

San José State University
Department of English & Comparative Literature
English 71: Introduction to Creative Writing, Section 04, Fall 2019

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Johnny Damm
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Office Hours:	M/W 9:00-10:15 and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	M/W 3:00-4:15
Classroom:	Boccardo Business Center 123
GE Category:	Letters C2

Course Learning Management and Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, readings, handouts, notes, and assignment instructions can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. Most importantly, you will be critiquing each other's work through Canvas. You are responsible for regularly checking Canvas and the messaging system through one.sjsu.edu to learn of any updates.

ENGL 71 Course Description

General Course Description

Introduction to Creative Writing (English 71) is a 3-unit lower-division course designed and administered by the Department of English & Comparative Literature at San Jose State University in accordance with the University's General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill Core General Education requirements in the "C2" Letters area of Humanities & the Arts.

Section-Specific Course Description

This is a traditional workshop class, offering an intensive study of creative writing with the ultimate focus remaining squarely on your work. You will be required to write and edit three poems, one short story, one literary essay, and one creative wildcard nearly all of which will be workshopped by the class as a whole. In our study of craft, we will also read and discuss classic and contemporary works from each of these three genres, considering issues of craft and parameters of form. Central to your semester-long project will be the consideration of the work of others—both published works and the works of your peers—to help you determine what you most value in your *own* work. Finally, there will be writing exercises in nearly every class, so come prepared not only to discuss but to produce.

English 71 GE Course Goals (GELO)

Students enrolled in Introduction to Creative Writing will learn 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.

ENGL 71 Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, you are expected to 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.

Writing Assignments

Poems, Story, Essay: Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to produce three 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.

Creative Wildcard: One poem/poem sequence, short story, literary essay, or hybrid form of your choice. Throughout the semester, you will regularly complete writing exercises in class—encouraging you to try new forms, techniques, etc. Your creative wildcard—which will be included in your final portfolio but not workshopped—should be drawn from these exercises or inspired by our outside reading. This piece should be free of errors but doesn't need to be as polished or revised as the other work: use this submission to demonstrate your openness to experimentation and (previously) unfamiliar modes of writing.

Workshop Assignments

Before each day of workshop, you must fully annotate and critique in Canvas the works we will discuss that day. You are required to both mark on the text of a piece (suggestions, errors) and to write a developed critique as a comment in Canvas. This critique should be one to two *full* paragraphs, a minimum of 100 words. We will

be critiquing an average of 5 works per week, so you must be careful to budget enough time to do them properly. Additionally, you are required to be active in class discussion, regularly sharing your critiques with the class as a whole. No late critiques will be accepted.

Reading Assignments

Alongside reading and critiquing the work of your peers, you will be reading the work of outside writers, with a substantial number of pages assigned every week. These readings will provide the material for our discussions of craft and form; they provide the framework for the discussion of *your* work. Keep up with the readings and be prepared to discuss them.

Final Portfolio:

At the end of the semester, you will turn in a portfolio that consists of edited/ final versions of your creative work; a collection previous drafts will also be turned in separately. 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.

Assignment Word Count and Learning Goals

Assignment	Word Count	GELO
3 Poems (two drafts each)	Varies	4,5,7,8,11
1 Short Story (two drafts)	1,500-2,000	4,5,7,8,11
1 Literary Essay (two drafts)	1,500-2,000	4,5,7,8,11
1 Creative Wildcard	Varies	4,5,7,8,11
Workshop Critiques	100-200 each	3, 4, 5, 8, 9
Revised Portfolio of Work	Varies	4,5,7,8,11

Required Texts

Textbooks

If They Come for Us, Fatimah Asghar, ISBN: 9780525509783

A Portrait of the Self as Nation: New and Selected Poems, Marilyn Chin, ISBN: 9780393652178

Friday Black, Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, ISBN: 9781328911247

Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions, Valeria Luiselli, ISBN: 9781566894951

Other Readings

All other readings are available through Canvas and will be linked through your syllabus. These will include a sampling of both classic and contemporary works in each genre.

Grading Policy

Final portfolio grade: 70%

Poems: 20%

Story: 20%
Literary Essay: 20%
Creative Wildcard 10%

Workshop Participation/ Submitted Critiques: 30%

Due to the workshop format, neither your creative pieces or your workshop critiques can be submitted late. Late critiques will not be accepted, and creative pieces submitted late to Canvas will not be workshopped. The pieces you submit to workshop will not receive a grade; they will only be graded as part of your revised final portfolio.

If you do not turn in a piece to workshop, but then submit that piece to your portfolio, your non-workshopped pieces will receive an automatic 50% deduction from that portion of your final portfolio grade.

About Grades

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the 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. Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC shall replace D or F. In such cases, NC shall also substitute for W (or Withdrawal) because neither grade (NC or W) affects students’ GPA.

A (92-100); A- (90-91); B+ (88-89); B (82-87); B- (80-81); C+ (78-79); C (70-77); C- (70-71); D+ (68-69); D (62-67); D- (60-61); F (<60)

Academic Dishonesty

All students are responsible for knowing and observing University policies regarding academic dishonesty. See University policy: ["Academic Integrity"](#).

Plagiarism is an active concern in the creative writing community and in the creative writing classroom. You are required to hold yourself to the highest standards and not plagiarize. If you wish to utilize creative borrowing or appropriation (i.e. erasure or found poetry)—which can be legitimate creative practices—you must consult with me and get my permission for your methods before submitting that work to workshop.

Classroom Protocol

You need to participate, be on time, and be courteous to your peers and to your teacher. When we are workshopping or discussing the readings, you should either have a physical copy or a copy pulled up on a laptop or tablet. When using a device, it should *only* be open Canvas. Avoid the temptation to check messages, etc. Your cell phone should remain in your pocket or bag unless you offer me a convincing argument as to why you need to have it out. You should also bring paper and a pen or pencil to every class: we will be doing our writing exercises by hand.

University Policies

The link below contains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc.:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/index.html>

SJSU's The Center for Literary Arts Fall Schedule

Jonathan Franzen: Sep. 20, 7 PM, Hammer Theatre Center

Rita Bullwinkel: Oct. 10, 7 PM, SJSU, MLK Library, Room 225/229

Carmen Maria Machado: Oct. 24, 7 PM, MACLA

Tyehimba Jess & Harmony Holiday: Nov. 7, 7 PM, Forager

Marilyn Chin, Shawn Wong, & Lawson Fusao Inada: Nov. 21, 6:30 PM, SJSU, MLK Library, Room 225/229

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This schedule is subject to change with fair notice: you are responsible for any changes made in class or through email

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
	Aug 21	Introduction: "Tell it slant," "This is Just to Say"
1	Aug 26	Poetry Reading A: Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Lawson Fusao Inada, Gloria Anzaldúa (CANVAS) <i>A Portrait of the Self as Nation</i> , Marilyn Chin (pp. 1-20)
1	Aug 28	Poetry Reading B: Danez Smith (CANVAS), Harmony Holiday, Ocean Vuong <i>A Portrait of the Self as Nation</i> , Marilyn Chin (pp. 21-61)
2	Sep 2	HOLIDAY
2	Sep 4	Poetry Workshop Group 1
3	Sep 9	Poetry Workshop Group 2
3	Sep 11	Poetry Reading C: Raquel Salas Rivera, Layli Long Soldier, Tyehimba Jess (Canvas) <i>A Portrait of the Self as Nation</i> , Marilyn Chin (pp. 61-126)
4	Sep 16	Poetry Workshop Group 3
4	Sep 18	Canvas Class Discussion: <i>If They Come for Us</i> , Fatimah Asghar
5	Sep 23	Poetry Workshop Group 4
5	Sep 25	<i>If They Come for Us</i> Discussion Cont. Fiction Reading A: Lydia Davis, Toni Cade Bambara, Rita Bullwinkel (CANVAS)
6	Sep 30	Fiction Workshop Group 1
6	Oct 2	Fiction Reading B: Clarice Lispector, Leonora Carrington, Carmen Maria Machado (CANVAS)
7	Oct 7	Fiction Workshop Group 2

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
7	Oct 9	Fiction Reading C: Ursula K. Le Guin, James Baldwin, Silvina Ocampo (CANVAS)
8	Oct 14	Fiction Workshop Group 3
8	Oct 16	<i>Friday Black</i> , Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah (pp. 1-103)
9	Oct 21	Fiction Workshop Group 4
9	Oct 23	<i>Friday Black</i> , Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah (finish book)
10	Oct 28	Fiction Workshop Group 5
10	Oct 30	CNF Reading A: Jamaica Kincaid, Zitkála-Šá, Joe Brainard (CANVAS)
11	Nov 4	CNF Reading B: James Allen Hall, Claudia Rankine, Lily Hoang (CANVAS)
11	Nov 6	Creative Nonfiction Workshop Group 1
12	Nov 11	HOLIDAY
12	Nov 13	Creative Nonfiction Workshop Group 2
13	Nov 18	<i>Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions</i> , Valeria Luiselli (entire book)
13	Nov 20	Creative Nonfiction Workshop Group 3
14	Nov 25	Canvas Class Discussion: <i>Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions</i> , Valeria Luiselli
14	Nov 27	HOLIDAY
15	Dec 2	Creative Nonfiction Workshop Group 4
15	Dec 4	Creative Nonfiction Workshop Group 5
	Dec 9	Last Class PORTFOLIO DUE
Final	Dec 17	Culminating Activity TBA 12:15 PM