

Writing Workshop Section 01

ENGL 100W

Fall 2024 4 Unit(s) 08/21/2024 to 12/09/2024 Modified 10/23/2024

Contact Information

Instructor(s):	Dr. Meghan Gorman-DaRif
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Office Hours:	Wednesday, 10-11 via Zoom, and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	TTH 1:30-2:45 BBC 121

Course Information

This section focuses on the writing of resistance, exploring poets, playwrights, and novelists from Ireland, Africa, and the US with special attention to how authors engage in their texts with the contexts of colonialism, systems of education, cultural nationalism, and the legacies of slavery. We will begin the semester focusing on **close reading through the poetry of W.B. Yeats**, before moving into **contextual analysis through one of the plays of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o**, and finally ending with a unit on **research methods and strategies in conjunction with Yaa Gyasi's recent novel, *Homegoing***, exploring the long history and impact of the slave trade on both coasts of the Atlantic.

Course Description and Requisites

Integrated writing and literature course to develop advanced proficiency in college-level reading and writing that broadens and deepens understanding of forms and genres, audiences, and purposes of college writing developed in lower-division composition courses while developing mastery of the discourse and methods specific to the field of English literary studies. Repeated practice in close reading of literary texts, writing and revising informal and formal essays of literary analysis, and peer review of other students' writing.

Writing in the Disciplines: Satisfies the CSU Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) if passed with "C" or better.

Prerequisite(s): A3 or equivalent second semester composition course (with a grade of "C-" or better); completion of core GE; and upper division standing. Or Graduate or Postbaccalaureate level. Allowed Declared Majors: English. Other College of Humanities & Arts majors must ask for department consent.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Classroom Protocol

Late Work: Unless arrangements have been made well ahead of time (at least 2 days prior to due date), late work will be penalized by a grade reduction of 10% per day and will not be accepted after a week.

Attendance: Your success in this class will largely be dependent on your attendance and active participation in our class discussions, as well as your keeping closely up to date with our reading schedule. Staying on top of lecture and reading material will result in a better understanding of the material, which will translate into higher grades on assignments and quizzes. Please plan accordingly and develop a schedule to manage the variety of assignments for this course, including readings, blog posts, and written assignments like papers, close readings, and research summaries.

Scholastic Honesty: Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, possibly failure of the course. This standard applies to all drafts and assignments, and a report of the incident will be submitted to the appropriate Dean's office on campus.

≡ Program Information

Writing in the Disciplines (WID) courses develop students' abilities to communicate effectively in their major course of study and in their careers. With an emphasis on critical thinking, these upper-division core courses advance students' understanding of the genres, audiences, and purposes of college writing while preparing them for successful communication in their chosen professions. Completing Writing in the Disciplines with a C or better is an SJSU graduation requirement.

Writing in the Disciplines Learning Outcomes Upon successful completion of a Writing in the Disciplines course, students should be able to:

1. explain, analyze, develop, and critique ideas effectively, including ideas encountered in multiple readings and expressed in different forms of discourse;
2. organize and develop complete discipline-specific texts and other documents for both professional and general audiences, using appropriate editorial and citation standards; and
3. locate, organize, and synthesize information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, and to communicate that purpose in writing;

4. produce discipline-specific written work that demonstrates upper-division proficiency in language use, grammar, and clarity of expression.

Writing Practice: Students will write a minimum of 8000 words, at least 4000 of which must be in revised final draft form.

Course Goals

Program Learning Outcomes of the Department of English & Comparative Literature (PLO)

This course helps students in the major to achieve the BA Program Learning Outcomes set forth by the Department of English and Comparative Literature in so far as they are required to develop and 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, and/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 the 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.

To those ends we will engage in all phases of close reading, thinking, and writing processes that produce clear and purposeful critical essays that demonstrate an understanding of and illuminate for others how literature contains and conveys its effects and meanings.

Course Goals

GE Learning Outcomes (GELO) Area Z Student Learning Objectives/General Education Learning Outcomes:

1. The GE writing requirement will be met in this class by means of short writing assignments including close readings, research summaries, and weekly blog posts, as well as a series of 3 longer written assignments with an aggregate word count of 8,000+ words, as follows:

Short writing assignments

- Blog Posts: 300 words/week

- Close Reading Exercises
- Research Summaries
- Paper Worksheets

Extended writing assignments:

Paper 1: Textual Analysis 850-1000 words

Paper 2: Contextual Analysis 1000-1250 words

Paper 3: Research Paper 2,000-2500 words

1. The General Education Learning Outcomes for this course and the coursework that link to those outcomes are described below:

<p>GELO 1: Students shall be able to produce discipline- specific written work that demonstrates upper-division proficiency in: language use, grammar, and clarity of expression.</p>	<p>Essays (1-3)</p>
<p>GELO 2: Students shall be able to explain, analyze, develop, and criticize ideas effectively, including ideas encountered in multiple readings and expressed in different forms of discourse.</p>	<p>Class discussions, blog posts, close reading exercises, Final Paper prospectus, Paper Outlines, Essays (1-3)</p>
<p>GELO 3: Students shall be able to organize and develop essays and documents for both professional and general audiences.</p>	<p>Blog posts, close reading exercises, Paper Outlines, Final Paper prospectus, Essays (1-3)</p>
<p>GELO 4: Students shall be able to organize and develop essays and documents according to appropriate editorial and citation standards.</p>	<p>Research summaries, Essays (1-3)</p>

GELO 5: Students shall be able to locate, organize, and synthesize information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, and to communicate that purpose in writing.

Research summaries, Final Paper prospectus, Essays (2-3)

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate the following:

- 1) The ability to analyze, contextualize, and critically respond to the content, structure, and style of literary texts through close reading.
- 2) Use interdisciplinary research to explicate the meaning of texts, especially through their relationship to their social, political, and historical moment.
- 3) Develop rhetorically sophisticated writing out of critical reading, as appropriate to upper-division university discourse.
- 4) Knowledge and understanding of postcolonial society through literature and how literary expression has developed in historical, geographical, cultural, political, international, and global contexts.

Course Materials

Required Texts/Readings

Textbooks

The Trial of Dedan Kimathi, by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o ISBN: 9781478611318

Homegoing, by Yaa Gyasi ISBN: 9781101971062

Recommended: The Craft of Research, by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams

Library Liaison

Peggy Cabrera Email: Peggy.Cabrera@sjsu.edu Phone: 408-808-2034

Course Requirements and Assignments

Blog Posts

You will be asked to contribute to the course blog at least once a week. Your contributions will include both an original post (300 words) and a response to a classmate's post (50-100 words). **Original posts are due Sunday at midnight; responses are due Wednesday by the time class meets.** Blogs should center on the

course readings for that upcoming week, focusing on critical analysis through close reading skills and/or addressing texts' social, political, and historical contexts to produce analytical readings as discussed in class. Blog posts should make an argument about some element of the text, as well as providing support for the argument with textual evidence and your own interpretation and analysis of the evidence to support your point or idea. The audience for this will be your peers - educated readers familiar with the text - therefore, the goal is to produce a value-added piece of writing for the class that hinges on persuading your readers that your interpretation is valid (though debatable). Examples might include: a pattern or theme you have noticed developing in the text, and what you think the author is trying to reveal through it; a close reading of a particular scene in an attempt to get at its possible meaning or implications; the use of outside research to contextualize the text and make an argument about it; a consideration of how the text's conditions of production may relate to or influence its meaning, etc. These posts are designed for you to be able to practice your analytical skills, and receive substantive weekly feedback on your writing and critical thinking in preparation for our longer writing assignments, and to encourage attentive reading practices to facilitate class discussion.

Close Reading Exercises and Research Summaries

Over the course of the semester you will be asked to complete structured close reading exercises to practice and fine-tune this skill leading up to essay assignments. In addition, you will also be asked to complete several research summaries in preparation for the research component of papers 2 and 3. These summaries will include an MLA citation of the summarized source, a brief review of the venue of the text, and a concise summary of the text's argument. These assignments are intended to provide support for developing ideas for essays, as well as to provide frequent opportunities for feedback on close reading and research skills necessary for successful completion of the larger writing assignments.

Quizzes

You will be quizzed on reading, viewing, and lecture materials covered in readings or during class time. If you are regularly attending class and keeping up with readings, these should be an easy way to keep your grade up – I see them as built-in accountability to encourage you to stay on top of materials.

Participation

As you may have discovered, active participation is key to success in online learning. Active participation will help us develop a community to discuss ideas, collaborate, and discover new insights into the texts and films through the perspectives of others. Participation includes more than merely attending class, as I expect each of you to arrive prepared by having carefully read assigned readings, and to actively participate in full class discussions and smaller group discussions and in class projects and activities.

Paper 1: Textual Analysis

Length: 850-1000 words double-spaced. Use standard margins and 12-point Times New Roman.

Essay Guidelines: This essay focuses on close reading skills to develop a textual analysis of one of the poems of W.B. Yeats. First, you will select a poem, or even a shorter section of one of the longer poems, and conduct a close reading of the selected section, focusing on stylistic and formal elements of the poem. Your paper will then make an argument about the significance of the poem or excerpt: what does it

show us about a larger theme or message in Yeats' work? How might it contribute to determining meaning in relation to larger text-wide questions such as issues of cultural identity in postcolonial nations, one's relationship to history, or the complexity of choosing how to respond to oppression? **In addition to stating what you think the passage means, your thesis should explain how the author creates that meaning.** This means that your thesis should address which features of the text you'll be discussing in your paper and note their function in developing the larger meaning.

Note on **Audience**: As with the blog posts, remember your audience will be others familiar with the poem, so the idea is to add value through your specific interpretation and analysis of the poet's diction, style, use of figurative language, etc., and to persuade your readers that your interpretation is valid through the inclusion and analysis of relevant evidence from the text.

Prewriting: for this essay I highly recommend completing a number of prewriting exercises. You may want to start with several choices of passages, and for each, complete the following steps in order to determine which close reading is the strongest for developing into a paper.

- *Summarize/Paraphrase*: State the basic content of the passage/set of quotes in your own words. It is important to begin with a literal understanding of what is occurring, especially in complex texts.
- *Observe*: Look closely at the formal features of your passage, listing every one you notice. "Formal features" are choices that the author made when composing the passage. Identify the author's use of literary devices, such as allusion, repetition, and metaphor. In addition, note words that seem unusual or surprising and consider variations in syntax. What word or form would you expect instead? What is the effect created by the unusual word/structure that the expected would not convey? What details are included for emphasis, or which reveal implicit meanings about the characters or events?
- *Analyze*: Select 4-5 of the features you observed in step 2. For each literary device, image, or unusual word/structure, write a detailed analysis of why it is significant. Why do you think the author chose to include these particular images? What do the details you've observed reveal about the ideas and themes that the author explores? Be as specific as possible at this stage.
- *Argue*: Based on your observations and analysis in Steps 2 and 3, make a claim about the significance of this passage to the work as a whole. What do the author's decisions in this specific passage/set of quotations help us to understand about the larger themes and concerns of their work, such as individual vs group identity, the intersections of class, race, gender, and religion, the impact of education, etc?

Grading Criteria: For a C or above, your paper must be at least 850 words long, focus on one passage or a series of related quotes that make up a short passage, include a thesis statement, and analyze (rather than merely summarize) least three specific features of the text (literary devices, words, or images). If your paper meets these basic requirements, I will consider the following factors when assessing your grade:

-*Argument*: Does the paper consistently and effectively build an argument, rather than just summarizing the passage, articulating both what the author is doing with language, and how?

-*Organization*: Does the essay logically develop the argument articulated in the thesis statement? Does the paper effectively use between paragraphs and ideas? Does the paper introduce the topic and conclude effectively and logically?

-*Critical thought*: Does the essay include original ideas, venturing beyond the material we've covered in class? Does the paper acknowledge ambiguity and complexity in the text, rather implying the interpretation is obvious?

-*Presentation*: Is the paper free of grammatical errors and edited for style?

Paper 2: Contextual Analysis

Length: 1000-1250 words double-spaced plus a separate Works Cited list. Use standard margins and 12-point Times New Roman font.

Essay Guidelines: The purpose of this essay is to analyze how *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* responds to one specific historical issue at the time of writing (1976). The goal is not to write a comprehensive explanation of the whole play, but to focus closely on a set of passages, verbal patterns, or recurring images that can help readers understand one specific aspect of the text's relationship to its particular time and place.

Your **introduction** should briefly introduce the context you're focusing on and state your **thesis**: your central argument about how you think the author represents or implicitly responds to a specific cultural/historical/political issue. For example, do the sections you're analyzing suggest that *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* affirms or subverts depictions of the Mau Mau Uprising that might have been dominant in the mid-1970s? Do your passages indicate a challenge in the text to a common understanding or stereotype?

As you develop your **thesis**, consider these questions: what does the specific historical or cultural context you are analyzing help readers to understand about the play? Conversely, what does the play help us understand about the historical context of 1976 Kenya?

In your **body paragraphs**, provide background information to orient readers to your historical issue, and use textual analysis to explain how you think the author is representing or responding to this issue. You might choose to focus closely on one or two passages or gather a range of quotations from across the book. Your Contextual Analysis Paper will develop the same skills you've practiced in the Textual Analysis paper: analyzing the significance of the author's formal choices, such as their word choice, tone, selection of detail, and use of metaphors. For this paper, you'll be focusing on **how those formal details reveal the author's response to a specific cultural/political/social conflict**.

Research: Unlike your first paper, this assignment requires you to gather evidence from outside of your main literary text. You are required to incorporate **at least 3 credible scholarly sources**: one source that provides background information on your historical topic, one critical essay that makes an argument related to your historical topic, and a third source (could be either informational or critical). Cite all of your sources within the paper using parenthetical citations (Author #), and include a Works Cited page citing in MLA style.

To locate sources in the SJSU library system, visit the MLK Library's English and Comparative Literature research guide: <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/english>. The research guide includes contact information for the English and Comparative Literature librarian, who can help with research questions. For more guidance, please visit my office hours, the Writing Center, or the MLK Library's Research help desk.

Grading Criteria:

For a C or above, your paper must be at least 1000 words long, incorporate 3 sources, and include a debatable thesis statement about your selected text's relation to one specific historical context. If your paper meets these basic requirements, I will assess your grade based on the following criteria, listed in order of importance.

- *Argument:* Does the paper develop a compelling argument about how the author represents and responds to a specific historical context, rather than just summarizing the book and listing contextual information? Does the evidence in your body paragraphs support your argument?
- *Historical specificity:* Do you ground claims about the author's historical and cultural context in your research, rather than making assumptions? For example, do you describe specific ways in which people were constrained at particular moments or in particular circumstances under colonialism, rather than vaguely stating that people were oppressed?
- *Organization:* Does the essay develop logically? Do you use transitions and topic sentences to link your paragraphs?
- *Integrating research:* Do you effectively incorporate your three sources? Do you frame each quotation or paraphrase with an explanation of its significance? Do you attribute ideas and phrases to their sources using in-text citations?
- *Presentation:* Is your paper free of grammatical errors and edited for style?

If you have any questions about your use of source material in your paper, please ask me in advance of the deadline.

Final Paper: Research Paper

Length: 2,000-2500 words, plus a separate Works Cited page. Use standard 1-inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font.

In your final paper, you will use the close reading, contextual analysis, and research skills you've practiced in earlier papers to develop an original interpretation of *Homegoing*. You have three broad goals in this paper: (1) to develop an argument about a specific topic in the novel; (2) to support this argument with textual evidence and outside research; (3) situate your argument within an existing scholarly debate.

In your **introduction**, introduce the topic and text your paper will focus on, and concisely explain why this topic matters: why is it central to the text you're analyzing? Next, briefly summarize what other scholars have argued about your topic. You don't need to use specific quotations here; just give readers a general sense of the controversy that surrounds your topic. (Ex. "Critiques of slavery narratives, including those of X and Y argue that reproducing the violence of slavery carries with it its own harm and violence") This summary of a scholarly controversy should set the stage for your own argument. ("However, in *Homegoing*, Yaa Gyasi is able to represent the unfreedoms of slavery in the US without falling into the aforementioned pitfalls by focusing on Y rather than Z as was the case in B.) Conclude your introduction with a **thesis statement** that identifies your main argument and previews the evidence you will use to support it.

Each of your **body paragraphs** should provide support for your argument. Be sure to include a detailed analysis of the specifics of the author's language, using close reading techniques to demonstrate *what* they do, and further, *how* each passage or phrase you analyze supports your argument. The body of your paper should include an in-depth analysis of literary passages. As you present your analysis, cite the arguments that other scholars have made about your topic, and indicate which parts of their arguments you agree and disagree with. Be selective and precise when incorporating other critics' positions; the majority of each paragraph should consist of your own analysis.

Choosing a topic

Begin by brainstorming themes, issues, ideas, and questions that are personally interesting and important to you from the class overall. Some of the critical contexts we have discussed in class are the debate over reparations, The New Jim Crow, the ethical considerations of representations of slavery, and the stylistic differences in the text between the Ghanaian and American sections. You are free to engage with any of these or to select a separate topic of your own. To get started, review your class notes blog posts, and close reading exercises; browse library databases to see what other scholars have written about; and talk to me in office hours. As you pre-write, think of a few **critical questions: questions on your topic that could generate multiple possible answers from different readers**. How is Gyasi responding to the various contexts we've discussed in class? What does her novel accomplish that is different from other similar genres or texts from different contexts or locations? What kinds of complexity is the author able to grapple with and explore in their writing?

Prospectus: write up two paragraphs in response to these questions and indicating possible directions for your final paper. Please include a statement of your topic, your research question, and the evidence and research you are planning to possibly use. While we are only beginning on *Homegoing*, the first section provides many potential avenues for analysis in terms of: narrative form and genre; continuities between colonial and postcolonial history; the atlantic slave trade; diaspora and return; race across national contexts; intersections between race, nationality, class, and gender; etc. My hope is that if you establish a topic or two to focus on early on, you'll be able to note significant passages throughout *Homegoing* for the final paper and be well prepared for writing on either of the final texts when the time comes.

Research

Your essay should incorporate at 3-5 scholarly sources: book chapters or articles from peer-reviewed academic publications. (These will be the background on the scholarly debates into which you are entering – you may also need some contextual, historical, or biographical texts to supplement your research depending on your topic). To get started on research, visit the library's English research guide. For more research guidance, visit my office hours, the Writing Center, or the MLK Library's Research Help desk.

Grading Criteria

For a C or above, your paper must be at least 2000 words long, develop an argument, include original analysis of specific passages from your literary text, and incorporate at least three scholarly sources. If your paper meets these basic requirements, I will assess your grade based on the following factors in order of importance:

- *Argument*: Does your paper make an interesting and debatable claim about the text or texts you're analyzing? Does the analysis in your body paragraphs support your thesis? When responding to other critics, do you clearly indicate how their arguments relate to yours?
- *Organization*: Are your paragraphs divided by topic? Do you use topic sentences to signal how each paragraph relates to your central argument? Does the argument of the paper develop logically, and have an effective introduction and conclusion?
- *Integrating research*: Do you frame each quotation/paraphrase with an explanation of its significance? Have you attributed ideas to their sources using in-text citations?
- *Presentation*: Is your paper free of grammatical errors and edited for style?

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Final Examination or Evaluation

See Final Paper (Research) description above

✓ Grading Information

In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure. Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g., B+/B/B-), the assignment of a + or - grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

There will be a series of 3 essays that make up the majority of the grade for this class. **Should you choose to revise essays, the deadline for revisions is one week from the date you receive your paper back with comments.** There will also be weekly blog posts, and short writing assignments and reading/lecture quizzes:

Essay 2	20%	GELO 1-5, CLO 1, 2, 3
Essay 3 Final	25%	GELO 1-5, CLO 1, 2, 3
Weekly Blog Posts	10%	GELO 2, 3, 5, CLO 1, 2, 3
Short writing assignments	10%	GELO 2-5, CLO 1, 2
Quizzes	10%	GELO 1, CLO 4
Participation	5%	

A (93%-100%)	B- (80%-82.9%)	D+ (67%-69.9%)
A- (90%-92.9%)	C+ (77%-79.9%)	D (63%-66.9%)
B+ (87%-89.9%)	C (73%-76.9%)	D- (60%-62.9%)
B (83%-86.9%)	C- (70%-72.9%)	F (0%-59.9%)

This course must be passed with a C or better as an SJSU graduation requirement.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.