

**San José State University Department of English and Comparative Literature  
English 169: Diaspora in American Literature (Section 01) – Spring 2021**

Prof. Keenan Norris  
Email: keenan.norris@sjsu.edu  
Class Days/Time: T/TH 1:30-2:45PM  
Office Hours: T 11:30AM-1:30PM

**Course Description**

This class will study North American texts both fiction and non-fiction that have as their focus race and ethnicity. This class will examine selected works by African American, Asian American, Chicano, Latinx, and other non-white-identifying authors. The class will center the specific, individual experiences of people generically grouped as "people of color" in America.

GE Area: S Prerequisite: Passage of the Writing Skills Test (WST) or ENGL/LLD 100A with a C or better (C- not accepted), completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all SJSU studies courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.

**List of Readings**

*Black Boy* by Richard Wright

*What Lies Between Us* by Nayomi Munaweera

*The Immigrant's Refrigerator* by Elena Georgiou

*Waylaid* by Ed Lin

*The New American* by Micheline Aharonian Marcom

*A People's Future of the United States* edited by Victor LaValle

*Heads of the Colored People* by Nafissa Spires-Thompson

**Potential 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: *Black Boy*, *What Lies Between Us*, *Immigrant's Refrigerator* and *A People's Future of the United States*.

#### 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: *A People's Future*, *Waylaid*, *The New American* and *Heads of the Colored People*.

#### 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: trauma and transgression, referencing *What Lies Between Us* or *Black Boy*; stories of urban American referencing *Black Boy* or *Waylaid*; displacement and immigration, referencing stories from *Immigrant's Refrigerator*, *The New American* or *What Lies Between Us*; anti-stereotype narrative, referencing *Waylaid* or stories from *Heads of the Colored People*; imagining the future from ethnic minority perspectives, referencing stories from *A People's Future of the United States*.

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.

### III. Essay Grade Descriptions

An "A" essay is a paper that:

follows effectively the assignment instructions; presents an argument with an analytical thesis; shows sophisticated and original thought/analysis; demonstrates clear and excellent organization and development of ideas according to the purpose of the assignment; is coherent; is without excessive grammatical errors.

A "B" essay is a paper that:

follows effectively the assignment instructions; presents an argument with an analytical thesis; shows good, original thought and analysis; demonstrates clear and excellent organization and development of ideas according to the purpose of the assignment; is coherent; is without excessive grammatical errors.

A "C" essay is a paper that:

follows effectively the assignment instructions; presents an argument with an analytical thesis; shows original thought/analysis; is coherent; has several grammatical errors.

A "D" or "F" paper is one that:

fails to follow the assignment's instructions; lacks a distinct argument; lacks thought, originality, organization, development of ideas; has excessive grammatical errors; is incoherent; is plagiarized; or is turned in past the due date.

\*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 and classroom 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](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.” Please keep this in mind as you submit work for this course. The work you create in this class should aspire to resemble in quality the work we read. The work should be literary and character driven (this class is not the place for cat poems, romances, fan-fiction, fantasy, horror, crime, and the like.) I will not tolerate any work that is gratuitously violent, pornographic. If you aren’t sure about your work, see me before distributing it to your classmates.

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

#### X. Student Technology Resources

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.

#### XI. SJSU Peer Connections

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.

## XII. SJSU Counseling Services

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>.

## XIII.

### Reading & Viewing Schedule:

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

WEEK 1: *Black Boy*

WEEK 2: *Black Boy*

WEEK 3: *Immigrant's Refrigerator*

WEEK 4: *Immigrant's Refrigerator*

WEEK 5: *What Lies Between Us*

WEEK 6: *What Lies Between Us*

WEEK 7: *A People's Future of the United States*

WEEK 8: MID-TERM ESSAY

*A People's Future of the United States*

WEEK 9: Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah stories: <https://www.nanakwameadjei-brenyah.com/new-page>

WEEK 10: *The New American*

WEEK 11: *The New American*

WEEK 12: *Waylaid*

WEEK 13: *Waylaid*

Presentations

WEEK 14: *Heads of the Colored People*

WEEK 15: *Heads of the Colored People*

WEEK 16: FINAL EXAM ESSAY