

# ENGL 71: INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING



## :: Course Information

- Instructor: Dr. Kristian O'Hare
- Course and Section Number: ENGL 71-03
- Course Title: Introduction to Creative Writing
- Meet Time/Location: TuTh 1:30PM - 2:45PM / Boccardo Business Center 123
- Term: Fall 2022
- Credits: 3
- Prerequisites: Reflection on College Writing
- GE/SJSU Studies Category: Letters C2

## :: Contacting Me

Email: [kristian.ohare@sjsu.edu](mailto: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 12-1pm (in-person), Wednesdays 12-1pm (Zoom), or by appointment.**

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

Course materials such as syllabus, modules with all the assigned readings and handouts, lectures, announcements, workshop schedules, and assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). Please set your Canvas notifications so that you receive announcements, which will be sent out regularly. You are responsible for monitoring Canvas throughout the semester. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through [MySJSU](#) on [Spartan App Portal](#) (or other communication system as indicated by the instructor) to learn of any updates. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#).

## **:: 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.

### **:: Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)**

Upon successful completion of this course, students be able to:

- 1) Appreciate the wide breadth of contemporary writing in poetry, fiction, and essay;
- 2) Express themselves creatively in poetry, fiction, and essay;
- 3) Associate reading as a crucial component to writing;
- 4) Consider writing—their own and others’—as contributing to a larger community both inside and outside the university;
- 5) Place their own creative output within the larger contemporary writing community.

### **:: 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**

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.

### **:: Reading**

Reading is maybe the single most important part of a writer’s training. This course asks you to practice reading as a writer, since this will ultimately strengthen your own work. You will be encouraged to bring together your emotional side (How does this make me feel?) with your analytical side (What formal choices has the writer made that could explain the way I’m feeling?).

## :: **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 in Collaborations (Google Doc).

## :: **Writing Prompts (in-class and out-of-class)**

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. The weekly writing prompts will be given in class and posted on Canvas (in Modules)..

## :: **Major Writing Assignments**

Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to produce one poem, 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 one poem (15-35 lines in length), 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**

<b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>	<b>WORD COUNT</b>	<b>GELO</b>
<b>1 poem (two drafts)</b>	<b>Varies</b>	<b>4, 5, 7, 8, 11</b>
<b>1 short story (two drafts)</b>	<b>2500-3000</b>	<b>4, 5, 7, 8, 11</b>
<b>1 essay (two drafts)</b>	<b>1500-2000</b>	<b>4,5,7,8,11</b>
<b>Written Workshop Critiques</b>	<b>100-150 Words Each</b>	<b>3, 4, 5, 8, 9</b>
<b>Final Portfolio</b>	<b>Varies</b>	<b>4,5,7,8,11</b>
<b>Self-Reflection</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>1-10</b>

### **:: 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:**

- Poem (workshop, written critiques, participation): 100 points
- Short Story (workshop, written critiques, participation): 150 points
- Nonfiction (workshop, written critiques, participation): 100 points
- Final Portfolio (includes revisions, self-reflection, and self-portrait poem): 100 points
- Writing Prompts: 80 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.**

## **:: 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](#). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

## **:: 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](#) on the Student Union (East Wing 2nd floor Suite 2600)
- [The Spartan Floor](#) at the MLK Library at <https://library.sjsu.edu/services/services> (Fourth floor)
- [Student Computing Services](#)
- [Computers at the Martin Luther King Library](#) for public at large
- 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, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 71-03, Introduction to Creative Writing, Fall 2022 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
Tues August 23rd	<b>Introduction to the course (syllabus, schedule, assignments, etc)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● In-Class Writing: Bad Poetry</li><li>● Poetry Writing Prompt #1: Time to Make Lemonade<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Due: Tuesday, August 30th</li></ul></li></ul>
Thurs August 25th	<b>Focus on Sound</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● In-Class Writing: Idea to Image</li><li>● Discuss: Duffy's "Valentine"</li><li>● Poetry Writing Prompt #2: The Love Poem<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Due: Thursday, September 1st</li></ul></li></ul>

<p>Tues August 30th</p>	<p><b>Figurative Language and Imagery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss: Plath’s “Alicante Lullaby,” Espada’s “Latin Night at the Pawnshop,” Alvarez’s “Dusting,” and Hongo’s “Yellow Light</li> <li>● In-Class Writing: Images</li> </ul>
<p>Thurs Sept 1st</p>	<p><b>Forms, Line Breaks, Enjambment, Stanzas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss: Soto’s “Oranges,” Bass’ “Gate C22,” and Alvarez’s “How I Learned to Sweep”</li> <li>● Poetry Writing Prompt #3: The Journey Poem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Due: Tuesday, September 6th</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Tues Sept 6th</p>	<p><b>Short Lines Vs Long Lines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss: Hirsch’s “Fast Break,” Stafford’s “Traveling Through the Dark,” Hayden’s “Those Winter Sundays,” Lee’s “Eating Alone,” and Barreca’s “Nighttime Fires”</li> <li>● In-class activity: Recovering Memories</li> </ul>
<p>Thurs Sept 8th</p>	<p><b>The Self-Portrait Poem (assessment), Writing Workshop Guidelines, and How to Evaluate Peer Poetry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss: Copus’ “The Backseat of My Mother’s Car” and Cofer’s “Quincenera”</li> <li>● Poetry Writing Prompt #4: Childhood Memory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Due: Tuesday, September 13th</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Tues Sept 13th</p>	<p><b>POETRY WORKSHOP: Group 1</b></p>
<p>Thurs Sept 15th</p>	<p><b>POETRY WORKSHOP: Group 2</b></p>
<p>Tues Sept 20th</p>	<p><b>POETRY WORKSHOP: Group 3</b></p>
<p>Thurs Sept 22nd</p>	<p><b>POETRY WORKSHOP: Group 4</b></p>

Tues Sept 27th	<b>Element of Fiction: Plot</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss: Walker’s “Flowers” and Dybek’s “Bottle Caps”</li> <li>● In-Class Writing: Your Experience as Story</li> </ul>
Thurs Sept 29th	<b>Element of Fiction: Plot (Cont’d)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss: Bloom’s “Silver Water”</li> <li>● Fiction Writing Prompt #1: The Photograph <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Due: Tuesday, October 4th</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Tues Oct 4th	<b>Elements of Fiction: Character and Dialogue</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss: Alexie’s “This is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona”</li> <li>● In-Class Writing: Character Sketch</li> </ul>
Thurs Oct 6th	<b>Show, Don’t Tell</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss: Kahakauwila’s “Thirty-Nine Rules For Making a Hawaiian Funeral Into a Drinking Game”</li> <li>● Discuss: Diaz’s “How to Date a Brown Girl...”</li> <li>● Fiction Writing Prompt #2: The “How-To” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Due: Tuesday, October 11th</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Tues Oct 11th	<b>Elements of Fiction: Point of View</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss: Mary Gaitskill’s “Tiny, Smiling Daddy”</li> </ul>
Thurs Oct 13th	<b>Genre Fiction: Science Fiction/Fantasy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss: Ray Bradbury’s “There Will Come Soft Rains” and “The Veldt”</li> </ul>
Tues Oct 18th	<b>FICTION WORKSHOP: Group 1</b>
Thurs Oct 20th	<b>FICTION WORKSHOP: Group 2</b>
Tues Oct 25th	<b>FICTION WORKSHOP: Group 3</b>

Thurs Oct 27th	<b>FICTION WORKSHOP: Group 4</b>
Tues Nov 1st	<b>FICTION WORKSHOP: Group 5</b>
Thurs Nov 3rd	<b>FICTION WORKSHOP: Group 6</b>
Tues Nov 8th	<b>Lecture: Introduction to Creative Nonfiction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss: “Why Creative Nonfiction?”</li> <li>• Discuss: David Sedaris’ “Go Carolina”</li> </ul>
Thurs Nov 10th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss: Sherman Alexie’s “Indian Education”</li> <li>• NonFiction Writing Prompt #1: Your Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Due: Tuesday, November 15th</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Tues Nov 15th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss: Amy Tan’s “Fish Cheeks”</li> <li>• Discuss: Geeta Kothari’s “If You Are What You Eat, Then What Am I?”</li> </ul>
Thurs Nov 17th	Discuss: Evelyn Lau’s “An Insatiable Emptiness” Discuss: Amy Tan’s “Confessions” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonfiction Writing Prompt #2: Struggle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Due: Tuesday, November 22nd</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Tues Nov 22nd	TBA
Thurs Nov 24th	<b>Thanksgiving</b>
Tues Nov 29th	<b>NONFICTION WORKSHOP: Group 1</b>

Thurs Dec 1st	<b>NONFICTION WORKSHOP: Group 2</b>
Tues Dec 6th	Last Day of Class <b>NONFICTION WORKSHOP: Group 3</b>
Wed Dec 14th	<b>Final Workshop will take place during Finals Week. Our class will meet on Wednesday, December 14th 12:15-2:30pm</b> <b>Final Portfolio is Due on Friday, December 16th by 11:59pm.</b>