College of Humanities and the Arts · English & Comparative Literature

Creative Writing

ENGL 71

Spring 2026   Section 01   In Person   3 Unit(s)   01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026   Modified 01/24/2026

👤 Contact Information

- Instructor: Dr. Kristian O'Hare
- Email: kristian.ohare@sjsu.edu
- Office Location: Faculty Office Building (FOB) 215 (https://www.google.com/maps/place/Faculty+Offices+Building/@37.3346036,-121.8848429,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x808fccb90f698713:0xc1c8bc36cc853ee6!8m2!3d37.3345994!4d-121.8826542?shorturl=1)
- Office Hours: : MW 1:30pm - 2:30pm in office, Tuesdays in Zoom 1:30-2:30pm, or by appt in Zoom
- Class Meeting Time/Location: MW 10:30AM - 11:45AM / Sweeney Hall 231

🕐 Course Information

All course materials such as syllabus, readings, handouts, notes, and assignment instructions can be found on the Canvas Learning Management System course login website at http://sjsu.instructure.com. Most importantly, we will be having discussions and critiquing each other's work through Canvas. Please set your Canvas notifications so that you receive announcements, which will be sent out regularly. You are responsible for monitoring Canvas throughout the semester. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU on Spartan App Portal http://one.sjsu.edu (or other communication system as indicated by the instructor) to learn of any updates. For help using Canvas, see the Canvas Student Resources page (http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teachingtools/canvas/student_resources).

💻 Course Description and Requisites

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.

Satisfies 3A. Arts (Formerly Area C1).

Grading: Letter Graded.

✳ Classroom Protocols

Classroom Expectations & Community Guidelines

Our class time is brief and valuable, so we'll work together to create a respectful, engaged, and supportive learning space.

Technology Use

- Cell phones must be silenced and put away upon entering the classroom. Earpieces or earbuds should be removed.

- Laptops and tablets may be used only for course-related activities (readings, notes, assignments). Checking email, browsing social media, gaming, or unrelated web use is not permitted during class.

Respectful Participation

- Be present and engaged. Listen attentively, respond thoughtfully, and contribute constructively to discussions and workshops.

- Approach all peer and published work with curiosity and generosity, offering feedback that is specific, respectful, and rooted in helping the writer grow.

Professionalism & Courtesy

- Treat peers and your instructor with respect—in both spoken and written communication.

- Address professors appropriately and keep all communication professional.

Disruptive Behavior

- Inappropriate use of technology, disrespectful conduct, or repeated disruptions may result in being asked to leave class.

Our Classroom Community
In this class, we are a community of writers. We support each other as peers and as artists. The classroom is a judgment-free space—free of the impulse to harshly judge our own work or that of others. We respect confidentiality: what is shared in class stays in class. We listen as carefully as we speak, ask questions that invite dialogue, and allow our curiosity to guide us. We hold each other—and ourselves—to a standard of kindness.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. I understand that illnesses and emergencies happen in everyone's life, but this class is designed to be interactive and participatory. You can't participate if you aren't here. According to [University policy F69-24 (https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf)](https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf): "Students should attend all

meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefit for all members of the class."

Tardiness

Punctuality is important for maintaining a positive and productive classroom environment. I provide crucial information and reminders at the beginning of each class, and arriving late can cause students to miss valuable content that contributes to their success in the course. To minimize disruption and ensure that all students receive the full benefit of each session, please make every effort to arrive on time.

- Students who arrive more than **five minutes late** will be marked as **tardy**.
- **Frequent tardiness** (more than **three instances**) may result in a **grade penalty** or being marked absent for the day.
- If you know you'll be late, please **inform me in advance** (via email or Canvas) whenever possible.

Note: If you are consistently late due to circumstances beyond your control (e.g., work schedule), please reach out to me so we can discuss possible accommodations.

Late Policy

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class for which they are due.

Late Workshop Drafts: It is unprofessional to upload your workshop drafts late. Because of this, l*ate submissions will lose five points for each day they are late. I reserve the right to cancel a workshop if it is deemed that the writer has not given his/her/their peers reasonable time to provide good feedback.*

If you are absent or late on your workshop day, your grade will automatically be lowered by one letter (meaning if you an A in the course, your grade will be lowered to a B). If you foresee problems with the schedule, make an appointment to talk to me ASAP. The workshop can not be made up, unless there is an unexpected emergency, such as an unexpected hospitalization or death in your immediate family. Excused absences must be accompanied by a doctor's note or other official document.

▦ Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.
Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global

communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website (https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php)](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php).

English 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)](https://www.sjsu.edu/english)

📶 Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE Area 3A: Arts

Across the disciplines in Area 3 coursework, students cultivate and refine their affective, cognitive, and expressive faculties by studying works of the human intellect and imagination. Area 3 courses help students to respond subjectively as well as objectively to aesthetic experiences and to develop an understanding of the integrity of both emotional and intellectual responses. In their intellectual and subjective considerations, students develop a better understanding of the interrelationship between the self and the creative arts and the humanities in a variety of cultures.

3A (Arts) courses emphasize the integration of history, theory, aesthetics, and criticism. Performance and studio classes may be credited toward satisfaction of this subject area if their major emphasis is the integration of history, theory, and criticism. Audition-based courses will not be approved for GE.

GE Area 3A Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of a 3A course, students should be able to:

1. identify aesthetic qualities and processes that characterize works of the human intellect and imagination;
2. explore and articulate their own subjective aesthetic and intellectual responses to such works;
3. analyze the role and impact of the creative arts in culture and on the interrelationship of self and community; and
4. research and apply relevant aesthetic criteria and/or artistic conventions in effective written responses to works of art.

Writing requirement

3A classes require a minimum of 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

📖 Course Materials

Required Texts and Materials

- There is **no required** textbook for this course; instead, I have uploaded poems, short stories. and essays onto Canvas. You will be required to read these poems, stories, and essays. You must bring these readings to class, for I will be asking you specific questions and pointing out key passages from the text.
- A journal for class notes, writing exercises, daily observations, workshop responses, etc.
- Access to a desktop, laptop, or tablet.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Reading

Reading is one of the most vital elements of a writer's growth and development. As author Annie Proulx famously said, "Writing comes from reading, and reading is the finest teacher of how to write."

In this course, we'll practice reading like writers—not just for enjoyment, but as a way to sharpen our awareness of craft. You'll be encouraged to blend emotional responses (How does this make me feel?) with critical attention (What choices has the writer made to create this effect?). By studying how authors use language, structure, sound, image, and voice, you'll gain insights you can carry into your own writing.

The goal is not mastery, but exposure: learning to notice what writing is doing and how different techniques work across genres.

Attendance and Participation

This class is built on shared discussion, collaboration, and community. Each class session builds on the last, and your presence—and active involvement—are essential.

Attendance: I will take attendance at the start of each class. Absences will affect your grade, and excessive absences may result in failing the course.

Participation: Participation means more than showing up. It includes engaging in workshops, offering thoughtful peer feedback, asking questions, contributing to discussion, completing in-class writing, and collaborating in group activities. If you are present but consistently disengaged, it will negatively affect your grade.

While we all have occasional "off" days, consistent participation is expected. Our learning is richer when every voice is part of the conversation.

Daily Writings

Daily Writings are short, low-stakes writing assignments designed to help you practice craft skills we're working on in class—such as imagery, character, and dialogue. There will be **9 Daily Writings** over the semester.

Major Writing Assignments

You will complete the following creative pieces over the semester:

- One poem (1–2 pages)

- One short story (1000–1500 words) **OR** two flash fiction pieces (500–750 words each)
- One short nonfiction piece (500–750 words)

Workshops

You will participate in **two workshops** during the semester:

- **One poetry workshop**

- **One prose workshop** (students choose either fiction *or* nonfiction)

Workshops are an opportunity to:

- Share your work with the class

- Receive reader-based feedback from peers

- Practice identifying strengths, patterns, and possibilities in creative work

Workshop pieces must be posted to Canvas one week before your scheduled date so peers have time to read and respond. Feedback should be both written and oral.

We will discuss workshop etiquette in class, but the core principle is this: writing is personal, and sharing it is an act of trust. Respond with empathy, respect, and curiosity. Feedback in this course is exploratory rather than prescriptive, and you are not required to revise workshop pieces unless you choose to do so.

Post-Workshop Reflections (Poetry and Prose)

After your poem or prose piece is workshopped, you will submit a short reflection on the experience. These reflections are meant to help you process feedback, recognize patterns in how readers experience your work, and identify areas of craft awareness.

You are not required to revise your work. This assignment is about reflection, not correction.

Final Reflection Essay

The final reflection asks you to write honestly and specifically about what you took from this class—what changed, what stuck, and what you noticed about your own writing.

✔ Grading Information

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.

How I Grade
I expect good work. I expect work that is genuine and meaningful. Creative writing is a subjective field but it is very clear when a writer is creating work without real effort.

- Unless I make changes and announce otherwise, the final course grade breaks down as follows:
    - Daily Writings: 8 writings x 5 points =40 points
    - Poetry (workshop, written critiques, and participation): 100 points
    - Prose (workshop, written critiques, and participation): 150 points
    - Post-Workshop Reflections (one poetry, one prose): 50 points
    - Final Reflection Essay: 50 points
    - Attendance and Participation: 100 points
        - If you are present and active in class, you will get a boost on your final grade. If you are not active and miss many sessions, your final grade will be affected.
- *Your grade in Canvas is not representative of your grade in this course: I factor in overall performance (participation, professionalism, attendance, etc.). No grade haggling. I do not negotiate grades. If you are concerned with your grade (especially by midterm) and want to know how to do better in the future, I welcome appointments to discuss possible strategies for improvement.*

SJSU Academic Integrity Policy

A student's commitment to learning, as evidenced by his or her enrollment at San Jose State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy require all students to be honest in their academic course work. Faculty are required to report all infractions to the office of Judicial Affairs. The policy on academic integrity can be found here (https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/SJSU-Academic-Integrity-Policy-F15-7.pdf). The SJSU rules against plagiarism are set forth in the SJSU Catalog, which defines plagiarism as the act of representing the work of another as one's own (without giving appropriate credit) regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements.

Plagiarism at SJSU includes, but is not limited to: (1) the act of incorporating the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts thereof, or the specific substance of another's work, without giving appropriate credit, and representing the product as one's own work. It is the role and obligation of each student to know the rules that preserve academic integrity and abide by them at all times. This includes learning and following the particular rules associated with specific classes, exams, and/or course assignments. Ignorance of these rules is not a defense to the charge of violating the Academic Integrity Policy.

ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS

In this Introduction to Creative Writing course, your goal is to develop your own voice, creativity, and critical thinking as a writer. This course values the messy, imperfect process of drafting, revising, and discovering what your work is trying to say. All assignments must be your **original work**, reflecting your own ideas, language, and effort.

The use of artificial intelligence tools—such as ChatGPT, Claude, or similar programs—to generate, rewrite, "clean up," or significantly alter your creative work is **not allowed**. Using AI in this way short-circuits the learning process, dilutes your voice, and interferes with your development as a writer.

A Note on Grammar, Style, and Evaluation

This is a creative writing course, not a copyediting course. I will not be grading primarily on grammar or surface-level correctness. Occasional errors are expected and acceptable. I will comment on grammar or mechanics only when issues are so frequent or severe that they interfere with meaning or readability.

Your grade will be based primarily on **craft**—including imagery, voice, structure, risk-taking, specificity, revision, and engagement with course concepts—not on polished or "perfect" prose.

Because grammar is not the primary basis of evaluation, using AI tools to polish or rewrite your work is unnecessary and inappropriate for this course.

A Note on Grammarly and Similar Editing Tools

You may use Grammarly or similar tools **only after completing a full draft on your own**. These tools may be used to check spelling, punctuation, or basic grammar—not to rewrite sentences, suggest alternate phrasing, or generate language.

You are responsible for accepting or rejecting each suggestion.

If you use Grammarly or a similar tool, you must:

- Keep your original draft.

- Be able to explain what changes you made and why.

Draft History Requirement

All major writing assignments in this course require **proof of process**. You must be able to provide evidence of your drafting and revision history upon request. Acceptable draft history may include handwritten drafts, saved file versions, Google Docs version history, tracked changes, screenshots, or workshop drafts with peer feedback.

Submitting work without any draft history—especially work that appears to have been rewritten or polished using AI tools—undermines the purpose of this course. **If you are unable to provide draft history when asked, the assignment will receive an automatic zero (F), regardless of the quality of the final submission.**

Using AI in place of your own creative work violates the University's Academic Integrity Policy and will be treated as plagiarism.

To protect the integrity of your work:

- Keep a clear draft history for each assignment.

- Bring questions about any "gray areas" to me **before** submitting your work.

🏛 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

Schedule/Calendar below is subject to change. Always check Canvas for the most up to date information on assignments, readings, and due dates.

Week	Dates	Overview
One	M Jan 26 & W Jan 28	• [Week One Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-one-overview?module_item_id=17385284)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-one-overview?module_item_id=17385284)
Two	M Feb 2 and W Feb 4	• [Week Two Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-two-overview?module_item_id=17385286)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-two-overview?module_item_id=17385286)
Three	M Feb 9 and W Feb 11	• [Week Three Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-three-overview?module_item_id=17385287)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-three-overview?module_item_id=17385287)
Four	M Feb 16 and W Feb 18	• [Week Four Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-four-overview?module_item_id=17385288)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-four-overview?module_item_id=17385288)

Five	M Feb 23 and W Feb 25	• [Week Five Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-five-overview?module_item_id=17385289)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-five-overview?module_item_id=17385289)
Six	M Mar 2 and W Mar 4	• [Week Six Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-six-overview?module_item_id=17385291)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-six-overview?module_item_id=17385291)
Seven	M Mar 9 and W Mar 11	• [Week Seven Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-seven-overview?module_item_id=17385292)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-seven-overview?module_item_id=17385292)
Eight	M Mar 16 and W Mar 18	• [Week Eight Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-eight-overview?module_item_id=17385293)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-eight-overview?module_item_id=17385293)
Nine	M Mar 23 and W Mar 25	• [Week Nine Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-nine-overview?module_item_id=17385294)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-nine-overview?module_item_id=17385294)
Ten	M Mar 30 and Apr 1	• [Week Ten Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-ten-overview?module_item_id=17385295)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-ten-overview?module_item_id=17385295)
Eleven	M Apr 6 and W Apr 8	• [Week Eleven Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-eleven-overview?module_item_id=17385296)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-eleven-overview?module_item_id=17385296)
Twelve	M Apr 13 and W Apr 15	• [Week Twelve Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-twelve-overview?module_item_id=17385298)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-twelve-overview?module_item_id=17385298)
Thirteen	M Apr 20 and W Apr 22	• [Week Thirteen Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-thirteen-overview?module_item_id=17385299)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-thirteen-overview?module_item_id=17385299)
Fourteen	M Apr 27 and W Apr 29	• [Week Fourteen Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-fourteen-overview?module_item_id=17385300)](https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-fourteen-overview?module_item_id=17385300)

Fifteen	M May 4 and W May 6	• Week Fifteen Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-fifteen-overview?module_item_id=17385301)
Sixteen	M May 11 and W May 13	• Week Sixteen Overview (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1620501/pages/week-sixteen-overview?module_item_id=17385302)