

**San José State University**  
**Department of English & Comparative Literature**  
**English 169, Ethnicity in American Literature, Section 01,**  
**Spring 2022**

**Course and Contact Information**

Instructor(s):	J. Michael Martinez
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Email:	jmichael.martinez@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	T/R, 11:30 pm – 1 pm
Class Days/Time:	T/R, 3 pm - 4:15 pm
Classroom:	Boccardo Business Center 122

**Course Description**

*3 units*

Study of expressions of ethnic and racial identity in American literature, with close attention to strategies of representation and resistance. Selected texts primarily arise out of the lived experiences of people of color, including Native Americans, Black Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinx Americans.

What is ethnicity? What is nationality? What comprises a subject? Everyone has a cultural history they may trace, does that mean everyone could be argued to be “ethnic?” These are several the questions we are going to address in this class. Moreover, focusing on recent works by “ethnic” writers, we will ask how literary/aesthetic forms inform and aid the construction of “racial,” “ethnic” and other identities. We will be looking at fiction, poetry, and, more importantly, forms of literary production that questions the literary form: performance art, video art, and installation work. The critical study of these cultural texts will show how value systems, beliefs, and ideologies function and are products to be read; ultimately, the course will ask you to see the world as text and ask you, in extension, to question the embedded narratives of race, gender, ethnicity in film, fashion, music, and art. In our analysis of 20th /21st century “ethnic” text, you will be introduced to Marxist, psychoanalytic, deconstructive and other post-modern discourses. These theories are themselves necessary and required to fully understand the development of literature and text in our contemporary society; these theories themselves are some of the most seminal texts in modern and contemporary literature. The readings will require your attention and willingness to engage different and, often, challenging perspectives. In addition, not only will we be theoretically analyzing text, we will create work with an understanding how this work comments, critiques, and creates the literatures of the contemporary era.

**Course Format:** Synchronous Online (Jan. 27-Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>); in-person attendance from the week of Feb. 14 until the end of the semester.

While the first few weeks of class will require a computer and internet connectivity, students can expect begin meeting in person at our class time after February 14<sup>th</sup>. Our class will be employing Canvas throughout the course where nearly all of our PDF reading will be posted.

### **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 MySJSU on [Spartan App Portal](#) (or other communication system as indicated by the instructor) to learn of any updates.

CANVASE SITE: <https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1472940>

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

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

- CLO 1: Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of Ethnicity in American literature.
- CLO 2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, and critical approaches to ethnic American literature, gaining an awareness of the range of cultural experiences and productions that make up American ethnic literary and cultural history, focusing on the self-representations of ethnic authors/groups
- CLO 3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
- CLO 4. Develop and carry out New Media research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively as a team.
- CLO 5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, strengthening their abilities to engage ethnic American literary text and to analyze both its form and content as well as its social and historical contexts.

### **Texts/Readings** (selections available on CANVAS)

- Black Peculiar by Khadijah Queen ISBN: 9781934819203
- Ragdoll Plagues by Alejandro Morales ISBN: 9781558851047
- A Physical Journal/Daybook
- Course Readings: on Canvas as PDFs or Links.

*There will also be handouts in class All required readings, 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. I allow for two excused absences before reducing 2.5% off one's overall final grade.

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; and the effort you bring to reading critically.

*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 will 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. 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.

## Due Dates

- **Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>:** Short Paper #1
- **Feb 24<sup>th</sup>:** Group January Presents
- **March 1:** Group February Presents
- **March 8<sup>th</sup>:** Group March Presents
- **March 10:** Short Paper #2 Due; Group April Presents

- **March 17th:** Group May Presents
- **March 22<sup>nd</sup>:** Group June Presents
- **March 24<sup>th</sup>:** Group July Presents
- **April 7<sup>th</sup>:** Group August Presents
- **May 18<sup>th</sup>:** Final Paper Due by 5pm

**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.

**Grading Information**

**Short Papers:**

You’ll be required to write two short response papers on the work. The two papers will comprise 30% of your grade. A detailed rubric will be provided.

**Presentation:**

I’m going to ask each of you to get into groups, and to present on one of our assigned readings (to be done during the latter half of the semester). This will comprise 15% of your grade.

**Final Paper:**

We are going to have a final seven-to-ten-page paper in our class that will account for 25% of your final grade. A detailed rubric about this project will be distributed during the final month of the semester.

**Grading:**

- Short Papers: 40%
- Presentation 15%
- Participation: 15% (including attendance, class discussion, etc.)
- Final Paper: 30%

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

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.

## Department of English and Comparative Literature BA Program Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

## 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.

Important Sites:	
CANVASE SITE: <a href="https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1472940">https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1472940</a>	Zoom Room: <a href="https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84969663393?pwd=Y1lvc05FM2ZYOURNcThVS1h5V0VaZz09">https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84969663393?pwd=Y1lvc05FM2ZYOURNcThVS1h5V0VaZz09</a>  Password: <b>270200</b>

## English 169 Ethnicity in American Literature, Spring 2022

(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).

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

<b>WEEK ONE:</b> <b>January 27</b>	First Day of Class: Course Overview, Introductions, Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis and discussion of “Water”</li> </ul>
<b>Week TWO:</b> <b>February 1</b>	<b>Read:</b> (Canvas) What do we mean when we talk about “Ethnic American Modern and Contemporary Literature” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PDF: “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,” Stuart Hall.</li> </ul>
<b>February 3</b>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langston Hughes: PDFs</li> <li>Run DMC: “My Adidas” &lt;<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vir1WcB_G-E">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vir1WcB_G-E</a>&gt;</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK THREE:</b> <b>February 8</b>	<b>Read:</b> Sojourner Truth: “Ain’t I a Woman”; PDF Aretha Franklin “(You make me feel like) A Natural Woman.”
<b>February 10</b>	<b>Read:</b> “At Last: Etta James, Poetry, Hip Hop,” <i>Black Resonance</i> , Emily Lordi: PDF
<b>WEEK FOUR:</b> <b>February 15</b>	<i>Week Four</i> Racial Indigestion: Race and Food (PDF Selections from <i>Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century</i> by Kyla Tompkins). “What’s De Use Talking ‘Bout Dem ‘Mendments?” –Day One

<b>February 17</b>	<b>Read:</b> “What’s De Use Talking ‘Bout Dem ‘Mendments?” –Day Two
<b>WEEK FIVE:</b> <b>February 22</b>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poetry selections.</b></li> <li>• <b>Prose:</b> PDF: Jose Esteban Munoz, <b>Selections</b> from <i>Disidentifications</i></li> <li>• <b>Paper One Due</b></li> </ul>
<b>February 24</b>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poetry: Canvas:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julia Alvarez “Bilingual Sestina” (Link),</li> <li>• Sandra Lim “Pantoum”(Link),</li> <li>• Evie Shockley “Pantoum: landing, 1976” (Link),</li> <li>• Aimee Nezhukumatathil “Red Ghazal” (Link),</li> <li>• Yusef Komunyakaa “Ghazal, After Ferguson”(Link),</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Group “January” PRESENTERS:</b></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">§ §</p>

<p><b>Week Six: March 1</b></p>	<p><b>On ASCO CANVAS</b></p> <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> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Group “February” PRESENTERS:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">§ §</p>
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<p><b>March 3</b></p>	<p><b>Read:</b> <i>Canvas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>
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<p><b>Week SEVEN: March 8</b></p>	<p><b>Read:</b> <i>Canvas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Book:</b> <i>Black Peculiar</i>, by Khadijah Queen</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Group “March” PRESENTERS:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">§ §</p>
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<p><b>March 10</b></p>	<p><b>Read:</b> <i>Canvas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Book:</b> <i>Black Peculiar</i>, by Khadijah Queen</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Group “April” PRESENTERS:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">§ §</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Paper Two Due</b></p>
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<p><b>Week EIGHT: March 15</b></p>	<p><b>Read:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Diwata selections</i> by Barbara Jane Reyes</li> </ul>
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<p><b>March 17</b></p>	<p><b>Read:</b> <i>Canvas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jimmy Santiago Baca, <i>Working in the Dark</i>, Pdf and POEMS PDF</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Group “May” PRESENTERS:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">§ §</p>
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<b>WEEK NINE:</b> March 22	Read: <i>Canvas</i> Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in LA selections. PDF <b>Group "June" PRESENTERS:</b>  § §
March 24	Read: <i>Canvas</i> Darby English. PDF selections, <i>How to See a Work of Art in Total Darkness</i>
<b>WEEK TEN:</b> March 29	<b>SPRING RECESS</b>
March 31	<b>SPRING RECESS</b>

<b>WEEK ELEVEN:</b> April 5	Read: <i>Canvas</i> Book: <i>The Ragdoll Plagues by Alejandro Morales</i>
April 7	Read: <i>Canvas</i> Book: <i>The Ragdoll Plagues by Alejandro Morales</i>  <b>Group "August" PRESENTERS:</b> § §
<b>WEEK TWELVE:</b> April 12	<i>The Ragdoll Plagues by Alejandro Morales</i>
April 14	<i>The Ragdoll Plagues by Alejandro Morales</i>
<b>WEEK THIRTEEN:</b> April 19	<b>SPIDERMAN: Into the Spiderverse</b>
April 21	<b>SPIDERMAN: Into the Spiderverse</b>
<b>WEEK FOURTEEN:</b> April 26	America Chavez
April 28	America Chavez
<b>WEEK FIFTEEN:</b> May 3	Paper Conferences

<b>May 5</b>	<b>Paper Conferences</b>
<b>May 10</b>	<b>Peer Review</b>
<b>LAST CLASS MEETING: May 12TH.</b>	<b>Final Meeting</b>
<b>May 18th</b>	<b>FINAL Paper DUE by 5pm PST</b>