

Writing Fiction Section 02

ENGL 130

Fall 2023 4 Unit(s) 08/21/2023 to 12/06/2023 Modified 08/21/2023

For the first few weeks we will be reading and discussing published stories from 2022 edition of *Best American Short Stories* and the 2023 issue of *Reed* (issue #156), the campus literary journal, as well as PDFs posted on Canvas. I will make presentations on elements of the craft – character, conflict, point of view, etc. The goal is to practice reading like writers rather than critics (there is a difference). We'll also do some writing exercises to get your ideas flowing.

Next we will discuss your stories. Each of you will write two stories over the course of the semester. In this course we will be reading and writing character-driven fiction. Character-driven fiction isn't necessarily realistic, but it does focus on people who feel real to the reader, and whose situations derive from both external and internal conflict. Don't worry if you have never written character-driven fiction before. The assigned readings provide a wide variety of examples for you to study.

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

* Classroom Protocols

In a workshop, writers must feel safe sharing their work with the group. Please keep your critiques confined to the work, not the author. Hostile, threatening, or personal criticism will not be tolerated. If you feel threatened by a classmate, please bring the issue to my attention so I can address it promptly. Students who violate this protocol will be dropped from the course.

Workshop Procedures

After the drop date, I will pass around a sign-up sheet where each of you will choose two dates to hand in your stories. On each of those dates, you will upload a story in PDF format to the Workshop Submissions discussion board on Canvas. Your story must be double-spaced, single-sided, and include page numbers.

Your classmates and instructor will download your story, make comments on the manuscript, and type up a half page (minimum) of comments, which they will post as replies to your story on the discussion board.

At the next class meeting, the instructor will lead a discussion of your story. We'll do two or three stories per class, so your story will get about twenty minutes of attention.

Critiques will be graded on the quality and quantity of the feedback they provide. What should you cover in your comments? You have two responsibilities. The first is to indicate what you got out of the story. What's your interpretation? If this were in a textbook, what would you say about it? This helps the writer understand what came across and what didn't. The second responsibility is to suggest avenues for improvement. How can the writer make this story better? Often this requires putting yourself in the writer's shoes. Remember that you can help a fellow writer with thoughtful commentary even if you would not have chosen the same topic or style in your own work.

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 nature of the subject.

Course Materials

Textbooks

- Greer, Andrew Sean and Heidi Pitlor, eds. *The Best American Short Stories 2022*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020. (ebook or print)
- *Reed Magazine 2023 Edition* (Issue 156). San Jose State University literary journal. (ebook or print – purchase ebook for \$7.00 at www.reedmag.org)
- PDF handouts on Canvas (find under “Files”)

Course Requirements and Assignments

- Two new, original pieces of fiction (SLO #3).
- Written and verbal comments on your classmates' stories (SLO #1, #3).
- Reading assignments from the textbooks. I will quiz on these (SLO #1).
- A substantial revision of one of your stories (serves as the final exam) (SLO #3).
- Brief in-class and take-home writing exercises (SLO #3).
- Attendance at two literary readings of your choice, and a written response to each (SLO #1, #3).

Grading Information

Late assignments will not be accepted without the instructor's prior approval.

Determination of Grades

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined by the SJSU Catalog (Grades-Letter Grading). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

A+/A/A- = excellent; B+/B/B- = above average; C+/C/C- = average; D+/D/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.

One-Unit Enhancement: Attendance at Literary Readings

Because this is a 4-unit course, students can expect to spend a minimum of twelve hours per week preparing for and attending classes and completing course assignments. This course will have integrated into the syllabus the following 1-unit enhancement:

- International Education / Cultural Enrichment

You are required to attend **two readings** by poets or prose writers. SJSU's Center for Literary Arts (<https://www.clasanjose.org/>) has a full schedule this semester. I recommend you attend those events, but you may also choose to write your responses to readings by other authors.

Here are a few readings taking place on campus this semester:

Thurs, 9/7/2023, 7pm: Memoirist **Hua Hsu** at the Hammer Theater

Weds. 9/13/2023, 12pm: Novelist **Adib Khorram** at the Student Union Theater

Thurs, 10/26/2023, 7pm: Novelist and SJSU alumna **K-Ming Chang** at the Hammer Theater

Thurs, 11/16, 2023, 12pm (Attendance Required), Novelist **Colin Winnette** at the Steinbeck Center

If you can't make it to any of these readings, contact your local bookstore or check listings in the Metro newspaper. I will let you know about additional campus readings as I hear about them.

After attending each reading, you will write a **1000-word personal response to each**. You may respond to any aspect of the reading, for example the speaker, the venue, the material performed, or the Q&A with the audience. Explore how your attendance at the reading changed the way you think about creative writing as an art form or as a profession. Your response papers are due by the end of the semester.

Criteria

Creative writing, though subject to the instructor's subjectivity, can be evaluated according to general standards used to determine how well a piece of writing works. These include: 1) Textual and/or technical competence and eloquence. 2) Imaginative risk. 3) Energy and freshness of language. 4) Effective use of metaphor and other forms of figurative language. 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 and quantity of writing you do as well as the quality and constructiveness of the criticism offered during the workshops. Some of you may have some natural ability writing fiction, and some may not. Think of talent as extra credit – it can make up for a blown quiz, but it won't get you an A if you neglect the other class requirements.

Breakdown

Final grades will be the product of the following factors:

- Workshop Submission #1, 20%
- Workshop Submission #2, 20%
- Final Revision, 20%
- Responses to Classmates' Fiction, 15%
- Class Participation, including Reading Quizzes, 15%
- Response Papers for Literary Readings/Performances, 10%

For extra credit you can attend at up to two more literary readings (and write responses). These must be turned in by the last day of class.

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

This class meets every Tuesday and Thursday, starting on Tues, Aug 22. Class will not be held Thurs, Nov 23 (Thanksgiving) or Tues, Nov 28 (instructor will be at a conference). The last day of class is Tues, Dec 5. In lieu of a final exam, you will submit your final revision on Canvas by Thursday, Dec 14, at 5pm.

Reading assignments meet SLO #1, writing assignments SLO #3.

Note: This schedule is subject to change. Announcements will be made in class and posted on Canvas.

BASS = Best American Short Stories

Reed = Reed Magazine

PDF on Canvas = find under "Files" on the Canvas site for this course

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
8/22/2023	Introduction & still write
8/24/2023	Topic: Character Readings: Elizabeth McCracken, "The Souvenir Museum" (<i>BASS</i>) George Saunders, "The Semplica-Girl Diaries" (PDF on Canvas)
8/29/2023	Topic: Character Readings: Bryan Washington, "Foster" (<i>BASS</i>) Kristen Roupenian, "Cat Person" (PDF on Canvas)
8/31/2023	Topic: Conflict Readings: Lauren Groff, "The Wind" (<i>BASS</i>) Gish Jen, "Detective Dog" (<i>BASS</i>)
9/5/2023	Topic: Conflict Readings: Erin Somers, "Ten Year Affair" (<i>BASS</i>) Kirstin Valdez Quade "The Five Wounds" (PDF on Canvas)
9/7/2023	Topic: Setting Readings: Alice McDermott, "Post" (<i>BASS</i>) Kim Coleman Foote, "Man of the House" (<i>BASS</i>)

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
9/12/2023	<p>Topic: Point of View</p> <p>Readings: Okwiri Oduor, "Mbiu Dash" (<i>BASS</i>)</p>
9/14/2023	<p>Topic: Voice</p> <p>Readings: Kevin Moffett, "Bears Among the Living" (<i>BASS</i>)</p> <p>Hector Tobar, "The Sins of Others" (<i>BASS</i>)</p>
9/19/2023	<p>Topic: Speculative Fiction</p> <p>Readings: Yolanca Delgado, "The Little Widow from the Capital" (<i>BASS</i>)</p> <p>Gina Ochsner, "Soon the Light" (<i>BASS</i>)</p> <p>Haruki Murakami, "A Shinagawa Monkey" (PDF on Canvas)</p>
9/21/2023	<p>Topic: Structure</p> <p>Readings: Meghan Louise Wagner, "Elephant Seals" (<i>BASS</i>)</p>
9/26/2023	<p>Topic: Metaphor and Symbolism</p> <p>Readings: Kenan Orhan, "The Beyoglu Municipality" (<i>BASS</i>)</p> <p>Sanjena Sathian, "Mr Ashok's Monument" (<i>BASS</i>)</p>
9/28/2023	Student Workshops
10/3/2023	Student Workshops
10/5/2023	Student Workshops
10/10/2023	Student Workshops
10/12/2023	Student Workshops
10/17/2023	Student Workshops

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
10/19/2023	Student Workshops
10/24/2023	Student Workshops
10/26/2023	Student Workshops
10/31/2023	Student Workshops
11/2/2023	Student Workshops
11/7/2023	Student Workshops
11/9/2023	Student Workshops
11/14/2023	Student Workshops
11/16/2023	Center for Literary Arts Event (Attendance Required): Colin Winnette in Steinbeck Center, MLK Library Room 590
11/21/2023	Student Workshops
11/23/2023	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)
11/28/2023	NO CLASS (instructor at an academic conference)
12/5/2023	Final Class Meeting
12/14/2023	Final Revisions and Responses to Literary Readings due on Canvas