

ENGL 71: INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING



:: Course Information

- Instructor: Dr. Kristian O'Hare
- Course and Section Number: ENGL 71-10
- Course Title: Introduction to Creative Writing
- Meet Time/Location: TTH 10:45-12pm/Online (Canvas and Zoom)
- Term: Fall 2021
- Credits: 3
- Prerequisites: Reflection on College Writing
- GE/SJSU Studies Category: Letters C2

: Contacting Me

Email: kristian.ohare@sjsu.edu

HOWEVER: The best way to contact me is through email in Canvas. Use this rather than my SJSU email for all correspondences. That email should only be used if you can't (for some reason) access Canvas.

I will respond to every message sent to me and always within 24 hours (and usually within an hour or two) Monday through Friday. On the weekends, my response time might be slower.

Office Hours: Tues and Thurs 9:30-10:30am, Tues at 2-3pm, or by appointment. We will meet in Zoom. I'd suggest emailing me a time, but you can drop in, too

:: Course Description

This course will be a basic introduction to the study and practice in the writing of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Through the reading of selected texts, students will gain a better understanding of craft and technique. In addition, this course will be an introduction to the writing workshop. In the writing workshop, students will be expected to develop as critics, and as writers be expected to be open to criticism.

:: ENGL 71 GE Learning Outcomes (GELO)

Upon successful completion of the course, you will be able to:

- 1) Decipher and understand the form and content of assigned literary works;
- 2) Comprehend the historical and cultural contexts of assigned literary works;
- 3) Recognize the accomplishments of and issues related to writing by men and women representing diverse cultural traditions;
- 4) 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 nonfiction, and short fiction;
- 5) Communicate such skills with clarity and precision;
- 6) Develop an appreciation of literary works as expressions of human intellect and imagination, and as representations of diverse human cultures;
- 7) Develop the ability to write literary works that express intellect and imagination and that represent diversity in human cultures;
- 8) Respond to literature through clear and effective communication in both written and oral work;
- 9) Read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility;
- 10) Appreciate how literary works illuminate enduring human concerns while also representing matters specific to a particular culture;
- 11) Write works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction that are of interest and value to the writer, to other students in the course, and to a diverse reading audience.

:: Required Texts and Materials

- There is **no required** textbook for this course; instead, I have uploaded poems, short stories, and essays onto Canvas. You will be required to read these poems, stories, and essays. You must bring these readings to class, for I will be asking you specific questions and pointing out key passages from the text.
- A journal for class notes, writing exercises, daily observations, workshop responses, etc.
- Dictionary and Thesaurus. Being writers, it is important to know what words mean and to vary your word choice. You should own both. There are free apps available.
- Access to a desktop, laptop, or tablet.

:: 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>

:: Reading

Writers read like writers. As you read the works in this class, you are expected to mark up the texts and prepare for class discussions.

:: Written Responses to Assigned Readings

Most written responses on assigned readings will take place during class with group discussion questions. Some of these responses will take place in Canvas.

:: Writing Exercises

Writing exercises are beneficial because they can help spur our imaginations and help us grasp elements of craft. For this reason, work diligently on them. These writing exercises may contain a germ; they can grow into a poem, essay, or story.

:: Major Writing Assignments

Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to produce two poems, one short story, and one literary essay, all of which must be edited into final drafts for your portfolio. Your pieces

are due to Canvas one week before your assigned workshop. **Late submissions will not be workshopped.**

:: Workshops

You will have three workshops: *you are required to workshop two poems, one short story (5-8 pages), and one essay (3-4 pages)*. After a few weeks devoted to learning our craft, we will begin student workshops. You will need to post your work to Canvas one week before you are scheduled to be workshopped. This will give your peers time to thoroughly read and comment on your work. You will read your peers' work, providing both written and oral constructive feedback. We will discuss workshop etiquette further in class, but consider this: your classmates are putting a lot of trust in you to read and respond to their writing, many of which will be very personal. In the interest not only of being a good student, but also a good person, this will be an opportunity for each of us to practice empathy, understanding, and criticizing in a constructive, rather than destructive, fashion.

:: Class Participation

This is a discussion-based course, not a lecture-based one. This means participation is very important to the success of the class. You add value to the class by reading the assigned workshop and published pieces, participating in discussions, writing insightful critiques, and carefully listening. It is my fervent wish that everyone participate actively in our conversations. Participating in a discussion is a skill that can, and should, be learned.

:: Writing Portfolio

At the end of the semester, you will submit a final writing portfolio that consists of edited, final versions of your creative work. It is crucial that all pieces be substantially revised from their earlier, workshopped drafts. The quality of your revisions will be a significant factor in your portfolio grade. You will reflect on your work in this course (review the learning objectives) and assess your work in a self-reflection.

:: Assignment Word Count and Learning Goals

ASSIGNMENTS	WORD COUNT	GELO
2 poems (two drafts each)	Varies	4, 5, 7, 8, 11
1 short story (two drafts)	2500-3000	4, 5, 7, 8, 11

1 essay (two drafts)	1500-2000	4,5,7,8,11
Written Workshop Critiques	100-200 Words Each	3, 4, 5, 8, 9
Final Portfolio	Varies	4,5,7,8,11
Self-Reflection	500	1-10

:: Grading Policy

The department's standard grading scheme consists of the following: "Requirements for particular assignments will vary, but in all cases essay grades will reflect the paper's effectiveness, which is broken down into three major areas: content (this includes maturity and sophistication of thought), organization, and expression.

While there are no specific requirements concerning style, subject matter, etc., there are standards of quality and craft that will be used to evaluate your work. Here are some of the general guidelines:

- A range (100-90): Original. Well-developed, highly imaginative, and intellectually stimulating. Shows a keen understanding of techniques discussed in class. An impressive initial effort; revision displays rigorous consideration of workshop critiques. Very few spelling and grammatical errors that might distract the reader.
- B range (89-80): Original. Shows a serious attempt to utilize the techniques discussed in class, but could benefit from further revision in terms of language, structure, polish, etc. Revision displays some rigorous consideration of workshop critiques. Very few spelling and grammatical errors that might distract the reader.
- C range (79-70): Somewhat lacking in originality. Demonstrates some attempt to utilize the techniques discussed in class, but is left underdeveloped or unpolished. Revision shows minimal effort and/or disregard for workshop critiques. Contains enough spelling, and grammatical errors to distract the reader.
- D range (69-60): Lacks originality. Demonstrates little imagination and regard for elements of craft. Shows little to no evidence of revision. Contains enough typographical, spelling, and grammatical errors to distract the reader.
- F range: Failure to submit work, or plagiarized work.

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.

Unless I make changes and announce otherwise, the final course grade breaks down as follows:

- 2 Poems (workshop, written critiques, participation): 100 points
- Short Story (workshop, written critiques, participation): 100 points
- Nonfiction (workshop, written critiques, participation): 60 points
- Final Portfolio (includes revisions, self-reflection, and self-portrait poem): 100 points
- In-Class Writings, Group Work, Participation: Factors into your final grade. If you are present and active in class, you will get a boost on your final grade. If you are not active and miss many sessions, your final grade will be affected.
- **No grade haggling: I do not negotiate grades. If you are concerned with your grade and want to know how to do better in the future, I welcome appointments to discuss possible strategies for improvement.**

:: Academic Integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy F15-7](#) 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. Visit the [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](#) website for more information.

:: Zoom Class Protocol

The Use of Web Cam

For a course such as Creative Writing, I am requiring the use of the webcam. This has to do with a [classroom community](#). Since we will be sharing our personal writing, it will help to have face-to-face interactions when it comes to sharing our thoughts and feelings on the work, especially in writing workshops.

Zoom Class Recording

Since students are sharing drafts of personal creative writings, I will not be recording our Zoom class sessions.

Students are not allowed to record without instructor permission

Students are prohibited from recording class activities (including class lectures, office hours, advising sessions, etc.), distributing class recordings, or posting class recordings. Materials created by the instructor for the course (syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, presentations, etc.) are copyrighted by the instructor. This university policy ([S12-7](#)) is in place to protect the privacy of students in the course, as well as to maintain academic integrity through reducing the instances of cheating. Students who record, distribute, or post these materials will be referred to the Student Conduct and Ethical Development office. Unauthorized recording may violate university and state law. It is the responsibility of students that require special accommodations or assistive technology due to a disability to notify the instructor.

Zoom Classroom Etiquette

- Mute Your Microphone: To help keep background noise to a minimum, make sure you mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
- Be Mindful of Background Noise and Distractions: Find a quiet place to “attend” class, to the greatest extent possible.
 - Avoid video setups where people may be walking behind you, people talking/making noise, etc.
 - Avoid activities that could create additional noise, such as shuffling papers, listening to music in the background, etc.
- Position Your Camera Properly: Be sure your webcam is in a stable position and focused at eye level.
- Limit Your Distractions/Avoid Multitasking: You can make it easier to focus on the meeting by turning off notifications, closing or minimizing running apps, and putting your smartphone away (unless you are using it to access Zoom).
- Use Appropriate Virtual Backgrounds: If using a virtual background, it should be appropriate and professional and should NOT suggest or include content that is objectively offensive or demeaning.

Lastly, all students are expected to treat everyone in class with respect and in general to behave in a reasonable, responsible, and courteous manner at all times. This means observing the customary rules that govern polite, civilized behavior. I expect everyone to do the following:

- Arrive promptly and stay in the classroom for the duration of the class meeting, unless you are ill or have an emergency; this holds true for all classroom activities. If you must leave class early for some reason, please let me know in advance.
- Do the reading and writing assignments before class time so that you come to class prepared to contribute to and participate in discussions.

:: Technology Requirements

Students are required to have an electronic device (laptop, desktop or tablet) with a camera and built-in microphone. SJSU has a [free equipment](#) loan program available for students. Students are responsible for ensuring that they have access to reliable Wi-Fi during tests. If students are unable to have reliable Wi-Fi, they must inform the instructor, as soon as possible or at the latest one week before the test date to determine an alternative. See Learn Anywhere website for current Wi-Fi options on campus.

:: Technical Difficulties

If they arise, please notify me and let me know how (and if) I can help. You should also contact the SJSU technical support for Canvas:

Technical Support for Canvas

Email: ecampus@sjsu.edu

Phone: (408) 924-2337

<https://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/support/>

:: Attendance

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."

:: Late Policy

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class for which they are due. **No late assignments will be accepted, especially workshop pieces; workshop dates will be set in stone; they can't be canceled or pushed to another time/date.**

:: Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

[Presidential Directive 97-03](#) requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations register with the [Accessible Education Center](#) (AEC) to establish a record of their disability. AEC will contact the instructor with further details, if needed.

:: Counseling and Psychological Services

The SJSU Counseling and Psychological Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Carlos in the new Student Wellness Center, Room 300B. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide confidential consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate, or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. We also offer numerous workshops for students every semester. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling and Psychological Services website](#).

:: Peer Connections

[Peer Connections](#) is your campus-wide resource for mentoring (time management, note taking, learning strategies, adjusting to college, etc.) and tutoring (including over 120 different courses and undergraduate writing). In addition, Peer Connections provides classroom support through Supplemental Instruction Leaders, Learning Assistants, Peer Mentors, and Embedded Tutors. Your instructor will announce if a Peer Educator is in your class. Peer Connections also has space for studying and offers breakfast snacks for students each day while supplies last. All services are FREE to SJSU students. For more information on services, hours, locations, or a list of current student success workshops, please visit the website at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu>.

:: Student Technology Resources

Computer labs and other resources for student use are available in:

- [Associated Students Print & Technology Center](http://as.sjsu.edu/asptc/index.jsp) at <http://as.sjsu.edu/asptc/index.jsp> on the Student Union (East Wing 2nd floor Suite 2600)
- [The Spartan Floor](https://library.sjsu.edu/services/services) at the MLK Library at <https://library.sjsu.edu/services/services> (Fourth floor)
- [Student Computing Services](https://library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services/student-computing-services-center) at <https://library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services/student-computing-services-center>
- [Computers at the Martin Luther King Library](https://www.sjpl.org/wireless) for public at large at <https://www.sjpl.org/wireless>
- Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college

A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from [Collaboration & Academic Technology Services](#) located in IRC Building. 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.

:: Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center offers a variety of free resources to help students become better writers. The center offers writing resources, workshops, and one-on-one and small-group tutoring sessions. Services support writing for students in all disciplines and at all levels. The SJSU Writing Center has two in-person locations, Clark Hall, Suite 126 and MLK Library, 2nd floor. Workshops and tutoring is also available through online platforms. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website](#).

ENGL 71, Critical Thinking and Writing, Fall 2021 Course Schedule

Reading assignments must be completed by the day that they are listed. The schedule is subject to change with fair notice; any changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Date	Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Thurs August 19th	Go over Course Syllabus, Schedule, Getting Started module Introductions How to Read Poetry
Tues August 24th	Lecture: Sound and Imagery Discuss: Plath, Toomer, Kumin, and Hongo In-class activity: Idea to Image
Thurs August 26th	Lecture: Figurative Language Discuss: Plath, Duffy, Forche In-class activity: Poetry of Place
Tues August 31st	Lecture: Forms, Stanzas, Line Breaks, Enjambment Discuss: Lee, Hayden, Copus In-class activity: Recovering Memories

Thurs Sept 2nd	Lecture: Short Lines Vs Long Lines Discuss: Barreca, Hirsch, and Soto In-class activity: A Childhood Memory
Tues Sept 7th	Lecture: Self-Portrait Poem Discuss: Self-Portrait poems TBA In-class activity: Writing a Self-Portrait Poem
Thurs Sept 9th	POETRY WORKSHOPS
Tues Sept 14th	POETRY WORKSHOPS
Thurs Sept 16th	POETRY WORKSHOPS
Tues Sept 21st	POETRY WORKSHOPS
Thurs Sept 23rd	POETRY WORKSHOPS
Tues Sept 28th	Lecture: Introduction to Fiction/Plot Discuss: Walker's "The Flowers" and Beattie's "Snow"
Thurs Sept 30th	Lecture: Character Discuss: Bloom's "Silver Water" In-class activity: Writing With Music
Tues Oct 5th	Lecture: Dialogue Discuss: Alexie's "This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona" In-class activity: Character Sketch

Thurs Oct 7th	Lecture: Point of View Discuss: Gaitskill's "Tiny, Smiling Daddy"
Tues Oct 12th	In-class activity: Conflict Discuss: Wolff's "Bullet in the Brain" In-class activity: TBA
Thurs Oct 14th	Discuss: Silko's "Tony's Story" In-class activity: TBA
Tues Oct 19th	FICTION WORKSHOPS
Thurs Oct 21st	FICTION WORKSHOPS
Tues Oct 26th	FICTION WORKSHOPS
Thurs Oct 28th	FICTION WORKSHOPS
Tues Nov 2nd	FICTION WORKSHOPS
Thurs Nov 4th	FICTION WORKSHOPS
Tues Nov 9th	Lecture: Introduction to Creative Nonfiction Discuss: Sedaris In-class Activity: The Body of Memory

Thurs Nov 11th	VETERAN'S DAY--NO CLASS MEETING
Tues Nov 16th	Discuss: McKee's "Eleven Micro-Memoirs From the Pandemic" In-class activity: Pandemic Life
Thurs Nov 18th	Discuss: Alexie's "Indian Education" and Tan's "Fish Cheeks" In-class activity: TBA
Tues Nov 23rd	NONFICTION WORKSHOPS
Thurs Nov 25th	THANKSGIVING BREAK--NO CLASS MEETING
Tues Nov 30th	NONFICTION WORKSHOPS
Thurs Dec 2nd	NONFICTION WORKSHOPS
FINAL WEEK	Work on Final Projects