
<i>B minus</i>	80 to 82%
<i>C plus</i>	76 to 79%
<i>C</i>	73 to 75%
<i>C minus</i>	70 to 72%
<i>D plus</i>	66 to 69%
<i>D</i>	63 to 65%
<i>D minus</i>	60 to 62%

• 30%

### FINAL PROJECT

Your final project may take on one of the following forms:

- One Long Work (10-15 pages: lyric essay, poetry, prose);
- Two Shorter Works (10 pages each: 1 Due at Midterm, 1 Due for Finals; lyric essay, poetry, prose);
- One Twenty Minute Performance (in consultation with me: dance, film, installation, happening, etc.) with written reflection (5 pages);
- an Art Object (in consultation with me: painting, collage, sculpture, digital art piece, sound art, installation, happening, etc.) with written reflection (5 pages).

• 15%

### Three Zines

• 5% per

### Five Short In-class exercises

in response to our daily class prompts

• 15%

### One In-Class Presentation

• 15%

**Participation** (including class discussion, preparation, attendance, class prompts, etc.)

Total 100%

Grades given conform to the English Department and university grading policy. The Department of English is committed to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU Catalog (“The Grading System”). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure.

## Department of English and Comparative Literature Student Learning Goals

This course supports several of the English Department’s Student Learning Goals. The Department of English and Comparative Literature seeks to foster the intellectual development of its majors by encouraging study of literature and writing—whether creative, technical, or other professional writing. The Department strives to make its majors familiar with a wide range of works of British, American, and World literature, including folk and popular forms; and with the nature of the canon and of canon-formation, including issues of culture, history, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

## MFA Creative Writing Student Learning Objectives

- Students will demonstrate a high-level of ability to propose and complete a publishable, full-length work of literature in a primary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
- Students will demonstrate high-level of proficiency to write works of literature in a secondary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
- Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.
- Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.

- 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) Effectively employ the language of their discipline; d) write under time constraints.

### University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](#), 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](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

### Workload

As ENGL 240 is a 4-unit course, students can expect to spend a minimum of 12 hours per week doing the assigned and supplemental reading, writing, participating in online Canvas activities (synchronous and asynchronous) expected in this seminar, and completing required course activities. Careful time management will be essential to maintain the schedule of reading and writing necessary for success in this course and to comment on work posted by other students. You are urged to read ahead in the course calendar and read to select the poets you want to investigate to write your term-paper. 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 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

<b>Important Sites:</b>	
CANVASE SITE: <a href="https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1435832">https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1435832</a>	Zoom Room: <a href="https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/89583992418?pwd=NjMwWVhlcTVreHRWRDQzQzZkVjdzdzO9">https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/89583992418?pwd=NjMwWVhlcTVreHRWRDQzQzZkVjdzdzO9</a> Password: <b>073326</b>

# Suggestions for Process, and for Doing Well in this Course

1. Never turn in your first draft of anything. Go back over your work, asking yourself if you've been applying the techniques we have been discussing in class. This will take concentration and focus. As we progress through the semester, you will be held accountable for more and more techniques. It's a lot to keep in mind, and writers very rarely get all of them right on the first try. It's best to do several re-readings, each focused on a different concept. (If you're wondering why your scores are not improving, this is the most likely reason why.)
2. While the assignments give you some direction you should try to approach these by writing about situations and experiences that matter to you. Write about the people, observations, experiences, and things that bother you, fascinate you, anger you, etc.
3. Pay attention to what we're reading. Ask yourself the following: Which poems and essays inspire you? Who really lights your imagination on fire? If brain transplants were possible, whose (among writers) would you want to have? Try to find a few "masters," and read their work over several times. Try to discern how these writers build a poem. Then try to do it on your own. This is how writers learn.
4. Pay attention to life in general. That's what all writers do. Look for nuances, the things that nobody notices at first glance. Always work with detail—that's where the magic is. Note this in your journal/daybook
5. While I wish you to write on topics of emotional risk, there are poem which are discouraged from being turned in for workshop or assignments: relationships (of any sort) with current classmates, suicide, threats of violence, etc. If you feel unsure of your poem, please contact me.

## English 240 Poetry Writing Workshop, Fall 2021

(As the course progresses, we may get off schedule--this is natural—as such, our daily assignments may be revised as necessary with fair notice given by email or in class). All “PDF” readings will be available on Canvas. While it is recommended to purchase the books we are reading for class, all the readings from our poetry books will also have PDF scans of the selections available on Canvas.

Please be sure to have completed the assigned reading **before** that day’s zoom class.

<p><b>WEEK ONE:</b> August 19th</p>	<p><b>First Day of Class:</b> Course Overview, Introductions, Objectives</p> <p>Introduction:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Syllabus and Assignments               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Research-Creation: Semester Project.</li> <li>ii. Lera Boroditsky</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Infinite and Finite Games Q &amp; A</li> <li>3. Conocimiento.</li> </ol> <p><b>In-Class Exercise #1:</b> Found language Image Poem</p>
<p><b>WEEK TWO:</b> August 26th</p>	<p><b>Read:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poetry selections:</b> PDF <i>Ahead of All Parting</i>, Rainer Maria Rilke.</li> <li>• <b>Prose:</b> PDF Infinite and Finite Games, selection.</li> </ul> <p><b>In-Class Exercise #2</b> (Contemplative Poem)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>DUE:</b> IN-CLASS EXERCISE #1 (Found language Image Poem)</p>
<p><b>WEEK THREE:</b> September 2nd</p>	<p><b>Read:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poetry selections:</b> <i>North True, South Bright</i>, Dan Beachy-Quick</li> <li>• <b>Prose:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PDF: selections from <b>HUNGRY LISTENING</b></li> <li>○ VIDEO: The Artist Sings: Peter Morin in Conversation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="https://vimeo.com/119944337">https://vimeo.com/119944337</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>In-Class Exercise #3</b> (HUNGRY SEEING Poem)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>DUE:</b> IN-CLASS EXERCISE #2 (Contemplative Poem)</p>
<p><b>WEEK FOUR:</b> September 9</p>	<p><b>Read:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poetry selections:</b> <i>Be Recorder</i>, Carmen Gimenez Smith</li> <li>• <b>Prose:</b> PDF: Jose Esteban Munoz, <b>Selections</b> from <i>Disidentifications</i></li> </ul> <p><b>In-Class Exercise #4</b> (The Poet Contemplates)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>DUE:</b> In-Class Exercise #3 (HUNGRY SEEING Poem)</p>
<p><b>WEEK FIVE:</b> September 16</p>	<p><b>Read:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poetry Selections:</b> <i>Black Peculiar</i>, Khadijah Queen</li> <li>• <b>Prose:</b> PDF selections, <i>How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness</i></li> </ul> <p><b>In-Class Exercise # 5</b> (Comparison Poem)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>DUE:</b> In-Class Exercise #4 (Poet Contemplates Poem)</p>
<p><b>WEEK SIX:</b> September 23</p>	<p><b>Read:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poetry Selections:</b> <i>Citizen</i>, Claudia Rankine</li> <li>• <b>Prose:</b> PDF selections, <i>TBD</i></li> </ul> <p><b>In-class Exercise:</b> How to make a Zine!</p>

<b>WEEK SEVEN:</b> <b>September 30</b>	<b>RESEARCH CREATION PROJECT</b> Individual check-ins on Projects. <b>Revision Exercises and In-class activities.</b> <b>DUE:</b> In-Class Exercise #5 (Comparison Poem)
<b>WEEK EIGHT:</b> <b>October 7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poetry Selections:</b> <i>Cenzontle</i>, Marcelo Hernandez Castillo</li> <li>• <b>Prose:</b> PDF selections, <i>Signs of the Americas</i>, Edgar Garcia</li> </ul> <b>DUE:</b> Zine 1
<b>WEEK NINE:</b> <b>October 14</b>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Book:</b> <i>Tertulia</i> by Vincent Toro</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK TEN:</b> <b>October 21</b>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poetry:</b> <i>Canvas</i>: Julia Alvarez “Bilingual Sestina” (Link), Sandra Lim “Pantoum”(Link), Evie Shockley “Pantoum: landing, 1976” (Link), Aimee Nezhukumatathil “Red Ghazal” (Link), Yusef Komunyakaa “Ghazal, After Ferguson”(Link).</li> </ul> <b>Workshop: Group 1-Workshop Ethic.</b>
<b>WEEK ELEVEN:</b> <b>October 28</b>	<b>Avant-Garde Cinema</b> PDF and Video: Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, Kenneth Anger, Andrew Busti <b>Workshop: Group 2</b> <b>DUE:</b> Zine 2
<b>WEEK TWELVE:</b> <b>November 4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>On ASCO</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chon Noriega, <i>Your Art Disgusts Me: Early ASCO 1971-75</i></li> <li>• Eva Zetterman, <i>The PST Project, Willie Herrón’s Street Mural Asco East of No West (2011) and the Mural Remix Tour: Power Relations on the Los Angeles Art Scene</i></li> <li>• Julia Bryan-Wilson, <i>Orifice Baroque</i></li> <li>• C. Ondine Chavoya, <i>Pseudographic Cinema: ASCO’s No-Movies</i></li> </ul> <b>Workshop: Group 1</b>
<b>WEEK THIRTEEN:</b> <b>November 11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>NO CLASS: CAMPUS CLOSED (VETERANS DAY)</b> <b>Asynchronous Individual conferences</b>
<b>WEEK FOURTEEN:</b> <b>November 18</b>	<b>Workshop</b>
<b>WEEK FIFTEEN:</b> <b>November 25</b>	<b>NO CLASS: CAMPUS CLOSED (THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY)</b>
<b>Last Week:</b> <b>December 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>PRESENTATION DAY AND/OR WORKSHOP</b> <b>DUE:</b> Zine 3

**FINAL PORTFOLIOS ARE DUE WHEN OUR FINAL IS SCHEDULED: DECEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> BY 10PM**