

# English 71—Creative Writing, Fall 2009

## Area C2: Humanities & Arts, Letters

Instructor: Kelly Harrison

Office: FO222, 924-4496

Section: 7, Tuesday 6:00-8:45pm, BBC124

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### REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- *The Making of a Story*, Alice LaPlante. ISBN: 978-0-393-06164-2 \$29.95 (cheaper online)
- College-level dictionary
- Lined binder paper, 8.5x11, for in-class writing. **Do not** use smaller paper—they get lost easily.
- Blue or black pens for in-class writing, colored pen (green, purple) for workshops
- Internet access and email

### RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- *Zen and the Art of Writing*, Ray Bradbury (Roberts may have used copies)
- *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, Stephen King

### CLASS CHOICE TEXT

The class will vote for one book to read in addition to the LaPlante text. (Ah, democracy in the classroom!) Please review this list and choose your top-three picks. We'll vote in class.

- *The Best American Non-required Reading - 2008*, Dave Eggers, ed (anthology)
- *Tin House*, Vol 10, No 4 (lit mag/anthology)
- *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker (novel)
- *White Oleander*, Janet Fitch (novel)
- *The Road*, Cormac McCarthy (novel)
- *The Bell Jar*, Sylvia Plath (novel)
- *The Glass Castle*, Jeanette Walls (memoir)
- *Player Piano*, Kurt Vonnegut (novel)
- *The Raw Shark Texts*, Steven Hall (novel)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Introduction to Creative Writing is a 3-unit, lower-division course designed, adopted, implemented, and administered by the Department of English & Comparative Literature at SJSU in accordance with the University's General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill Core General Education requirements in the Letters area of Humanities & the Arts. In this course, we will read and write poetry, creative non-fiction, and short fiction. The course will be taught using a combination of discussion and writing workshops. In the discussion, we will closely read and analyze published works of creative writing. In the writing workshops, you will analyze and critique the creative work of fellow class members.

### NO LAPTOP, NO CELLPHONE POLICY

You are expected to be present in both mind and body. You can't do that if you're checking Facebook or texting a friend. Therefore, you may *not* use laptops in the classroom. If you must take a call because of an emergency, leave the classroom. Anyone using a phone during a quiz or in-class essay or during any other assignment will receive an F (0 points) for that assignment.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the form and content of assigned literary works;
- Comprehend the historical and cultural contexts of assigned literary works;
- Recognize the accomplishments of and issues related to writing by women and men representing diverse cultural traditions;

- Acquire through both individual and collaborative/workshop efforts of a written and oral nature the skills necessary for reading, discussing, analyzing, interpreting, and—most importantly—emulating and writing works of poetry, creative non-fiction, and short fiction;
- Communicate such skills with clarity and precision;
- Develop an appreciation of literary works as expressions of human intellect and imagination, and as representations of diverse human cultures;
- Develop the ability to write literary works that express intellect and imagination and that represent diversity in human cultures
- Respond to literature through clear and effective communication in both written and oral work;
- Read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility;
- Appreciate how literary works illuminate enduring human concerns while at the same time representing their particular cultures;
- Write works of poetry, creative non-fiction, and short fiction that are of interest and value to the writer, to other students in the course, and to a diverse reading audience.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Creative Writing (60% of course grade):** Each student will write, revise, and submit the following new writing.
  - “Self-Portrait” diagnostic & revision
  - 1 creative nonfiction piece (approximately 4-10 pages)
  - 1 fiction piece (approximately 6-15 pages)
  - 4 poems
2. **Quizzes, Reading Responses, Workshops, Class Participation (30% of course grade):** Includes participating in daily discussions, asking questions, responding to other students’ work in workshop, doing in-class writing activities. These assignments cannot be made up if you are not in class. Writers read like writers. As you read the works in this class, I expect you to mark up the text and prepare for class discussions. You will attend at least one on-campus literary event and write a 2-page review of the event. See [www.litart.org](http://www.litart.org) for schedule. Most events will be announced in class, too.
3. **Final Exam (5%):** Tuesday, Dec 15, 17:15-19:30 (5:15-7:30pm). This will be a poetry-fiction reading.

## GRADING

A: Creative writing that receives an “A” is likely to:

- Fulfill all assignment requirements
- Demonstrate a compelling plot, idea, event (significance)
- Function well as a whole (structure)
- Demonstrate an engaging voice that incorporate strong word choices (style)
- Engage the writer as well as the reader (sincerity)
- Lack clichéd or over-used language
- Incorporate unusual/unique associations that fit the tone of the piece (originality)
- Lack spelling and punctuation errors, typos, etc.

B: Creative writing that receives a “B” is likely to:

- Fulfill most of the assignment requirements
- Demonstrate some significance
- Function generally well as a whole
- Demonstrate a generally engaging voice
- Incorporate some strong word choices
- Use some concrete imagery
- Mostly lack clichéd or over-used language
- Mostly lack spelling and punctuation errors, typos, etc.

C: Creative writing that receives a “C” is likely to:

- Neglect some aspects of the assignment requirements
- Be derivative of other works

Not completely function as a whole (some parts may be underdeveloped)  
Incorporate some strong, and some weaker, word choices  
Lack concrete imagery  
Include clichéd or over-used language  
Have some spelling and punctuation errors, typos, etc.

D: Creative writing that receives a “D” is likely to:  
Not fulfill the assignment requirements  
Not function as a whole  
Be a cursory response that demonstrates lack of motivation  
Show poor understanding of the assignment

F: No response or paper turned in one week past due.

## **LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

You are adults and responsible for attending class and turning in assignments on time. If you must miss class, contact a **classmate** about what we covered. **Do not email me** asking me what we discussed or if you missed “anything important”. (You did.) Instead, contact a classmate for that material.

It’s OK to email me if you need clarification on an assignment or need to arrange an appointment to meet in person. Please use standard English (including capitals and punctuation) in all emails to me. Please do not use text messaging or chat abbreviations (like cul8r, ur, i’m, etc). Treat your communications with me as you would with an employer. Yes, I’m an English teacher, and yes, I expect professional language skills from college students!

You cannot make up in-class writing, discussions, quizzes, or other work. If you turn in an assignment late, you will lose one full grade for each day the assignment is late. That is, an A becomes a B after one day, and then a C after two days. Each day is a calendar day, not a class session!

**I will not take any assignments more than one week late. I do not accept emailed assignments.**

## **QUIZZES, CLASS ASSIGNMENTS, AND HOMEWORK**

Throughout the semester, I will give quizzes on the assigned reading and assignments. These quizzes will not be announced in advance and cannot be made up. I will assign various responses to reading and other short writing assignments both in and out of class.

## **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism means passing someone else’s work off as your own, such as:

- using a story or poem from a book
- using web page text directly in your papers without citing
- having someone else write all or part of your assignments

Any assignment containing plagiarized passages will receive an F grade automatically, and I will report the incident to Academic Integrity.

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism or cheating on any portion of any assignment, including copying more than seven consecutive words from a web site, will result in a failing grade for assignment and possibly the course. All student work is subject to review at <http://www.turnitin.com> to identify possible sources of plagiarism. Students found guilty of academic dishonesty will be reported to the proper authorities and may result in a grade of NC.

**TURNITIN.COM Class ID: 2822582 password: sjsu**

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

### **Academic integrity**

Students should know that the University’s Academic Integrity Policy is available at [http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial\\_affairs/Academic\\_Integrity\\_Policy\\_S07-2.pdf](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s

integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at [http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial\\_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html).

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

### **Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.

### **Student Technology Resources**

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Clark Hall and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

### **SJSU Writing Center**

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Website: <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>

## COURSE SCHEDULE

MS = Making of a Story

Week date	First half	Second half
1 25 Aug 09	INTRODUCTION Adler “How to Mark a Book” handout The Self-Portrait assignment	What is Creative Nonfiction? Beginnings & hooks HW: Register with turnitin.com Read MS: “Shitty First Drafts” pg 574 MS: ch 1, part 1, “The Basics”
<b>CREATIVE NONFICTION</b>		
2 1 Sept 09	<b>Self-portrait due</b> Discuss writing Writing as discovery	Significance, structure, style, sincerity, originality  HW: MS, ch 2, 11, & 14 parts 1 MS: “Keeping a Notebook” pg 40
3 8 Sept 09	Stephen King excerpt (audio book) Edie’s Transitions lecture	Story structure/shape, memoir HW: MS, ch4&9, part 1 MS, Selzer, “The Knife” pg 533
4 15 Sept 09	Discuss “The Knife” Plot in non-fiction	Voice and POV HW: MS, ch 6, part 1 MS, ch7, part 1
Week 5, 22 September ALL FACULTY FURLOUGH DAY—NO CLASSES		
6 29 Sept 09	Dialogue	Character building HW: MS ch8 & 10, part 1
7 6 Oct 09	Workshop non-fiction piece Draft due	Creative journalism HW: MS, ch3 & 5, part 1 MS, Busch, “Ralph the Duck” pg 521
<b>FICTION</b>		
8 13 Oct 09	<b>DUE: Non-fiction piece</b> Revision plans	Writing exercises HW: MS, ch13, part 1, Class book pgs TBD _____
9 20 Oct 09	Flash Fiction (handouts) HW: MS, Johnson, “Emergency” pg 47	HW: Class book pgs TBD _____
10 27 Oct 09	Review significance, structure, style, sincerity, originality	HW: Class book pgs TBD _____

11 3 Nov 09	Revision review	HW: Class book pgs TBD _____
12 10 Nov 09	Completing fiction piece Fiction workshop	Begin poetry (handouts) Read Miscarriage, Bitch, and First birth/First week poems
<b>POETRY</b>		
13 17 Nov 09	<b>Fiction piece due</b> Intro to poetry Poetry packets (My beloved to Did you come...)	Re-creations HW: Read rest of poetry packet
Week 14, 24 November 2009, personal FURLOUGH DAY.		
15 1 Dec 09	Re-creations & poetry workshop #1	Self-portrait revisions (pass back) Extended metaphors (songs, handouts) HW: Revise self-portrait poem
16 8 Dec 09	Experimental poetry Preparing for a public reading HW: Polish your portfolio	<b>DUE: Self-Portrait revision</b> LAST DAY OF CLASS Practice performance reading <b>DUE: Portfolio (may move to day of final)</b>
<b>FINAL EXAM Tuesday, December 15 17:15-19:30 READING</b>		

#### Important SJSU dates FALL 2009

Thursday, September 3	Last Day to Drop Courses w/o Entry on Record
Monday, September 7	Labor Day - Campus Closed (L)
Friday, September 11	Last Day to Add Courses & Register Late (A)
Monday, September 21	Enrollment Census Date (CD)
Wednesday, November 11	Veteran's Day -Campus Closed (V)
Wednesday, November 25	Classes that start at 5:00 PM or later will not meet.
Thursday, November 26	Thanksgiving Day - Campus Closed (I)
Tuesday, December 8	Last Day of Instruction – Last Day of Classes
Wednesday, December 9	Study/Conference Day (no classes or exams) (SC)
Thurs – Wed, December 10-16	Final Examinations (exams)
Thursday, December 17	Final Examinations Make-Up Day (MU)
Friday, December 18	Grade Evaluation Day (E)
Monday, December 21	Grades Due From Faculty – End of Fall Semester (G)
December 22- January 24	WINTER RECESS

**THE BLAKE SNYDER BEAT SHEET (available online at <http://www.blakesnyder.com/tools/>)**

PROJECT TITLE:

GENRE:

DATE:

1. Opening Image (1): Opposite of final image. Shows character change.
2. Theme Stated (5): What is the movie/story about?
3. Set-Up (1-10): We meet all the A-list characters
4. Catalyst (12): Call to Adventure. Something is done TO the character to motivate them.
5. Debate (12-25): No one wants to change. The character would rather not accept the Call/Catalyst
6. Break into Two (25): Protagonist decides to act, plot point. (Act 2 begins).
7. B Story (30): Help the protagonist “get” the story
8. Fun and Games (30-55): Promise of the premise. This is the pitch, best part of film.
9. Midpoint (55): False victory or false defeat. Stakes are raised. Usually a public party/celebration. Clock ticks.
10. Bad Guys Close In (55-75): We see the danger approaching. Characters usually don’t see it.
11. All Is Lost (75): Death. Protagonist is worse off than in the beginning.
12. Dark Night of the Soul (75-85): Hero can’t go back, doesn’t want to move forward but does anyway.
13. Break into Three (85): Main story and subplots merge. (Act 3 begins)
14. Finale (85-110): Protagonist prevails. World is changed.
15. Final Image (110): Opposite of opening image, must show the change.

## Understanding the THREE-ACT structure

Syd Field, author of *Screenplay* and *The Screen Writer's Workbook*, outlined a structure that most screenplays follow, meaning the standard screenplay can be divided into three parts: Setup, Confrontation, and Resolution.

**Act I** comprises the first quarter of the screenplay. (For a normal movie, Act I is 15-30 minutes.)

**Act II** comprises the next two quarters of the film. (Act II is roughly 60 minutes.)

**Act III** comprises the final quarter of the film. (Act III is 15-30 minutes.)

**"Plot Point"**--The three acts are separated by plot points, a reversal/event that thrusts the plot in a new direction. Later screenplay gurus have built on Field's theory by stating that Plot Point #1, which leads into Act II, is the moment when the hero takes on the problem.

### The Three-act Paradigm:



**Act I** (Setup) comprises the first quarter of the screenplay.

**Exposition**--The part of a story that introduces the characters, shows some of their interrelationships, and places them within a time and place. This part of the story introduces the main character, the dramatic premise, and the dramatic situation.

**Main character**--the person in the story who has a need/objective to fulfill and whose actions drive the story

**Dramatic premise**--what the story's about

**Dramatic situation**--the circumstances surrounding the action

**Inciting Incident**--an event that sets the plot of the film in motion. It occurs approximately halfway through the first act.

**Act II** (Confrontation) comprises the next two quarters of the film.

**Obstacles**--In the second act, the main character encounters obstacle after obstacle that prevent him from achieving his dramatic need.

**First Culmination**--a point just before halfway where the main character seems close to achieving his or her goal/objective. Then, everything falls apart, leading to the midpoint.

**Midpoint**--a point approximately halfway through the film where the main character reaches his/her lowest point and seems farthest from fulfilling the dramatic need or objective.

**Act III** (Resolution) comprises the final quarter of the film. (For a two hour movie, Act III would be the final 30 minutes.)

**Climax (Second Culmination)**--The point at which the plot reaches its maximum tension and the forces in opposition confront each other at a peak of physical or emotional action.

**Denouement**--The brief period of calm at the end of a film where a state of equilibrium returns.

Episode of HOUSE

#### Act 1 (10min)

Scene 1: Soldiers in a tank, IED, crash. House wakes up from this dream

Scene 2: Cutty makes House take soldier as a client. House is freaked out about "dreaming" about patient.

Inciting Incident: Soldier has tons of symptoms, Q=gulf-war syndrome or something else?

#### Act 2 (20min)

Scene 1: Patient history, obstacles = symptoms that don't add up to specific diseases.

Scene 2: Sleep study, Chase & Cameron have sex in sleep room. Foreman enters, discovers patient alone and suffering from bad breath due to vaginosis bacteria in mouth.

Scene 3: Possible cancer. House asks Wilson to biopsy salivary glands. Wilson does scan on head.

First Culmination: Diagnosis of cancerous brain tumors

Scene 4: Decision to operate on brain. During surgery, tumors have disappeared.

#### Act 3 (10min)

Scene 1: Review of symptoms, including new "paralysis". Chase discovers DU in urine. MDs argue over diagnosis. House leaves to get some sleep.

Scene 2: MDs ask patient Qs in writing b/c patient is deaf. MDs get idea. House can't sleep.

Climax: Paralysis is ascending to respiratory system. MDs stuck. Need more info. Cutty pages staff b/c patient is dying. House is bleeding. House is dreaming again.

Scene 3: Answer = genetic disease that can be corrected by surgery. Patient lives.