

ENGLISH 71-8 "INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING" SPRING 2013

(This syllabus can be found online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/greensheets/2013spring/index.html>)

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Course Description and GE Objectives: English 71 "Introduction to Creative Writing" is a 3-unit lower-division course designed in accordance with the University's General Education Program Guidelines to fulfill the Core GE requirement in the "C2" Letters area of Humanities and the Arts. The course involves both the reading and writing of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. Students will produce original works of poetry - which is the use of language distinguished by its composition in meter and rhyme - as well as prose (fiction and creative nonfiction), which is the ordinary form and use of written language devoid of metrical or rhyming patterns, in response to the required texts, both historical and contemporary, that students will use as models for their work. English 71 will examine the aesthetic traditions of poetry and prose, as each genre has evolved over the past several centuries, in order to understand the historical and cultural contexts from which each genre arose. By the end of the semester, students will be able to recognize and utilize poetic forms and narrative techniques and, therefore, be better skilled and more appreciative readers of imaginative literature.

Course Student Learning Objectives (SLO): The Department of English and Comparative Literature has established the following Student Learning Objectives (SLO) for its baccalaureate courses, such as English 71: Students will demonstrate the ability to 1) read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric; 2) show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature; 3) write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject; 4) develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively; 5) articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

Required Texts:

Samuel Maio, *Dramatic Monologues: A Contemporary Anthology*
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* (Penguin Classics)
Edgar Allan Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Tales* (Signet Classics)
Ernest Hemingway, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Stories* (Scribner)

Required Writing and Relationship to Student Learning Objectives (SLO):

- 1 pre-course and 1 post-course diagnostic writing (fulfills SLO 1 and 3)
- 1 in-class examination on poetic terms and forms: Major Assignment 1 (fulfills SLO 1, 2, 3, and 5)
- 4 poems: Major Assignment 2 (fulfills SLO 1, 2, and 3)
- 2 prose pieces, totaling 12-14 pages: Major Assignment 3 (Aesthetic Statement and Story Assignment fulfills SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5; original prose piece fulfills SLO 1, 2, and 3)
- 4 critiques, 1-2 pages each, of 2 workshopped student-poems and 2 workshopped student-stories (fulfills SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

Assignment Distribution, Grading, and Due Dates:

Major Assignments: Major Assignment 1: Take-home examination on poetry terms and forms.
Major Assignment 2: 4 required poems, as follows:

Major Assignment 2 (continued):

1 English sonnet (14 lines, by definition of the form)

1 metrical and rhymed sestet-stanzas poem, a minimum of 3 stanzas (18 lines minimum)

1 metrical and rhymed quatrain-stanzas poem, a minimum of 3 stanzas (14 lines minimum)

1 poem in blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter), a minimum of 20 lines

Note: At least one of those formal/metrical poems must be a dramatic monologue.

You may not use your English sonnet for your workshop turn, but you may choose any of the remaining 3 required formal poems to workshop.

Major Assignment 3: 1 fictive story, 6-7 pages in length, modeled after one of the stories on the Course Schedule (below, except as noted) accompanied by an aesthetic statement of 1-2 pages; and 1 piece of original prose, 6-7 pages in length, which may be either fiction or creative nonfiction - defined as factual prose writing that employs the elements and techniques of fiction: narration, dialogue, etc.

Grading: All required writing will be evaluated and assigned a point value, as follows, which added together at the end of the semester will translate into your final course letter grade. Your pre-course and post-course diagnostic writings - used for program and university assessment purposes - will not be evaluated or returned, but each is worth 5 points if handed in on their respective due dates.

I. Diagnostic Writings: 10 points of course grade (pre-course=5; post-course=5)

II. Major Assignment 1: 15 points of course grade

III. Major Assignment 2: 15 points of course grade

IV. Major Assignment 3: 30 points of course grade (story assignment=15 points, 5 for the Aesthetic Statement and 10 for the modeled story; original fiction or creative nonfiction=15 points)

V. Critiques of workshop pieces: 30 points of course grade (7.5 points for each of 2 critiques of student-poems, and 7.5 for each of 2 critiques of student-stories)

The maximum values of each of the five assignments (I-V) total 100 points. The points represent percentages which graduate, in accordance with University policy, as follows: 100-98=A+; 97-94=A; 93-90=A-; 89-87=B+, 86-84=B; 83-80=B-; 79-77=C+; 76-74=C; 73-70=C-; 69-67=D+; 66-64=D; 63-60=D-; 59-0=F.

The Department of English and Comparative Literature reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A=excellent; B=above average; C=average; D=below average; F=failure. In English and Comparative Literature courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of the ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

Due Dates:

Pre-Course Diagnostic Writing due **Wednesday, January 30th**.

English Sonnet due **Wednesday, February 6th**.

Major Assignment 1 (take-home poetry examination) due **Wednesday, February 20th**.

Major Assignment 2 (poems) due **Wednesday, March 13th**.

Major Assignment 3 (prose): Aesthetic Statement and Modeled Story due in final form one week after workshop; original fiction or creative nonfiction due **Wednesday, May 8th**.

Each of the 4 critiques is due the day that the assigned student-poem or student-story is workshopped.

Post-Course Diagnostic Writing due **Wednesday, May 8th**.

Due Dates (continued):

All due dates are absolute. Failure to hand in an assignment on its due date will result in a lowered grade for that assignment. In case of a legitimate – and verifiable – emergency, please contact me **before** the assignment is due, if possible.

Course Procedures: This class is conducted, principally, in workshop format, which requires active student participation. Not all of your required writing (poems and prose) can be treated in workshop, but we will spend a good portion of the semester workshopping – that is, critiquing constructively – your work. **To this end, you must distribute to the class your poem and your aesthetic statement and modeled story – hard copies for the assigned 2 lead discussants and for me; via email to the rest of the class – at least one week before the date of your workshop turn.** Failure to distribute your work the class meeting **before** your workshop date will result in losing your turn – and a corresponding grade reduction for the assignment, as noted in the “Due Dates” section above. We will set up the workshop order during the first month of class, typically treating six students’ pieces (one by each of six students) each week of the workshop segments of the course. Before the workshops begin, I will lecture on selections of poetry and prose from the required texts as indicated by the Course Schedule below. These lectures and discussions will center on a writer’s aesthetic practice (that is, his or her particular craft or artistic technique), the **how** a work was made rather than the interpretation of its meaning – although this of course is important too. **The in-class exam (Major Assignment 1) will cover my lectures on poetry.**

Aesthetic Statement and Modeled Story (part of Major Assignment 3): The length of your modeled story will be determined in large measure by the model you choose to follow, but generally 6-7 pages is a good guideline. This modeled story, accompanied by an aesthetic statement of 1-2 pages, must reflect in manner and style one of the stories on the Course Schedule below (except as noted). Your aesthetic statement should be clear and focused, stating which author and which specific fictive piece are reflected by your story’s technique, mood, theme, plot, structure, characterizations, etc. State the general type of your story – romantic, realistic, impressionistic, etc. – and be certain to identify and articulate other essential elements of your story such as the use of humor, irony, narrative point of view, etc. that reflect similar aesthetic practices by the author and story you have chosen to model. In short, you are to explain in your aesthetic statement your story’s technique and composition in specific relation to your chosen model. An example of this assignment, based on Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour,” will be made available to you. You may **not**, therefore, choose “The Story of an Hour” on which to model your story; however, you are free to choose any other Chopin story listed on the Course Schedule.

Concerning attendance: I strongly advise your making a friend in the class from whom you can get notes for any lecture or discussion you should happen to miss and to distribute the required hard copies of your workshop piece(s) should you not be able to come to class the meeting before your turn(s). I cannot conduct a private tutorial with you, either by email or during office hours, in order to replicate what you missed by not attending class. Please do not ask me to do so. However, after you’ve caught up on the reading and thoughtfully considered your friend’s notes, feel free to ask me specific questions should you need clarification. Further, I will not act as your secretary by distributing hard copies of your workshop piece(s) in your behalf. Do not ask me to do so or leave them in my office or mailbox for distribution.

Manuscript Preparation and Procedures: 1) **All assignments must be typed in 12-point, double-spaced (and, for poems, triple-spaced between stanzas) and paginated, on standard white, 8.5 by 11 paper. You must turn in to me a hard copy of each assignment.**
**** Emailed assignments are not accepted and will be treated as failing to meet the due date. **** You must provide hard copies of your workshop poem for the entire class and hard copies of your

workshop story assignment to 2 Lead Discussants and to me; however, you may email your workshop story to the rest of the class. 2) All creative work – that comprising Major Assignments 2 and 3 – must be titled. Each work must retain its original title through subsequent revisions. 3) **The type of the work (English sonnet, blank verse, etc., fiction, nonfiction) must be stated on the first page of your manuscript beneath your name. Remember to number your pages of prose work.** 4) All poems and your original prose must be your own (that is, no translations) and written exclusively for this course. By University policy, you may not hand in any work for which you were given credit in another course, including mine should you be a former student. 5) Adherence to the fundamental tenets of literacy is expected. This includes the correct usage of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. **Failure to do so will result in a grade reduction, as per department policy, as stated above.** You must have – and be able to articulate – a viable aesthetic reason for deviating from proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

****Please do not ask for special treatment of any kind or to be exempted from any course procedure or requirement. In particular, do not ask to change the workshop schedule once it has been set or ask for an extension of an assignment’s due date.****

University Policies: You are responsible for reading the SJSU academic policies available online (<http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>). Academic Integrity Policy (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm>); Add/Drop Deadlines (http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/); Late Drop Policy (<http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy>). [Note: Monday, February 4th is the last day to **Drop** without a transcript notation, and Monday, February 11th is the last day to **Add** courses and register late.] **Campus Policy in Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act:** If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please see me as soon as possible. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with the DRC (<http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/>) to establish a record of their disability.

Some Suggestions for Creative Work: Remember that creative writing is possibility. Ideas can originate from one’s personal history, dreams, private thoughts, observations, reading, and more. Following are a few **suggestions**, if needed. Write about: 1) a particularly memorable childhood experience, evoking the mood and tone of a child while retaining an adult’s capability for descriptive language – Countee Cullen’s “Incident” and Mark Strand’s “Shooting Whales” are exemplary poems of this kind; 2) someone you have observed over the course of most of your life, a grandmother or brother for instance, and recount a memorable experience you shared with her or him; 3) a “dictionary” poem in which you use correctly 10 words previously unknown to you, making use of a thesaurus, rhyme dictionary, etc.; 4) yourself imagined as an “other,” a well-known historical or mythic figure or member of the opposite sex, using the imagined voice to evoke a significant event in the life of that “other.” *Dramatic Monologues* is replete with examples, such as “Tantalus” (p. 100).

The Center for Literary Arts (CLA) Spring 2013 Schedule: All events by visiting professional writers and poets are **free** and begin at 7:00 p.m.; it is expected that you will attend as many as possible:

Feb. 06 (Wed.) Jayne Anne Phillips Reading and Book Signing, MLK Library 225/229

Feb. 27 (Wed.) Susan Steinberg and Susan Straight Reading, MLK Library 225/229

Apr. 03 (Wed.) Dana Gioia Reading and Book Signing, Engineering 189

Apr. 04 (Thur.) Dana Gioia in Conversation with Samuel Maio, 1:00pm, Engineering 285/287

Apr. 17 (Wed.) Carmen Giménez Reading and Book Signing, MLK Library 225/229

Apr. 22 (Mon.) Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni Reading and Book Signing, Engineering 189

Apr. 24 (Wed.) Cathleen Miller Reading and Book Signing, MLK Library 225/229

For more information see <http://www.litart.org> or call the Event Hotline: (408) 924-4600.

Course Schedule:

- Jan. 23 Course overview. Preliminary discussion of poetry, meter, and the **English sonnet**: R. S. Gwynn, "Shakespearean Sonnet" and Len Krisak, "Mark Fleiss" (handout).
- 30 Discussion of **meter**. Discussion of the **English sonnet** from *Dramatic Monologues (DM)*: William Baer, "The '2' Train" (p. 6) and "Eclipse" (p. 8); Rhina P. Espaillat, "On Being Accused of Optimism After Predicting Good Weather" (p. 48); A. M. Juster, "Fugitive Son" (p. 83); Gail White, "For a Senior Killed on Prom Night" (p. 247). Discussion of the **dramatic monologue** from *DM*: Introduction (pp. xvii-xxiv). Discussion of **metrical sestets** from *DM*: Anthony Hecht, "The End of the Weekend" (pp. 74-75) and "Death Sauntering About" (p. 80); Samuel Maio, "Projections" (p. 114). W. D. Snodgrass, "April Inventory" (pp. 183-185) and "Looking" (p. 189); Timothy Steele, "Practice" (p. 198) and "Joseph" (pp. 203-204); Thomas Hardy, "Ah, Are You Digging On My Grave?" (handout). **Pre-Course Diagnostic Writing due Wednesday, January 30th.**
- Feb. 06 Discussion of **quatrains** from *DM*: X. J. Kennedy, "First Confession" (pp. 88-89) and "Hangover Mass" (p. 90); Anthony Lombardy, "Abraham" (pp. 103-104); David Middleton, "The Sunday School Lesson" (pp. 150-152); W. D. Snodgrass, "The Last Time" (p. 190); Richard Wilbur, "The Ride" (pp. 248-249) and "Cottage Street, 1953" (pp. 253-254); Newton, "Amazing Grace" (handout); Housman, "To An Athlete Dying Young" (handout). **English sonnet due Wednesday, February 6th.**
- 13 Discussion of **blank verse** from *DM*: Jim Barnes, *from* "Bombardier" (pp. 14-16); David Middleton, "A Quiet Reply" (pp. 153-156); Joseph S. Salemi, "Laocoön in Hades" (pp. 170-172); A. E. Stallings, "Hades Welcomes His Bride" (pp. 191-192); Henry Taylor, "Breakings" (p. 209); John Updike, "Dry Spell" (pp. 222-223); Derek Walcott, "Fight with the Crew" (p. 231) and "A Far Cry from Africa" (pp. 238-239).
- 20 Poetry Workshop. (8 students; 2 Lead Discussants per student)
Major Assignment 1: Poetry Examination due Wednesday, February 20th.
- 27 Poetry Workshop. (8 students; 2 Lead Discussants per student)
- March 06 Poetry Workshop. (9 students; 2 Lead Discussants per student)
- 13 Discussion of Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories*: "The Story of an Hour" (p. 217), "At the 'Cadian Ball'" (p. 178), "The Storm" (p. 267), and "The Kiss" (p. 225). Discussion of **point of view** and **opening paragraphs**. Discussion of Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Tales*: "The Black Cat" (p. 99). **Major Assignment 2 (poems) due Wednesday, March 13th.**
- 20 Discussion of Poe, *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Tales*: "The Tell-Tale Heart" (p. 172), "The Cask of Amontillado" (p. 152), and "The Balloon-Hoax" (p. 1). Discussion of Hemingway, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (p. 3) and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" (p. 121).

- 27 **Spring Break.**
- April 03 **CLA Dana Gioia Reading, 7:00pm (in lieu of class).**
- 10 Prose / Story Assignment Workshop. (6 students; 2 Lead Discussants per student)
- 17 Prose / Story Assignment Workshop. (6students; 2 Lead Discussants per student)
- 24 Prose / Story Assignment Workshop. (6 students; 2 Lead Discussants per student)
- May 01 Prose / Story Assignment Workshop. (7 students; 2 Lead Discussants per student)
- 08 **Major Assignment 3 (original prose) due Wednesday, May 8th.**
Post-Course Diagnostic Writing due Wednesday, May 8th.
- 15 **Final Exam, 5:15 - 7:30pm, Wednesday, May 15th.**