

Writing Fiction

ENGL 130

Fall 2025 Section 01 Hybrid 4 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/17/2025

Contact Information

Instructor: Jill Logan

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Office: Faculty Office Building 112

Phone: (408) 924-4024

Office Hours

MW 1:00-2:00

Via Zoom link on Canvas homepage or by appointment

Course Information

This course is a workshop in short stories and short fiction. We will begin the course by studying the short fiction of modern authors, taking each story apart in an effort to understand how it works and analyzing various aspects of craft. During this time you will also be working on your own fiction. The second half of the class will then be devoted to workshoping two stories from each of you, to discuss what works and what could work better in those drafts—one of which you'll revise for the end of the course.

The fiction that we'll be looking at and writing will be *character-driven* fiction that somehow seeks to *defamiliarize*. (I know, I know. "Defam-huh?" Don't worry. You'll soon be absolutely owning this term.) We'll begin our class by talking about what these terms mean, what they look like in practice, and why they're so important in the wider discussion of what we mean by *literary fiction* (and, maybe more specifically, *human literary fiction*).

We'll meet:

T Th 12:00-1:15

Clark 308

And you will also be required to attend 2 literary readings outside of class.

Course Description and Requisites

Workshop in short stories or other short fiction. Beginning the novel in individual cases. May be repeated twice for credit.

Prerequisite: ENGL 71 (or equivalent) or instructor consent.

Letter Graded

Program Information

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: 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 +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able 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, including structures of power.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: english@sjsu.edu (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

This course addresses the following Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) approved for the BA in English.

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

- SLO #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.
- SLO #3: Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and the nature of the subject.

Course Materials

The Best American Short Stories 2024

Author: Groff, Lauren, ed.

Publisher: Harper

Edition: 2024

ISBN: 978-0063275959

Availability: Campus Bookstore or most booksellers

What else will I need?

- Electronic device (laptop, desktop or tablet) with a camera and built-in microphone. [SJSU has a free equipment loan program available for students.](#)
- Reliable Wi-Fi with access to email, Canvas, and Google Docs. [See the Learn Anywhere website for current Wi-Fi options on campus.](#)
- *Optional* Ability to print manuscripts, if useful to you

Course Requirements and Assignments

What will we be required to do for this class?

- Write and workshop two new, original pieces of fiction (SLO #3)
- Write feedback letters for your classmates' stories (SLO #1, #3)
- Read assigned short stories from the textbook (SLO #1)
- Complete quizzes on the assigned readings (SLO #1)
- Fully participate in In-Class Activities (SLO #3)
- Attend two literary readings of your choice, and write a response to each (SLO #1, #3)

- Complete a substantial revision of one of your stories and write a Critical Introduction to it (serves as the final exam) (SLO #3)

Two new, original pieces of fiction

You will be required to submit two new and original pieces of fiction for workshop. We will sign up for workshop slots early in the semester. You will submit your manuscript **one week before you are scheduled to be workshopped**. This will give your peers time to thoroughly read and comment on your work. **All manuscripts should be 8-12 pages, titled, double-spaced, and should include page numbers.**

Feedback letters

You will submit a feedback letter (of at least 300 words) for each of your classmates' workshops. For each manuscript that you review, you'll need to submit a feedback letter addressed to the author. You will post these letters to Canvas, so that the writer can access them and so that I can see and grade them. They will be graded according to the rubric on Canvas.

When reviewing a manuscript:

- Read it once without marking it, while asking yourself what the author is trying to accomplish, and how the piece might improve and become what it seeks to be. Then go back and read it again, annotating it to show what works well and what doesn't work so well.
- In your feedback letter, list the elements of the manuscript that are working well. **Be specific.** Compliment parts that are effective or that elicit a particular emotional reaction from you. Then question the way in which the story proceeds. What isn't quite clear? What needs more development? What might need to be rethought?

Quizzes

To ensure that we're all fully engaged in the reading—and thereby in our discussions of story elements—you'll need to complete a Canvas quiz on the assigned readings before each due date. You may take each quiz two times, but understand that you won't necessarily have the same questions each time.

In-class Activities

These activities will vary from class to class, and I will give individual instructions on them during our class time. Some you will turn in to me; some you will not. Because the full class period is built upon these activities, no credit will be awarded **if you miss more than 10 minutes of class.**

Attend and Respond to Two Literary Readings (One-Unit Enhancement)

You are required to attend two readings by poets or prose writers presented on the SJSU campus or elsewhere. I'll post a list of possibilities on Canvas, but feel free to scour the San Jose and San Francisco socials/papers/websites/bookshops for others. You'll attend the reading and write a 1000-word response to it. Your response should include a description of the event, a summary of what was read, and your reflection on the experience.

Final Revision with Critical Introduction

In lieu of a final exam, you will turn in a substantial revision of one of your workshop submissions with a Critical Introduction. The manuscript should be annotated to direct me to the specific changes you have made. Examples of changes that might be included in a substantial revision include adding or deleting a character, changing the point of view, inserting a new scene, and altering the ending of the story. It is not enough simply to correct the spelling and grammatical errors of the first draft. To earn a high grade on the revision, you must alter the story in some significant way. Your Critical Introduction will discuss your influences for and choices with the piece, as well as any concerns you have moving forward.

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.

✓ Grading Information

How will I be graded?

Creative writing, though certainly subjective, can be evaluated according to general standards used to determine how well a piece of writing works. These include: 1) Character-driven momentum 2) Imaginative risk to defamiliarize 3) Energy and freshness of language to contribute to defamiliarization 4) Effective use of metaphor and symbolism 5) Clarity and precision of detail 6) Capacity for mixed feelings and uncertainty 7) Effective use of grammar, syntax, and rhythm 8) Naturalness and believability 9) Appropriateness of style to subject 10) Compelling audience interest

Grades will be based on the quality of writing you do, as well as the quality and constructiveness of the feedback offered during the workshops.

Final grades will weighted be as follows:

- Workshop Submission #1 20%
- Workshop Submission #2 20%
- Final Revision with Critical Introduction 20%
- Feedback Letters 15%
- In-Class Activities 10%
- Reading Quizzes 5%
- Response Papers for Literary Readings 10%

Determination of Grades

Grade	Percentage
A	93 to 100%

Grade	Percentage
A minus	90 to 92%
B plus	87 to 89 %
B	83 to 86%
B minus	80 to 82%
C plus	77 to 79%
C	73 to 76%
C minus	70 to 72%
D plus	67 to 69%
D	63 to 66%
D minus	60 to 62%

Is late work accepted?

Any work not turned in by the assigned time/date will be lowered 10% per day up to 3 days. I will not accept late work for In-Class Activities.

What if I miss my workshop?

Workshops are a key component of this class, and therefore it's critical that you attend your workshop. Missing a workshop without notifying me ahead of time will result in a 30% deduction from your story submission grade.

What is expected of me in this class and what can I expect?

Your task as a student will be to embrace the opportunities afforded to you in this class: the exploration of new reading, the discussions with your peers and me about the work at hand, the opportunity to give feedback on the works of your peers, the opportunity to receive constructive feedback on your own work,

and, of course, the opportunity to take part in a thoughtful and supportive community of writers. I hope that you'll understand how truly valuable all of these opportunities are (even if it's years from now).

Because good writing often asks us to explore the sometimes difficult and ugly truths in life, there may be times when you feel uncomfortable about something that you've read or something that you're attempting to write. Please communicate with me about these situations. The sooner I know about them, the more effective I can be in helping to find solutions to ease your discomfort.

To help foster a safe and supportive writing community, I ask that you be mindful of your words, both spoken and written. If you think something you've written might be potentially disturbing to or painful for some readers, please speak to me ahead of time so that we can discuss a trigger label for it. Also, please be mindful of issues of appropriation or of harmful tropes that might exist in your work. These issues might be difficult to gauge in your own writing, but I'm always here to discuss situations or texts with you ahead of workshop, if you have concerns.

I expect that you will treat each other and me with respect and dignity at all times, and that you will attend class regularly and give your full attention to the activities and to the work of your peers. You can expect that I will treat you as an individual, and that I will challenge you to think, experiment, probe, and create. I am happy to talk to you about any concerns or questions by email or during my office hours.

Workshop Etiquette

While we are workshopping:

- Listen to your classmates and be careful not to interrupt. It is frequently difficult to formulate responses in front of peers, and even slight interruptions can derail the thoughts of the person speaking.
- Focus your comments on the work and never on the author. It should be as if we're discussing a manuscript that arrived with no name on it.
- It is not acceptable to issue insults or to praise sarcastically. Likely, some of the work we read will not meet your exact taste. That should not prevent you from delivering a sound analysis of its strengths and weaknesses.

What about AI?

As developing fiction writers, it's important that we work on building and flexing our creative muscles by generating and growing our own ideas. But a key problem with Generative AI is that it's doing that generating for us--whether we use it to brainstorm ideas, organize ideas, or something else. I know that a lot of students rely on it for editing, feeling that it smooths out language and punctuation issues; however, it also necessarily changes language and offers style, rather than allowing for those ideas and choices to come from the author. (You!)

Another potential issue for our class is students using AI to generate feedback for their peers. Not only does this use of AI rob the student of the practice of reading critically and giving feedback, but it also raises an ethical concern when one student pastes another student's work into an LLM. Right now there are

numerous lawsuits underway involving authors whose work has been co-opted by LLMs without their permission. We don't want to put our own work or the work of our peers at risk.

Therefore, students will be asked to sign an AI Policy for the class, in which they agree that they will not use AI on their work (with the one exception of minor spell-check/grammar-check features of apps like Grammarly). Breaking the contract will result in a meeting with me to address the violation and determine corrective actions (e.g., resubmission, referral for academic integrity violation). Students with questions about the AI policy are encouraged to contact me for clarification or additional guidance.

Anything else I should know?

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the [Academic Calendars webpage](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/) at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/. The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

[University Policy S12-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

- "Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material."
 - It is suggested that the greensheet include the instructor's process for granting permission, whether in writing or orally and whether for the whole semester or on a class by class basis.
 - In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.
- "Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent."

Academic integrity

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> requires 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 [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

TurnItIn has been enabled in Canvas to check all submitted material for plagiarism. Plagiarized work will receive a "0". If you're working with borrowed material and are concerned about plagiarism issues, please see me before submitting the piece so that we can discuss the specifics of your situation.

Note: In this policy you will notice that it is considered "cheating" to submit previously graded work for a grade in another class, as well as to submit the same work simultaneously in two or more classes. **This means that you cannot submit a piece of writing for this class that you have also submitted for another SJSU class.** Any such submissions will receive a "0" and I will take the appropriate administrative actions. Please talk to me if you have any questions about this policy.

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](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) at http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/aec) (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

Accommodation to Students' Religious Holidays

San José State University shall provide accommodation on any graded class work or activities for students wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require students to be absent from class. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor, in writing, about such holidays before the add deadline at the start of each semester. If such holidays occur before the add deadline, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. It is the responsibility of the instructor to make every reasonable effort to honor the student request without penalty, and of the student to make up the work missed. See [University Policy S14-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S14-7.pdf>.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the [Academic Success Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc/> located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd 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 DV and HD digital camcorders; digital still cameras; video, slide and overhead projectors; DVD, CD, and audiotape players; sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Counseling Services

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7th Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling>.

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.

Course Schedule

When	Topic	Notes
Thursday 8/21	Welcome	Read: Syllabus In-Class Activity: Introductions, Discuss Policies and Syllabus
Tuesday 8/26	Defamiliarization	Read: Allegra Hyde's "Democracy in America" (146-167) In-Class Activity: Discuss Defamiliarization with exercise
Thursday 8/28	Conflict	Read: Taisia Kitaiskai's "Engelond" (168-187) and Susan Shepherd's "Baboons" (281-297) Due before class: Quiz 1 (on Canvas) In-Class Activity: Discuss <i>Conflict</i> with exercise
Tuesday 9/2	Narrative Voice	Read: Selena Gambrell Anderson's "Jewel of the Gulf of Mexico" (8-23) and Steven Duong's "Dorchester" (119-129) Due before class: Quiz 2 (on Canvas) In-Class Activity: Discuss <i>Narrative Voice</i> with exercise
Thursday 9/4	Point of View/Perspective	Read: Jamel Brinkley's "Blessed Deliverance" (38-53) and Azareen Van Der Vliet Oloomi's "Extinction" (298-311) Due before class: Quiz 3 (on Canvas) In-Class Activity: Discuss <i>Point of View/Perspective</i> with exercise

When	Topic	Notes
Tuesday 9/9	Tension	Read: Katherine Damm's "The Happiest Day of Your Life" (81-99) and Molly Dektar's "The Bed & Breakfast" (100-118) Due before class: Quiz 4 (on Canvas) In-Class Activity: Discuss <i>Tension</i> with exercise
Thursday 9/11	Topicality	Read: Madeline Ffitch's "Seeing Through Maps" (130-145) and Suzanne Wang's "Mall of America" (312-333) Due before class: Quiz 5 (on Canvas) In-Class Activity: Discuss <i>Topicality</i> with exercise
Tuesday 9/16		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Thursday 9/18		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Tuesday 9/23		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Thursday 9/25		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Tuesday 9/30		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Thursday 10/2		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Tuesday 10/7		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Thursday 10/9		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Tuesday 10/14		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Thursday 10/16		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Tuesday, 10/21		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops

When	Topic	Notes
Thursday 10/23		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Tuesday 10/28		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Thursday 10/30		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Tuesday 11/4		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Thursday 11/6		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Tuesday 11/11		NO CLASS: VETERANS DAY
Thursday 11/13		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Tuesday 11/18		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops/Discuss Final Revisions and Critical Introductions
Thursday 11/20		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops/Discuss Final Revisions and Critical Introductions
Tuesday 11/25		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Thursday 11/27		NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING
Tuesday 12/2		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops
Thursday 12/4		In-Class Activity: Student Workshops Due by 11:59 PM: Response Papers for Literary Readings
Tuesday 12/16		Due: Story revision with Critical Introduction