ENGLISH 117A  AMERICAN LITERATURE & FILM         FALL 2016  JOHN ENGELL
BUSINESS CLASSROOM 120       THURSDAY 15:00-17:45  John.Engell@sjtu.edu
ENGLISH MAJOR ELECTIVE AND G.E. (SAN JOSE STUDIES) AREA S:
SELF, SOCIETY, AND EQUALITY IN THE U.S.
GRADUATE ASSISTANT: Eli Hansen Eli.Hansen@sjtu.edu
COURSE DESCRIPTION: We will study novels, films, and works of non-fiction prose set in and focused on California, specifically San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the Eastern Sierra. The novels are “Roman Noir”—dark novels about crime, the detection of crime, and moral corruption. The films are “Noir (c 1940-1960),” and “Neo-Noir (c 1960-present)” —dark films about crime, its detection, and moral corruption. The two works of non-fiction prose describe the Eastern Sierra before, during, and after the great Los Angeles “water grab,” a woeful historical tale of crime and moral corruption evoked in the film Chinatown. The “Noir” sensibility is alive and thriving in California and in many recent literary and screen works created in and about the State. This sensibility extends to works involving all social classes and ethnic and racial groups. It represents the “dark underside” of the glowing “Golden State.” The moral darkness often arises from individuals unscrupulously pursuing money and power. The moral darkness may also arise from jealousy, envy, fear, hatred, racism, sexism, classism, etc. These dark impulses are present in the works we will read and watch. As part of our investigations of “California Noir,” we will discuss not only the moral but also the historical, sociological, class/ethnic, and artistic/aesthetic implications of the “Noir” sensibility. All works we will read and watch are examples of both popular and high art—an extraordinary accomplishment of their creators.
PREREQUISITES: Passage of the WST; upper-division standing; completion of Core G.E.

COURSE GOALS AND STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & COMPARATIVE LITERATURE [D stands for Department]:
1D. Students will demonstrate the ability to 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, rhetoric, or film.
2D. Students will demonstrate the ability to show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches in British, American, and World Literature.
3D. Students will demonstrate the ability to write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, context, and nature of the subject.
4D. Students will demonstrate the ability to develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5D. Students will demonstrate the ability to articulate relations among culture, history, & texts.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR SAN JOSE STUDIES AREA S [S stands for G.E. Area S]:
1S. Students shall be able to describe how identities (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age) are shaped by cultural and societal influences within contexts of equality and inequality.
2S. Students shall be able to describe historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S.
3S. Students shall be able to describe social actions which have led to great equality and social justice in the U.S. (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age).
4S. Students shall be able to recognize and appreciate constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups within the U.S.
DEPARTMENT AND G.E. LEARNING OBJECTIVES COVERED ARE LISTED NEXT TO ASSIGNMENTS.
ASSESSMENT: All student writing shall be assessed for grammar, clarity, conciseness, and coherence. In accordance with the approved assessment plan, the course coordinator/department curriculum coordinator or chair will summarize the assessment results for English 117A according to the procedure for submitting courses for continuing certification in General Education.

REQUIRED LITERARY TEXTS IN ORDER READ:
Cain, James M. DOUBLE INDEMNITY. Vintage Crime.
Austin, Mary. THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN. Penguin.
Mosley, Walter. SIX EASY PIECES. Washington Square Press.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:
Assignments listed on the schedule are accompanied by Student Learning Objectives for the Department of English & Comparative Literature & for San Jose Studies Area S. All Learning Objectives are covered. Writing Assignments include short definition and short essay quizzes, an short critical essay with annotated bibliography, and a creative project. Guidelines and explanations will be provided in class.

GRADING:
Five Short Essay Tests 6% each Total 30%
Critical Essay with Annotated Bibliography Total 35%
Creative Project Total 35%
Overall Total of 100%; Total writing approximately 5,000 words.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS [All class meetings are on THURSDAY, 15:00-17:45]:
8/25 DISCUSSION & LECTURE: Class Syllabus (handout), Film Terms (Handout), Literary Terms (handout), and the California Roman Noir and Film Noir; begin discussion of THE MALTESE FALCON (novel & film)
9/1 READING: Finish reading Hammett, THE MALTESE FALCON
FILM SCREENING: THE MALTESE FALCON. Dir. John Huston
BRIEF DISCUSSION AND/OR LECTURE: THE MALTESE FALCON, novel & film
9/8 READING: Review Hammett, THE MALTESE FALCON
LECTURE & DISCUSSION: THE MALTESE FALCON, novel & film
9/15 1st SHORT ESSAY TEST: Film Terms, Literary Terms, THE MALTESE FALCON, novel & film (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S)
READING: Cain, DOUBLE INDEMNITY
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: DOUBLE INDEMNITY (novel) and THE MALTESE FALCON (novel and film): greed, class, sexuality, power, social instability
READING: Review Cain, DOUBLE INDEMNITY.
FILM SCREENING: DOUBLE INDEMNITY. Dir. Billy Wilder
BRIEF DISCUSSION AND/OR LECTURE: DOUBLE INDEMNITY, novel & film
9/22 DISCUSSION AND LECTURE: DOUBLE INDEMNITY, novel & film
2nd SHORT ESSAY TEST: Film & Literary Terms; DOUBLE INDEMNITY, novel & film (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 1S, 2S)
10/6
READING: Complete reading Chandler, THE LONG GOODBYE
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: THE LONG GOODBYE, the Roman Noir and Los Angeles; class, money, sexuality; power; assignment for the short Critical Essay and Annotated Bibliography due on 7 April

10/13
FILM SCREENING: THE LONG GOODBYE, Dir. Robert Altman
BRIEF DISCUSSION & LECTURE: THE LONG GOODBYE: novel & film

10/20
SHORT CRITICAL ESSAY WITH ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: THE LONG GOODBYE, novel & film; reinventing/playing with the conventions of noir

3RD SHORT ESSAY TEST: Film & Literary Terms; THE LONG GOODBYE, novel and film (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S)

10/27
READING: Austin. THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN
FILM SCREENING: CHINATOWN. Dir. Roman Polanski
BRIEF DISCUSSION AND/OR LECTURE: CHINATOWN: neo-noir, class, money, power, corruption; creative project assignment

11/3
READING: Reisner. CADILLAC DESERT, Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 10
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: CHINATOWN, THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN, CADILLAC DESERT: power and money versus integrity and the natural world

11/10
4TH SHORT ESSAY TEST: Film & Literary terms only if necessary; CHINATOWN, THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN, CADILLAC DESERT (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S)
READING: Mosley. SIX EASY PIECES.
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: Mosley, Chandler, detectives, race & class, money & power in [Southern] California

11/17
FILM SCREENING: MULHOLLAND DRIVE. Dir. David Lynch
BRIEF DISCUSSION AND/OR LECTURE: what is MULHOLLAND DRIVE about and how is it related to noir and neo-noir?

12/1
CREATIVE PROJECT DUE
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: SIX EASY PIECES, MULHOLLAND DRIVE and putting [Southern] California back together again

12/8
5TH SHORT ESSAY TEST: SIX EASY PIECES and MULHOLLAND DRIVE (all G. E. and Department SLOs)
THIS IS THE END, MY FRIEND. DISCUSSION, COMMENTS, ETC.