

Design Your Life, Design Your Semester, Design Your World

ENGL 44HA

Spring 2026 Section 03 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/25/2026

Contact Information

Instructor:	Ume Ali (OO-me ah-LEE)
Email:	ume.ali@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	W 12 - 1pm FOB 213 or Zoom (by appointment)
Class Days/Time:	MW 3:00 - 4:15pm
Classroom:	BBC 223
Prerequisites:	Completion of GE Area A2 Written Communication
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	GE Area C2 Humanities

Course Information

This three-unit course, organized into three modules, introduces first-year students to San José State University and the broader purpose of college. Through readings, lectures, discussions, campus events, performances, and reflective writing, students explore the cultural values shaping higher education, examine the role of college in building a meaningful life, and develop a preliminary plan for their academic, career, and personal goals.

Course Description and Requisites

Building a plan of a career and meaningful life through exploration of the importance and purpose of college and SJSU guided by readings, lectures, discussions, events, performances, and reflection on the explored cultural values.

Grading: ABC-/No Credit

High Impact Practice: First-Year Seminars and Experiences.

Classroom Protocols

Classroom Protocol

In English 44, much of the learning happens in class. Therefore, it is imperative that you attend each class session and participate in class activities and discussions. Class participation entails: (1) demonstrating that you've completed the readings, (2) are contributing to discussions, and (3) are completing in-class activities and assignments. ***Class discussions will sometimes include material of sensitive nature. In this course, students may encounter materials that differ from, and perhaps, challenge their understanding of reality, their ideas, and their beliefs. Students are encouraged to discuss issues that may arise from such material with me. ***If you have special needs or accommodation requests, message me as soon as possible.

University Policies

University-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. can be found at:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/index.html>

General Expectations, Rights and Responsibilities of the Student:

As members of the academic community, students accept both the rights and responsibilities incumbent upon all members of the institution. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with SJSU's policies and practices pertaining to the procedures to follow if and when questions or concerns about a class arise. See University Policy S90-5 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S90-5.pdf>. It is recommended that students seek clarification or discuss concerns with their instructor.

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)

English 44 Humanities & Arts Learning Outcomes (HALOs)

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

1. Articulate the value of a college education and how activities outside of classes can extend that value

2. Apply strategies learned in class on how to pursue curiosity and integrate it into one's life
3. Use the tools of various humanities and arts disciplines to describe and analyze the complexities and diversities of ways that humans have thrived and created meaningful lives,
4. Think critically and communicate effectively about the relationship between ethics and humanities and the arts in interpersonal relationships, community, and the world,
5. Use self-reflection and critical thinking about their own experiences and perspectives as tools for creating a meaningful life and connecting with their communities
6. Explain, analyze, and use various modes of humanistic expression including visual arts, performing arts, literary arts, and intellectual discourse as a means to create meaningful lives, spark curiosity, and live in community with others.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Through this course, students will:

1. Reflect on one's interests to explore various careers, and document interests and careers to serve as future resources
2. Provide effective summaries of events, lectures, performances, etc.
3. Create effective schedules for one's academic semester
4. Improve time management strategies
5. Engage in wide ranging conversations that will include themes of belonging and generating meaning in one's life

Course Materials

The Artist's Way (25th Anniversary) 16th Edition by Julia Cameron. Links to free online and digital texts will be provided throughout the semester.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Course Requirements

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, you are expected to spend a minimum of 45 hours for each unit of credit (normally 3 hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, and completing assignments. These activities and assignments include:

1. Adobe Scrapbook
2. Engagement (warm up, group work, attendance)
3. Attendance at 6-8 College, University, or off-campus events that expose them to new intellectual ideas and/or artistic practices
4. Event reflections (6)
5. Presentation

Assignments

All assignments should be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font (unless otherwise noted), with one-inch margins, MLA formatting, and will be submitted on Canvas or on your Adobe Webpage.

✓ Grading Information

Minimum Grading Policy

This course uses the minimum grading method of assessment. This means, the minimum score for all assignments is 50%, and no zeroes will be given (as long as work is submitted). Hopefully, this encourages us to attempt and submit all work (regardless of quality).

5 pt Rubric				
Points	5	4	3	2.5
Description/Criteria	Completed assignment according to prompt. Clear, focused, organized, insightful response.	Mostly clear, additional details/insight would be helpful.	Some engagement with prompt, some ideas presented. Could more be more focused, main idea needed.	Minimal or missing work.

10 pt Rubric						
Points	10	9	8	7	6	5

Description/Criteria	Excellent, thoroughly completed work. Clear focus. Responded to all parts of prompt, organized response in logical manner, with a beginning, middle, and end.	Very strong ideas. Additional details/insight would be helpful to overall response. Good focus. Structure could be more intentional, thoughtful.	Additional detail/insight would be helpful to strengthen presentation of ideas. Responds to the prompt, though response can be structured in a more organized and coherent manner.	Shows some demonstration of understanding of the prompt, response seems to address some components of the prompt while missing aspects. Some thoughts and insights presented. More clarity/focus needed.	Minimal engagement with the prompt. Some scattered thoughts. Response needs focus/clarity.	Did not attempt, complete, or address the prompt.

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

***The schedule is tentative and subject to change at any given time. It is the student's responsibility to check Canvas for updated assignment deadlines and assigned work.

Week	Date	Monday		Wednesday	Humanities Events

	Jan19		Jan 21	Welcome Module (due 1/25) Request Adobe Creative Cloud	Please refer to campus events listed below and choose which ones to attend. You are required to attend 8, but will only submit reflections for 6.
1	Jan26	First HA44 Class Meeting! Introductions, Ice Breaker, Syllabus Module I: Creative Self Readings: AW (Artist's Way) Introduction + Week 1 (creative fear, permission, safety)	Jan28	Virtual Scrapbook Project (VSP) Adobe Setup + Scavenger Hunt Assign VSP #1	1/23-1/30 NAACP Exhibit King Library 5th floor
2	Feb2	Readings: AW Week 2 (identity, self-definition, voice) Due: VSP #1 Profile Collage	Feb4	No Class Meeting	2/5 CLA Danzy Senna (author reading)
3	Feb9	Discussion: Cal Newport, Digital Minimalism (Introduction) Due: Event #1 Reflection	Feb11	Readings: AW Week 3 Excursion: TBD Due: VSP #2	2/13 "Kaleidascope" School of Music Hammer Theater (concert)
4	Feb16	No Class Meeting Readings: AW Week 4	Feb18	No Class Meeting Due: Event #2 Reflection	
5	Feb23	Virtual Journal Check Module II: Creativity in Culture & Community Readings: AW Week 5 (risk and play) Due: VSP Post #3	Feb25	Discussion: Hanif Abdurraqib, They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us (excerpt)	2/24 Art Gallery Night Lecture : Drew Francis Cameron

6	Mar2	Readings: AW Week 6 (worth) Due: Event #3 Reflection	Mar4	Discussion: Jia Tolentino, Trick Mirror (essay) Excursion: TBD	3/3 Art Gallery Night Lecture : Kathy Aoki
7	Mar9	Readings: AW Week 7 Due: Event #3 Reflection	Mar11	Discussion: TBD Due: VSP #4	3/10 Art Gallery Night Lecture : Alexandra Loew
8	Mar16	Readings: AW Week 8 Due: Event #4 Reflection	Mar18	No Class Meeting	3/19-3/21 "Wolf Play" by Hansol Jung HGH 103 Theatre (play)
9	Mar23	Readings: AW Week 9 Due: VSP #5	Mar25	Applying Analysis to Art, Culture, and Life Ocean Vuong, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous (excerpt)	
10	Mar30	SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK	Apr1	SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK	
11	Apr6	Virtual Journal Check Discussion: Jenny Odell, How to Do Nothing (Ch.1)	Apr8	Module III: Designing a Creative Life Readings: AW Week 10 Due: VSP #6	4/10 & 4/12 Stuck Elevator & La Voix Humaine (opera) Hammer Theater
12	Apr13	Readings: AW Week 11 Austin Kleon, Steal Like an Artist (excerpt)	Apr15	No Class Meeting Due: VSP #7	4/17 Digital Literacy Showcase (extra credit)
13	Apr20	Readings: AW Week 12 (final chapter)	Apr22	Excursion: TBD Due: Event #5 Reflection	4/25 Beethoven Ball (\$11 SJSU Students) Tickets
14	Apr27	Discussion: TBD Due: VSP #8	Apr29	No Class Meeting	5/1 & 5/2 Kingdom of Cards by Tagore (theater)

15	May4	No Class Meeting Due: Event #6 Reflection	May6	Due: Student Virtual Journals (Adobe) Presentations	5/7 Kingdom of Cards by Tagore (theater)
16	May11	Celebration!	May13		