

# DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Spring 2015 Newsletter



SAN JOSÉ STATE  
UNIVERSITY

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## Cindy Baer: An Outstanding Nurturer of Success

By Aaron Thein and Giselle Tran

The average preschooler will begin to use their motor skills and learn to have fun by running around, jumping on one foot, or skipping. Dr.



Cindy Baer, however, was not an average preschooler. “I’ve known since I was five years old that I wanted to be a teacher,” she says, having developed a hobby of writing quizzes for her imaginary students at that age. She realized her dream of becoming a teacher when she received her MA in 1983

and her PhD in 1994 from the University of Washington in Seattle. And now, in March 2015, she has been given the Outstanding Lecturer Award of 2015—an award that considers eligible lecturers from all departments of SJSU—as well as hired in the tenure-track position of Assistant Writing Programs Administrator.

Upon receiving all the good news, Dr. Baer admits it felt surreal. “It’s one of those things where so much good fortune comes your way that you start to feel a little self-conscious, [but] it’s very satisfying to have the good opinion of your fellow faculty,” she says. Dr. Baer has been working as a lecturer at SJSU on and off since 1981 and was finally able to stay at SJSU in 1988, building many decades worth of meaningful relationships with both her students and colleagues. According to her longtime colleague Dr. Bonnie Cox, Dr. Baer is “a wonderful colleague. She comes to meetings always prepared and ready to contribute intelligently and reasonably to whatever issue is at hand.”

Dr. Baer has a long history with SJSU, beginning in 1977 with her education as an undergraduate. When she got to San José State, she was surrounded by faculty who accepted her. She says, “You could go to their offices and sit down and talk books with them...this felt like my

intellectual home.” In 1981, she continued on at SJSU to pursue her MA, beginning her dream career as a Teaching Associate alongside Dr. Cox. After getting her MA, Dr. Baer earned her PhD at the University of Washington in Seattle and returned to SJSU to teach. Decades later, Dr. Baer remains happily at SJSU, saying, “The range of teaching assignments that I get in this department, I wouldn’t get in other places...I’ve always been able to teach both writing and literature, and teach a wide range of writing courses, all the way from Stretch English to Advance Composition. It keeps my mind busy...I’m here because I’m still learning at San José State.”

Currently, Dr. Baer’s biggest project and challenge is the Stretch English program, or Stretch Composition. She pilots and coordinates the program with twelve other faculty members in order to create a new, year-long curriculum that accepts a myriad of students. Because of the large spectrum of possible students in freshman year, Dr. Baer says, “Your teaching strategies have to change quite a bit,” noting that the classroom becomes a place where constant writing and reading activity is happening, embedding discussion within the activities instead. Since many of her Stretch students are auditory learners, one of her teaching techniques is having them read out loud. “They can function linguistically at a pretty high level orally,” she says, “but in writing, it’s not the same development. There’s this great incongruity between those two levels of learning.”

Despite the challenges, Dr. Baer has found her work with the program rewarding. One of her most powerful memories from the young program involved a student who is a U.S. citizen, but has parents who were not U.S. citizens. During a conversation the two of them were having about the newspaper early on last term, the student revealed to Dr. Baer that he realized he could vote. He admitted that he had not really thought about it before because his parents cannot vote as they are not citizens. Still, he realized he wanted to change his world and began to understand that the only way to do that was to become a person with information, and to turn that information into action. The only way to get information, he told her, was to go out there and get it himself. “I want to put them on that line toward civic action,” Dr. Baer says, “I want to help them make that connection between reading and writing and democracy. It’s a process. Writing’s a part of it. Reading’s a part of it.”

Dr. Baer’s involvement in the Stretch English program is part of the reason Dean Lisa Vollendorf nominated Dr. Baer for the award. Dean Vollendorf says, “[Dr. Baer’s] leadership in the past few years has been truly extraordinary. She stepped up to become a leader in building our Stretch English Pilot Program, which is in its first year. The pilot is off to a fabulous start thanks to her leadership.” Due to the nature of the new program, Dean Vollendorf has also welcomed Dr. Baer into the

position of Assistant Writing Programs Administrator to run the program. “In that role,” Dean Vollendorf says, “she will continue to coordinate Stretch English and work with colleagues to strengthen writing instruction for all students at SJSU.”

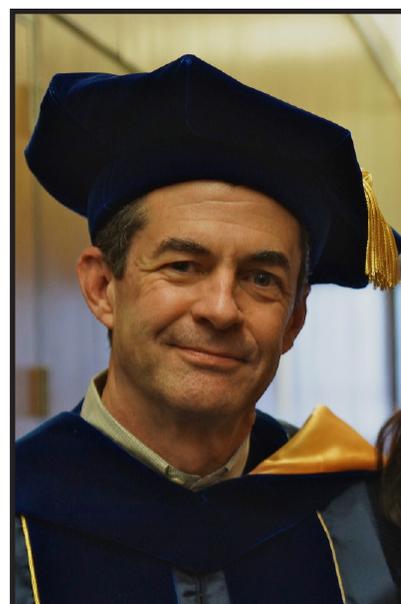
As Dr. Cox retires this year, she is pleased to know that the Stretch English program will be in Dr. Baer’s competent hands. “No one works harder or more productively than she does,” Dr. Cox states, “Students taking classes from Dr. Baer can expect to get the very best instruction humanly possible.”

A tireless nurturer of student success, Dr. Baer says, “The important thing is...to remember that you can’t push people to it. It really is leading them. That means you have to start where they are, just like writing. You can’t push an audience to see what you are trying to say. You have to lead them to a new perspective.” Dr. Cindy Baer proves that before titles, achievements, and awards, comes a relentless patience for learning and education, and an optimistic attitude that seeks only to usher students into their intellectual selves. “[This] has been a long and fruitful career,” she says, “and it’s not over yet because I’ve just started a new one.”

## *Robert Cullen: Leaving a Lasting Impression in SJSU History*

By Alexis Bejarano and Memo Alvarez

**T**he English Department at SJSU is blessed with many fine teachers, and Professor Robert Cullen, who will retire after this semester, is certainly



among them. With diligence, kindness, and a willingness to ensure the success of his students even on a personal level, Professor Cullen’s abilities as a teacher and as a colleague will remain forever imprinted in the hearts of many.

Professor Cullen has always worked earnestly for his tremendous number of accomplishments that have led to his current success.

Since childhood,

Professor Cullen somehow knew what direction his life was going to head in.

“I liked school and I was a good reader. Teaching seemed fitting for me,” he states. “My experience of being in good schools throughout my life and having some very good teachers certainly helped as well.”

In response to being asked what else affected his decision, he gives a bemused smile, and rubs his chin thoughtfully.

“I worked at my uncle’s greenhouse for a while as a young adolescent, and after that I knew I wanted to work with my head and not my body.”

Professor Cullen earned his BA in English from Stanford in 1975, and later earned his PhD from UCLA in 1981, with a dissertation in American literature on Thomas Pynchon. Describing how he first became a professor here at SJSU, he says, “[It happened] once I decided to study for the doctorate at UCLA. From 1981–1988 I taught as a lecturer at UCLA Writing Programs. I accepted the position at SJSU because it was a tenure-track job and because it gave me the opportunity to teach American literature in addition to writing classes.”

During his first few years here, he taught literature and freshman writing courses, and was the composition coordinator for a number of years. In mid-career, part of his academic assignment was to teach outside the department in the interdisciplinary American Studies program.

When asked how he would describe his time here at SJSU, he says, “A very rewarding career. I’ve enjoyed it very much. The first 5-6 years were the hardest because you want to make sure you earn tenure. It’s more work and it’s time demanding. You know the material, but you haven’t taught it yet. You learn what works after the first few years. Overall, it has been a very rewarding experience.”

His time here has indeed been well spent.

The impression he hopes to leave on both his colleagues and the students here at SJSU, reflect this. “I’m confident that certain students will remember me as a good professor,” he states, pausing for a moment as he folds his hands together modestly. “As for my co-workers, I hope they will remember me well.”

To students who were lucky enough to be in one of his classes, like Vichet Khauv, Dr. Cullen’s hope to be remembered as a good professor came true. “He was always serious about the topics he taught,” Khauv says. “He would always be interested in what other people had to say, and would encourage us to speak,” Khauv continues, “I like professors like Cullen, because he reminds me of other professors like Wilson, Mesher, and Maio. They are passionate about what they teach and will continue to try to bring out the best in students and teach them, whatever the subjects may be.” His colleagues, David Mesher and Linda Mitchell, couldn’t agree more.

“Bob has been one of the real stars of the department, an outstanding colleague, educator, and friend.

He has served the department in crucial positions for decades, from leading the composition program twenty years ago, to mentoring teaching assistants now,” says Professor Mesher. “As much as we’ll miss him, I know we all wish him well.”

Professor Mitchell heartily agrees. “He has been an amazing officemate these past seventeen years. The office just won’t be the same without him.”

Although he will certainly be missed, he plans on spending his retirement fruitfully. “I want to enjoy my so-called ‘golden years’—travel to places I would like to visit or revisit in Europe. My wife and I enjoy artsy-fartsy stuff like plays, ballets, photography, and music. I may even volunteer or coach volleyball.” He says all of this with a smile before being asked what final parting words he had for his prior and current students.

“Thank you to my students for all of the hard work that they have done. I see many students juggling a lot

“Book by book—savor the reading instead of just getting it done. Choose a handful of books that are going to stick with you for the long haul.”

of commitments—school, family, jobs—I appreciate the dedication that many students put in with all of their challenges. It has been a great experience for me.” His words trailed off for a moment as a wave of sentimental memories flashed through his mind. “I’ve said this before, but it really has been all in all a rewarding career; there is very high satisfaction for the choice I made to come here, and frustrations fade. By large, it’s been a great place to work. I have a lot of respect and appreciation for the faculty here.”

He readjusts himself in his seat as he looks at his bookshelf intently before looking back with a serene smile, choosing his final words carefully.

“It’s okay to slow down a little. Don’t overcommit. Don’t race towards your degree.” His smile broadens. “Book by book—savor the reading instead of just getting it done. Choose a handful of books that are going to stick with you for the long haul.”

All sound advice. From his students to his colleagues, he will long be remembered as one of the best, and most brilliant professors to ever grace the grounds of SJSU.

## Spotlight on Visiting Professor Andrew Lam

By Thao Nguyen and Robin Brown

**D**rs. Connie and Robert Lurie established the Lurie Author-in-Residence Program in 2000. In its 15 years, it has brought in many authors of national and international acclaim to San José State University to act as Visiting Authors. This year's Author-in-Residence is one of the most notable Vietnamese-American authors of the last two decades, Professor Andrew Lam.



Professor Andrew Lam is recognized as one of the most prominent Vietnamese-American writers today, making him especially fitting as the Author-in-Residence since this April will mark

the 40th anniversary of the fall of Saigon. In addition to being an essayist, novelist, and a writer of short stories, Professor Lam is a journalist for many acclaimed newspapers and magazines. He is the senior editor and writer for New America Media, writes for The Huffington Post, and contributes to NPR as well. Professor Lam is a member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences, and was a John S. Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford.

Professor Lam's dedication and love for writing is apparent, which makes it all the more surprising that he initially pursued an entirely different career path. "I left biochemistry behind at Berkeley," he recalls, "but a heartbreak after college led me to writing, [so I] studied creative writing at San Francisco State University. I wrote, at first, about my romance," he says, "but it soon led to the stories of boat people, of Vietnamese [people] struggling to rebuild in the new country...[soon] the personal bled into the historical and I found my voice, and eventually my vocation."

Professor Lam spent his early childhood as the son of Lieutenant General Lâm Quang Thi in Southern Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Following the fall

of Saigon in 1975, Professor Lam's family was able to find refuge in the United States. "I learned [English] quickly enough, and within a couple of years became an American kid," Professor Lam recalls. However, not everything about the transitional process was easy. "The real [obstacle was] poverty," Professor Lam says. "We were dirt poor when we came to America...having lost everything. My family struggled at the end of Mission Street in Daly City." However, Professor Lam and his family eventually worked their way into the middle class. Professor of Asian American and Ethnic Literature, Nolle Brada-Williams, attributes the success to Professor Lam's drive. "He's one of the most driven writers I know," she says. "He is very savvy about being an entrepreneur through his art," Professor Brada-Williams states, "Professor Lam and his family are amazing in how they have returned to economic safety."

Despite their current comfort in the middle class after being in America for the last 40 years, Professor Lam and his relatives still face the obstacle of trauma. "We left as refugees who fled our homeland after a bloody war ended," Professor Lam states. "We lost everything and everyone we left behind, and that loss is something which one can never fully be recovered from." It is through describing this trauma that Professor Lam's writing stands out. "The key to [Professor Lam's] writing," Professor Brada-Williams says, "is his humor, playfulness, and insight, even with dark topics." This humor shines through in many of his short stories, such as "Love Letter", or "Step Up and Whistle".

Although he does not always use humor to describe the trials of the Vietnamese diaspora, the experiences that Professor Lam writes about are felt by many of the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants that arrived in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s. His works, such as *Perfume Dreams: Reflections on the Vietnamese Diaspora* and *Birds of Paradise Lost*, have earned him various accolades, including the PEN Open Book Award. However, when asked on which accomplishment he is most proud of, Professor Lam humbly states, "I have

**"...the personal bled into the historical and I found my voice, and eventually my vocation."**

the most happiness in having found an aesthetic art to express myself and what is in my mind." Professor Lam continues, saying,

"I am proud that young Vietnamese Americans tell me my works have connected them to their parents' generation—those who came to America as refugees." Professor Brada-Williams agrees, saying, "Part of his drive, besides emulating his parents, is the duty and responsibility he feels to tell their stories."

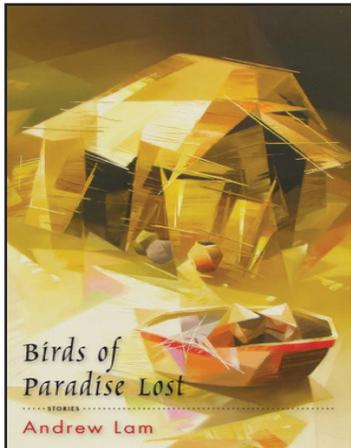
Professor Lam continues to connect to younger generations in his term as Author-in-Residence at San José State University, where he teaches a graduate level

Non-Fiction Writing Workshop on Thursday nights. “I am having a good time teaching graduate students how to improve their voice as a personal essayist,” he says, “I particularly feel proud when I see students improve within such a short time.” It is not hard to see that Professor Lam, who cites writers like James Baldwin, Vladimir Nabokov, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Kazuo Ishiguro as his personal inspiration, could inspire future writers himself. “He can teach both fiction and nonfiction,” Professor Brada-Williams says, “and students can learn to represent a multiplicity of experiences [from him].”

Professor Lam is one of many Asian-American authors among Amy Tan, Maxine Hong Kingston, Chang-Rae Lee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sanjay Gupta, and Khaled Hosseini, who has gained mainstream recognition. However, Professor Lam believes there is still a hurdle Asian-American authors have to cross. “[They] are too far and few in between,” he says, “and often famous Asian Americans’ novels don’t often get turned into movies. The problem is Asian-American stories have not yet gone mainstream in Hollywood. Hosseini and Tan and Huang are exceptions.” Yet Professor Lam himself has done a lot to get Asian-American voices into other forms of media. He is involved with NPR’s *All Things Considered* program, and had his return to Vietnam documented by PBS. Professor Brada-Williams attributes some of Professor Lam’s success to his ability to “stand out as

role model who can occasionally claim [his] pigeonhole [as an Asian-American author]. Ethnic authors are burdened in a way mainstream authors are not,” she explains, “people are more critical of how [one] represents it because it can be stereotyped or appropriated, but [Professor Lam] does a good job of exploring beyond that and representing the Vietnamese diaspora.”

Currently, Professor Lam is working on another collection of short stories to follow *Birds of Paradise Lost*, his first set of short stories. While the publication date of this collection has yet to be announced, his knowledge can be accessed by students every Thursday night at San José State and by readers anytime.



## Celebrating a Career: Dr. Bonnie Cox is Retiring

By Mark Roberts and Emily Fox

With summer just around the corner, many students and faculty are busy focusing on finishing another semester here at San José State University. What many students and faculty do not realize is that after this semester, things at SJSU will be different: Professor Bonnie Cox is retiring. Sad, but true, Professor Cox, who has taught at SJSU for the last 34 years, will be saying goodbye to SJSU and its students, and we will be saying goodbye to one of our school’s most influential English professors.

Professor Bonnie Cox is a Bay Area native. She grew up in Centerville, located near Fremont. Right out of high school, she attended SJSU. After that, she completed her MA degree at SJSU before earning her PhD at Stanford. She then returned to SJSU as a professor, and has taught here ever since. For the past 34 years, she has succeeded in teaching students about Old and Middle English, and the rest is now history. When asked about her long career, Professor Cox would only say, “[San José State University] has always been here.”

When asked what she will miss most about teaching, Professor Cox says, “My students. I love being in a classroom...and seeing the light go off in [a] student’s head.” She wants her legacy at SJSU to be one that influences all students to strive for success and understand how they will get the most out of their SJSU career. Her classes are demanding because she wants her students to push themselves. Because of this, it is no surprise that her students will miss her as well. According to English Professor Nick Taylor, every year at graduation, “Students talk about Professor Cox the most.”

Professor Cox is confident that what she is teaching is important to all students taking English classes. She hopes that after she retires, the same lessons she is teaching now will continue to be taught the same way in the future. When asked to give advice to first-year English professors, Professor Cox says, “Don’t try to do too much. There is a natural tendency to be excited...and want to be on committees, but teaching has one of the highest burnout rates.” Professor Cox also says, “A [student] becomes a teacher because [he or she] had good teachers.” It is likely that many students have thought about becoming a teacher because of Professor Cox.

Many English majors here at SJSU have had the grueling pleasure of taking one of Bonnie Cox’s exceptionally difficult English classes. Former students describe her teaching style the same way: blunt, confident, authoritative, and that she has the magical ability to make every student in the room feel frightened just by making eye contact. Her RateMyProfessors score is high, but the student feedback is the same: intimidating, not for the faint of heart, intense, and engaging.

However, she does not mean to frighten her students; her intent is only to ensure that they are learning, and that they are learning well. Professor Cox’s teaching style makes many students feel nervous, but at the same time she makes her students actually come to class prepared to participate and learn. Though she is described by many of her former students as “intimidating,” the central part of Professor Cox’s teaching style has always been student-oriented. “She pushes students to engage in meaningful conversations, and at times debates, about the text,” one former student says about class with Professor Cox.

Professor Cox has mixed feelings about her upcoming

**“A [student] becomes a teacher because [he or she] had good teachers.”**

retirement. She thinks that it will be a bittersweet time, not only for students and faculty, but for her as well. She says, “I’m worried about what’s going to happen at the end of August when everybody goes back to school and I don’t.” However, she is excited about her future plans to travel to New England with her friend and relax after a wonderful 34 years of teaching.

If you were one of the students who survived a semester with Professor Cox, you deserve a congratulations. You have gone through the crucible and have lived to share the experience—one not all students have been privileged to endure. Though Professor Cox’s unique teaching style has created some strong student opinions over the years, now is the time to celebrate the end of a long and illustrious career. One thing is for certain:

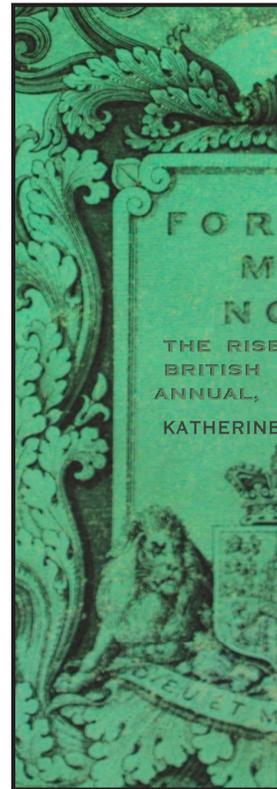
Professor Bonnie Cox has left her mark on SJSU, and she will be missed.

## ***Dr. Katherine Harris Publishes New Book on the British Literary Annual***

By Elizabeth Barrera and Micayla Reed

**D**r. Katherine Harris is a professor here at San José State University, and she wants her wealth of unique knowledge to be put to good use. She is currently teaching a course on Interactive Fiction that combines narratology and interactive fiction within books and games. Harris specializes in Romantic-era and 19th-century British Literature along with other aspects of these times, like literary annuals, which are the subject of her newest book, *Forget Me Not: The Rise of the British Literary Annual 1823-1835*. Literary annuals are miniature books that were initially given to young women as gifts. They were small and discreet enough to fit in a skirt pocket, and they could be pulled out and read at a park or with a gentleman in a parlor. Annuals—made up of poetry, prose, charts, and artwork—allowed women to publish their poetry to earn a living and feed their families. In this monograph, Harris writes about the rise and popularity of the literary annual as a genre and its effect on later print culture. Her research on this topic started in graduate school when she was told by one of her professors that there were no collections of annuals, even though the genre quickly grew popular in its time. During grad school and her summers as a professor, she visited some of the best libraries in New York and Europe to collect literary annuals. Her collection of over 300 annuals are the basis for her book, which is due to release in June 2015, but is currently available for sale.

Literary annuals were published in 1820–1860 in England, and in 1823 became a national phenomenon. They were advertised as a “conduct manual for women”, but the publisher who created the form, broke it, and labeled them as “polite literature” that also included some Gothic narratives. Harris says they “broke these ideas of proper femininity, and I liked that because I like to break the rules, too. I like to see what the limits are.” In creating this annual, Dr. Harris was determined to portray every detail of early production so that individuals of current generations could learn to appreciate them just as much as she. Through extensive research and timeless hours of dedication, Dr. Katherine Harris published a



literary annual that exemplifies the hard work of British literature.

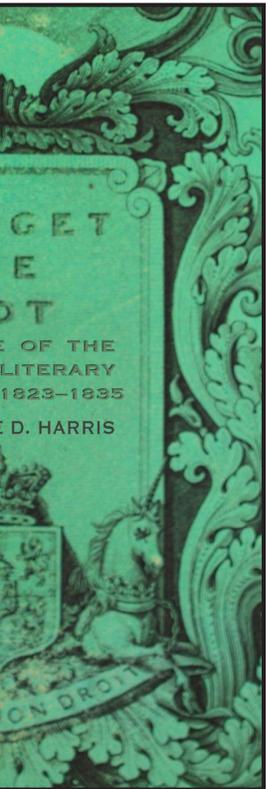
As she reaches under her desk to pull out a box, Dr. Katherine Harris tells us about her perspective on teaching 19th-century literature. “This is a box of 19th-century newspapers that we use in a lot of my classes,” she says as she opens it and pulls out several worn pages. “It’s really intriguing to [my students] to see the advertisements and the writing.” She points out the intricate images, disorganized ads, and the small, smudged writing spread across the pages. Like these newspapers and magazines, Harris has spent a great deal of time collecting literary annuals because they are unlike any other form of art or literature we can study today. “We can go to a museum...

and see these really great works of art. That didn’t happen in the 19th century. You had to be very wealthy to be able to see artwork,” she explains. There are 10–30 handmade engravings that replicate famous pieces of art inside each annual, and they are just big enough to admire through a looking glass. It’s these small details that Harris spent many years learning about while creating her compilation of annuals.

Dr. Harris appreciates the roots of things, asking questions, and acknowledging how their existence came to be. People who don’t have a 19th-century background can grasp the idea that there is an immense number of historical figures that are available. “Literary annuals are an artifact, not just words on a page,” says Dr. Harris. She sees the simplicity and intricacy of print production and fonts. It’s about the importance and mechanization of paper making, all of these were created in the 19th century in order to make reading materials more available. “When we read anthologies, we miss that physical artifact itself,” says

Dr. Harris, “We’re such a visual culture that we forget we’re not the first ones to do that.”

Dr. Harris dedicated her time from 2005–2010 on a massive scavenger hunt, going through different libraries. It was difficult to find a large number of copies available, when the most common answer she received was “we lost it in the blitz of World War II.” Chuckling as she reminisced, Dr. Harris continued on to the actual making of her project. “Writing it was hard,” she says. One of the most difficult parts of it was having to compromise with the publishers. Harris wanted 100 images to be printed in the book, but her publishers were only willing to print 70, which caused her to change the direction of press. Though it took three years for her book to



be published, she never gave up on her ultimate goal: to enhance the perspective of this generation’s appreciation of British literature.

Harris’s willingness to donate parts of her collection so that everyone can enjoy and appreciate the genre demonstrates her desires to enlighten the younger community. “My writing style is to reveal as much as possible, rather than to present only evidence and interpret it for everybody. I try to present as much as I possibly can,” she says. “Short stories really came to prominence through the literary annuals. There’s all kinds of implications,” she continues. In the same way that annuals were expanding the boundaries for women poets, video games also had the ability to demonstrate the expansion of literary boundaries. Thus, Dr. Harris likes to challenge her students by having them question how much they are living in their imagination, which is why she incorporated Gothic games into her course. “There’s an extensive amount of literature living in these games that others don’t notice,” she says. Her current task is to challenge her students into finding old literature in media today.



### *Student Success Funds Awarded to Professional and Technical Writing Program*

By EDNL Staff

Recently, the Department of English and Comparative Literature was awarded \$10,000 from SJSU’s Student Success Fund to be used to help grow the Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) program for the next two years. The Student Success Fund is one branch of the Student Success, Excellence, and Technology Fee (SSETF), which is a pool of money funded by all enrolled students attending the university. Proposals are made from departments all over campus for this resource, commonly for new equipment, or money for

new hires (The financial breakdown of the SSETF can be found online—PTW’s allocation is item #21).

Dr. Mark Thompson, or “Doctor-Professor” to his students, has been the Director of Professional Technical Writing at SJSU for 18 months. He earned his PhD at Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, teaching his craft to engineers and computer-science students before taking up the position of director at SJSU. There hadn’t been a program director for some time before Thompson joined up, but when he did he went right to work on how he could expand and improve the program.

“I’ve been looking at what’s going on and how I can make the program better,” says Thompson. Funds from Student Success will certainly go a long way

in expanding the program. For the money allocated to the PTW program, Dr. Thompson says that Dean Lisa Vollendorf’s work in applying for the funds made this possible. “I feel incredibly fortunate to have this level of support. There’s a lot of responsibility to get it right,” he says. “This is money that students have paid into the system, I want to make sure it comes back to them in ways that they will directly benefit from.”

Dr. Thompson reports that a portion of the money has been set aside for publications like *The Writing Life*, a class-made magazine featuring articles written by the students of ENGL 129, and the *English Department Newsletter*. These expenditures, in the past, were covered by the English Department. With the influx of resources awarded to the program, the English Department won’t have to worry about their wallets—at least in regards to Technical Writing. “We’re able to take that burden off the English Department and fund that for ourselves for a few years,” Thompson says.

The rest of the allocated funds have already been spent on equipment for the program, including two cameras, a video camera, a high-quality printer, and several high-end computers outfitted with software for sound and video production. When asked about the changing landscape of technical writing, Thompson says, “There are trends going on in tech writing right now where more audio and video is being produced. As a tech writer you’re now expected to take technical writing concepts and expand them into a variety of multimedia. There’s an emerging intersection between technical writing and video production. We’re providing these opportunities for students who are interested in them.”

Students taking the ENGL 129 course can look forward an expanded podcast project this semester, and Dr. Thompson says that the new equipment is already making a difference in the quality of student projects. He is also excited about a future long-term project, the

“...it’s about what kind of projects students want to work on, balanced with the projects I think are going to best prepare them for writing careers.”

creation of a program-wide website that will serve as a learning lab for students. He ultimately envisions students creating content using industry-standard software, sending that through an approval process, and publishing it using a content management system. He hopes this will allow students to get important experience that will translate into job experience down the road.

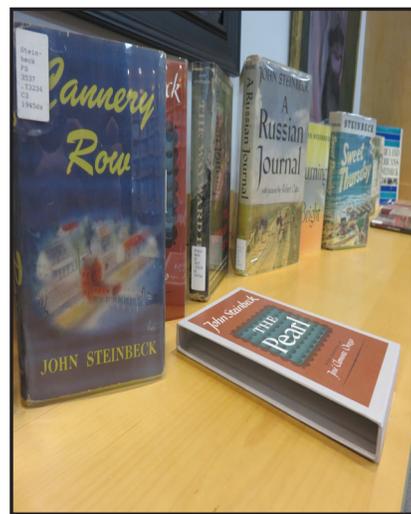
All told, the allocation of funds for the Professional and Technical Writing Program should help usher in a new era of educational balance. Students should no longer feel handicapped by a lack of access to technology.

The program will now allow for more student engagement and expanded curriculum creation. Dr. Thompson concludes, “I’m super open to student input, because it’s student money we’re spending here. Ultimately, it’s about what kind of projects students want to work on, balanced with the projects I think are going to best prepare them for writing careers.”

## Spartans’ Steinbeck

Dina Eastwood and Nicole Bracciotti

It’s a well-kept secret that needs to be talked about: San José State University is home to the only university research archive in the world dedicated to the life and work of iconic author, John Steinbeck. Officially called The Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies, it is open to students, faculty, researchers, and the public. The center’s long title may sound formal, but the contents and those who oversee it are not. Tucked into the fifth floor of the grand Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, it is run by easy-going Associate Professor Nicholas Taylor and Archivist Peter Van Coutren. Both are proud of the center, the gem on the fifth floor, full of what Van Coutren refers to as “all these special little jewels.” Center Director, Taylor, says, “It’s not just for students who are trying to write a paper on the man.” The collection houses books (many of them first editions), articles, photographs, and some of John Steinbeck’s personal belongings. “We’re not



in the business of collecting valuable stuff. A lot of what we have is given to us directly by family members and collectors,” Taylor explains, highlighting that the center’s contents are truer to literary relevance than glitz.

Born in 1902 in Salinas, just 60 miles south of San José, John Steinbeck adored and wrote prolifically about the Central Coast. The allure of his classics, such as *The Grapes of Wrath* or *Cannery Row*, have even more draw when standing next to the author’s notes, written in his own hand, on the manuscripts. Professor Taylor points out that Steinbeck wasn’t much of a speller, and visitors can actually see the misspellings. Discussing this, Taylor’s facial expression becomes whimsical, and a crooked smile graces his face, as he candidly explains, “Steinbeck couldn’t spell for shit.” This information may be surprising, but it is part of what makes Steinbeck so cool in his imperfection. According to Taylor, Steinbeck struggled in college, never finishing at Stanford University. “He dropped out of Stanford after taking the classes he wanted,” Taylor says, “and went to work at a fish hatchery in Tahoe.” Taylor talks about some of the author’s other quirks, including that Steinbeck was “a left-handed personality who was a righty,” and that the author once lived with a one-eyed pornographer in New York City.

Besides these tidbits on his life (all connected in some way to material displayed at The Steinbeck Center), it is explained that Steinbeck was just like every other struggling writer: his original works were cut-up and modified by his first editor, who was also his first wife, Carol. (Keeping the connection local, Carol was an alumna of San José High School.) Van Coutren says the author did not shy away from criticism or assistance. “Steinbeck reached out for help when creating his characters,” he says, also pointing out that Steinbeck sent out “countless letters” to his friends, asking for help with his writings.

After decades in the American consciousness, Steinbeck’s appeal never seems to fall off the radar. At least two Academy Award winners are connected to two, separate, Steinbeck-related projects at this time. Actor James Franco is also in production of the film, *In Dubious Battle*, based on Steinbeck’s novel. Van Coutren and Taylor feel it’s because Steinbeck communicated in a way that appeals to so many different people. Van Coutren feels the author stayed away from complex language on purpose. “Steinbeck saw dignity in all people, no matter who you were. [Steinbeck wrote] in layers, levels, that tell a story and challenge the reader. He made sure people understood his stories,” he says. Making his point, Van Coutren happily points out the vibrant, hand-woven rug from Azerbaijan, sent by three women who were thrilled to receive translated copies of Steinbeck’s work. It hangs on a wall with a woven portrait of Steinbeck, amid other thank-you gifts and bits of memorabilia from around the world.

The center is about more than the author; it is also in place to ensure great literary traditions are carried on. Annually, students and aspiring writers have the option to apply for the \$10,000 Steinbeck Fellowship, or the Louis Owens Essay Prize. According to Taylor, the center’s namesake, Martha Heasley Cox, insisted on these opportunities. One of the most noteworthy awards, one that brings in media attention from around the world, is the annual John Steinbeck Award. Started in 1996, and given to Bruce Springsteen that first year, the award is described on-line as reflecting appreciation for Steinbeck’s empathy, commitment to democratic values, and dignity. It is given to an artist, writer, thinker, or activist who embodies Steinbeck’s values.

For aspiring writers who are currently at San José State but may not quite be at the “prize-winning level” yet, Taylor says the Steinbeck Center is a good place to

“It helps students become interested in writing as a vocation and understand where the literature they read is generated.”

become inspired. “It helps students become interested in writing as a vocation and understand where the literature they read is generated.” How can members of the San José State English Department make sure this wonderful treasure trove is utilized and appreciated more by students? “We are always looking for new ways. We haven’t cracked the code, but it is something no other university has, to get to experience this archive and what is around us,” Taylor says. Taylor encourages SJSU instructors (from any department) to contact him at [nicholas.taylor@sjsu.edu](mailto:nicholas.taylor@sjsu.edu) if they’re interested in bringing a class to the Steinbeck Center for a tour. Whether you are a professor, a Steinbeck connoisseur, or have never picked up one of the author’s 30 novels, it can’t hurt to spread the word about this wonderful, truly Spartan resource.



## *The English Department Goes to Ireland*

Michelle Guelff and Andrea Heine

A visit to the St. Patrick's Cathedral, a literary pub crawl, and a legendary three-day film festival. These are just a few items on the itinerary for this year's English Department Study Abroad program to Ireland.

The program is being run by English Department faculty member Dr. Julie Sparks and includes many fun and exciting adventures centered on the General Education requirements for the three-unit course, English 117B: Global Film, Literature, and Culture. The class is also helpful in the advancement towards graduation, as it covers the GE Area V (Global Understanding) requirement for students.

"Ireland seems like the perfect model for cultural transformation," Dr. Sparks says, "because it has held onto some essential core of its identity even as it endured 800 years of British domination, and even as it is now being impacted by waves of new immigrants from impoverished and war-torn lands across the globe."

It might seem odd to some that the English Department is taking their Study Abroad program to Ireland instead of somewhere in England. However, Dr. Sparks says that she wanted to focus on Ireland first because its literature and culture are more compelling to her. "As much as I love Shakespeare, Dickens, Austen, Hardy, Orwell, and the other great English writers I grew up with, the Irish writers just struck me harder," she says. "When I was a student myself, I was electrified by Bernard Shaw's plays and essays, and that led me to other Irish writers, including Yeats, Wilde, Swift, Joyce, and Roddy Doyle, who present the world from an entirely different perspective. They gave me a new way to view both the English culture of their superpower days, and our own American culture in contemporary times."

After trying to get the program going last summer, Dr. Sparks found herself on her own, trying to promote the class, recruit students, and market the program. Ultimately, after so much hard work, there wasn't enough time for the students to raise a suitable amount of money for the trip. However, this year, with bake sales, Yankee

Candle holiday sales, and hard work, 11 San José State University students from a variety of different majors will be joining Dr. Sparks this summer in Ireland.

When asked what aspects of the trip she was most excited for, Dr. Sparks said, "I am especially eager to share the adventure with students and see what they make of it: the films we'll see at the Galway International Film Festival, the gorgeous landscape we will travel through to get there, the glorious architecture of the cathedrals and castles, and the Irish people themselves with their lively wit and deep reserves of knowledge about their rich and dramatic history."

Students will start the program with one week of instruction at San José State University, followed by a week off to prepare for the trip, and then come together for three weeks of exploring and learning in Ireland. The summer session runs from June 26th to July 3rd, with a cost of \$4,385 for every student participating. After over a year of hard work promoting the trip, several students dropped out of the program due to lack of funds and scholarship opportunities. Dr. Spark says, "This is one thing I hope to improve next year. I want to seek other avenues of funding for the students while also finding ways to make it less expensive."

English major Colleen Bird, one of the students participating in the program this summer, says that even though "the greatest challenge is the cost...the experience will be priceless, and what better way for a student to justify international travel than to study abroad!"

Studying abroad can be an amazing learning and life experience. Dr. Sparks explains, "While watching the films, reading the literature on the syllabus, and exploring the museums and other cultural sites, students are going to be thinking, talking, and writing about how identity is formed and transformed."

The schedule includes two main cities: Dublin and Galway. Some highlights of the trip include a tour of the Dublin Castle, a visit to the Irish Film Festival, a night bus tour of Dublin, a show at a Druid Theatre, and of course, the Galway Film Fleadh, Ireland's most famous film festival. Even though a festival in the land of pubs sounds like a party, Dr. Sparks explains that there will be "lectures from film and theater professionals, both in Dublin and Galway. Both cities have university programs in film and theater, and both have film institutes where the art form is studied and advanced."

Of course, this is a class, and there is time set aside almost every day for discussing and listening to lectures pertaining to the culture that the students will be absorbing. However, the homework seems less like work when set in such an interesting environment. For those who wish to get a taste of the Irish culture and possibly participate in Study Abroad program next year, check out the first Annual San José Irish Film Festival, sponsored by San José State, scheduled for early May. The dates are

still in the development stage, but Dr. Sparks believes “that it is going to be great.”

The festival is a collaboration between the English Department and the Department of Radio, Television, and film (RTVF), with essential support from the Film Production Society (FPS), which is a student club that produces films and film festivals. Dr. Sparks came up with the idea and wrote the grant proposal to make this Irish Film Festival a reality in San José. The production of the festival is left to Barnaby Dallas of the RTVF Department, with his right-hand man, Jake Ohlhausen, who is head of the FPS.

The English Department is constantly expanding and developing with the support and active participation of its staff and students. Programs such as this offer a rich cultural experience and a hands-on approach to learning. While it is too late to sign up for the Study Abroad program to Ireland this year, the English Department welcomes any students for next summer who are wishing to learn, grow, and explore.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.sjsu.edu/studyabroad/programs/> or the program’s Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/SJSUIreland2015>.



## *National Adjunct Walkout Day*

By Vanessa Palencia and Stephen Neeley

Last October, an anonymous San José State University faculty member proposed the idea of a National Adjunct Walkout Day to protest against adjuncts’ working conditions despite their notable roles in contributing to a major chunk of students’ academic learning. While the San José State campus remained quiet, with only buttons and teach-in lectures that covered the topics to rustle its daily routine, many other col-

lege campuses participated in the walkout. With concern about job security and a desire for the protest to not have a designated leader, the SJSU faculty member preferred to stay anonymous. Regardless of the anonymity, the proposal garnered nationwide attention and support from faculty members and students alike.

The working conditions of adjuncts have long been an issue at U.S. universities. Many students think that the person standing at the front of the classroom at a college campus is always a ‘professor.’ In fact, this couldn’t be further from the truth. According to Gloria Collins, a lecturer and Writing Skills Test Coordinator at San José State University, about 60 percent of the faculty on campus are part-time teachers, or adjuncts, and about 40 percent of the faculty are tenure-line. Adjuncts are hired by the university through a part-time contract to teach, but are not considered full-time faculty. Because they are hired on a part-time contract, adjuncts are at risk to be let go from their position at any time during their employment. Ms. Collins admits, “A lot of students don’t realize the conditions...part-time positions aren’t really part time because there is a lot of work involved.” She explains that in order for part-time lecturers to make ends meet, they typically need to teach more classes than a full-time professor. Sometimes this gap in employment hierarchy can lead to varied treatments between departments. For example, a teacher who teaches an English 100W class might receive \$2,000 for one semester, but if that same teacher were to teach an Engineering 100W class, they would receive \$3000-4,000 for one semester. Ms. Collins says that being an adjunct is like “being part of a faculty and not being part of a faculty.” Having a greater workload than a full-time professor without many of the perks, it is possible to feel unappreciated.

Tuition for an undergraduate student is typically around \$16,831 for one semester and with an estimated 26,644 undergraduate students that attend the state school, how is it possible that adjuncts are still so poorly paid? Additionally, students pay a hefty “Student Success Fee”. With the amount of money that the university receives, it seems implausible that adjunct lecturers would continue to struggle to make a livable income. In other words, where is the money going? Ms. Collins discloses, “About 40 percent of the Student Success Fee seems to be going towards the athletics, and I have nothing against student athletes, but that’s a lot of money.” It appears then that monetary priorities must be straightened out and, through the National Adjunct Walkout Day, this issue is slowly creeping into the spotlight.

Prior to the walkout, some teachers like Professor Andrew Fleck were notified about the event through either social media or a collective email from Gloria Collins regarding stickers for the event. Asked about the adjunct situation, Dr. Fleck says, “These teachers carry a lot of obligations and often receive few acknowledg-

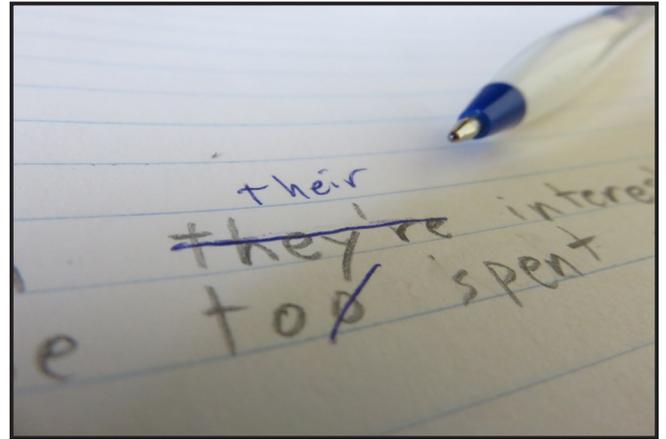
ments for their work.” Since the overall issue of adjuncts and their under-appreciated roles in the school system has often been hidden, Gloria Collins confesses that, “I was excited when I heard about [the walkout day]. Journalism students were interested in it and kept wanting to interview me about it.” Word began to spread in the hallways and professors started discussing the topic both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers like Andrew Fleck, who felt “sympathetic towards adjunct colleagues”

**“A lot of students don’t realize the conditions...part-time positions aren’t really part time because there is a lot of work involved.”**

and believed that “universities have not lived up to obligations towards employees and students,” showed their support for adjuncts. However, due to a contract agreement that prevents teachers on campus from actively participating in the walkout, the SJSU campus remained relatively quiet. Instead, some teachers posted stickers that read “Adjuncts Matter”, while others actively participated in a live streaming from the new TV studio on campus. According to Ms. Collins, “Since the faculty and the CSU have agreed to a contract, [the faculty] are currently not legally permitted to strike.” However, faculty can participate in other kinds of actions like teach-ins and peaceful rallies. “We just do not want to disrupt classes for SJSU students,” she continues. Teachers want the security of a job, therefore, instead of risking their jobs, teachers at San José State took the opportunity to teach their students on the matter rather than actually walk out.

Sometime in February, Leah Griesmann revealed herself as the anonymous SJSU faculty member who initiated and organized the National Adjunct Walkout Day. Now that students are more aware about the topic and colleagues on the SJSU campus are talking about it more, new strides to improve the invisibility of adjunct roles in universities are being taken. However, Griesmann says that she plans to move away from the Bay Area due to low teacher pay and the exorbitant cost of living. Without her as an anonymous leader in the movement, is it possible that the National Walkout Day will eventually fade? Not necessarily. Professor Fleck expects more events to occur on this topic due to the public light that National Adjunct Walkout Day has brought. With adjuncts making up an estimated 60 percent of the faculty, they deserve the benefits that come with the hard work they contribute in school. In the words of Gloria Collins, “A degree should be worth something. It shouldn’t be handed out like potato chips.” Each adjunct has come to San José State with a degree in hand and should be treated with the respect that comes with that knowledge. Like

tenured faculty at San José State, adjuncts deserve better working conditions. Meanwhile, we must continue to highlight the issues of the adjunct lecturer to the public in hopes that change will come sooner rather than later.



## Now Hiring: Writing Specialists

By J. Johnson and Tyler Kittle

**D**eep inside San José State University’s Clark Hall is a gem of student services: The Writing Center. The simple design of off-white and glass walls, soft overhead lighting and small, round tables creates a professional but private ambiance conducive for writing. It’s no accident that this stress-free atmosphere lacks clutter, computers, and cell phones. With little in the lobby to distract anxious students, they are able to take a breath and focus purely on the work they’ve brought with them. When an experienced Writing Specialist like Andrew Tucker greets the students for their appointments, they are already better prepared to learn how to improve their writing.

The objective of the Writing Center is simple and thorough: “Our mission is to enhance the writing skills of SJSU students so they can communicate clearly in any setting (informal, academic, or professional).” To accomplish this all-encompassing goal, the Writing Center hires and trains Writing Specialists to create handouts, offer group workshops, and conduct one-on-one tutoring sessions under the watchful eye of Director Michelle Hager.

Andrew is one of nine dedicated Writing Specialists currently employed at the Writing Center. He began working as a Writing Specialist when he was still an undergraduate majoring in English. Today, Andrew is a Teacher’s Associate for the SJSU English Department and an MFA graduate student. Though he has other hobbies, such as listening to music and attending San José Sharks hockey games, writing is his passion. In 2013, his screenplay *The Art of Growing Gardenias* took 4th place

in CSUMAF's Feature Screenplay Category and today, he has a novel in the works. Having a long-standing appetite to write helped prompt Andrew to apply for the position of a Writing Specialist.

Writing Specialists typically tutor students for half-hour sessions Monday through Friday through the Writing Center's streamlined intake process. Though the Writing Center teaches its Writing Specialists to use specific strategies to assist students with their writing, each case demands customized attention. "My personal process is very similar to that of the rest of the Writing Specialists; we facilitate open conversation with students about their writing, address the larger-order issues first, and then focus on grammar and mechanics," Andrew says. "We explain, model, and then make sure the students understand how to make changes on their own... [we won't] simply edit writing or mark up the page."

Having coached numerous students through the years, Andrew has noted some error patterns in students' writing. "The most common issue I see in student writing is a disconnect between ideas and prose. [They] have great ideas, but their claims lose something on the page because they are more worried about making sentences sound good [rather] than clear," Andrew explains, "I am always reminding students to return to the basics—to determine who is doing what in a sentence. That's something I talk about every day." He also has a piece of advice for essay revisions, "Students need to realize that revision is a process, and the process usually starts with content or organization. Revising for grammar is important, but it should usually be the last step, because if the content changes, the sentences usually change, too."

Like most jobs, being a Writing Specialist has its benefits and challenges. Andrew explains, "Students who become Writing Specialists are able to build close relationships with SJSU faculty, who act as mentors and eventually recommenders for graduate school or future employment. In addition, [we] gain teaching experience, publishing experience, and professional development in the form of workshops and résumé building sessions with skilled faculty members."

According to Andrew, the most demanding task of being a Writing Specialist is becoming one. The hiring process demands about two months of a candidate's time, but it simultaneously integrates the required training. "The hiring process itself is rather challenging, but pushing through is incredibly rewarding," Andrew adds that while the job has given him a strong sense of community on campus and prepared him for the professional world, making a difference in students' lives is deeply gratifying: "It's a great feeling to see improve-

**"The most common issue I see in student writing is a disconnect between ideas and prose. [They] have great ideas, but their claims lose something on the page because they are more worried about making sentences sound good [rather] than clear."**

ments not only in students' writing, but also in their confidence...I've even had some graduate students acknowledge me personally in their theses—that's cool."

The Writing Center always likes students to

take full advantage of its available services. Besides assisting students with their academic work through tutoring sessions, Writing Specialists can help students with their cover letters, résumés, and even professional website profiles. "We have plenty of students coming in with class résumé assignments without realizing that we can help with their actual résumés." Also, another often-overlooked resource of the Writing Center is the plethora of writing lessons known as "Homegrown Handouts," some of which are authored by Andrew. Every semester, a Writing Specialist is required to create a writing lesson on topics that range from punctuation to citations. These unique lessons are available to download from the Writing Center website, free of charge.

For SJSU students who are considering applying to become a Writing Specialist, Andrew recommends carefully reviewing the hiring requirements and process on the Writing Center's website. He adds, "You do not need to be an English major to become a Writing Specialist, although it is easier if writing and the rules of English come naturally to you." Also, Andrew encourages potential candidates to "practice explaining [writing] concepts to your friends... it is important to explain why something is wrong and how it can be fixed."

Director Michelle Hager states that the Writing Center is currently hiring Writing Specialists and that the pay is significantly better than most campus jobs. The Writing Center is conveniently located on the ground floor in Clark Hall. The hours are 9:30 AM –5:30 PM Monday through Thursday, and 9:30 AM –2:00PM on Fridays. Be sure to check out the website before visiting the Writing Center: <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>.



Writing Center Director Michelle Hager

## Welcoming Doctor Ryan Skinnell

By Philip Perry and Laura Nguyen

San José State University has a new Assistant Writing Program Administrator: Dr. Ryan Skinnell. Dr. Skinnell hails from North Texas University, where he is currently an Assistant Professor of Writing and Rhetoric and teaching similar courses, as well as Histo-



riography, Advanced Expository Writing, Modern Rhetorical Theory, and First-Year Composition. His PhD is in Rhetoric, Composition, and Linguistics, which he received at Arizona State University in 2011. San José reflects a return to California for Dr. Skinnell; he received his MA in Rhetoric and Composition Theory at the California State University, Northridge

and his BA in English with a Minor in History at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Dr. Skinnell's desire to come to SJSU was driven by several different factors, generally boiling down to his excitement over the program here at SJSU. He explained, "I value the CSUs as a system, it is in an area of the country I want to be in, it is a job that is aligned with my particular interests and experiences, and it appeared to be a position in which I could do interesting work." Inevitably, changes must be made when the staff at any school changes in order to accommodate the new additions and integrate them into the system, but Dr. Skinnell's enthusiasm will certainly ease the transition. He says, "My first priority is to spend time getting to know the students, my colleagues, and the community." He continues, "SJSU has invested a lot of time and resources in the past few years to hiring a great group of rhetoric and composition specialists who I am looking forward to joining."

Concerning Dr. Skinnell's specific new responsibilities within the department, he's excited about the new position, despite the noticeable change in course material he'll be teaching. At North Texas University, he currently teaches upper division and graduate courses on rhetorical theory and history, spending plenty of time writing, and taking care of similar matters. At SJSU, however, his teaching areas will be different.

Professor and current Writing Program Administrator Richard McNabb says that when professors come in, they have a contract that specifies how many courses they have to teach. Some professors come in just on a teaching contract, but Dr. Skinnell will come in with administrative duties as well. "So he will be teaching a number of courses, and then he will be expected to help me administer the writing program," Dr. McNabb says. "So that entails overseeing English 1A, English 1B, English 2, the assessment of those courses, professional development training, training instructors, promoting writing across campus. It's a huge job," says McNabb.

This, however, does not deter Dr. Skinnell. He has always been fascinated by how people use language and "by the constructive and destructive possibilities of language, which to many people is relatively benign." When discussing the drastic shift in his assignments and teaching focus, Dr. Skinnell says, "I'll have more connection to people in the department and across campus than I currently do—one of the aspects of the job at SJSU I'm most attracted to." Dr. Skinnell's love for the program and writing in general will act as a major boon to the department as well.

Dr. McNabb says there are about 55 instructors to supervise, and the department offers over 200 sections a semester of writing, so Dr. Skinnell was needed. "[The department] realized that they needed more than just me to really run this program efficiently, and there's a big move on campus right now to promote writing and to develop writing-support services," says McNabb. Dr. McNabb also says that Dr. Skinnell will be taking over the assessment aspect of the English department. One of his areas of specialty is assessing writing, according to McNabb, so Dr. Skinnell will be handing that, as well as taking the lead on TA training. Dr. Skinnell's dissertation was on institutional history of writing, "so he has a lot of knowledge about how writing instruction has evolved," says McNabb. McNabb says this was the component that distinguished him from other candidates. The presentation during the hiring process was what sold the committee, says McNabb.

Dr. Skinnell's upcoming book concerns "the institutional functions that first-year composition has historically served, functions which have often been unrelated to teaching students to be better writers." His book looks at the influence of English 1A at Harvard, which set the model for first-semester writing, and how this influence shaped writing instruction throughout the 20th century. "It's clear that [Dr. Skinnell] knows a lot about the field and a lot about the teaching of writing and its best practices," says McNabb.

We look forward to welcoming Dr. Skinnell to San José State.



## Reading Harry Potter in Academia: How College Students Can Connect to Teenagers in Teaching and Writing

By Shirley Ramos and Victor Hernandez

This is the era of the young adult (YA) literature. These books range from a variety of genres, but are generally aimed at teenagers and try to capture the themes going on in their lives. Ever since Harry Potter hit the shelves in 1997, YA literature has been on the steady rise in popularity. Nowadays, YA literature-turned-films like *The Hunger Games*, *The Maze Runner*, and *The Hobbit* are all box office hits, showing how easily YA literature has embedded itself into the mainstream culture. While students have likely read these books and others in the genre, many would be hesitant to use any of these works in an academic setting. However, one English course utilizes these books in a unique way.

ENGL 112B: Literature for Young Adults is a class taught primarily by Dr. Mary Warner, a specialist in this field of work. The course has been taught for thirty years, though Dr. Warner only started teaching the course in 2004. In the course, Dr. Warner goes over how YA literature appeals to teenagers, how YA literature can be analyzed and appreciated as works of art, and she employs “book reads” for students so that they can have a wide repertoire of YA books to use in their future. It is a popular course amongst students, but it is especially useful for those planning on teaching or writing in the future.

Future K-12 teachers have a lot to gain by taking this course. In fact, it is a required course for anyone who plans on earning a BA in English Education. Many middle and high school students do not enjoy the literature that they have to read because they either do not understand the books or they are not interested in the books. This is where YA literature comes in. YA literature serves as a gateway to classical literature, a change in perspective that students can more easily connect to, usually in a more comfortable place. Students may also need histor-

ical fiction to truly understand the context of a book set in another time. “Witness” is a free-verse poem about KKK incidents in Vermont during the 1920s. Dr. Warner recalls “Witness” being so emotionally strong that students would cry upon reading it, creating a stronger connection to the racism within *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

As a result, Dr. Warner explains that “future teachers [need] to know as many books as they possibly can so that they can pair them up with [literature classics].” She gives the example of Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* and compares it to Anderson’s *Speak*, both of which dwell on the topic of rape. Students would find *Speak* to be more accessible and more emotionally compelling, thus the students would gain further understanding of *The Scarlet Letter* through *Speak*. YA literature can also be paired with other classes or larger themes in life. Kayla Navaro, a student in ENGL 112B, demonstrates this pairing: “You could also use *The House of the Scorpion* as a companion piece to another work of dystopian fiction, like *The Giver*, or as a connection to what students are learning in their other classes, like forms of government and slavery in history or genomics in biology.”

Students who are interested in creative writing take the course for different reasons. The primary reason is that these students want to write YA literature themselves. The course provides video clips of YA authors talking about their work. Dr. Warner stresses that these authors often became authors due to YA literature: “[Authors] talk about the fact that they weren’t necessarily readers [until] some teacher—some adult—gave them books and they got started by reading YA literature.” This makes it clear to future writers just how important YA literature is to teenagers, as it created most of their idols. These author talks allow students to understand what it is like to be a YA author and hopefully gain advice on where to start.

Creative writers also get the chance to dissect an effective YA book and figure out why it was effective. They learn what differentiates a YA book from any other book, even if the distinction seems to be arbitrary. One

“[Authors] talk about the fact that they weren’t necessarily readers [until] some teacher—some adult — gave them books and they got started by reading YA literature.”

of the key aspects of many YA books is maintaining dark and heavy themes while also keeping the reader engaged. “There’s so much more impact,” Dr. Warner says. “You are at the age of being a young adult and you really know about the things going on around you, such as divorce and abuse and poverty.” YA books tend to focus on the emotional and grim aspects of these themes.

Knowing these dimensions, the future writers now have an idea on how to set the tone for their books and how to utilize their character archetypes to fit their themes.

This course has effectively shown both future teachers and writers the importance of YA literature, as well as how to utilize YA literature to appeal to teenagers. Dr. Warner still feels the course could change, though. One of her goals is to strengthen the analysis of YA literature, specifically on what makes literature effective. She also maintains that there are books that she has to teach, known as the “canonical books.” While she would like students to learn about other YA books, she delegates that through more liberal assignments. In the end, Dr. Warner is satisfied with the course. She believes that both adults and teenagers have a lot to gain from YA books, especially in its themes. She concludes, “It’s the idea that [YA literature] can be written for an adolescent, but it holds meaning for adults as well.”

## ***First-Year Writing Program News***

### **Program Highlights**

- Two new courses were approved this academic year: ENGL 2 “Critical Thinking & Writing” and ENGL 1B “Argument & Analysis.” ENGL 2 is an introductory writing course open to all students needing to satisfy GE Area A3. ENGL 1B is a specialized writing course for engineering majors. It fulfills GE Area C2.
- The First-Year Writing Program received a \$27,000 CSU Promising Practices Redesign grant to explore ways of integrating technology and technology-based assignments into the composition classroom.
- Two new tenure-track writing program administrators were hired: Dr. Ryan Skinnell and Dr. Cindy Baer. Ryan will oversee TA training and supervision, writing assessment, and other general programmatic tasks. Cindy will oversee Stretch English and co-coordinate with Tom Moriarty the Writing Fellows Program.
- The First-Year Writing Program is participating in the SJSU GE Pathways initiative. In the fall, fifteen sections of ENGL 1A will be designated as gateway courses into the general education paths of global citizenship, sustainability, and creativity.

### **Faculty Highlights**

Many of our dedicated writing faculty have received grants; presented papers at conferences; organized and participated in campus workshops; published articles, short stories, and other pieces of writing; received teaching assignments overseas; and piloted new courses, among many other achievements. Below is a small sample of their achievements.

- Sally Ashton, Sherri Harvey, Leslie Jacoby, Sheree Kirby, Avantika Rohatgi, Ed Sams, Julie Sparks, Roohi Vora met monthly to develop curriculum for ENGL 1A and ENGL 1B. Their work has been publicly commended by SJSU higher administration.
- Cindy Baer, Sara Cook, Mark Dowdy, Maria Judnick, Sarah Prasad, Dalia Sirkin, and Mary Williams from the English Department, and Scott Alkire, Shama Ball, Effie Chiu, Zerrin Erkal, Roshini Joseph, and Kaye Sanders from LLD piloted sections of Stretch English this year. They have all been instrumental in the success of the program.
- Sally Ashton had lyric essays accepted at *Brevity: A Journal of Concise Nonfiction* and *Los Angeles Review of Books*. She also has poems forthcoming in *Zyzzyyva* and *Poet Lore*. For National Poetry Month, Sally has been active giving talks and readings.
- Cindy Baer received the AY 2014–2015 Outstanding Lecturer Award. She also participated in Dean Vollendorf’s Leadership Academy, meeting once a month to discuss with faculty from across the university challenges to administering higher education.
- Sara Cook received an AANAPISI grant to lead individual, small group, and department-based workshops on best practices for providing feedback on student writing. Thus far, she has worked with over 100 faculty from twelve different departments across campus.
- Leslie Jacoby was among a small group of applicants selected to attend the 2015 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar for College and University Teachers in Belfast, Northern Ireland; Douglas, Isle of Man; and Glasgow, Scotland from 8 June to 12 July 2015.
- Maria Judnick coordinated her fourth National Endowment of the Humanities Summer Institute hosted by SJSU professors Matthew Spangler and David Kahn. In addition to readings around the Bay Area, Maria participated in the Fish-trap Summer Gathering of Writers in Oregon and attended the Association of Writers and Writing Programs conference. This spring, she has been busy completing her AANAPISI grant project and blogging for the KQED Pop! website.

- Linda Lappin presented at the San José Poetry Festival Sunday, 12 April. The event was profiled in the *Mercury News*.

[http://www.mercurynews.com/bay-area-news/ci\\_27900825/san-jose-poetry-festival-gathers-rhyme-and-reason](http://www.mercurynews.com/bay-area-news/ci_27900825/san-jose-poetry-festival-gathers-rhyme-and-reason)

- Jill Logan published several short stories and essays, including “Little House” (*Nimrod International Journal*); “Touching Down” (*Greensboro Review*); and “A Daughter’s Letter to Tamsen Donner” (*Zyzyva*). She was nominated for a 2014 Pushcart Prize and awarded a 2014 Katherine Anne Porter Prize for Fiction.

- Sarah Prasad worked as the Writing Support co-coordinator, running the LLD 4 optional activity component for Stretch students. She managed tutors, created curriculum, and moved the grading system onto Canvas. The job also included a 2-unit activity component for LLD 1, for which she had over 20 tutors and over 500 students to supervise.

- Avantika Rohatgi was appointed as a SJSU Salzburg Fellow for AY 2015-2016. She will be attending a session of the Global Citizenship Program at the Salzburg Global Seminar in Salzburg, Austria. The fellowship is offered by the SJSU Salzburg Program and sponsored by the College of Humanities & Arts.

- Ed Sams organized the Poe Fest last fall, for which he received a humanities grant. He also received two AANAPISI grants and presented a conference paper on “Teaching Writing in Large-Forum Classes” at the GRIT Conference at CSU LA.

- Ted Shank has a forthcoming poem in the *Perfume River Poetry Review*.

- Julie Sparks has been working on two projects related to her interest in Ireland and Irish studies. This summer she will be offering a study abroad course in Ireland. Eleven students from various majors (including one English major) will spend three weeks in Dublin and Galway, immersed in the cities artistic, literary, and cultural delights. In addition to preparing for her summer course, Julie is working with Professor Barnaby Dallas of RTVF to bring recent movies from Irish film studios to campus.

- Roohi Vora presented a paper titled “Magic of Mehendi—The Henna Painting Ceremony: Studying Process Analysis through Culture” at the 2014 Young Rhetoricians’ Conference (YRC). She was also awarded a Certificate of Completion for the SJSU 2014 Advanced Summer Institute, using Joseph Harris’ meta-language for revision to deepen teaching practices. In March, Roohi had the honor of delivering the closing speech at the SJAWP Saturday Seminar. The topic was “I Can See for Miles: Informative Writing.” Most recently, she recited Urdu poetry at the Middle Eastern Poetry event to celebrate Middle Eastern Heritage at San José City College.

- A SPECIAL THANK YOU to Inga Silva and John Murphy for their commitment to student learning and for their years of service to the English Department and SJSU. We wish them the best as they embark on their new adventures.

Please be sure to congratulate all of the faculty for their commitment to student writing.

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# Course Descriptions

Fall 2015

*(Note: These descriptions were accurate at the time of press, but class times can change. Consult the SJSU course catalog when you plan to register.)*

## **ENGL 56A: British Literature Survey to 1800**

Eastwood, MW 10:30-11:45

This course is a survey of British Literature from its earliest works through the eighteenth century. The goals of the course are to help students to gain an overview of the major literary periods, genres, authors, and works of English literature. We will discuss these texts from a variety of perspectives, including the dynamic relationship between heroes and villains throughout early English history, considering what these representations reveal about the various societies that produced them.

## **ENGL 56B: English Literature Late 18th Century to Present**

Wilson, TR 4:30-5:45

Major literary movements, figures, and genres from the Romantic age to the present. Writers may include Austen, the Romantics, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Dickens, the Brontes, George Eliot, Hardy, Yeats, Joyce, Lawrence, Forster, Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Auden, Beckett.

## **ENGL 68A: American Literature to 1865**

English, TR 9:00-10:15

English 68A American Literature to 1865. Readings include Native American orature and works by Bradford, Bradstreet, Franklin, Wheatley, Irving, Emerson, Douglass, Poe, Melville, Whitman, and Dickinson; plus the first American comedy, a seduction novel, and *The Scarlet Letter*. Classwork assignments, one midterm, and a non-comprehensive final.

## **ENGL 68B: American Literature**

Meshar, TR 1:30-2:45

Survey of American literature from the end of the Civil War to the present. Representative readings in poetry and prose of the development of American lit, with emphasis on the major authors, works, and literary movements of the period, but with time to enjoy some of the quirky writers and unconventional texts that make American literature fun.

## **ENGL 71: Creative Writing (ONLINE)**

Soldofsky

An online introductory creative writing class using Canvas, the eCampus learning management system. Students will draft and revise original works of poetry, creative nonfiction, and short-fiction, learning the basic craft of writing these genres through reading the work of published poets and writers, guided by the instructor. In our class workshops and in small writing groups, students will discuss each other's work, making revision suggestions facilitated by the instructor and T.A's. During the semester, everyone will participate in the workshops as both an author and a peer-critic. ENGL 71 is a prerequisite for taking upper-division creative writing workshops (ENGL 130, 131, and 135), and also fulfills the C2 Letters area of the Humanities & the Arts General Education requirement. 3 units.

## **ENGL 71: Creative Writing**

Ashton, TR 12:00-1:15

We will experiment with the fundamentals of creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry through reading published works, discussion, and writing, writing, writing using the models and methods we review. My focus is on process including workshop in small peer groups.

## **ENGL 71: Creative Writing**

O'Sullivan, TR 9:00-10:15

Schragg, MW 12:00-1:15

Taylor, MW 12:00-1:15

Logan, TR 9:00-10:15

Lindelof, W 6:00-8:45

Mouton, TR 4:30-5:45

Examinations of works of poetry, creative nonfiction and short fiction as expression of human intellect and imagination, to comprehend the historic and cultural

contexts, and recognize issues related to writing by men and women of diverse cultural traditions. Students will also write poetry, creative nonfiction, and a short fiction.

### **ENGL 78: Introduction to Shakespeare: William Shakespeare and Popular Culture**

Adrienne Eastwood MW 3:00-4:15

In this course we will grapple with the question: does Shakespeare still matter in the twenty-first century? Students will study several of Shakespeare's plays in depth, and then analyze modern film adaptations of those same works. Some of the pairings we will discuss include: *The Taming of the Shrew – 10 Things I Hate About You* (Dir. Gil Junger); *Othello – "O"* (Dir. Tim Blake Nelson); *Macbeth – Scotland PA* (Dir. Billy Morrissette); *Romeo and Juliet – Romeo + Juliet* (Dir. Baz Luhrmann) *Hamlet – Hamlet* (Dir. Almereyda, with Ethan Hawke). In each case, we will tease out the decisions made by each director in their attempt to remake or reinterpret Shakespeare's work.

### **ENGL 100W: Writing Workshop**

Stork, MW 9:00-10:15

Intensive practice in writing about literary topics, especially poetry, short stories and a drama review. We will attend a performance by the San José State Theatre Department and focus on a wide range of poetry and poetic techniques. The main research project is a textual history of one poem.

English, TR 10:30-11:45

Fiction, drama, poetry, and more poetry. *W:t* by Margaret Edson and *Lying Awake* by Mark Salzman are the longer works; poetry will be from Best of the Best American Poetry: 25th Anniversary Edition.

Rohatgi, MW 1:30-2:45

Advanced workshops in Reading and Composition, Creative Arts, English Studies, and Technical Writing. A Writing Workshop is also available for foreign students.

### **ENGL 101: Introduction to Literary Criticism**

Brada-Williams, MW 10:30–11:45 AM

Study of various historical and contemporary approaches to literature, including New Criticism, structuralism and post-structuralism, New Historicism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, post-colonialism, feminism, queer theory, and ecocriticism. An emphasis will be placed on learning to apply these different methods of interpretation through a workshop format.

### **ENGL 103: Modern English**

Mitchell, MW 9:00-10:15

Mitchell, MW 1:30-2:45

This course provides a survey of Modern English phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, transformational grammar, and the universality of linguistic structures. Material in the course will also focus on some recurring problems of usage and/or correctness, regional and social varieties of English, the role of pragmatics in using language to communicate, and the historical development of English, especially as it affects the language today.

Stork, MW 10:30-11:45

An historically-informed, linguistically-based introduction to Modern English Grammar, ranging from the phoneme to the nominal clause. Attention to complex prose texts (i.e., *The Gettysburg Address*) and modern colloquial speech ("Chill out" as a phrasal verb).

### **ENGL 105: Seminar in Advanced Composition**

Moriarty, TR 1:30-12:45

ENGL 105 is a seminar in advanced writing. Using rhetorical theory as our guide, we will produce three projects for multiple audiences, ranging from the academic to the popular, from essays and arguments to memes and tweets for Twitter and other forms of social media.

**ENGL 106: Editing for Writers**

Thompson, MW 3:00-4:15

In this class, we cover all the fundamentals that writers need to know about editing and working as a professional editor. This includes proofreading and copyediting, as well as sentence-level and document-level editing. The Basics? Fix gnarly sentences. Make ugly paragraphs pretty. Learn how to work with other writers. Gain the confidence to explain your edits and defend them against the howling mobs! Required class for Professional and Technical Writing concentration.

**ENGL 107: Professional and Technical Writing**

Thompson, TR 12:00-1:15

In this survey of technical and professional writing, you'll learn how to write and design persuasive documents that get real things done in the real world. Projects include resumes and cover letters, proposals, instructions (video and writing), presentations, and user manuals for phone apps. We also learn a number of digital tools used to author and publish writing in the current tech landscape, such as Adobe InDesign, Snagit, and Madcap Flare. Required class for Professional and Technical Writing concentration.

**ENGL 109: Writing and the Young Writer**

Browne, M 4:30-7:15

This course is designed to strengthen participants' writing skills in both creative and expository genres and to develop participants' knowledge and skill as future teachers of writing. Students will write a short memoir paper, present a selection of poetry, and create a multi-genre research paper. Expect discussion and discovery!

**ENGL 112A: Children's Literature**

Krishnaswamy, MW 9:00-10:15, MW 12:00-1:15

Study of literature for elementary and intermediate grades, representing a variety of cultures. Evaluation and selection of texts.

**ENGL 112B: Literature for Young Adults**

Warner, W 4:30-7:15

In ENGL 112B, we read *After the First Death*, *Speak*, *Whale Talk*, *Witness*, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, and *We Were Here*. Two additional texts—*Literature for Today's Young Adults* and *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning*—introduce YA literature's genres, demonstrate the complexity of the best YA lit, and provide author/book resources. Book Talks and a unit of study/annotated bibliography requirement further knowledge of YA literature.

**ENGL 117A: American Literature, Film, and Culture**

Engell, T 1:30-4:15

The focus of this class will be California Noir and Neo-noir, though strictly speaking not every literary work and film we will study in the class is "noir." These works are, however, all set primarily or entirely in California and are typically "dark" in tone and subject. We will cover novels and their film adaptations, an original screenplay, a collection of essays and stories, and other works from 1930 to the present.

**ENGL 123B: Literature for Global Understanding: Africa**

Meshner, TR 3:00-4:15

The focus of the course will be on works originally written in English by novelists from Africa since the middle of the twentieth century, but we will also read works in translation from other languages, as well as some drama and, if time permits, poetry. Among the authors who may be covered are four Nobel laureates in literature—J.M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Naguib Mahfouz, and Wole Soyinka—as well as writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Buchi Emecheta, Nuruddin Farrah, Bessie Head, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and others.

**ENGL 125: European Literature: Homer to Dante**

Wilson, MW 4:30-5:45

Classical and medieval literature in translation: Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Virgil, and Dante.

**ENGL 129: Introduction to Career Writing**

Thompson, TR 10:30-11:45

In 129, students write to get published in the places that they read, drafting and revising about whatever they're into: food, video games, fashion, high-tech, science—whatever. Students also get writing and producing two English Department magazines, an in-class podcast series, a short video, and their own blog. Expand your portfolio, learn some new skills, and march boldly forth with a publishable work in hand. Required class for the Professional and Technical Writing concentration.

**ENGL 130: Writing Fiction**

Mouton, TR 1:30-2:45

Engell, TR 10:30-11:45

English 130 is a fiction workshop class in which each student will write two short stories. Each of these short stories will be workshopped in class, after which each story will be rewritten. Both drafts—pre- and post-workshop—will be included in each student's end-of-semester Portfolio. In addition to writing two short stories and revising them, each student will be responsible for helping to workshop all stories written by classmates. And each student will be responsible for reading a number of assigned, published short stories that will serve as models for writing successful short fiction.

**ENGL 131: WRITING POETRY**

(Theme: "Stand Up Poetry: Making Good Lines")

Soldofsky, MW 10:30-11:45

An intermediate/advanced-level poetry writing workshop, where students workshop poems they are writing for the class, while reading and analyzing a diverse selection of published poems—mostly in open and some in closed forms. The workshop's thematic emphasis will be on "Stand Up Poetry": poems whose characteristics include wit, performability, clarity, use of natural language, compelling use of rhythm and line, and that convey a linguistic punch. Students will use Canvas for posting drafts of their poems to classmates, and may also post audio or video files (if desired) for facilitating workshop discussion. Grades based on a final poetry portfolio and a final poetry reading/performance or digital presentation. ENGL 131 can be repeated for credit. 3 units.

**ENGL 133: Reed Magazine**

C. Miller, T 3:00-5:45

This course is ideally a two-semester sequence in which students produce this year's issue of *Reed*, the oldest literary magazine west of the Mississippi. In the fall semester students will focus on editorial duties, mainly reading submissions, reviewing art, communicating with submitters to gain hands-on experience in publishing. Previous experience producing a literary magazine is desirable but not required.

**ENGL 142: Chaucer**

Stork, MW 3:00-4:15

An introduction to the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, read in the original Middle English. Selections from his dream visions, *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Canterbury Tales*. Find out what the word "quaint" really means!

**ENGL 144: Shakespeare I**

S. Miller, TR 12:00-1:15

This course will introduce you to some of the major plays of William Shakespeare. Each play will be considered both within the context of the cultural and political atmosphere in early modern England and through the critical lenses provided by postmodern theories of literature. Students will gain a basic knowledge of Shakespeare's thematic questions and a solid understanding of the language he used to explore these themes. For example, we will discuss the construction of the family as a mini-commonwealth and the political impact that added to Shakespeare's dramatic productions. Similarly, we will consider the relationship between patriarchal and monarchical authority, and the ways in which related ideologies circulated among Elizabethans.

**ENGL 145: Shakespeare and Performance**

Eastwood, MW 9:00-10:15

In this course, we will examine in-depth several of Shakespeare's plays, specifically addressing issues of performance and interpretation. Placing each play in the context of its original performance during Shakespeare's time, and its life on stage and screen in the ensuing centuries, encourages an engagement with the ways in which re-imagining Shakespeare's works helps them retain their vitality and cultural relevance. Paying particular attention to modern productions, we will analyze the ways in which production elements such as setting, casting, staging, costumes, editing, and individual performances shape and create meaning (or fail to do so) for the audiences of today. Placing these plays within this context of performance will raise larger issues about the complex relationships between the Shakespearean canon and its ever changing audiences. Students will respond to each Shakespearean play text through both writing and oral interpretation, integrating speech and dramatic performance with an understanding of the complexities of plot, characterization, and dramatic form. Required for the English Single-Subject Credential

**ENGL 149: TechnoRomanticism; British Literature in the Romantic Period**

Harris, TR 10:30-11:45

The British Romantic-era (1785-1837) was perhaps one of the most intellectually and technologically productive eras in all of England: The Industrial Revolution forced citizens to abandon agrarian life and embrace an urban existence that was full of prostitutes, raw sewage, cholera and scientific experimentation. Literature during this time, 1785-1837, reflects the anxiety caused by this shift, but it also reflects an excitement about England's potentially terrifying future. In Mary Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein*, our hero(es) embody all of these aspects of British life. We'll read poetry, short stories, and non-fiction in the British Romantic period through Shelley's 1818 text and then read her second novel, *The Last Man*, a very futuristic view of the nineteenth century.

**ENGL 167: Four Ways of Looking at John Steinbeck**

Shillinglaw, TR 12:00-1:15

Long after he had left California for the east coast, John Steinbeck admitted that he kept "the tone of Salinas in my head like a remembered symphony." This class will begin by considering Steinbeck's finely honed sense of place, considering two books about the Salinas Valley, *The Long Valley* and *East of Eden*. Then we will consider Steinbeck as socially engaged writer: *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. Will be the focus of discussion. Third is Steinbeck ecological vision, which was enriched by his friendship with marine biologist Edward F. Ricketts: we will discuss *Sea of Cortez* and *Cannery Row*. We will close the semester with a unit on Steinbeck's treatment of Mexico in text and film; the focus will be on the documentary, *The Forgotten Village*, the novel and film of *The Pearl*; and *Viva Zapata!* The course includes a field trip to Salinas and Monterey.

**ENGL 169: Ethnicity in American Literature**

Karim, TR 12:00-1:15

Study of race and ethnicity in the literary arts of North America. Selected works of authors from such groups as African Americans, European Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, Latinos and American Indians.

**ENGL 178: Literary Landscapes; Literature of Creative Nonfiction**

C. Miller, R 3:00-5:45

Through the magic of literature we will take a trip around the world and see how travel writers have created the foreign locale on paper. We'll examine some of the early practitioners, like Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad* and Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa*. We'll head off aboard trains, boats and planes with texts such as Paul Theroux's *The Great Railway Bazaar*. Along the journey some questions we'll explore are the difference in how authors write as insiders vs. outsiders, and male vs. female travelers. And to practice what we read, class field trips! (Prerequisite: upper-division standing.)

**ENGL 180: Individual Studies**

By arrangement with instructor and department chair approval.

**ENGL 182: Women and Literature: Considering Violence**

Shillinglaw, TR 10:30-11:45

In this course, we will consider the nature of violence in texts written by and about women: Texts will include *Medea*, Euripides; *“Roan Stallion”* by Robinson Jeffers; *Beloved* by Toni Morrison; *White Oleander* by Janet Fitch; *The Round House* by Louise Erdrich.

**ENGL 190: Honors Seminar—The Poet and the Queen: The Works of Edmund Spenser**

Eastwood, MW 1:30-2:45

It is well known that Karl Marx dubbed Edmund Spenser “Elizabeth’s arse-kissing poet.” Whether Marx was talking about Spenser’s poetry or some of Spenser’s prose works, critics have echoed the sentiment, and until fairly recently, have done little to challenge the assumption. My class will consider some of the more radical aspects of Spenser’s writing against some of the highlights (and lowlights) of Queen Elizabeth’s remarkable 45-year reign. I will argue that Spenser’s position in relation to his Queen is much more complex than many subsequent critics have thought. This course will provide you with a strong historical and cultural background of Elizabethan England against which we will read several of Spenser’s poetic texts including ALL SIX BOOKS of the greatest poem ever written: *The Faerie Queene*! The opportunity to read this poem in its entirety is a rare one at any level of scholarship, and this class will enable you to accomplish this impressive feat as an UNDERGRAD!

**ENGL 193: Capstone**

Shillinglaw, TR 1:30-2:45

The aims of this capstone class are fourfold: to reflect on your years as an English major; to consider books that ask perennial questions (with a focus on family/work); to consider your writing, both academic and creative; to consider your futures—“Why do Humanities matter?” To address these questions, we will discuss several texts, among them Anne Fadiman, *At Large and At Small* and Anne Tyler, *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*; Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*; *The Gathering*, Anne Enright.

**ENGL 199: Internship in Professional/Technical Writing**

Thompson, (time arranged with instructor)

This independent study requires that students secure a writing internship with a local business (while the department can’t guarantee an internship, we can put students in touch with companies that have expressed an interest in SJSU interns). 120 hours of workplace experience are combined with academic readings in professional writing. In a final essay, students compare their workplace experience to the academic literature on workplace writing.

## A Message from Shannon Miller, English Department Chair



With spring every year come changes, some exciting, some bittersweet. And it is no different this year for our department, which is welcoming new faculty and staff, but also saying goodbye to beloved members of the department.

Bonnie Cox, champion

of Classical and Medieval literature, and a faculty member whose name inspires awe in her students, is retiring this year after 34 years at San José State University. Professor Cox is a Spartan through and through, having graduated from SJSU, receiving her B.A. and M.A. here, and then returning to the department as first a lecturer and then as a professor. The halls of FOB will not be the same without Professor Cox's wit and honesty.

Robert Cullen is also retiring this year. A well-known figure in the fields of composition and rhetoric and 20th-century American literature, he co-authored one of the most respected writing textbooks, *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. This textbook is widely used across the country, and has gone through nine editions so far. He has created a legacy of supporting writing instruction across the country, but particularly here: he trained our new teaching assistants for almost a decade, nurturing them through the challenges of beginning a teaching career as he set high standards that he helped them to achieve. We owe so much to these two faculty who have taught and molded generations of students, always kept the bar high, and helped their students achieve those expectations.

We will be saying farewell to two other faculty who will be moving onto exciting new positions. Andrew Altschul has accepted a position at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, while Andrew Fleck will be moving to University of Texas, El Paso. We will miss the pedagogical contributions that Professor Altschul made to the department's creative writing curriculum, and that Professor Fleck made to the teaching of early modern literature, such as Shakespeare and Milton, as well as to the Humanities Honors Program. We will miss them, but wish them all the best in their positions.

Our department is also saying goodbye to two of our longtime lecturers, John Murphy and Inga Silva, who have been a mainstay of our writing faculty. Committed to his students' success, Mr. Murphy commuted from San Diego to help freshman improve their writing here at San José

State University for many years. Now, that is commitment! And Inga Silva, who has taught in our department for 15 years, is also retiring to spend more time with her family. She has described how teaching at San José State University was part of her life-time dream to make a better life for her children. It has been an honor and privilege to have these two committed educators with us for so many years.

And we also said goodbye to our wonderful Pat Cunningham earlier this year as she moved to a position in SJSU's College of Education, where all of her talents are sure to improve the lives of their faculty and students. We all miss her enthusiasm, humor, and astonishing efficiency that has kept our department running so smoothly since she arrived three years ago.

Yet spring brings renewal along with these changes. We have been very lucky to hire two new assistant professors this year, Cindy Baer and Ryan Skinnell. Dr. Baer has been running our Stretch English pilot since last year, and she is the perfect person to continue in this important job as we improve composition for all students. Like Professor Cox, she was also a student of the SJSU English Department before going on to gain her PhD. Her teaching acumen was rewarded this year with San José State's Lecturer of the Year award, and the department is delighted that she will be moving into this new position. Professor Skinnell will have a little farther to move to join the faculty as we continue to shape our composition program: he is coming to us from the University of North Texas and is enthusiastic about returning to California after 8 years away, first in Arizona and then in Texas.

And in Pat Cunningham's position we have had wonderful luck in gaining two new staff members to our department office. Joanne Lamb joined us in January; a Connecticut native who spent many years in Minneapolis, she has grown fond of California, but also of our department over the last few months. And Debbie Mullin, who has extensive experience in sales, has just joined us this month. She has been a great addition to the office, and she is fitting in perfectly. Please welcome these two smart and talented women who are providing support to our faculty and helping keep students on track to graduate.

And to our graduates, saying goodbye to you is often the most bittersweet of changes on a campus. I have so enjoyed getting to know our majors and graduate students over the last eight months. Our students, and soon to be graduates, are resourceful, creative, inquisitive, and forthright. They support each other in classes and they are invested in improving the world around them. They rise to the many challenges that face them with resilience and a commitment to improve themselves. It has been an honor to help you all on your path to finishing your degrees and moving out in the world, where I know you will all do wonderful things. I won't wish you luck, because I know you won't need it. Your talents, that we have had the pleasure to help you develop, will lead you where you need to go.

To your future successes!

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