

## Spring 2025 Newsletter

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### Dr. Andreas P. Bassett Brings Passion and Fresh Perspectives to SJSU's English Department

*Amirah Muhammad and Brandon Tran*

San José State University's Department of English is proud to welcome its new English professor, Dr. Andreas P. Bassett. A 2025 graduate from the University of Washington (UW) and self-proclaimed coffee enthusiast, Dr. Bassett is ready to brew up some flavor in his upcoming courses: ENGL 50 (Early Modern Literature), ENGL 145 (Shakespeare and Performance), and SJSU's newest addition, ENGL 162 (American Indigenous Literature).



*Dr. Andreas P. Bassett*

Growing up in Osaka, Japan, but frequently visiting family in the US until he was 18, Dr. Bassett's journey into higher education began at Portland Community College. After transferring

to and graduating from Portland State University (PSU), he received his B.A. in English, *magna cum laude*. With its similarity to Portland State and UW, Dr. Bassett found himself attracted to SJSU and the community that its home city fosters. Before settling on English, he experimented with a number of majors, but it wasn't until he took a Shakespeare class as a junior at PSU that he realized what he needed to do. "It was purely accidental," says Dr. Bassett. This experience marked the start of his journey in pursuing a career in English and comparative literature. Now a member of several literary organizations, like the Renaissance Society of America, Dr. Bassett enjoys engaging in literary research, and these memberships give him access to data on what kinds of Early Modern stories people enjoy. Dr. Bassett found this critical for tying in new material to his classes. "Being a part of these memberships and conferences are a way to stay connected," he says. "It's a way to continue to network, and it's [a] way to get to know scholars and graduate students."

By adding some lesser-known plays to his ENGL 145 curriculum, Dr. Bassett hopes to spark his student's interest. "When these plays were printed, they would like to put Shakespeare on the title page, but they weren't by Shakespeare," says Dr. Bassett. He says that tying in these pieces of history as to why some of these plays were published can offer students a new perspective on the prolific author's work. For example, one of Dr. Bassett's favorites, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, was a spinoff play that offers similar themes to Shakespeare's well-known canon: "[I]t was a popular 'nocturnal' play, just like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, that takes on the plot of a young couple in love struggling to get married," says Dr. Bassett.

SJSU students can look forward to an engaging and thought-provoking semester with Dr. Bassett, where history, literature, and contemporary relevance come together in unexpected and exciting ways. Dr. Bassett is also introducing a

new course in American Indigenous literature. In this course, students will study Native American literature from California and across the Pacific Northwest, focusing on local stories to help bring light to different aspects of Native American history and culture. Although other ethnic-centered English literature courses cover some Native American literature, this course is perfect for students who want to learn more.

Dr. Bassett's research on American Indigenous literature takes us on a ride on and off the reservation with how American Indigenous people's lives have developed in natural and urban environments. He incorporates authors like Tommy Pico, who wrote a collection of poems about living in New York and the struggles that come with being stereotyped as a Native American, and local author Tommy Orange. He intends to make the class multimodal by featuring the film *Smoke Signals* in addition to reading Sherman Alexie's collections. Dr. Bassett is not just curating a syllabus—he's crafting an experience that will immerse students in the complexity of Indigenous storytelling. If you're ready to engage with narratives that push boundaries and stereotypes, then this isn't a class you want to miss!

Dr. Bassett is moving to San José over the summer and starts teaching in the fall. Be sure to give him a warm SJSU welcome when you see him!

## **Text as Image: The Importance of Creative Collaboration**

*Yasmeen Farid and Lee Covino*

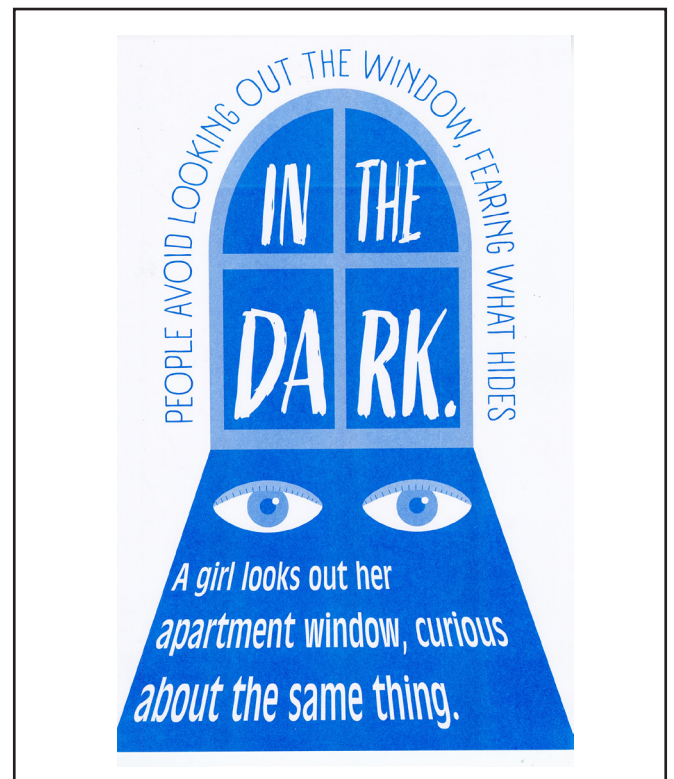
Last year, Dr. Brook McClurg had an idea: what if he worked with fellow professor and friend, Carla Fisher Schwartz, to design a collaborative project that combined nonfiction and printmaking in a creative, interdisciplinary way? How could they put their students' creations in conversation with one another? What could they learn from this joint effort? McClurg, professor of ENGL 135 (Writing Nonfiction), and Schwartz, professor of ART 175

(Digital Printmaking), eventually landed on what has been dubbed the “Text as Image” project.

The project begins in Professor McClurg’s classroom where his students compose a selection of words from flash prose—ranging from just one word to a full sentence—that they would like to see come to life. Once these are ready, the class hands off their text prompts to Professor Schwartz and her art students, who translate the English students’ words into text-based designs. Professor McClurg notes that the process of working between disciplines can help his students become better writers: “The goal for the English students is to integrate concision into their writing process. When you can only use a few words, you have to be careful about what and where they are. Doing this collaboration teaches them to write punchy sentences full of experience and meaning that connects with audiences in a direct way.” This kind of communal work forces students to recognize the gap between how they imagine their writing and how others might interpret it. “Once your writing is out there, it changes. The people who engage with your work shape it through their interpretations of it,” says Professor McClurg.

This is why both professors keep their students from contacting one another, at least until after their projects have been completed. The lack of communication between the writer and artist is part of what makes it work, even if their collaboration is unconventional. The professors agree that the lack of contact allows each artist to remain objective in their interpretation of the English student’s text. “We actually prefer to keep no contact between the students. With no contact, the artists have to work solely with what they are given without the writer’s influence over what they think the final design should look like,” says Professor Schwartz. By maintaining that gap throughout the project, the artists create designs that provide a new way of thinking about the initial snippet of text.

Since interpreting art is subjective, Professor McClurg emphasizes that the project is not about translating one media into another as closely as possible but instead about highlighting the value of working with other artists to create something new. “There is no one right way to ‘translate’ text into image,” he says. “I want to make my students conscious of what words they want to use and how to frame them despite the narrow parameters of the project.” Professor McClurg believes this kind of multimodal teamwork teaches both the writers and artists to approach their work carefully and recognize the subjectivity in interpretation. In some cases, this project is the students’ first chance to collaborate with other artists and see their work as part of a bigger picture, so it’s important they are not under the impression that there is a right and wrong way of creating art.



Words by Itzel Acevedo-Adame, Art by Seleyna Velasquez

As hoped, Professor McClurg and Professor Schwartz have seen their students strengthen their editing and designing skills through this project. With two years of “Text as Image” projects under their belt, each professor strives to make it an annual tradition. Moving forward, Professor Schwartz hopes they can “scale it up” by hosting

a gallery to showcase the students' final products: "They should get to see their work on display and feel proud of themselves." Both professors hope this project will inspire collaborative work between other disciplines, who might join them in the pursuit of expanding student's minds and creative abilities. For now, students from both classes can take home a print of their final design and can proudly display it for themselves.

## Center for Literary Arts Wraps Up '24–25 Season Highlighting Diverse Experiences in America

*Trina Nguyen and Ruth Hutchins*

For over three decades, San José State University's Center for Literary Arts (CLA) has connected our local San José community with diverse, contemporary writers. Through its Reading Series, the CLA invites acclaimed authors to speak live at the Hammer Theatre, sharing their craft and insights.



*Dr. Selena Anderson*

This year's selections have centered around the experience of being "other" in America. Intentional? CLA Director Dr. Selena Anderson, who has held the position since 2018, says it is. "It is a recurring theme in the series. Ever since I was a young reader, it was something I was looking for, but it wasn't taught as widely in school. Stories that privileged a black subjectivity and centered people of color—or really anyone escaping oppression

through art—all that was outside of the canon, and the absence created such a hole. But it made me into a more voracious reader though. And when I got this role, it gave me a stage to show what I know."

The CLA chooses topics that align with their mission statement and reflect what's current in America and the Bay Area: "There is such an incredibly diverse population in this area. It's both a powerful and very normal thing to do, to connect folks with books that reflect their experiences," says Dr. Anderson.

During a reading, the featured author spends the first fifteen minutes sharing excerpts from their most recent work, which is followed by an onstage interview with an expert. "We've had local authors, magazine editors, and experts conduct the interviews," Dr. Anderson explains. "It has sparked some very interesting conversations. The best ones are when it feels like you're eavesdropping. At the end when we open the question asking to the audience."

Most speakers also share at another event on the same day. At the Craft Lecture Series, held in the afternoons at the Steinbeck Center, students can engage with invited authors in a smaller, more intimate setting. As Dr. Anderson puts it, "That's your chance to meet your literary hero."

This year's Reading Series kicked off in November with a doubleheader event featuring Jaime Cortez, who read from his semi-autobiographical collection of short stories, *Gordo*, and Dino Enrique Piacentini, who read from his debut novel, *Invasion of the Daffodils*. "Sometimes we have two authors that come together," says Dr. Anderson. "It works especially well when their books are maybe on a similar topic or in conversation in some way—but one is a story collection and the other is a novel. That's what happened there. There were two relatively new books, really exciting debuts, and they both had a connection to Northern California."

In fact, many of the speakers featured at CLA events are from California. For example, Native American writer Tommy Orange, who was December's speaker, hails from Oakland. He read from his new bestselling novel, *In Wandering Stars*, which is about epigenetic and generational trauma stemming from the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864. "He's brilliant and real, and he reads a lot. He inspires really heartfelt questions from students," Dr. Anderson says.



Dino Enrique Piacentini (right)  
and Jaime Cortez

Carvell Wallace, who spoke in February, is also from Oakland. He read from his debut memoir, *Another Word For Love*, which spoke of his own experiences growing up black and queer in America. "I saw an interview [with Carvell Wallace] and I loved it. I thought he would be so great at SJSU, and he was," Dr. Anderson says. "His book really spoke to me. It's a memoir about his relationship with his mom—about understanding what she was up against when she was raising him, and it's also about forgiveness. And of course love. His prose is really beautiful."

But Dr. Anderson isn't shy about who to approach as long as they're a great fit for the community. March's speaker, Lauren Groff, flew in from Florida. Groff read from her new thriller/adventure novel, *The Vaster Wilds*, which is about a young servant girl who escapes from a colonial settlement and has to learn to survive in a new world. "If you've ever read *Hatchet* or *Island of the Blue Dolphins* or *My Side of the Mountain*—it's very

much that but for adults. Adventure stories don't often feature a female protagonist, you know. Groff is also telling a story about the colonies that I for one hadn't heard before," says Dr. Anderson. "It was not the one that I learned in school—the cannibalism part."

In April, Natalie Diaz, a MacArthur "Genius" Foundation Fellow, read from her Pulitzer Prize winning poetry collection, *Postcolonial Love Poem*, billed as "an anthem of desire against erasure." She writes on how the bodies of the earth, language, family, enemy, and friend are to be held and loved. And the last speaker of the year, Ted Chiang, read from *Exhalation*, his most recent collection of short science fiction and fantasy stories, which tackles some of humanity's oldest questions in a way that only he could imagine.

"You have not met your favorite author yet, but you can!" says Dr. Anderson. "Come to our events readings. They're free, 6:30 P.M. at the Hammer Theatre. All are welcome."

For more information on future events, visit [www.clasanjose.org](http://www.clasanjose.org). Recordings of the previous Reading Series events can be found at [www.youtube.com/@centerforliteraryartsofsan104](https://www.youtube.com/@centerforliteraryartsofsan104).

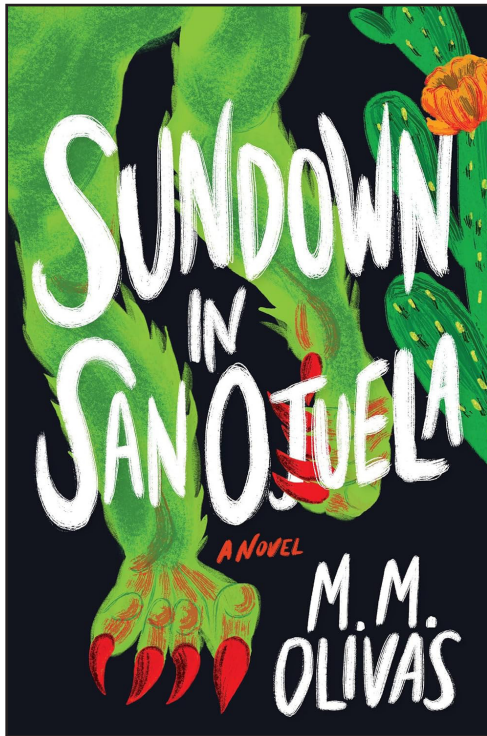
## Mara M. Olivas Takes the Spotlight with San José State University's 2024 M.F.A. Publication

*Stefan Pantic and Varun Nathamuni*

The Department of English and Comparative Literature congratulates Creative Writing M.F.A. graduate Mara M. Olivas on the publication of her latest work, *Sundown in San Ojuela*, published by Lanternfish Press in November 2024. "In just two years of the program, she's churned out three books' worth of materials; she's a very prolific writer," says Nicholas Taylor, director of the M.F.A. (Master of Fine Arts) program. While at SJSU, Olivas worked on a number of short stories;

the aforementioned *Sundown in San Ojuela* earned the James Phelan Award for Fiction.

The English department's M.F.A. is a terminal degree that enables its graduates to teach at a 4-year university and allows students to choose two separate creative writing fields among fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and screenplay writing, making it different from other M.F.A. programs nationwide. The program has graduated many successful writers and attracts students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, helping them on their publishing journeys.



*Sundown in San Ojuela* (Cover)

*Sundown in San Ojuela* is a supernatural western/mystery novel set in Southern California that follows a young woman returning to her hometown after seeing the ghost of her dead aunt, tracking her process of trying to uncover the mystery at hand. In featuring themes of generational trauma, border control violence, colonization, and racism, Olivas wanted to use fictional and supernatural elements to present the real-world issues of the Mayan cultural identity in hopes of spreading more awareness of the world's problems—particularly the struggles of the Latinx community and the discrimination against

American people of color. Olivas is inspired by growing up and living in Riverside, California, drawing upon much time spent in the desert, her culture, and her own experiences with her family. Olivas's foremost goal in this novel was to speak to queer Latinx people and the challenges they face, especially as many of them struggle to find their own voice.

Olivas started her writing journey in high school, where she fell in love with fiction, particularly graphic novels and horror films, which heavily influenced *Sundown in San Ojuela*. After enrolling in UC Riverside's Creative Writing program, Olivas was introduced to authors she had not previously known, particularly the works of Octavia Butler and Ursula K. Le Guin, which largely inspired her writing. Most notably, Olivas took classes with Nalo Hopkinson, author of the books *Brown Girl in the Ring* and *Midnight Robber*, who directly taught Olivas how to find her "author's voice."

Olivas was further able to hone her writing skills and connect with the publishing industry through the Clarion Workshop in December of 2022, a writing workshop for science fiction and speculative fiction authors that has been around since the 1960s. Before writing her recent novel, she published a number of short stories in a wide variety of publications. *Sundown in San Ojuela* was originally written as her senior thesis, then later sold to publishers in 2023, though it was originally delayed due to COVID-19.

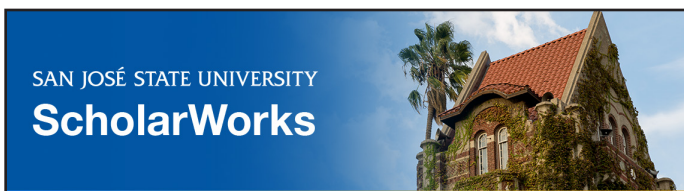
When dealing with writer's block, Olivas usually takes a self-care day or week off, has her friends look at her writing, or simply avoids the topic altogether until inspiration strikes. "The main difference between a professional writer and a novice writer is endurance and writing something even when it's bad—especially when it's bad. Any talent is a learning experience, and a professional knows that they have to work at it until they can finally go the distance," says Olivas.

Despite the many challenges young authors face, Olivas encourages upcoming writers to keep writing, because no one will ever know if success is right around the corner. With her latest work, she has the potential to inspire a generation of future writers whose stories have not been told.

Visit Mara M. Olivas's website at: <https://olivasthewriter.wtf/>. For more information regarding the M.F.A. program, check out the website: <https://www.sjsu.edu/english/graduate/MFA/>.

## **SJSU's University Scholar Series Latest Guest Speaker: Dr. Allison M. Johnson**

*Jesus Gomez and Maricela Padilla*



*SJSU Scholarworks digital banner*

On December 7, 1877, William S. Bergin was sentenced to death by hanging after shooting a hotel employee. Some blamed his family's history of mental illness, others his drinking. However, most pointed to his missing right arm for his changed demeanor. At only 15 years old, Bergin fought in the Civil War and lost his right arm, permanently disabling him. His story is just one of many that Dr. Allison M. Johnson covered in her recent talk, "The Post-War Lives of Amputee Civil War Veterans," as part of San José State University's (SJSU) Spring 2025 University Scholar Series, in which she shared her research on the lives of amputee Civil War veterans whose voices William Oland Bourne captured in his left-handed penmanship contests.

The University Scholar Series is co-sponsored by the Office of the Provost, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, and the Division of Research and Innovation here at SJSU, and gives SJSU

faculty members the opportunity to share their research. The series, hosted by Provost Vincent J. Del Casino, Jr., usually has three speakers each semester, and this semester Dr. Johnson was chosen to be the first speaker. Each speaker's presentation is open to all SJSU students, faculty, and staff, as well as members of the public.

Honored to be selected as a speaker and feeling supported throughout the process, Dr. Johnson enjoyed sharing the work she's dedicated herself to and enthusiastically received questions from presentation attendees. "Questions meant that people were paying attention or interested in what was going on, so that's really nice," says Dr. Johnson.

During her talk, Dr. Johnson explained that the left-handed penmanship contests instructed each contestant to turn in their best-written personal statements using their left hand. Bourne, the orchestrator of the contests, hoped that the left-handed penmanship contests would inspire and show veteran men who had lost their right arms that they could reintegrate themselves into society, even after losing their dominant arm. According to Dr. Johnson, only 2% of the population was left-handed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to stigma, which only added to these veterans' burden as they navigated the then-current misconceptions surrounding disability. Moreover, men's masculinity at that time was primarily defined by their ability to provide for their families, leaving disabled veterans to redefine their masculinity in light of their changed lives.

Beyond inspiring these disabled veteran men, Bourne also hoped to publish their personal statements, adding their collective voices as a literary contribution to the history of the Civil War. Though mainstream publication eluded him, the project united three-hundred-plus voices of amputee Civil War veterans and provided invaluable insight into how these veterans viewed and responded to the war. Thomas A. Perrine is one such author. His poem, *Sinister Manuscript*,

explored the disenfranchisement he faced as a disabled man, drawing parallels to the racial discrimination of the time.

Dr. Johnson's research into Bourne's contests and the veteran men who competed in them has become her life's work. She's been researching these men since she was a graduate student, and she considers the original documents amazing resources that highlight the kind of voices that often go unheard in textbooks. Fortunately, Dr. Johnson was able to bring them to life. "I wrote about them in my dissertation," she says, "my dissertation became a book, and they were a chapter in my book. Fortunately, I was then able to publish a collection of their writings." Dr. Johnson has authored two books, *The Scars We Carve: Bodies and Wounds in Civil War Print Culture* (LSU 2019) and *The Left-Armed Corps: Writings by Amputee Civil War Veterans* (LSU 2022), which her talk is based on.

Dr. Johnson especially enjoys the research aspect of her work, noting how rewarding it is to track down and learn more about amputee Civil War veterans' lives following their war-inflicted injuries. When writing her book, Dr. Johnson chose not to correct the men's grammatical errors, as her goal was to present their writings as authentically as possible for the reader to get a sense of their voices. Her editing process began during the pandemic and spanned over the course of two years.

As part of her ongoing research, Dr. Johnson started looking through pension records last summer to find out more about these veterans. Many of the records show that these men continued to provide for their families by writing to the Bureau of Pensions, along with the money they made from their regular jobs. The Bureau of Pensions, established during the war, provided support for disabled veterans, and the amount of money they were given monthly was determined by their injuries. Men who lost an arm in war were initially given \$8 monthly. Whenever new disability legislation was passed, veterans would

write to pension agents, advocating for themselves to receive the increased dollar amount for their injuries.

Dr. Johnson plans to continue digging further into the pension records. As for her future plans for her work on left-armed veterans, she explains, "Rather than doing a second volume, I am now shifting into doing a longitudinal study, tracking their lives over time and seeing what conclusions I can come to about the post-war lives of amputee veterans."

To watch Dr. Allison M. Johnson's speech or see who will be the next speaker, please visit <https://library.sjsu.edu/faculty-services/university-scholar-series>.

To access University Scholar Series presentations from the Fall 2010 semester onwards, please visit <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/uss/>.

## **CSU x Open AI: Artificial Intelligence Integration in English Education**

*Jaideep Chahal and Eric Diaz*

On February 4, 2025, the California State University (CSU) system announced an AI initiative to bring AI technology "to 500,000 students and faculty." The sweeping initiative claims that by bringing AI into education, the CSU will be able to free professors from administrative tasks and drive better educational outcomes. San José State University (SJSU) has spearheaded the new AI initiative and established its own AI advisory committee. In just the span of a few months, SJSU was able to launch its first "AI Librarian" and establish strategic partnerships with NVIDIA and the City of San José.

AI integration is particularly attractive to SJSU's administrators who see its potential to cut down on costs, expand access to education, and provide personalized learning. Although professors



welcome reduced administrative burdens, many remain cautious about AI's educational benefits. This is particularly true in the Department of English and Comparative Literature where faculty are concerned that AI could dilute English education. Interviews with English Professor Colton Saylor, Writing Center Director Michelle Hager, and several students reveal mixed responses: some express optimism about AI's potential to enhance student research, while others voice concerns about the technology's potential to limit the development of students' writing skills.

Students, on the other hand, can see some of its benefits. Beginning an essay can be a daunting task, but this is an area where AI can be particularly useful for students. AI tools like ChatGPT can be used to simplify the research process and probe potential theses, though the technology's tendency to confidently deliver incorrect information remains a concern, especially for students who lack the expertise to differentiate these "hallucinations" from accurate facts. Additionally, the personalized nature of ChatGPT can provide valuable adaptive learning experiences for students. Students are able to ask targeted questions and receive responses from ChatGPT that are tailored to their individual learning style. "It's a very helpful tool to have," affirms English student Nicholas Herring. By supporting these early stages of writing, ChatGPT helps students establish a strong foundation and gain academic momentum, which enables them to progress toward deeper levels of critical thinking and analysis.

Although AI can be helpful for exploring ideas, it should not be used to outsource thinking. According to Michelle Hager, "AI will not replace writing because to write is to think and nothing else can think for you, but AI could potentially replace or play a bigger role in the communication of ideas." Professor Saylor is a bit more skeptical about AI's value, noting students often end up using ChatGPT as a shortcut to avoid reading and writing, which includes generating text for essays

or summarizing assigned readings entirely, both of which violate the Writing Center's AI Policy.

Professor Saylor believes it is valuable for students to build their own skills as both readers and writers, especially as AI becomes further integrated in our education system. "Seeing it as a tool is great, but I also think recognizing that the other tools we are trying to develop in ourselves and our classes require human invention and creativity. That's just as important." Professor Saylor continues, "The English department's literary courses require students to engage with texts and develop their own argumentative and analytical skills. There's a level of creativity required to accomplish this, just like any creative field, which requires students to build the confidence they have in their own work." Sites like Grammarly have been used by students to make their writing come across as more professional, but this is ultimately something that comes down to a writer's own capabilities. Students need to develop confidence in their own writing before falling back on tools like AI.



This is all without bringing up the ethical concerns for AI, which includes plagiarism, biases, its environmental and energy costs, and unauthorized data scraping from thousands of unwitting writers. Because this is still an emerging technology, the proper ethics of its adoption and use are in the process of being established and taught to students. In the meantime, it is difficult for professors to assess potential AI content in student's writing. Online AI detectors are inconsistent and can produce false positives. There are alternative means of evaluating writing,

such as in-class essays and presentations, which allow professors to assess students' abilities directly. These methods of assessment are likely to become increasingly popular as AI-generated work becomes harder to detect.

As AI expands and becomes a more powerful tool, faculty and administrators will have to balance innovation with educational integrity. AI can enrich the student experience, but the onus is on students to utilize AI in an ethical manner. Should they take shortcuts, they will compromise their own education and professional development. However, faculty remains divided on how to discourage students from misusing AI. Although SJSU has already developed a comprehensive AI policy for students and faculty alike, further collaboration between stakeholders—including students—is needed to adapt the policy as AI improves and new best practices emerge.

## **The Humanities Honors Program Celebrates 70 Years of Excellence**

*Annabella Juarez and Erin Nicholson*

On March 14, 2025, the Humanities Honors program (HHP) celebrated its 70th anniversary by hosting an event that showcased how dedicated and involved its alumni community has been since their graduation. This reunion of Humanities Honors Spartans was a testament to the influence of HHP and its impact across professionals in many fields. The program offers students across all majors the opportunity to engage with thought-provoking material about art, culture, literature, and other humanities subjects. With a focus on interdisciplinary studies and global cultures, this program helps prepare students for future job opportunities and networking efforts.

“The mission of the Humanities Honors program is to provide a comprehensive view of the development of world cultures, from ancient times to the present day, and build a community among

students and professors,” says Erik Johnson, coordinator of the Humanities Honors program.



*Photo by Michele Bertolone*

After recently completing a post-pandemic rebuilding phase, the program has had to navigate state budgets and enrollment hurdles as it seeks to reestablish stronger engagement. Johnson and his colleagues worked together to reinvent a revised program, aiming to more efficiently benefit students and create a space for personal and professional growth. “What I hope to accomplish with this revised program is to build a stronger community, offer resume enhancement, and provide opportunities for students to efficiently knock out their lower GEs,” says Johnson.

The relaunch will bring exciting new developments to the structure of the program. Johnson acknowledges that although the HHP differs from standard majors and minors, students can nevertheless strategically complete their GE requirements while simultaneously “grounding their understanding in literature, philosophy, art history, and political thought.”

HHP offers four lower-division courses that are worth three credits each. While students can take any of the four classes, those who complete the course sequence will gain access to scholarship opportunities and priority registration.

Students across majors find this program appealing due to the courses' organization and networking opportunities. Even for non-humanities majors, HHP is designed to embrace students from diverse backgrounds and interests by synthesizing technical skills (communication, reading, and writing) with ethical, cultural, and historical contexts.

Johnson notes that students and professors establish meaningful relationships through curation of course material and the student cohort structure. HHP strives to "build a learning community among the students by modeling intellectual community among the faculty," says Johnson.

We can look to recent history to see the program's success. Justise Wattree, HHP alumnus, won first place in the 2022 California State University Research Competition with his project, "The Two-Front War: Self-Help and Black Health Activism During the Spanish Flu, HIV/AIDS, and COVID-19." Johnson was Wattree's RSCA guide and mentor for the project. They had already developed a working relationship through HHP and Johnson recalled the formidable efforts Wattree put into his studies as well as the networking opportunities that HHP provided. Wattree is now a policy fellow at the California Hospital Association, having since earned his Master's degree in Social Factors in Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Caitlin Pambid, another HHP alumni, is a finalist of the 2024 Student RSCA Competition with her project, "Death to the Museum (As We Know It)." While Pambid was originally a forensics major, after entering HHP, she found an unexpected passion for the humanities and refocused her studies in the field. "Had I let myself being a forensics major hold me back from enrolling in HHP, I would've never discovered my love for the humanities. The program has challenged me to expand my worldview and critically analyze

history," says Pambid. Pambid is now an intern at the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park, where she researches and installs exhibitions.

Wattree and Pambid are just two of many success stories from HHP. Joining the program is a step toward creating a branch of networking contacts, obtaining internships, and elevating your marketability for employment.

All SJSU students are eligible to enroll in HHP. For more information or to enroll in the Fall 2025 term, contact the program directly through their website: <https://www.sjsu.edu/hum/humanities-honors-ge/humanities-honors.php>.

## **SJSU Arts Alum Profile: Luis Valdez**

*Micaela Veglia*



*Luis Valdez*

Prolific playwright and San José State University alumni Luis Valdez is now known as the "Father of Chicano Theater," but he did not always have that name. Originally, Valdez's parents were farmers that immigrated from Mexico and eventually settled down in East San José. In 1958, Valdez became a student at San José State University as a mathematics and physics major. "I came from a farm working family and wanted to do something for farm workers, so eventually I just gravitated to the theater. I said, 'You know, I've got to do something.' It's the most impractical decision that anybody could make. . . I decided to go into the theater. Inspired, really, by what I had

been studying in school, so I switched majors,” explains Valdez.

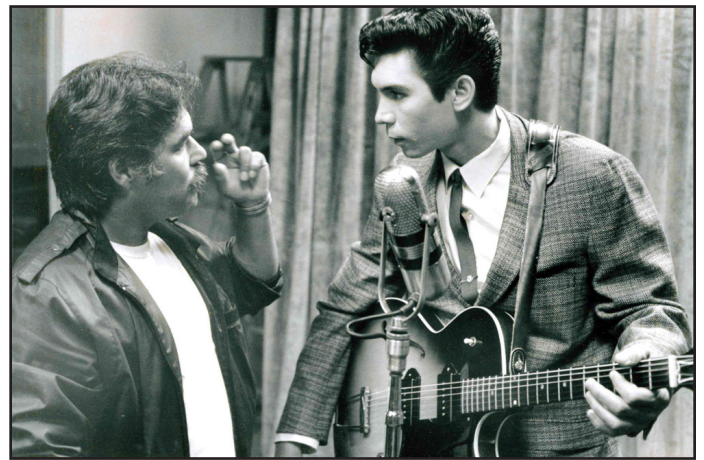
Valdez’s background with migrant farmers provided a unique voice that had not been heard on the stage before. Valdez says, “My involvement in the cultural revolution started on the San José State campus.” His work focuses on dismantling the negative stereotypes that surround Chicanos, providing political commentary on the state of the Chicano community and expanding on Chicano culture. The potential tension of the 1960s further encouraged Valdez to write political and social commentary. He explains, “it was all aimed at community organizing.”

At the beginning of his theater experience, Valdez struggled to get on the mainstage because of the color line that was still in place. Unless there were roles created for Latinos, it was unlikely they would be cast in primary roles. Valdez recalled playing a walk-on, no-dialogue organ grinder with a live monkey in a production of *Inherit the Wind* on campus. “San José State had developed a reputation for quality [theater in the Bay Area],” he says. However, he notes that there was still a need for Latino representation and stories to be shared on the stage: “Latino theater as such did not exist, so I figured I had to create it from the ground up.”

In 1963, Valdez premiered his first full length play, *The Shrunken Head of Pancho Villa*, under the guidance of Dr. Harold Crane at SJSU. Dr. Crane encouraged Valdez to direct for the first time by telling him, “You understand your own material—you’re the playwright.” Valdez holds on to this message to this day and does the initial direction for all of his works. Other faculty members were also aware of Valdez’s aspirations. One of his teachers, Dr. Eleanor Leflore, once told him, “Just know that [*The Shrunken Head of Pancho Villa*] is your first play, and you’ve got more plays in you.”

His time at SJSU provided him with the opportunity to create works that would thrust him on a journey to creating a stage for Chicanos across the country. “San José State was absolutely my Ivy League college. This was it, you know? I came here, and I respected it as such and it treated me like that,” says Valdez..

After graduating, Valdez became entrenched in the Civil Rights Movement, particularly with the Delano Grape Strike, and fought alongside Cesar Chavez in his mission to unionize migrant farm workers in California. This resulted in the creation of El Teatro Campesino (The Farm Worker’s Theater) whose goal was to travel to and perform in different migrant camps and educate the public about the United Farm Workers Association’s cause. Largely improvised, these early performances focused on the experiences of farm workers and aimed to lift their spirits through comedy.



*La Banba* (1987)

After the strikes ended, Valdez moved El Teatro’s permanent residence to San Juan Bautista, about an hour south of San José. The company has since toured internationally, and its success would lead Valdez to write his most well known play *Zoot Suit*, inspired by the real events of the Zoot Suit Riots and Sleepy Lagoon Murder trials in Los Angeles during the 1940s. In 1942, the murder of José Diaz resulted in the police apprehension of seventeen Chicano teens despite lack of evidence. The ensuing injustice eventually led to 1943’s Zoot Suit Riots, when White Angelino servicemen attacked Chicanos wearing Zoot suits, purportedly because the excess fabric in the suit’s design was considered “unpatriotic” in a time of war rationing.

In expanding on the racial violence and persecution Chicanos experienced through these events, Valdez’s play was met with overwhelming success. In 1979, he became the first Chicano playwright and director to have a show on Broadway, and two years later, Valdez wrote and

directed a film adaptation of *Zoot Suit*.

With the success of *Zoot Suit*, Valdez was provided even more opportunities and found himself working on other movies, including *La Bamba*, *The Cisco Kid*, and *Disney's Coco*. Maintaining his position as the artistic director of El Teatro Campesino, Valdez continues to write stories that illustrate the Chicano experience.

## Digital Humanities Center Opens at SJSU Library

*Ariyana Caballero and Claudina Maldonado*

San José State University (SJSU) is excited to announce the opening of its Digital Humanities Center (DHC), a partnership between the University and San José Public Library that aims to utilize cutting-edge technology for learning purposes. Located on the first floor of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, the DHC sponsors weekly events, exhibits, performances, and workshops with the aim of providing everyone a place to learn.



*Courtesy: Facebook*

“[The DHC] creates a space for critical and creative engagement with emerging technology, for both SJSU and the San José community,” says Nick Szydłowski, San José Public Library’s digital scholarship librarian. Although many colleges host similar spaces, the DHC is unique in its effort to collaborate with the public. “Determining what types of technology and what type of furnishings went into the space [involved] engaging both the student population and public by conducting focus groups,” says Kyle Burkett. By focusing on the needs of its community, the program has been

able to provide the necessary resources for our increasingly tech-centered way of life. “Everything now has a digital component, a digital focus,” says Kyle Burkett, one of the library’s senior librarians. With the rapid evolution of technology in the last decade, the need for digital literacy is something the DHC takes into careful consideration. For example, it hosts virtual workshops that teach participants about machine learning, salary negotiation, and how to use Adobe software, all with the intention of ensuring people have access to the help they need, free of charge. In April, the DHC hosted a poetry workshop dedicated to National Poetry Month where anyone could join and get advice from poet Emily Parent, and author Andrew Lam made an appearance to discuss the 50th anniversary of the Fall of Saigon. Silicon Valley Reads hosts a book club every week, encouraging the discussion of an annual theme. On the student side of events, there was an art exhibition featuring digital submissions from Maria Vu, presented in 2D and 3D forms, and two musical performances were held in the library’s atrium. The first one was performed by Professor Luna-Mega’s class, ElectroAcoustic Music II, and the other, “Playing the Library,” was composed by faculty members of the SJSU School of Music.

The DHC is a place where anyone can go to learn and explore, regardless of their technical know-how. To learn more about the center, please visit <https://library.sjsu.edu/digitalhumanities>.

## The Mystery of Fiction: Investigating the Detective Genre with Dr. Colton Saylor

*George Ngo and Sarah Hughes*

[Detective’s Notes, February 2025]

It’s February and campus life has been in full swing—from approaching midterms and bustling events, to the loud banter of students rushing for their classes. Yet amidst all the business, you’ve caught wind of an elusive class within the English Department. One rumored to be an exciting dive into the past as well as the contemporary. Having nothing but anecdotal reports of its engaging dialogue and compelling readings, you resolve to find out more.

A long afternoon of questioning students yields some leads: the name Dr. Colton Saylor and a classroom number. In hopes of catching the professor for an interview, you pick up pace towards the classroom. Down a hallway you find the correct door. With cautious hands you find the handle unlocked. With bated breath, you slowly creak the door open. The classroom looks to be vacant. You begin to pace around and find some interesting items. Upon collecting them you note that there is little immediate connection: *A Rage in Harlem* by Chester Himes, Volume 1 of *Death Note*, a DVD of *Scooby Doo*, *The North Light* by Hideo Yokoyama. Just what exactly is this class? Maybe you should've just asked those students earlier...

As you pondered, the door clicked and opened. A man walks in toward the front desk and picks up a pair of sunglasses. Breathing a sigh of relief he then looks up and notices your presence.

“Oh hey can I help you?”

Realizing that you're just slightly out of place, you freeze. Just act natural, play it cool.

“Ah yeah, I was just looking for Dr. Saylor.”

He suddenly chuckles and says, “Well you found him, what can I do for you?”

...

When it comes to detective fiction, few genres can compete with its sophisticated, maze-like narratives, making it the perfect tool for students to practice their critical thinking skills. At San José State University, students are given the opportunity to explore this genre in Dr. Colton Saylor's ENGL 21 (Mystery and Detective Fiction) course. Framed like a detective novel, the class mirrors the investigative journey: students play detective and Professor Saylor guides them along, acting as the narrator of their story.

When imagining what mystery and detective fiction might look like, what often comes to mind is a trench-coated, pipe-puffing Sherlock Holmes tiptoeing through the dark alleyways of Victorian London. Although many great works of fiction have inspired modern mystery tropes and tales, the genre canonically begins with Edgar Allan Poe's

*The Murders in the Rue Morgue* before expanding into Holmes' iconic investigations and Agatha Christie's cozy courtroom crimes. With these classics acting as its introduction and foundation, ENGL 21 mirrors the genre's evolution, gradually expanding into noir, true crime, and thrillers. By exposing students to the genre's breadth, the course demonstrates the genre's relevance across time, cultures, and people.



*Photo by Sarah Hughes and Professor Saylor*

Professor Saylor's own journey with detective fiction began during his Ph.D. studies at University of California, Santa Barbara, where he encountered the genre as a student. Drawn to its layered storytelling and complex logic, Professor Saylor found himself as a student teacher not long after taking the class himself. When the opportunity arose to teach a similar course at SJSU in 2019, he seized it, molding the curriculum into what ENGL 21 is today.

Rooted in his background in critical race theory, Professor Saylor's unique approach to this genre challenges students to go beyond the “whodunit” and “howdunit” and examine how detective fiction is often about more than just crime—it's about who gets to investigate, who is believed, and who acquires justice. “Even detective work is intertwined in the political,” Professor Saylor notes, adding that he encourages students to analyze how detective fiction has historically

leaned into Western, often white male, logic as the dominant method of deduction. This theme is further reinforced in his noir unit, where Professor Saylor seeks to highlight the subgenre's potential for asking bigger, more important questions: "How might we engage with systems of power that are indifferent to us?" Similarly, Professor Saylor notes how true crime raises ethical questions about the exploitation of real-life crime for entertainment as "nonfiction blended through the lens of fiction."

Professor Saylor is also invested in the newer, more contemporary offshoots of the genre. Chester Himes' *A Rage in Harlem* is a great example of noir fiction that diverges from the subgenre's typical Western, often white, tropes. These variations are explored in greater depth through student-lead investigations. In class, students create a "Detective Profile" presentation, analyzing characters from popular culture and how they play around with the genre's tropes. Whether examining *Scooby-Doo's Mystery Inc.* or *Death Note's* eccentric L, students discover that detective fiction is far more embedded in modern media than they might have anticipated. While Professor Saylor acknowledges that detective fiction has carried the stigma of lower culture fiction, he dismisses that notion: "I want students to meet with their favorite shows, media, and so on, and see that it can be taken seriously."

Beyond literary analysis, the course provides students with the tools necessary to look critically at what is going on around them: socially, politically, and culturally. As Professor Saylor points out, "Any study of genre is a conversation between generations, even countries. The intellectual exercise of detection matches up with scholarship." Detective fiction, at its core, is about uncovering hidden truths, which is a skill just as valuable in the real world as it is in literature.

For students at SJSU, ENGL 21 is more than just a literature course—it's an invitation to throw on your detective hat and investigate the mysteries of storytelling itself. Whether through the lens of Sherlock Holmes' deductive reasoning, the gritty realism of noir, or the psychological complexity of thrillers and true crime, mystery and detective fiction remains a subject worthy of closer

examination. Even the final exam echoes this sentiment: "Why does detective fiction matter?" The very question seeks to highlight the course's ultimate goal to inspire an appreciation for the genre and its ability to promote critical thinking.

## **Eugenie Chan, Lurie Professor Igniting the Fire of Theater**

*Elias Shustock & Sebastian Lara*

This year marks the 25th consecutive year of the Lurie Author-in-Residence Program. Made possible by the generous contribution of Connie and Robert Lurie, the program hosts published authors in literature, poetry, and theater, giving students the ability to dive into a specific genre under the guidance of a professional. This year's Lurie Resident English professor is Eugenie Chan, a playwright with deep connections to the Bay Area and the current artistic director of Eugenie Chan Theater Projects, a group whose work focuses on the history of Chinese-Americans in the United States.

In this year's Lurie class, ENGL 281 (Playwriting Workshop), Professor Chan challenged students to understand how plays are written and the context that shaped them. "It's to get a sense of the trajectory of plays in America," says Professor Chan. Guiding them through detailed readings of authors like Arthur Miller and August Wilson, she firmly believes that a student's ability to understand a complicated play will allow them to be more introspective in their own writing. For Professor Chan, writing is natural, it just takes inspiration. "The hardest thing is writing that first sentence," says Professor Chan. Her teaching philosophy is centered around getting students engaged in theater, then letting them be creative on their own. To encourage this, she tasked students with simply writing one phrase on something that inspires them. Professor Chan wants "to light the fire of theater" in each of her students and push them to create new works that are immersive and thought provoking. At the end of the course, all students are expected to write a

short, ten-minute script that implements each of the elements of theater they studied over the course of the semester.

Professor Chan's passion is best exemplified by her own craft, as many of her plays are deeply personal and focus on her family's immigrant history. In one of her recent plays, *Madame Ho*, Professor Chan bases the plot on her great-grandmother, a woman whose story has long been



*Photo by Joe Zygaj*

subject to a sense of shame within her family since Madame Ho was a brothel keeper who came into the business as a young woman. "She was likely kidnapped or sold into this country," says Professor Chan. She recalls her uncles being reprimanded if there was even a possibility they still had connections with her great-grandmother. Familial status was a powerful commodity in the small world of San Francisco's Chinatown, but it often bent the truth. These are stories that Professor Chan believes are worth telling "to fight erasure." By doing so, she is able to transform this familial history into an affirmation, not by expressing her family's shame but through understanding the reality of what her great-grandmother did to survive.

Professor Chan still carries memories of her family following the debut of *Madame Ho* in San Francisco's Chinatown. "I had uncles say, 'we're sorry [after seeing the play]. We didn't understand the value of this history. We just knew not to talk about this.'" Not all family histories are pleasant, and Professor Chan believes these are often the ones most marginalized. Her work focuses on the raw and uncut stories of Chinese-American identity. Difficult questions about where we are and how we got here. Using the power of a stage forces those conversations into an audience.

Professor Chan's body of work also explores these perception conflicts more broadly. The *Truer History of the Chan Family* takes on ever-present stereotypes of Asian Americans that still linger to this day. "Most of what we know about the Chinese in America examines our history as typologies of railroad workers, laundry men, or high-tech wunderkind. We are either laborers, crooks, or flawless geniuses," says Professor Chan. She shows history as full of people outside the binary, history that often is not told because it makes us uncomfortable. Professor Chan believes that these uncomfortable stories are the ones worth telling, and through her plays she forces them to light, stopping their erasure.

"It's about justice. Getting a story told that needs to be told," says Professor Chan. Finding her spark in the hushed-up history of her family, she is now committed to helping students find their own fire in ENGL 281, where they will not only become better writers but better truth tellers.

## **A Gothic Conclave of Horror: Poe Fest**

*Dan Ariz Coronio and James Matthew Lopez*

The Department of English is full of people with a passion for creative literature, as evinced by Poe Fest, a long-running event hosted each year by Dr. Allison Johnson. A torch passed down by Edwin Sams, former English faculty member, Poe Fest is



a celebration focusing on the 19th-century author Edgar Allan Poe and his imaginative storytelling.



*Poe Fest 2024 Digital Banner*

Each year, just before Halloween, Dr. Johnson invites fans and literature enthusiasts to celebrate Poe's works. Poe Fest integrates both Ed Sams's and Dr. Johnson's vision by having the Poe-like aspects connected to students' creative works, creating unforgettable moments of storytelling, snacks, and partying. Dr. Johnson says her personal highlight is when "Professor Sams performs Poe from memory, bringing enthusiasm to share the feeling of the poem rather than just reading it."

During the pandemic, Poe Fest was temporarily moved online. "It was especially nice when we were doing it remotely since it was just a fun way to connect with people," Dr. Johnson says. After surviving the pandemic, Poe Fest moved back to the real world where it continues to thrive. Dr. Johnson is currently focused on the overall expansion of this event. "It would be nice if more people came, but I understand that people have busy schedules. The largest contingent of people that are there are mostly my students, but it would be great to make it grow a little more," says Dr. Johnson.

Though Poe Fest is centered around Poe, it is not limited to his poems. Since the event is an expression of all things spooky, other forms of horror can be expressed in this theatrical event. Scary stories, poems, raps, and other literary performances accentuate the spirit of Poe Fest. "I've been trying to expand beyond

Poe and his vibes, trying to invite people into sharing their own works," says Dr. Johnson.

The future of Poe Fest looks to be as thrilling as its macabre story performances. For Dr. Johnson, Poe Fest is about keeping tradition alive and sharing moments with other enthusiastic Poe fans. "It's a nice thing for the entire department to celebrate and just enjoy reading together," says Dr. Johnson. As long as spooky storytelling and connectivity through experiences continue, the annual tradition of Poe Fest will live on. In the weeks leading up to Halloween next year, be sure to check it out. Don't ghost this event—unless it's your costume!

## **#Certified: The SJSU English Department's PTW Certificate Program**

*Shayanna Gatchalian and Sbedye Herrera*

San José State University's (SJSU) English department has produced thousands of professional writers and editors over its forty-year-long history. While many attribute this feat to the English department's majors and minors, a handful of alumni have graduated from a lesser-known program the department offers: the Professional and Technical Writing (PTW) Certificate. This certificate program expands the university's reach outside matriculated students to the general public, allowing anyone with a bachelor's degree to learn about the fundamentals of technical writing within just one year.

The PTW certification program accelerates its four-year degree counterpart into a four-course curriculum consisting of two core classes on the fundamentals of technical writing and editing (ENGL 106 and ENGL 107, respectively), along with two elective options that explore a specific subject, including social media (ENGL 111), UX design (ENGL 110), and professional publications (ENGL 129).

At the heart of the certificate program are ENGL 106 and 107. ENGL 106 teaches students how

to edit and how to write. Dr. Mark Thompson, director of the PTW program, notes, “It’s a hardcore class, but it’s meant to make sure students leave [the program] knowing what good editing looks like.” Starting with fundamentals at the sentence level and progressing to more extensive documents, students are prepared to not only write professional business literature but also articulate their rationale for technical edits. ENGL 107, the technical writing class, is a good introduction to the field and a great networking opportunity since the class welcomes guest speakers from big-name companies like Google and Broadcom.

While the core classes have remained the same, the PTW curriculum has been updated to stay relevant in Silicon Valley, such as the recently established UX design and social media writing classes. Dr. Thompson emphasizes how these changes are essential in keeping students up to date with modern industry standards. “A lot of the fundamentals stay the same. [Hiring Managers] want people who can write and read complicated things and be able to explain them to different audiences. But it is also about making sure they have the modern tool set—designing, marketing, writing,” says Dr. Thompson. Every semester, these courses are updated based on the professors’ research specialties, and students are always working on the latest technology.

One of the differences that sets SJSU’s PTW certificate program apart from others is its in-person format. Instead of trudging through an online playlist of tutorial videos and exercises independently, students in the courses take on collaborative projects, from publishing the English department undergraduate newsletter (which you’re reading right now!) full-blown video productions. “I believe the strength of the program lies in its in-person collaboration because it teaches a lot of skills that you’re going to need to eventually be successful,” Dr. Thompson notes. But don’t just take Dr. Thompson’s word; take it from Samantha Denny, an SJSU alumna who finished the program last spring semester.

Before enrolling in the PTW certificate program, Denny was finishing her M.F.A. in Creative Writing at SJSU and working as a youth swim instructor on the side. She decided to get certified in professional and technical writing to gain new insights into what she had been studying for several years. Now a working document proofreader for BDO Global Financial Services, Denny highlights how the skills she picked up from the program help her today with proofreading financial and tax documents. “We did assignments that gave us real hands-on practice. It makes a good portfolio [of writing samples] you can give to a potential employer to say, ‘Hey, I have some experience in formatting web pages for a nonprofit, or I can make a guide on how to use this specific tool, or I can do a press release,’” Denny remarks.



*PTW certificate recipient and M.F.A., Samantha Denny*

As one of the best universities in the nation, San José State University is committed to providing high-quality education to Bay Area residents. The PTW certificate program under the English department stands as proof of this mission, helping everyday people invest in their professional journeys. With a strong job placement record, the Professional and Technical Writing faculty continues to update its curriculum to ensure students come out of the program with the skillset necessary to compete in today’s job market. No matter the pathway, strong communication skills can set apart the ordinary and the extraordinary and allow people to align with their long-term ambitions.

## Available Online This Summer!

- ENGL 22. Fantasy and Science Fiction
- ENGL 60. Lit. of the Atlantic World, 1680-1860
- ENGL 70. Emerging Modernisms and Beyond
- ENGL 71. Creative Writing
- ENGL 100WB. Written Communication: Business
- ENGL 101. Introduction to Literary Criticism
- ENGL 113. Gothic and Horror Fiction
- ENGL 123D. Literatures of Asia
- ENGL 145. Shakespeare and Performance
- ENGL 169. Ethnicity in American Literature
- ENGL 172. The Arts in U.S. Society

*Check the summer course catalog for more details!*



# Course Descriptions Fall '25

## ENGL 50. BEGINNINGS TO THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT

TR Dowdy 4:30p · Bassett 3p

Exploration of Anglo-Saxon, Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Colonial Writings in Britain, Europe, and America. Class engages literary text, literary history, and historical events that shape the literature and social constructs of the period.

## ENGL 60. LITERATURES OF THE ATLANTIC WORLD, 1680– 1860

TR Walker 12p ONLINE

Examination of literatures arising out of the circulation of ideas and people across the Atlantic, with particular focus on the formation of distinctly British and American literary traditions within a global context.

## ENGL 70. EMERGING MODERNISMS AND BEYOND

F McSharry 10a

Exploration of Modernist and twentieth-century writings. Class engages literary text, literary history, and historical events that shape the literature of the period.

## **ENGL 71.**

### **CREATIVE WRITING**

MW Arnold 9a · Logan 12p · Ali 3p

TR O'Hare 10:30a · Tran 3p · Edgerton 1:30p

ONLINE

TBA Damm 12a

Examinations of works of poetry, creative nonfiction and short fiction as expression of human intellect and imagination, to comprehend the historic and global cultural contexts, and recognize issues related to writing of diverse cultural traditions. Students will also write poetry, creative nonfiction, and short fiction.

## **ENGL 100W.**

### **WRITING WORKSHOP**

MW Eastwood 12p · McSharry 9a ONLINE

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.

## **ENGL 101.**

### **INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY CRITICISM**

MW Krishnaswamy 10:30a

Study and application of various historical and contemporary approaches, including foundational twentieth-century theory as well as contemporary approaches. Applications of critical models to various literary, visual, and digital texts.

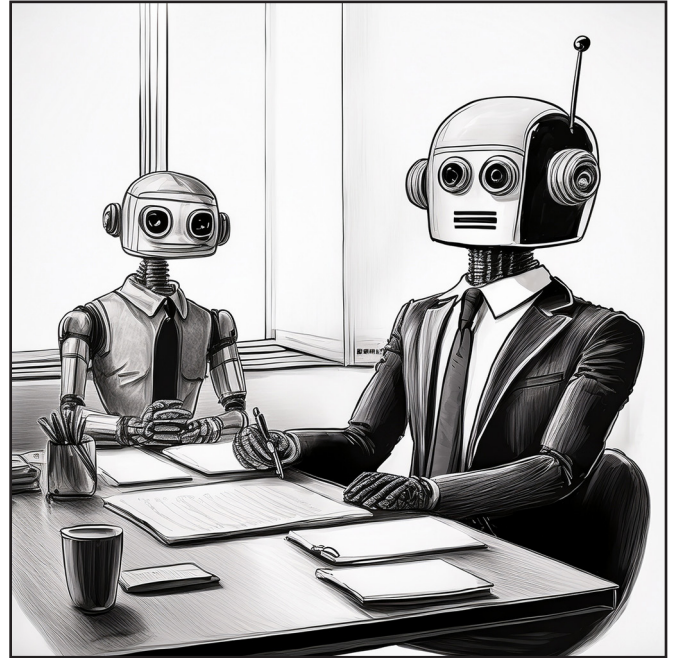
## **ENGL 103.**

### **MODERN ENGLISH**

TR Lawson 9a

MW Mitchell 10:30a

The growth and structure of modern English, including its phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Attention to social and regional varieties, with implications for language development and literacy among native and nonnative speakers.



## **ENGL 106.**

### **PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDITING**

MW Thompson 12p

Copyediting, substantive editing, and reorganization of technical documents. Review of grammar and punctuation to ensure technical mastery and ability to justify editing decisions. We also cover graphics editing, access aids, and the professional skills of an editor.

## **ENGL 107.**

### **PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL WRITING**

TR Thompson 10:30a

Survey of professional and technical writing. Students learn how to write and design persuasive documents that get real things done in the real world. Projects

include resumes, instructions (video and print), presentations, user manuals, and augmented reality apps. Includes learning digital tools used to author and publish writing in the current tech landscape such as DITA, SnagIt, Adobe Premiere, AI, and Madcap Flare.

## **ENGL 110. UX DESIGN AND VISUAL COMMUNICATION**

TR Thompson 12p

Combines visual rhetorical theory with digital design techniques to teach writers about the visual aspects of written and digital communication. In this hands-on course, students design user interfaces for apps, apply UX research to improve bad user experiences, and design a number of publications, including a cookbook, a website, and a interactive food ordering app.

## **ENGL 112A. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

TR Vora 10:30a

TBA Nathanael 12a ONLINE

Study of literature for elementary and intermediate grades, representing a variety of cultures. Evaluation and selection of texts.

## **ENGL 112B. LITERATURE FOR YOUNG ADULTS**

M Urcaregui 4:30p

Study of selected literary material, representing a variety of cultures, chosen to motivate secondary school readers.

## **ENGL 117A. AMERICAN LITERATURE, FILM, & CULTURE**

F Saylor 10a

Using both film and literature, course examines narratives that create and define cultural identities in the United States. A variety of cultural moments in the history of North America as depicted in both film and literature as well as the artistic practices used to shape those representations will be discussed.

## **ENGL 123C. LITERATURES OF THE PACIFIC**

TR Brada 3p

This version of English 123C will provide a sampling of 20th and 21st century texts from around the Pacific Rim. Specifically it will focus on literature written by authors from Japan, Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam.



## **ENGL 125. ANCIENT LITERATURES**

MW Mitchell 9a

A survey course that allows for a critical examination of influential texts from before 1350 CE.

## **ENGL 130. WRITING FICTION**

TR Logan 12p

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

## **ENGL 131. WRITING POETRY**

MW Chielek 3p

Workshop in verse forms. Study of traditional and contemporary models. May be repeated twice for credit.

## **ENGL 133. REED MAGAZINE**

F McClurg 10a ONLINE

Student-edited and managed literary magazine. Contents selected from local, national and international submissions. Students urged to work on the magazine for the two semesters required for publication. Open to all majors. May be repeated once for credit.

## **ENGL 135. WRITING NONFICTION**

TR Norris 1:30p

Advanced creative writing workshop in literary nonfiction. Study of legacy and contemporary models.

## **ENGL 145. SHAKESPEARE AND PERFORMANCE**

TR Bassett 9a

Course examines in depth several of Shakespeare's plays, specifically addressing issues of performance. We will discuss each play in the context of its original performance during Shakespeare's time and its life on stage and screen in the ensuing centuries.



## **ENGL 146. STUDIES-EARLY MODERN BRITISH LITERATURE**

MW Eastwood 10:30a

Offers students the opportunity to study the poetry, drama, and prose of the influential early modern period in England. The course is broadly construed, enabling individual professors to focus on topics relating to their particular areas of expertise and/or interests.

## **ENGL 157. TOPICS IN RHETORICAL ANALYSIS**

TR Lawson 1:30p

Curious about how AI is shaping the future of communication? This course examines AI technologies through feminist perspectives, revealing how they intersect with power, identity, and ethics. Building on the history of technofeminist scholarship, we will draw from thinkers like Judy Wajcman, Donna Haraway, Safiya Noble, and Ruha Benjamin to develop frameworks for ethical AI engagement. Through critical readings, creative projects, and opportunities to build small-scale AI tools, this course will equip you to evaluate current AI tools and help shape this technology's future with attention to inclusion and justice. Open to all majors and viewpoints towards AI.

## **ENGL 162. INDIGENOUS AMERICAN LITERATURES**

TR Bassett 10:30a

Study of texts by Indigenous American writers and storytellers, with genres including but not limited to oral traditions, fiction, poetry, oratory, and political discourse. Potential topics include issues of individual and tribal identity, survivance, and sovereignty.

## **ENGL 169.** **ETHNICITY IN AMERICAN LITERATURE**

MW Saylor 1:30p

Study of expressions of ethnic and racial identity in American literature, with close attention to strategies of representation and resistance. Selected texts primarily arise out of the lived experiences of people of color, including Native Americans, Black Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinx Americans.

## **ENGL 181.** **SPECIAL TOPIC: LITERATURE OF TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION**

MW Spangler 1:30p

A contemporary lens (post 1980) on literature of immigration to the US and Western Europe with a primary focus on asylum-seekers, refugees, and undocumented immigrants.

## **ENGL 199.** **WRITING INTERNSHIP**

TBA Thompson 12a ONLINE

Internship at a local industry, publisher, arts or public agency. Discussion of experiences and problems in the internship. Study of professional practices and demands, including those of career preparation and development. *Must already have an internship set up to enroll for this class.*



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**Claudina Maldonado**

# Letter from the Chair

From elementary school to high school, I lived in an ideal spot on the 25 bus line that went in one direction through my neighborhood to the Huntington Beach Pier, and the other direction to the mall. Parents in my neighborhood routinely asked kids to show that they had memorized key phone numbers before they were allowed to go to the beach or the mall with other kids. My generation asks their kids if they have their phone with them. No one I know has much of a memory for numbers now that we always have small computers in our hands or pockets. My son would have a hard time even finding a public phone to call for help if he didn't have his phone with him. It is truly amazing how fast a certain skill or memory can fade when one stops relying on it and relies on an exterior device or technology instead.

In an article titled “Should College Graduates Be AI Literate?”, Beth McMurtrie interviewed many academics about their thinking on AI in education (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 11, 2025, pp 12-22). Pam Lach, a San Diego State digital humanities librarian stated: “The best thing we can do for our students is teach them how to discern reliable information from misinformation. It's getting harder and harder. And with the proliferation of gen AI, that's accelerating” (20). I am also persuaded by the argument that we have to prepare students for the workforce, including workspaces that may include the use of AI. The CSU system has just invested almost \$17,000,000 in bringing ChatGPT to our 23 campuses for an 18-month contract (at the same time that we are being asked to cut about \$400,000,000 from campus budgets).

We have a great mix of responses to AI on our campus with faculty, depending on their own familiarity with AI or the objectives of their class, either forbidding its use or encouraging it. So far, we are asking faculty to come up with their own individualized policies depending on the needs of their particular courses—although this can be confusing for students. With these points in mind, last month I took a class on the uses of AI in education. We were required to create some images and text using AI as a way of familiarizing ourselves with various AI products and processes. One of the constant refrains in the class was that the links provided might have moved behind a paywall since the class was designed, so we were routinely given multiple links to try. Even the ones that were still free would offer upgrades for a fee. In an assignment where I was required to use AI to check if texts or images were themselves AI generated, the site determined only a part of my wholly-AI generated text was AI, but also offered me a helpful button to “Humanize it” at “easy,” “medium,” and “aggressive” levels for a fee.



After spending a few weeks on my online class, a less sunny memory from my childhood came back to me. In the late 1970's Americans began a boycott of Nestle products because the company was using aggressive marketing tactics in developing nations to get new mothers to use their baby formula products instead of breast feeding. This led to much higher infant mortality rates as the baby formula had to be mixed with clean water that could be hard to access in developing countries, and when women stop breastfeeding for even a short period of time, they can lose their ability to produce milk altogether. That idea that a seeming gift from a corporation can end up taking away one's own ability to independently create and provide without later continuing to buy a particular product has really stuck with me over the years. Josh Eyler, who directs the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at the University of Mississippi, told Beth McMurtrie, “If you offload onto AI the very cognitively demanding aspects of the learning process, then, like a muscle atrophying, you're weakening that process over time” (20).

In an interview with *The New York Times*, the novelist Isabel Allende said: “One thing has been always in my life, writing [...] I think my way of getting over things, of understanding, of exploring my own soul, my past, and also, most importantly, of remembering, is writing” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXvHxQgFvoA&t=1386s>). My hope for today's students is that you learn to use a range of tools, but you never lose the power to write and create, nor the gifts that the process of writing itself can provide.

—Noelle Brada-Williams