Spring 2016 **English 117B: Grand Course Summary of Ideas**

Introduction to the course:

Main ideas: Journeys of discovery and self-discovery, globally outward-looking mindset and its relationship to SJSU General Education Goals.

Unit 1: **Swades: We the People**

Main ideas: Bollywood vs. Hollywood, the Indian world view as influenced by the Raj, Hindu/Islam divide; political and religious dimensions of caste systems, gender (especially as related to career women and arranged marriage), family duty vs. individualism, complicated identity issues of the NRI (and expats in general), the “swadeshi” movement and the ethic of public service (with great power comes great responsibility), the relationship between education and equality, the ethical use of technology.

Unit 2: **Ridicule**

Main ideas: The challenges and opportunities inherent in depicting history in retrospect, ideas and tensions leading to the French Revolution (Rousseau’s ideas about childrearing and the Noble Savage, income inequality, *noblesse oblige* vs. parasitic gentry), pragmatic marriages vs. love matches, “wit” vs. intelligence, status and caste, rights/human value of the disabled (especially the Deaf community), challenges to the power of the Church, the rise of Science and the empirical method.

Unit 3: **The Beautiful Country, Andrew Lam essays**

Main ideas: Identity issues of the bi-racial person, the contemporary phenomenon of human trafficking, the father-son bond, the myth of the Wild West, generational divide compounded by immigration, the culturally-specific allure (and limits) of “happily-ever-after” thinking; war, diaspora, and the American Dream. More on the identity issues of the expat.

Unit 4 **Desert Flower,** film and memoir

Main ideas: The relationship between biography & film, varieties of marriage coercion, contemporary phenomenon of FGM, women’s bonds—varieties of nurturing and exploiting, public service as personal empowerment, the eternal allure of rags-to-riches tales. Religion as a part of cultural identity.

Unit 5: **Testament of Youth** (film and memoir)**, poetry of WWI**

Main ideas: The relationships among autobiography, fiction, & film; women’s education in the early 20th century, the conflict between the wife-mother role and public service, the call to duty and glory versus the pull of love and family, the value of the poetic sensibility, changing attitudes about gender roles, war, and heroism.

Unit 6: **Sweet Land, “Gravestones Made of Wheat” (short story)**

Main ideas:

Unit 7: **Man and Superman**

Main ideas: Relationship between stage drama & film, early 20th-century ideas about socialism, the New Woman and the New Man (pushing at the restrictions of gender and class definitions), Shaw’s idea of Creative Evolution, more on the conflict between self-interest and the public good, more on marriage for love or money/status.

Unit 8: **Motorcycle Diaries**, film and memoir

Main ideas: Relationships among memoir, biography, iconography, film

Extra film clips: film portraits of Columbus, Pocahontas, Gandhi, Michael Collins, Che Guevara,

Connections:

* Leaving Home—expats, immigrants, adventurers
* Many motives for marriage (some conflicting)
* Hierarchies—caste and other un-American traditions