SJSU | DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Spring 2024 Newsletter

Table of Contents

Dr. Vee Lawson Joining SJSU's Professional & Technical Writing Team in Fall 2024 1

Nick Taylor Takes the Wheel 3

CLA Brings Literary Luminaries to SJSU 4

The Steinbeck Fellowship: The Gift That Keeps on Giving 5

ChatGPT's Effect on the Department of English and Comparative Literature 7

Reed Magazine Emerges from Pandemic Even Stronger 8

Technical Writing Graduate Spotlight: Mariah Faris 9

SJSU Welcomes Marcelo Hernandez Castillo, This Year's Lurie Professor 10

The Poets and Writers Coalition Club: A Friendly Space for All SJSU Writers! 12

How to Improve Confidence in Writing: A Conversation with First-Year Writing Director Dr. Ryan Skinnell 13

New Digital Humanities Center Brings New Innovation to the College 14

2024 English Department Scholarships! 15

Course Descriptions 16

Letter from the Chair 24

Dr. Vee Lawson Joining SJSU's Professional & Technical Writing Team in Fall 2024

By Koh Henderson and Roula Seikaly

San José State University's Department of English and Comparative Literature is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Vee Lawson (they/them). A 2024 graduate of Michigan State University, Vee's research interests include feminist, transgender, and queer rhetoric as well as the impact of writing and language on digital communities. Starting in the Fall 2024 semester, they are excited to teach ENGL 103 (Modern English) and ENGL 111 (Strategic Digital Content and Social Media Writing). Vee will be joining the Professional and Technical Writing Department alongside Dr. Mark Thompson, who is very excited to have them on board.

Vee grew up in Seattle, but has since lived in several states, most recently Michigan, where they earned their Ph.D. focusing on writing, rhetoric, and culture. While their passion for teaching came later in their education, their love of language began early. Vee recalls, "I think I've always been interested in lan-

guage… I was, you know, the kid that never stopped talking. I learned to read by accident, because my mother just wanted some peace and quiet. That poor woman!" It was through taking courses on pedagogy and feminist rhetoric that they discovered their love of working with students, especially supporting underserved communities and encouraging students to write for audiences beyond the classroom. Along with their two adorable cats (who have their own Instagram) and spouse, Natasha, Vee will bring a sense of fun and innovation to SJSU.

Today, Vee is an expert in social media writing, and has poured countless hours into the study of online communities and discourse, teasing out how communities shape themselves and why. Their endless curiosity about the why of both people and language inspired them to focus their dissertation research into studying the interplay of an online community at a critical turning point. Participants in this community turn to a kind of sharp humor, or "snark," as a way of coping with and responding to the influence of fundamentalist Christian media, a culture with which many "snarkers" had personal experience. As a feminist writer, Vee observed that the community began to split along strong ethical lines. On one side, participants were more than willing to weaponize sexism themselves in their judgment of fundamentalists. This group wasn't what drew Vee, who instead followed the splinter group, which approached the idea of snark from an exciting new perspective.

This new community was founded for the purpose of "deliberately story-based, ethical snark." As this community encouraged participants to share their own personal stories and engage in snark without sexism, a whole new way of connecting with one another and processing their feelings emerged. By studying how and why this community evolved through interviews, topic modeling, and digital data analysis techniques, Vee could make meaning out of a totally organic shift in online discourse around a culturally important topic. Adding storytelling to the community made all the difference. "When [the splinter group] did that, they actually opened up this really uncomfortable empathy with the fundamentalist women upon whom they're snarking. Because they're realizing that these experiences that they're sharing… were also affecting the women who were posting [fundamentalist media] on the internet, who were really in this space of both harming and being harmed," Vee recalls. Cross cultural empathy and communication are the heart of Vee's approach to teaching and language, which is just what we at SJSU are all about.

Vee rose to the top spot over the course of an intense interview process, during which they visited SJSU, sitting in on classes and presenting their research and teaching methodology to a panel of English department faculty between interview sessions. They also gave a presentation that was attended by students and professors. Vee loved what they saw and experienced here and was excited by their sense of what life as an SJSU teacher could include. Describing what sounds like a rigorous personal and professional experience, Lawson cheerfully recounted the courtesy and collegiality of their potential peers and the enthusiasm and preparedness students demonstrated in class. The warm reception they received from faculty and students alike was high on the list of reasons why they were happy to accept the appointment offer.

When asked to comment on Dr. Lawson's fitness for the position, English Department Chair Dr. Noelle Brada-Williams highlighted Lawson's deep and complementary skill set. "We had a couple of great finalists, but what I think what made Vee stand out is that they're very tech savvy. You know, we live in Silicon Valley. As writers, we know that technology can radically change how we do our jobs. We felt it would be most important that someone would not only be savvy with the technology that's available today, but would be agile enough to change and master whatever technology comes down the road."

Starting in the SJSU Fall 2024 semester, Dr. Lawson will teach ENGL 103 (Modern English) and ENGL 111 (Strategic Digital Content and Social Media Writing), a key Professional and Technical Writing elective course that, as the English Department's staffing level shifted in recent years, has not been taught regularly. A self-described "grammar nerd," Vee is enthusiastic about working with students who may have just started pursuing their English degree and those who have more writing experience under their belt. "I think grammar is such a fun tool. It doesn't have to be something you can use to win fights on the internet. That deep understanding of grammar can help you do so many more creative things with your writing in the future."

Vee is extremely excited about the ENGL 111 course, particularly as it involves much of their ongoing research and areas of interest. "Strategic digital content and writing for social media is entire-

ly my bag. I'm excited to be designing that course and including some real-world elements. As a graduate student at Michigan State University, Lawson led six sections of *Writing as Inquiry*, a course designed to help first-year students interrogate the historical meaning of "good writing" and the racial and gender implications embedded in that concept. Their passion for interdisciplinarity in teaching will profoundly influence the students enrolled in those courses, as will a proposed course on feminist writing and AI that Lawson hopes will clear the approval process before too long.

Dr. Lawson will be a tremendous asset to the Professional and Technical Writing Department, bringing broad experience and a contemporary, tech savvy perspective. By teaching feminist writing, they hope to show that students from diverse backgrounds can all succeed and find support and mentorship at SJSU. As a brilliant social-media writer, their strengths balance perfectly within the English Department, expanding students' access to an exemplary education. Vee's message to students at SJSU, and the words they live by, is "Always be curious, because you never know where your journey is going to take you."

Nick Taylor Takes the Wheel

By Samantha Denny and Jaden Giacchero

San José State University's Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program saw a leadership change this past semester, with Nick Taylor taking over as director from Alan Soldofsky. Soldofsky helped create the program in 2000-2001, making Taylor the second Director of the MFA in Creative Writing. The program has had a great tenure under Soldosfky's leadership, and now Taylor has taken the wheel to continue guiding the program and its students towards the future.

For Nick Taylor, an English professor at San José State for 17 years, teaching English and creative writing has always been his goal, especially since he went to graduate school for creative writing. He had high hopes of becoming a professor and felt gratified by helping others with their writing process. Taylor has worked adjacent to the field before,such as when he analyzed donor data for the College of William and Mary in Virginia. Taylor also worked as a computer programmer before grad school, which he says is very similar to working in creative writing, since both jobs involve sitting in front of a computer and writing for hours; computer programming just has a faster payoff than publishing a novel.

After working at the College of William and Mary, Nick Taylor joined San José State in the Department of English and Comparative Literature's Creative Writing program in 2007, teaching the fiction writing class and becoming *Reed Magazine's* faculty advisor. The fiction writing class allowed him to work more with the material that would become the basis for his four novels. Fiction writing allowed him to delve into more inspiring and innovative writing material. Throughout the program, Taylor found it the most rewarding to see students' progress for himself. The growth and development of the program continue to be of the utmost importance, adding vitality to the department. Taylor also worked with *Reed Magazine* for five years, helping to develop published editions of the magazine. The atmosphere of a literary magazine differs significantly from a fiction writing class,yet he found his time at *Reed Magazine* offered insight into the competitive publishing field and could serve as an advantageous research opportunity for MFA students.

After moving away from *Reed*, Taylor became the director of the Steinbeck Center from 2012 to 2021. While there, he worked to get the Steinbeck Center

more involved with the Creative Writing program so that M.FA students could interact more with the Steinbeck Fellows, recipients of the Steinbeck Fellowship working on a significant writing project. Nick Taylor also crafted the Graduate Steinbeck Fellowship for incoming MFA students with the goal of getting the center and the program to work closer together. The Graduate Steinbeck Fellowship is a one-year program that all newcomers to the MFA in Creative Writing and MA in English programs are eligible for. It provides one year's worth of full-time, in-state tuition to SJSU for a stipend in exchange for fellows participating in campus readings, campus literary events, and Steinbeck Center outreach to San José high schools.

Regarding his predecessor, Taylor said that Alan Soldofsky left big shoes to fill, given that he was the original director of the program. He also noted that Soldofsky kept documentation of several small tasks, like record-keeping, that no one thought about, but that Soldofsky had been handling throughout his time as director. His record keeping allowed Taylor to not only check in on the progress of current program features and facilities, but also to follow up with future plans within the department.

So far, Nick Taylor has handled the interviews of the newly admitted students of the MFA in Creative Writing, a process he enjoyed. He said it was fun to talk to all of these new program members and see who will be joining the workshops come Fall 2024. "It's been wonderful to feel like I can put my influence on the incoming class," he said. "It's been interesting to do admissions for the first time and see what I can do for the incoming class." Eager to start the upcoming years and their progression, Taylor plans to focus on the students' success at SJSU.

As for the program's future, Taylor plans to keep his concentration centered on advocating for students to submit their work to magazines and other publishing opportunities. There is an abundance of opportunities with the department that Taylor is excited for students to take advantage of. Taylor wants students to understand the emphasis on keeping steady and thorough habits throughout their writing careers. Hopefully, establishing a foundation of career-building qualities and practices within writing will influence students to be even more prepared to start their professional writing pursuits. It's a good habit to get into, he says, even early in your career.

CLA Brings Literary Luminaries to SJSU

By Fatima Mejia and Zach Drew

For over 30 years, the Center for Literary Arts has promoted contemporary literature and creative writing at San José State University. Writer and English professor Dr. Selena Anderson has served as the Center's director since 2018, and under her stewardship the CLA has continued to offer students and community members unique opportunities to engage with the literary arts. The CLA seeks to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and celebrate diverse perspectives through the medium of literature. One of the chief ways that the CLA achieves this goal is through its Craft Lecture Series.

The CLA Craft Lecture Series brings renowned authors to SJSU for live speaking events in which they explore and explain the intricacies of their craft. These talks—conveniently located on or near campus—provide the audience with unprecedented access to the inner workings of some of the most celebrated literary minds. In planning these lectures, Dr. Anderson draws on the interests of the SJSU community. "I ask folks—especially students—what they're reading. I try to match up with what my colleagues are teaching," she says. This tailored approach ensures that the chosen authors are relevant and engaging. Furthermore, to ensure that everybody has access, these events are completely free to attend.

The speakers that appeared during the 2023–24 series represent a veritable who's who of contemporary American writers. As Dr. Anderson explains, "My goal is to present a reading series that reflects what's happening in American literature. I also want to give students what I had been searching for as a young reader—that is, an alternative to the master narrative." The recently concluded series certainly bears this out, featuring a diverse array of established voices and rising talent.

Hua Hsu, winner of the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for his memoir *Stay True*, visited the Hammer Theater in September. Hsu's memoir follows his life as the son of Taiwanese immigrants, a self-identified music snob and introvert, and a young man faced with grief after his friend Ken dies due to a violent carjacking. During the post-reading interview, Hsu was asked what he learned throughout the lengthy writing

process of *Stay True*. Hsu says, "You can mourn and grieve, but you can also discuss the joy that gives that grief such meaning." Bringing in authors like Hsu allows students and community members to connect with great voices of the literary sphere and get a deeper look at the works they create.

Hua Hsu

Percival Everett, who spoke to a sold-out audience back in February, is another standout amongst the illustrious list of recent speakers. Everett is a highly awarded author of more than 20 books and a Distinguished Professor at the University of Southern California. His novel *Erasure* was recently adapted into the film *American Fiction*, which was nominated for five Academy Awards and won Best Adapted Screenplay. In addition to reading an excerpt from his novel *The Trees*, Everett spoke at length about his experience as a writer and academic throughout his prolific career. A central theme of his talk was the importance of intellectual curiosity. Everett's own appetite for knowledge informs his writing process as well. As he puts it, "Writing novels, for me, is an excuse to study something." Gaining such insight into the creative process of an accomplished writer like Everett makes the CLA Craft Lecture Series an invaluable resource for students and aspiring writers.

For SJSU's own hopeful writers, the CLA also hosts a Writer-in-Residence who works with members of the community and SJSU students alike. Upon registering for a creative consultation, around five to ten writers will receive one-on-one feedback about their current project. During the 2023–24 series, Colin Winnette, the author of *Users and Haints Stay*, ran the fall workshops; Kate Folk, author of *Out There*, hosted the second half of the series during the spring. Students who would like to participate only need to share a sample of the project they're working on, and appointments will be made on a first come, first served basis. To schedule an appointment, visit clasanjose.org/cla-writer-in-residence. The program is open to Bay Area writers of any experience level, and it is a welcoming space for creative exploration in the literary arts.

The CLA Craft Lecture Series and Writer-in-Residence programs bring SJSU students and community members together to engage with prominent authors in literature. Students who haven't participated before should absolutely consider taking advantage of this no-cost opportunity in the upcoming year. Dr. Anderson says it best: "Expect to meet your new favorite writer! You'll have the chance to meet an author who changes both the way you think about books and the way you think about yourself." The CLA is a vital resource for beginner and experienced literary enthusiasts in the Bay and a diverse space that fosters a cross-cultural exploration of literature. For future events, visit clasanjose.org .

The Steinbeck Fellowship: The Gift That Keeps on Giving

By Paul Anagaran and Daniela Sanchez Martinez

Since 2001, the Steinbeck Fellowship at San José State University has helped jumpstart many writers' careers. Enabled by the generosity of Martha Heasley Cox, the Steinbeck Fellowship program offers a stipend of $15,000 for selected fellows to continue their writing journey.

Though the program has long been a great success, changes made during the pandemic by then-coordinator Professor Nicholas Taylor have increased eligibility and thus, the number of applicants. Previously, writers who were interested in becoming a Steinbeck Fellow were required to be Bay Area residents. This decision to broaden its scope was made in response to global concerns in which traveling and going outside were becoming increasingly dangerous. While Bay Area residency is still encouraged by the program, it is no longer a requirement. This

change in eligibility allows any writer regardless of their location to qualify and contributed, along with significant outreach, to a record number of applicants from across the country.

That said, because of the growth in the number of applicants, the competition is fiercer, and the selection process has become increasingly difficult. The Steinbeck Fellowship program chooses six traditional fellows, along with five to six graduate fellows going into San José State's MFA/ Creative Writing or MA/English programs, to receive the prestige and stipend. After a lull in applications during the pandemic, the number of applicants has bounced back—nearly tripling in the last year alone. Current Steinbeck Fellowship coordinator Professor Keenan Norris says it has become increasingly difficult to choose finalists: "Even when we had one-third the number of applicants, we still had more than six people who were legitimately qualified to receive the fellowship." As a result, only minute differences in the quality of the application or the fit of the candidate end up determining who is selected.

Keenan Norris

While the selection process is extremely competitive, aspiring writers shouldn't be discouraged from tossing their hat in the ring. Norris notes that the program is looking for emerging writers who have experienced some success but "whom our fellowship can help in a substantial way." Applicants who fit this criteria may include those who have published stories or essays within well-regarded literary journals or magazines. He further elaborates on what the fellowship aims to accomplish, stating, "We just want to provide a launchpad for our wonderful writers." Along with helping writers get to where they are going, Norris highlights the resources at San José State University that fellows can avail themselves of, whether it be agent representation and advising, or full access to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library.

The acclamations of recent Steinbeck scholars add to the fellowship's growing prestige. *Afterparties*, a collection of short stories by the late Anthony Veasna So, won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 2021. Meron Haderon won the Caine Prize, a continent-wide literary prize, in 2021 for her short story "The Wall," and Francisco Gonzalez, one of this year's fellows, just won his second O. Henry Prize. Next month, 2021–22 fellow Uche Okonkwo will publish her book *A Kind of Madness*. These are only a few publications we can look forward to from these scholars.

The Steinbeck Fellowship program continues to propel fantastic writers. "The Steinbeck Fellowship has not only provided incredible resources, but also a strong community of writers," says 2023–24 fellow AJ Bermudez, who is currently moving toward the completion of her second collection of short stories. "I couldn't be more honored to be in the mix with this diverse, insightful, and inspiring crew," says Bermudez. Xueyou Wang, a 2023–24 fellow working on her collection of short stories, says, "Receiving the Steinbeck Fellowship has been deeply galvanizing and motivating. I really appreciate the ways in which the fellowship demanded that I put my values into practice, to create fiction that builds worlds in which we can see a more just and humane future for everyone."

Countering the major growth in tech culture, Norris reminds us that this fellowship is essentially a gift to writers and artists alike. Students could listen to current fellows read their work and ask them about the writing process, the themes in their work, or other questions about their craft in May at this year's spring reading. Norris discusses the ways the fellowship serves the larger literary culture at SJSU: "[It] gives attention to the MFA Creative Writing program in general, along with the great work that Dr.

Selena Anderson and [the] Center for Literary Arts do, in addition to the Steinbeck Center more generally, in addition to our wonderful English department and Creative Writing program."

For more information about this year's Steinbeck scholars and other fellowship-related updates, please visit sjsu.edu/steinbeck/awards-fellowships/steinbeck-fellowship/index.php.

ChatGPT's Effect on the Department of English and Comparative Literature

By Mikaela Anderson and Vivian Ly

ChatGPT

In the 16 months since its November 2022 release, ChatGPT has taken the world by storm. Developed by OpenAI, a tech company headquartered in San Francisco, ChatGPT is one of many generative artificial intelligence (AI) models that have been released within the last two years. Generative AI uses machine-learning algorithms to understand, predict, and create new content from data. This means that the writing abilities of programs like ChatGPT can be used to complete college assignments, including original essays.

New technology is often disruptive, and generative AI is no exception; in the last two years, the use of ChatGPT has created substantial issues for teachers and college professors. One survey conducted at Boston University found that three-quarters of students have used AI to help with coursework. Some of the uses listed by the students pose no ethical issues, such as asking ChatGPT for help with finding sources to cite for a paper or using it to check grammar and sentence structure. However, ways to cheat using AI are myriad, and many professors complain of students using ChatGPT to generate entire essays. Many colleges have enacted AI-use policies in an attempt to meet the issue head-on, but it's difficult to regulate such a new and rapidly changing technology.

Professor Mark Thompson has been teaching at San José State University for ten years in the Department of English and Comparative Literature. Regarding ChatGPT's value for academic use, he says, "I've used it to summarize academic articles and for research to find literature. I think it could help with research if you know enough about the topic that you can judge [the results]. It's good at taking the drudgery and the bookkeeping part and letting people focus on the creative part, but I don't think it should stand in for actual thinking and effort."

ChatGPT may have value for research, but that's about where its usefulness ends for Professor Thompson. "After working for so long in writing, it's easier for me to write something myself instead of creating a bad version and having to rewrite it. Part of my background is sentence analysis, and I don't like how ChatGPT writes." Many critics of ChatGPT would agree, with its detractors citing the stilted, unnatural way that it often writes. It's also prone to making errors and can even "hallucinate" information, making it especially crucial for a human editor to go over any text produced by AI.

One survey by Study.com found that over a quarter of professors have caught students using AI to cheat. Professor Thompson has experienced several instances of students using generative AI to cheat, including a student who wrote an essay on Edgar Allen Poe using ChatGPT: "I typed the prompt into ChatGPT, and it basically wrote out her entire essay." A more outrageous example involved a student using AI on an assignment to create an instructional video. The student used one program to generate the instructions, then another for text-to-voice, and finally, a third program to auto-generate the video.

Aside from issues with cheating, the use of generative AI has also caused concern for professors regarding its potential negative effects on students' writing. "It's so easy to [use ChatGPT] if you don't have a lot of time and would otherwise turn in something bad. It concerns me that students aren't developing their brains as writers and learning how to organize and give information. When you have something else doing the heavy lifting, you're just a stenographer," Professor Thompson says.

Yet another area students can run into trouble is using generative AI on topics they lack knowledge about. Stylistically, the content generated might look okay, but the facts may be incorrect. Unlike

humans, AI doesn't have the ability to discern what is a reputable source and what is not.

ChatGPT's release has created a number of issues for professors and students, but the outlook isn't totally negative. With Professor Vee Lawson joining the Professional and Technical Writing department in the fall, potential plans to integrate AI into class offerings are in the works. Professor Thompson says, "We're looking with our new hire at expanding our use of AI and building our own AIs in ways that make sense for the projects that we're working on. It's definitely a tool that's being used professionally, so the idea is [to ask ourselves], 'How are professional tech writers using it, and how can we bring that into the classroom?'"

Reed Magazine Emerges from Pandemic Even Stronger

By Dania Quiroz Lara and Kiara Schuette

San José State University is home to *Reed Magazine*, California's oldest literary journal. *Reed Magazine* started in 1867 as a student writing pamphlet and has since grown to be a well-established and respected international literary magazine. Recently, we were able to catch up with the magazine's editor-in-chief, Helen Meservey. Meservey revealed that this is her last semester as the head of the magazine and shared some details about her time at *Reed Magazine*, recent accomplishments, and current projects.

Meservey started working with *Reed Magazine* as a student and an editor the year after the magazine's 150th year. She entered her role as editor-in-chief in the summer of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Meservey describes her role then as being "all over the map." She persevered through the lockdown era and printed her first published issue of *Reed Magazine*. "At this time in 2021, I was in my mother's spare bedroom in Massachusetts trying to coordinate with a printer in Pennsylvania, an editor in New York, and a whole class in California." As she recalls this time, she emanates enthusiasm for *Reed Magazine* and the students waiting to be part of her class and the journey.

Meservey says that *Reed Magazine* is a "flagship" of the Department of English and Comparative Literature because it incorporates all aspects of what the department strives to teach. The literary magazine features fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and even art. *Reed Magazine* operates as a class within the English Department but is open to all university students. During the fall semester, students review submissions and engage in discussion to determine which pieces will be published in the next issue. The spring semester enables students to gain experience with copyediting, layout and design, marketing, and everything else that goes into publishing a book. "I think it's important for the department. I think it's definitely important for students, and I think it's important for the university."

Reed Magazine hosted a panel at the Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) in 2021. The AWP Conference & Bookfair is an annual four-day event for writers, teachers, students, editors, and publishers. It attracts thousands of writers to engage in conversation about the literary world. Although it was a virtual panel, the organization was thrilled to participate in the event. According to Meservey, the panel was essential because *Reed Magazine* is

one of the few literary journals with the privilege of announcing the AWP contest winners. The annual conference is also a critical opportunity for *Reed Magazine* to network and expand its reach.

Reed Magazine's success and outreach have helped boost the number of submissions it receives. This year, *Reed Magazine* received 3,740 fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and art submissions, a 76% increase from last year's 2,861 submissions. The number of submissions this year was a welcome surprise for Meservey. *Reed Magazine* has won two Pushcart Prizes, an award from a respected literary press devoted to writers. These wins garnered a commendation from the mayor of San José for works featured in Issues 153 and 154, further stamping *Reed Magazine's* impact on the literary world and the university.

Meservey is currently cementing *Reed Magazine's* legacy in a number of ways. The organization launched an archive project in 2020 in collaboration with the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. The team is currently on the cusp of releasing the first of their digitized editions of *Reed Magazine*, beginning with Issue 152. She hopes to digitize Issues 152, 153, and 154 within the coming weeks.

Reed Magazine hopes to expand its presence on and off campus further and is working to achieve this through several mediums. The magazine's podcast, *In the Reeds*, accessed through the *Reed Magazine* website or on YouTube, has episodes featuring interviews with the judges and winners of the recent *Reed Magazine* contests. Additionally, *Reed Magazine* has a newsletter and various social media platforms. The *Reed Magazine* Instagram account has seen an increase in engagement and was recently tagged in a post naming it one of the top 25 literary magazines in the country.

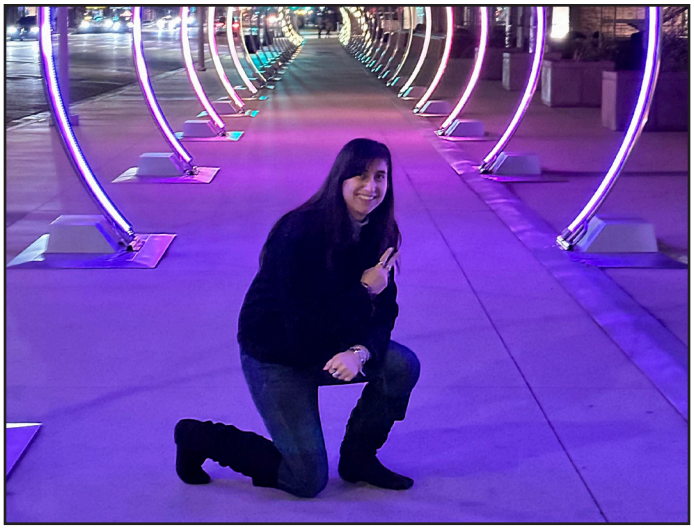
Meservey hopes these projects will continue to expand the magazine's impact following her departure. She says, "The enthusiasm of the students, and the thrill of producing something beautiful, creative, and positive — that doesn't get old." What would she like to see for *Reed Magazine* in the next ten years? She hopes that everyone on campus will have heard of *Reed Magazine*. She encourages anyone on campus to contribute to *Reed Magazine* by joining the class or by sending in a submission. *Reed Magazine* is looking forward to welcoming Professor Brook McClurg as the new editor in chief in the fall 2024 semester.

Technical Writing Graduate Spotlight: Mariah Faris

By Vienna Alexander and Michael Lopez

Choosing a career path is one of the most important decisions for university students, so finding a field that represents your interests is essential. One San José State University graduate recalls the path to her career and provides advice for future professionals. Mariah Faris, a 2016 graduate of the English with Concentration in Professional and Technical Writing program and current senior technical writer, knew that she had always been interested in the intersection of technology and writing, but didn't always know there was a career path where she could combine those interests. "I want to work in tech, but I also really want to write. What can I do?" Faris recalls asking herself. What she wanted to do was a career field that she didn't know about: technical writing.

Following her love for writing, Faris majored in English at SJSU. Discussing her career interests in college, she says that she knew tech companies had people writing for their websites, and that was the kind of writing she was interested in. When she learned about the technical writing program, she quickly changed her major concentration and was excited about being able to apply both of her passions. She says, "It just made me so happy because I got the best of both worlds; I got to work in tech, but then I also got to do what I love most and don't get sick of doing all day, which is writing."



Faris found many of her English classes to be beneficial. She had an affinity for English literature and had a great time taking the Shakespeare course. She also enjoyed taking technical writing classes in her new concentration. "I liked so many different classes for different reasons, but my favorite tech writing one would have to be Dr. Mark Thompson's document design course E110: UX and Document Design," she said. Faris really enjoyed the concept of UI (User Interface) and being able to design documents; her passion for it helped her become a visual expert at her current company.

In terms of important class projects, Faris immediately had one that came to mind. "I can't emphasize how critical it is to take the English 107: Technical Writing final project as seriously as you can." Faris recounts how doing the project and having it in her

portfolio helped her and many of her classmates land jobs. “That went in my portfolio; that’s what impressed companies.”

On landing positions within companies, Faris stressed the importance of internships and networking. No matter where students are at in their studies and careers, these are crucial opportunities. She explains how there are two different types of internships: programs for students about to graduate, and opportunities for younger students. The former can help students immediately transition from college into a job at the company,while the latter can help students build experience that could get them a job at the company or elsewhere.

Faris is currently a senior technical writer at Netskope, a global cybersecurity leader. She works with the technical writing team and communicates with other teams to create documentation, and they even create informational content, such as short videos with scripts and graphics. Faris also works to onboard interns, and she plays the role of an editor and UX (User Experience) writer on top of being a technical writer. Prior to Netskope, she worked at Zscaler, another top cybersecurity company, also doing technical writing. In her current role, she takes opportunities to create and keep in touch with professional connections. “I’ve been at this company that I’m currently at for almost three years now, and I’m still networking.”

When it comes to strategies for Professional and Technical Writing students, Faris highlighted the importance of building up a portfolio. “Do well on your projects. Your portfolio is key,” she said. Faris advised keeping any relevant pieces of writing and building a portfolio, as well as helping companies or fellow students—such as those in clubs, where documentation is needed—who may need technical writing done for them. Throughout the interview, Faris made it clear that communication was a key skill that needed to be practiced, as it could help in building tech writing experience, networking to land jobs, and performing said jobs more easily. She notes, “The more writing you do, the better [of a] writer you become.” Putting in the effort to do as much writing as possible and polish up work to build a portfolio worked for Faris. She advised that students in or looking to get into professional and technical writing should do the same.

Even in her current position as a senior technical writer, Faris is still looking into the future. One of her main goals is to become a technical writing manager by her tenth year of work. She has been in the industry for about seven to eight years. She sees herself in that leadership position because of her interest in the people aspect of the role. She explains, “I like seeing what new people come in, what they are bringing, and the ideas they are running with.”

Overall, Faris’s experiences at San José State have been beneficial to her career. She explains, “All of that writing is helpful, and I feel like college prepared me. Even just your regular English classes helped.” All of her experiences have stayed with her, and Faris still remembers the excitement she had for her SJSU classes and the impact it had on her aspirations. “I genuinely loved it; it really influenced my creativity. I enjoyed [it] so much, and I was like, ‘Oh my god, I want to carry this with me.’”

SJSU Welcomes Marcelo Hernandez Castillo, This Year’s Lurie Professor

By Tanvir Kaur and Nicholas Nash

Joining the Department of English and Comparative Literature as this year’s Lurie Professor, Marcelo Hernandez Castillo is a poet and a professor at St. Mary’s University, where he teaches in the Creative Writing program and in the Ashland University low-residency Master of Fine Arts program. He was the first undocumented student to graduate from the Helen Zell Writers’ Program at the University of Michigan. He later helped found Undocupoets, an organization that promotes the work of undocumented poets in the United States and also holds poetry workshops for incarcerated youth in Northern California. Some of Castillo’s works include *Children of the Land* and *Cenzontle*, both of which have been National Public Radio Best Books of the Year. The latter also won the Great Lakes Colleges Association New Writers Award in Poetry in 2019.

As Lurie Professor, Castillo is currently teaching English 240: Poetry Writing Workshop. The Lurie Author-in-Residence Program is a fund established by the Lurie family, which lets San José State University offer a one-semester professorship to a distinguished author who teaches a writing workshop. Nominees are selected by the creative writing faculty, and the invitation is extended to the chosen author

for the following spring semester. The choice depends partly on logistics, such as whether an author can feasibly visit the university for a single semester, but also on curricular needs and the variety of candidates. The chosen candidate gets awarded the title of Lurie Professor for that year.

"The program allows [our department] to bring in a distinguished author in a variety of genres who comes to teach a graduate course, usually a workshop," says English Department Chair Dr. Noelle Brada-Williams. For the curious student, she recommends the bulletin board outside the 102 office of the English building with pictures of all the Lurie Professors. "Getting a sense of the cumulative

impact is a great thing to understand, the fact we're bringing in people every year. If you came in as a freshman, you could meet at least four. It's one of the most valuable things."

Castillo began writing poetry in high school to impress a girl he was infatuated with, who would later become his wife. Castillo explains, "I began reading and writing poetry in high school because I was in love with a girl named Rubi . . . 17 years later, we're married with a baby." Nearly 20 years later, she continues to be Castillo's inspiration in his poetry. "All of my poems are for her. My first book of poems is about her and for her, although it never names her. In a way I'm always and still writing because I'm in love with a girl named Rubi," Castillo explains.

While his origin with poetry came from a teenage love, it soon became a protective tool against his undocumented status. Since Castillo grew up undocumented, he was careful in everything he did because "being undocumented means you have to monitor everything you do because one mistake can be catastrophic." This included perfecting his writing abilities so there would be nothing indicating his undocumented status. Castillo explains that writing and poetry were "a way to kind of offset any questions or any suspicions about my documentation status . . . I started writing so that nobody could suspect anything of me, so that I could master language."

The more he wrote poetry, the more Castillo realized that it was the one thing in his life that he could "control," and unlike many things in life that require documentation, poetry did not require anything other than simply writing. "Poetry made sense to me in a way most things didn't. You didn't need a car for poetry, or a Social Security number, or a passport. It was there for the taking, and it was beautiful," says Castillo.

Castillo's teaching style at SJSU consists of in-class writing prompts and group critiques, a curriculum which has made quite the impression according to Professor Nicholas Taylor, director of the Creative Writing program. "I keep hearing from the students that his writing exercises are incredibly innovative and helpful. Several students described walking out of a class session with a nearly finished poem," says Professor Taylor.

"Castillo is a well-known contemporary poet and memoirist; that's always a good thing to bring into a program like ours," Professor Taylor explains, "Many of our students are also undocumented, or have family members who are, so [his] experience provides a powerful model for them."

Through his poetry, Castillo advocates for undocumented people in the United States. "I see it as my way of effecting the most change that I am capable of in an area where my voice is most likely to be projected," he says. "I'm just working in the space that I can enact the most change."

Undocupoets began as a campaign protesting the regulations of eight major poetry publishing competitions, which specified US citizenship as an entry requirement. After its success, the campaign grew to include a fellowship for undocumented writers and partnered with other nonprofits such as the Sibling Rivalry Press Foundation. For his work with Undocupoets, Castillo was awarded the Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award and the position of Poet Laureate for both Yuba and Sutter County. Castillo's website can be found at marcelohernandezcastillo.com and his work with Undocupoets at undocupoets.org.

The Poets and Writers Coalition Club: A Friendly Space for All SJSU Writers!

By Sarah Howard and Kyle Chow

One of the many concerns SJSU writers have when it comes to their craft is that they often do not have access to a second eye to look over their work. This can be daunting to deal with, especially if writers need to submit work that will be graded. This is where the Poets and Writers Coalition, or PWC, comes in. Located at the Boccardo Business Center in room 320, this club serves as a safe place where

Rye Lomax

writers of all backgrounds and skill levels can build a community to assist each other in their writing.

The PWC's creation dates all the way back to late 2013, and its main goal was to connect SJSU students from all backgrounds and majors. Though it is connected with the English department, it is not exclusive to English majors, as all are welcome, including beginner writers. "Through this, we hope to build a community of writers that can not only support each other, but through our unique perspectives and experiences, forge stronger writers," says Rye Lomax, current president of the PWC. This has definitely been beneficial for the members of the club. One of the club's current members, Eric Diaz, says that he enjoys "interacting with others who also have an interest in writing and seeing their own perspectives on this art form."

All club members can participate in a variety of activities, such as following unique writing prompts for the day, having discussions about everyone's writing struggles and what inspires them, or participating in quiet writing sessions. Currently, the club hosts a collaborative writing project known as a zine. A zine is a type of published work where everyone can contribute a piece of writing that follows a single theme. It can take the form of an online magazine or a printed booklet. This year, for the PWC's zine, the theme is nostalgia, and it will be accessible for free on a digital publishing platform called Issuu.

Rye believes that writing is an important skill to hone even outside of the creative space, especially since students are already writing for their courses. Students' writing skills will eventually carry over to the professional world regardless of their field. Rye says, "Even in positions that have little to do with writing, like computer engineering, being a strong writer can really help, particularly in getting your ideas across."

The PWC's environment has managed to foster growth for the writers involved, as it allows students to hear feedback on their own writing as well as experience diverse writing styles. Lee, a student who attends the PWC's weekly meetings, expresses the effect the club has had on their writing. "I really do feel like this is where I've grown the most in my creative writing—it's encouraged me to write in forms and genres I usually don't, and I love hearing others talk about their writing. Other people's perspectives [are] one of the most important things to have as a writer," says Lee.

The PWC believes that humanity is built on stories. Stories are told daily through different forms of media, such as movies, music, books, and even social media platforms. They provide a means for individuals to stay connected with one another. "Stories are how we learn to become who we are, how we learn to interact with the world around us, and how we find meaning in that world," Rye says. "It is those stories that the PWC wants to connect with, building upon and understanding these stories through the form of writing."

The PWC will be collaborating with the SJSU chapter of "Her Campus," a media platform that seeks to

empower the voices of college women, in a seminar called "Story Through Poetry 101." Rye tells us, "In this seminar, we hope to equip new or aspiring writers with some important forms of writing and poetry combined with the parts of a story. That way, by the end, everyone can write their own narrative through the form of poetry."

Currently, the PWC meets every Friday from 3–4 P.M. If a student cannot physically be present, they may use the free communication app Discord to join the club's server. From there, they can access Zoom links to join the meetings virtually.

To learn more about the PWC, visit their Linktree, where you can access links to their zines and their social media: linktr.ee/PWCSJSU

How to Improve Confidence in Writing: A Conversation with First-Year Writing's Dr. Ryan Skinnell

By Phyllis Aboagye and Joshua Togonon

Writing is an essential skill that plays a crucial role in academics, professional life, and personal communication. However, many students struggle with developing confidence in their writing abilities. The challenge of developing confidence in writing stems from various factors, but primarily it is the feeling that one's work is not good enough. Fortunately, there are strategies that students can employ to improve their confidence in writing.

Delving deeper into this pervasive issue, the root cause of the problem often lies in a persistent feeling of inadequacy—students feel that their writing is subpar. This self-doubt significantly impacts their writing approach, whether in the classroom or beyond. To gain insight into these challenges and potential solutions, we turned to Dr. Ryan Skinnell, an associate professor of rhetoric and composition. He shared his insights on the hurdles students face in developing writing confidence, as well as possible methods they could adopt to improve their self-trust in their writing abilities. He comments, "Most students have a relationship to writing in school that is largely antagonistic. There is so much focus on what's wrong with their writing . . . students are being taught whatever they produce isn't good enough. They often come with a significant amount of anxiety." The anxiety students develop about writing from a young age affects how they view the work they do in their classes and how they approach writing. This sense of unease impacts their self-perception and extends to the output of their efforts.

Consequently, the lack of confidence students have affects the quality of their writing in many ways. Dr. Skinnell says, "Lack of confidence impacts a student's writing in lots of ways. The first and most obvious way is that kids freeze up and can't do the work at all. They are so steeped in trauma and anxiety they can't bring themselves to do anything in fear they will be chastised or shamed. A much more common one is that they are fixated on correction and correctness. They are focused on saying things perfectly and using perfect punctuation and grammar." This over-emphasis on perfection is a double-edged sword. At the same time it, in theory, may lead to grammatically correct prose, it may do so at the expense of creativity and individuality. It is crucial to understand that initial drafts are only a starting point, not the finish line. Perfection is an eternally elusive

goal, especially on the first attempt of any endeavor, and a fixation on it can blind students to the importance of constructive criticism. This preoccupation with flawlessness often creates an apprehension of judgment, deterring students from seeking feedback. This fear can create a barrier to one of the most important aspects of writing improvement.

Indeed, receiving and giving feedback is a major part of writing. Dr. Skinnell says, "Feedback is the thing, if you wanna teach someone to write, to learn to write, what you need more than anything else, the chance to write and someone who will engage with

their writing sincerely . . . what student writers need is help prioritizing things that need revision or even repetition. What are the things you are doing well that you can keep doing?" By receiving and giving focused feedback, students can improve their confidence in writing and even help others improve their confidence in writing.

In addition to feedback, there are many other ways that students can improve their level of confidence in their writing. Students can improve their confidence by figuring out what areas of their writing they need support in. Dr. Skinnell suggests that this process is highly individual and must be tailored to fit the needs of each specific student: "It is so different from one student to the next. In some ways, it needs to be driven by students. Part of a student's job is finding places to seek that out. If what you need to develop as a writer is more support and encouragement, it's important for you to seek those out." SJSU offers several such resources for students who are looking for help in improving their writing, including the Writing Center (sjsu.edu/writingcenter/) and Peer Connections (sjsu.edu/peerconnections/index.php). The Writing Center is an especially great resource for students who want to improve their confidence in their writing. Dr. Skinnell says, "The Writing Center, in particular, is sort of known for their one-on-one tutoring sessions. They have also got a ton of videos and blog posts and handouts and things like that, so you don't necessarily need to schedule a meeting to talk about your essay." SJSU also has several writing clubs and opportunities for students to gain confidence in their writing, including the College of the Humanities and Arts Newsletter and in Journalism.

In order to gain confidence as a writer, it is important to remember that growing in your writing is a continual and incremental process. This journey is cultivated over time with dedication, patience, and practice. Students and instructors can work together to help improve their writing abilities and confidence in their writing. Dr. Skinnell says, "One thing I think I do often and well is that I take writers seriously wherever they are in their process. I engage sincerely in their work, as if it has value on its own, which it does, in an attempt to make it a communicative process, not a process where I know everything and they are trying to show me they know stuff. This boosts their confidence." Dr. Skinnell has taught many writers at SJSU, but one who stands out to him is a former student who is now in a tenure-track position at a community college in the Central Valley. Dr. Skinnell says it was nice to see her grow and develop as a writer and teacher. For all students with literary aspirations, it is important for them to remember that developing confidence in their writing won't happen overnight; instead, it is achieved through persistent practice and a belief that every step forward is a step towards writing excellence.

New Digital Humanities Center Brings New Innovation to the College

By Arya Emadi and Andrew Allison

After securing a highly competitive Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Arts, SJSU's Humanities and the Arts Department has opened a new Digital Humanities Center (DHC). According to Dr. Katherine D. Harris, Professor of Literature and Digital Humanities and a driving force behind the DHC, "The Center is an intellectual space for coming together to work on projects. Don't think of it as a place for simply loaning tech or getting access to your email—this is a place to intellectually explore how to study and understand communities and culture from a technological aspect."

The DHC is meant to open new opportunities for the library and its patrons, rather than be just another study space in the building. Although the DHC is still very much liable to change in its scope and goals, it will undoubtedly have a focus on collaboration and instruction. Reflecting the Center's specialized purpose, the hardware available for use there will also be specialized for use specific to the DHC.

SJSU Spartans, as well as members of the "larger off-campus community," are invited to attend events hosted by the DHC, and to request use of the center to host events themselves. Examples of events which have already been hosted by the DHC include a faculty photography exhibition, and a lecture on the future of artificial intelligence. The diversity of content in events hosted by the DHC reflects the di-

versity of the field of the humanities and the arts. An example of the kinds of activities the DHC wishes to involve the off-campus community in would be something like the creation of an interactive map of local neighborhoods, which would display art from those communities, alongside testimonies from community members.

Located on the ground floor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, directly next to the campus-side entrance, the DHC has already officially launched, but is still in the development phase. Focus group testing sessions—which have included Spartans as well as members of the community surrounding the campus- have already concluded, and, says Mr. Nick Szydlowski, MLK Jr. Library's Digital Scholarship Librarian, "We received a lot of other great suggestions in the Community Conversations, so I think we will be working on developing some of those ideas into additional forms of programming for the space." We look forward to seeing these developments.

Interested parties can contact the Digital Humanities Center and the King Library's Digital Scholarship Librarian, Nick Szydlowski, at nick.szydlowski@sjsu.edu.

SCHOLARSHIP

2024 English Department Scholarships!

Casey Wickstrom & Nick Li

It's scholarship season at San José State! The Department of English and Comparative Literature is offering several awards for nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and scholarly papers. Details and specific requirements can be found online at sjsu.edu/english/current-students/scholarship.php. Applications can also be found at the English department. For more information, please contact Professor Noelle Brada-Williams.

Brada-Williams notes that many English scholarships are not applied for: "We have three [2024] scholarships open to students and there have been almost no submissions so far. Last year we actually had a scholarship go 'ungiven' as there was only one submission and the donor refused to give it out unless there was competition of at least three people. Let's not let that happen again!" She encourages students to submit: "Look over your coursework in American literature, poetry, and classical and medieval literature and see if there is something of value that you would like to submit. The scholarships range from $100 to more than $1,000. And all would look great on your resume or grad school application."

Scholarships Available by Student Submission

- Bonita M. Cox Award for Classical and Medieval Literature: Awarded for outstanding achievement in classical or medieval studies. The essays may be on any topic and from any discipline. Preference shall be given to those essays that demonstrate a clear connection between the past (classical or medieval periods) and the present. Eligible students: junior, senior and graduate students taking 6 units or more.

- Academy of American Poets / Virginia De Araujo Prize: Monetary award for best submitted poem. Open to any undergraduate or graduate student (taking 6 units or more). This prize is judged by a distinguished poet not affiliated with SJSU. A maximum of three poems may be submitted; no longer than 150 lines each.

- Kichung Kim Scholarship: Scholarship awarded to an SJSU student majoring in English. Submit an essay based on American/Ethnic American Literature. Eligible students will be enrolled full time, have a minimum 2.5 GPA, and demonstrate financial need.

Scholarships Available by Faculty Submission

Open to Undergraduate Students

- **Shirley Nelson Iverson Scholarship:** To a freshman or junior English major with intentions of becoming a high school teacher.

- **The Lois King Thore Scholarship Fund:** To an English major who indicates they wish to pursue a degree in English and shows promise in short story writing.

- **Anne Lillis Memorial Scholarship Fund:** To an English major for excellence in Creative Writing with a preference for poetry.

- **The Robert H. Woodward Memorial Scholarship:** The student must show significant achievement

in research and scholarship in American Literature.

- **James Phelan Award for Criticism:** Awarded to undergraduate and graduate students for verse and prose work produced in literary criticism and analysis.

- **James Phelan Award for Poetry:** Awarded to undergraduate and graduate students for verse and prose work produced in metrical or free verse.
- **James Phelan Award for Fiction Story:** Awarded to undergraduate and graduate students for verse and prose work produced in short story.

- **James Phelan Award for Non-fiction Essay:** Awarded to undergraduate and graduate students for verse and prose work produced in personal essay.

New 2024 Scholarships!

- **Bertha Kalm Scholarship:** $10,000 Opportunity. The Amanda and Charles Kalm Scholarship, established in 1995 by Bertha Kalm, supports graduate students who aspire to make a difference for humanity. Up to four scholarships of $10,000 each will be awarded for the 2024–25 academic year. Eligibility: first-year graduate students nominated by a tenured or tenure-track faculty member.

- **The Dr. Hector and Catalina Garcia Graduate Endowed Scholarship:** $7,500 Opportunity. Who is eligible? SJSU graduate students in good academic standing who are matriculated in an SJSU master's or doctoral degree program, a teacher credential, or an advanced certificate program. And who has at least one more semester (after the semester in which the application is submitted) before completing their graduate program. Selection criteria: the awardee shall have demonstrated commitment to the Hispanic community at large through community service, leadership, and activism. The awardee is a graduate student with financial need.

Congrats S2024 Scholarship Winners!

The Academy of American Poets / Virginia de Araujo Prize
Linh Nguyen
Marilyn Copley Hilton (honorable mention)

Kichung Kim Endowed Scholarship
Nhi Bui
Katherine Hamilton

Bonita M. Cox Award for Classical and Medieval Literature
Karen Liou

The Shirley Nelson Iverson Scholarship
1st Place: Tam Ho
2nd Place: Jaena Jaug
3rd Place: Joshua Tapia

The Lois King Thore Scholarship Fund
Hannah Le

Anne Lillis Memorial Scholarship Fund
Courtney Caldwell

The Robert H. Woodward Memorial Scholarship
Evonne Tan

James Phelan Award for Criticism
1st Place: Charlotte Kunde
2nd Place: Jeff Lin

James Phelan Award for Poetry
1st Place: Carlos Leon
2nd Place: Nalana La Framboise

James Phelan Award for Fiction
1st Place: Mara Olivas
2nd Place: Sophie Aust

James Phelan Award for Nonfiction
1st Place: Hallie Burch
2nd Place: Mel Gomez

Schelby A. Sweeney Beowulf Award
Jillian Dobert

Course Descriptions
Fall 2024

ENGL 20- The Graphic Novel
Instructor: Dr. Maite Urcaregui
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 10:30 A.M.–11:45 A.M.

English 20: The Graphic Novel is a C2 Humanities general education course that offers students a broad introduction to reading and analyzing comic art. We will read comic strips, comic books, webcomics, and graphic novels across genres, including canonical works and works that are pushing the boundaries of the canon. Students will develop their close reading (and viewing), critical thinking, and scholarly writing skills throughout the course and will showcase their learning through scholarly writing as well as creative comics making.

ENGL 21- Mystery and Detective Fiction
Instructor: Colton Saylor
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 12:00 P.M.–1:15 P.M.

Examines mystery or detective fiction from its inception in the 19th century and follow it across the globe as the genre has been taken on and developed by a variety of cultures.

ENGL 22- Fantasy and Science Fiction
Instructor: Tanja Nathanael
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): TBA

Students will examine works of literary fantasy and science fiction to understand them as expressions of human intellect and Imagination; to comprehend their historical and cultural contexts; and to recognize their diverse cultural traditions. Both contemporary and historical works will be studied.

ENGL 30- Literature and the Environment
Instructor: Mostafa Jalal
Course Type: In-person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 10:30 A.M.–11:45 A.M.

Explores the ways in which writers and literary texts engage environmental issues and represent the natural world and humanity's place in it, paying close attention to issues of ecology, the landscape, conservation, sustainability, and human intervention/interference. Possible areas of inquiry include nature writing, ecofeminism, ecocriticism, environmental justice, postcolonial environments, and the Anthropocene.

ENGL 50- Beginnings to the American Experiment

Instructor: Nancy Stork
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 1:30 P.M.–2:45 P.M.

A survey that covers the period of the earliest literature recorded in the English language up until 1680. We will look at early Anglo-Saxon charms, medieval romance, Renaissance poetry and the astonishing imagery of the recently discovered American preacher, Edward Taylor. Along the way we will consider the evolution of poetic form, prose style, drama and such themes as exile, wandering, heresy, evil, desire, love, and ecstatic visions.

ENGL 60- Literatures of the Atlantic World, 1680-1860

Instructor: Allison Johnson
Course Type: In-person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 12:00 P.M.–1:15 P.M.

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

Instructor: Kathleen Mcsharry
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): Monday, Wednesday
Time: 10:30 A.M.–11:45 A.M.

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

Many sections available. See course catalog.

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 (Section 1)- Writing Workshop

Instructor: Dr. Meghan Gorman-DaRif
Course Type: Hybrid
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 1:30 P.M.–2:45 P.M.

This course explores the writing of resistance from Ireland, Africa, and the US, with special attention to how authors engage in their texts with the contexts of colonialism, systems of education, cultural nationalism, and the legacies of slavery. We will begin the semester focusing on close reading through the poetry of W.B. Yeats, before moving into contextual analysis through one of the plays of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and ending with a unit on research methods and strategies in conjunction with Yaa Gyasi's recent novel, Homegoing, exploring the history and impact of the slave trade on both coasts of the Atlantic.

ENGL 100W- Writing Workshop

Instructor: Kathleen McSharry
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): Monday, Wednesday
Time: 1:30 P.M.–2:45 P.M.

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 100W- Writing Workshop

Instructor: Katherine D. Harris
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 1:30 P.M.–2:45 P.M.

ENGL 101- Introduction to Literary Criticism

Instructor: Revathi Krishnaswamy
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): Monday, Wednesday
Time: 10:30 A.M.–11:45 A.M.

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

Instructor: Vee Lawson
Course Type: Hybrid
Course Day(s): Monday, Wednesday
Time: 9:00 A.M.–10:15 A.M.

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

Instructor: Rebecca Kling
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): Monday, Wednesday
Time: 10:30 A.M.–11:45 A.M.

Copy editing, substantive editing, and reorganization of technical documents. Review of grammar and punctuation to ensure technical mastery and ability to justify editing decisions. Graphics editing, access aids, and professional skills of an editor.

ENGL 107- Professional and Technical Writing

Instructor: Mark Thompson
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 10:30 A.M.–11:45 A.M.

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, Augmented Reality (AR), SnagIt, Adobe Premiere, and Madcap Flare.

ENGL 110- UX Design and Visual Communication

Instructor: Mark Thompson
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 12:00 P.M.–1:15 P.M.

Combines visual rhetorical theory with design techniques to teach writers about the visual aspects of written and digital communication. In this hands-on course, students design and test UX documents, including User Interfaces, phone apps, and promotional posters.

ENGL 111- Strategic Digitl Content and Social Media Writing

Instructor: Vee Lawson
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Monday, Wednesday
Time: 12:00 P.M.–1:15 P.M.

Content writing and management, creating effective and ethical content, content auditing, integration, and assessment. Applications may include social media posts/campaigns, website copy, promotional materials, videos, podcasts, product and event descriptions,

blog posts or articles, how-to/user guides, infographics, and FAQ pages. Activities include producing reports, conducting user research, and giving verbal presentations.

ENGL 112A- Children's Literature

Instructor: Roohi Vora
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 10:30 A.M.–11:45 A.M.

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

ENGL 112A- Children's Literature

Instructor: Tanja Nathanael
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): TBA
Time: TBA

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

ENGL 112B- Literature for Young Adults

Instructor: Mary Warner
Course Type: Hybrid
Course Day(s): Monday
Time: 4:30 P.M.–7:15 P.M.

In ENGL 112B, we read *After the First Death*, *Speak*, *Whale Talk*, *Witness*, *Prisoner of Azkaban,* and *We Were Here*. Two additional texts--*Literature for Today's Young Adults* and *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning* --introduce YA literature's genres, demonstrate the complexity of the best YA lit, and provide author/book resources. Book Talks, a book to film paper, and a unit of study/annotated bibliography requirement deepen student knowledge of YA Literature. The 4th credit enhancement includes the options of field experience and creating a blog devoted to a sub-genre of YA Lit. F'24 is the last semester that Professor Warner will be teaching ENGL 112B as she retires at the end of Spring '25.

ENGL 117A- American Literature, Film, and Culture

Instructor: Colton Saylor
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Friday
Time: 9:30 A.M.–12:15 P.M.

Course Title: American Monstrosities

This course will interrogate American representations of monstrosity in all of its forms and guises. From werewolves and zombies to depictions of the diseased body, we will explore how American notions of identity, race, gender, and class have all been influenced by what we deem monstrous. Some of the texts we'll watch and read together include:
The Bride of Frankenstein (dir. James Whale)
The Fly (dir. David Cronenberg)
Mongrels (written by Stephen Graham Jones)

ENGL 120- Theatre History

Instructor: Philippa Kelly
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Monday
Time: 12:00 P.M.–2:30 P.M.

Examines the historical roots, many manifestations, and diversity of theatrical performances with particular attention to theatre's role within and between cultures.

ENGL 122- Topics in Comparative World Literature

Instructor: Dr. Meghan Gorman-DaRif
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 3:00 P.M.–4:15 P.M.

How are authors choosing to represent violent figures like pirates and freedom fighters? What is the function of literature as a site of political resistance? Can literature help cultivate practices of resisting oppressive social, cultural, and political structures or open new horizons of hope? This course examines the tradition of postcolonial resistance literature, focusing on the figure of the pirate and the freedom fighter in texts from Africa and South Asia.

ENGL 123B- Literatures of Africa

Instructor: Dr. Meghan Gorman-DaRif
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 12:00 P.M.–1:15 P.M.

What image of Africa emerges from literature? How do African writers "write back" to or resist colonial writing about Africa? This course explores postcolonial literature from a variety of countries and cultures in Africa, focusing on how authors engage with colonialism, systems of education, the intersections of race, class, and gender, and the English language itself as a medium for self-expression. This course is not meant to be a complete survey in African literature, but introduces students to some themes that have emerged in African fiction over the last fifty years, and the contexts in which it is produced.

ENGL 125- Ancient Literatures

Instructor: Nancy Stork
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 9:00 A.M.–10:15 A.M.

This class will cover the main fonts of religion and mythology that have contributed to the traditional Western canon of literature: Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, early Christians and medieval Roman Catholics. Emphasis is placed on textual history and a keen historical awareness of how these texts were transmitted, translated, lost and rediscovered. Contradictions and discrepancies between various sources will also be addressed.

ENGL 127- Contemporary Theatre

Instructor: Kathleen Normington
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 12:00 P.M.–1:15 P.M.

Contemporary plays from 1980s to present and important theatre practices for this period. Explores contemporary theatre by critically examining selected plays and productions of the last fifty years. The course will concentrate how the selected plays and productions express the diversity and complexity of postmodern society. The class will look at various performance styles and how they are a direct response and/or reaction to major changes in the social and political landscape. The course will focus on how theatre represents contemporary views of people, events and ideas through specific performance discourses.

ENGL 128- Introduction to Playwriting

Instructor: Eugenie Chan
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Monday
Time: 4:15 P.M.–6:45 P.M.

Writing in dramatic form: plot structure, characterization, content and theme. Analysis of plays. Exercises in writing.

ENGL 130- Writing Fiction

Instructor: Keenan Norris
Course Type: Hybrid
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 12:00 P.M.–1:15 P.M.

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

ENGL 131- Writing Poetry

Instructor: J. Michael Martinez
Course Type: Hybrid
Course Day(s): Monday, Wednesday
Time: 3:00 P.M.–4:15 P.M.

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

ENGL 133- Reed Magazine

Instructor: Brook Mc Clurg
Course Type: Hybrid
Course Day(s): Friday
Time: 9:30 A.M.–12:15 P.M.

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.

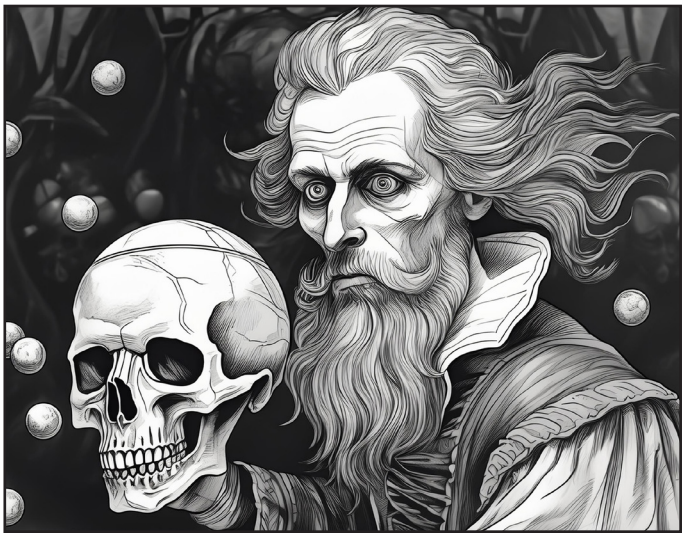
ENGL 135- Writing Nonfiction

Instructor: Keenan Norris
Course Type: Hybrid
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 1:30 P.M.–2:45 P.M.

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

ENGL 145- Shakespeare and Performance

Instructor: Adrienne Eastwood
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Monday, Wednesday
Time: 10:30 A.M.–11:45 A.M.



This 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. Paying particular attention to modern productions, we will analyze the ways in which production elements such as setting, casting, staging, costuming, editing, and individual performances shape and create meaning (or fail to do so) for the audiences of today. Placing these plays within this context of performance will raise larger issues about the complex relationships between the Shakespearean canon and its ever-changing audiences. Students will respond to each Shakespearean play text through both writing and oral interpretation, integrating speech and dramatic performance with an understanding of the complexities of plot, characterization, and dramatic form.

ENGL 157- Topics in Rhetorical Analysis

Instructor: Ryan Skinnell
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 3:00 P.M.– 4:15 P.M.

Rhetoric is the study of persuasion. Hate is, unfortunately, one of the most effective forms of persuasion in history. In the 19th and 20th centuries, in particular, hateful rhetoric was a driving force behind unprecedented wars, colonial violence, and genocide. In this class, we will study hateful rhetoric through a (highly) critical lens, paying particular attention to the emergence and expansion of anti-Semitism, racism, and Islamophobia in the 20th and 21st centuries. Our goal will be to understand what the rhetoric of hate is, why it so often works, and what can be done about to confront and counteract it.

ENGL 165- Black American Literatures

Instructor: Allison Johnson
Course Type: Hybrid
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 10:30 A.M.–11:45 A.M.

Examination of early African-American literary and print culture, including Black-owned and operated printing presses, newspapers, and periodicals. Particular focus on poetry, slave narratives, abolitionist periodicals, Civil War-era newspapers, and turn-of-the-century magazine fiction.

ENGL 166- Latinx Literatures

Instructor: Maite Urcaregui
Course Type: Hybrid
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 9:00 A.M.–10:15 A.M.

This course surveys contemporary Latinx literatures—literature by and about diasporic peoples who are from or trace their origins to Latin America (Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean). We will read across forms and genres, including poetry and spoken word, journalistic and autobiographical non-fiction, comics, and young adult and literary fiction. Through these texts, we'll explore the following themes and topics: deconstructing "the Americas," undocumented experiences and the limits of citizenship, the politics of naming, queer and feminist poetics, and diasporic histories and identities.

ENGL 169- Ethnicity in American Literature

Instructor: Allison Johnson
Course Type: In-Person
Course Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 1:30 P.M.–2:45 P.M.

This course explores the influence of ethnic diversity on American literature by focusing on lines, including but not limited to borderlines, bloodlines, the color line, and timelines. Paying close attention to strategies of representation and resistance, we will examine the polyvocal literary and cultural fabric of the United States.

ENGL 172- The Arts in U.S. Society

Instructor: Shannon Rose Riley / Liz Linden
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): TBA
Time: TBA

Study of American arts and artists in their aesthetic, social, and political contexts, focusing on 20th and 21st centuries. Arts examined may include architecture, poetry, music, visual arts, dance, theatre, performance art, and fiction. Special emphasis on issues of cultural diversity and social justice.

ENGL 173- Thinking About Contemporary World Arts

Instructor: Liz Linden
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): Wednesday
Time: 1:30 P.M.–2:45 P.M.

An interdisciplinary investigation of the connections between the contemporary arts and global cultures. Use of critical and creative thinking to develop global understanding and to explore personal and cultural identities.

ENGL 180- Individual Studies

Instructor: Adrienne Eastwood
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): TBA
Time: TBA

By arrangement with instructor and department chair approval.

ENGL 199- Writing Internship

Instructor: Mark Thompson
Course Type: Online
Course Day(s): TBA
Time: TBA

If a student aready has a writing internship, they can take this class for school credit. Discussion of experiences and problems in the internship. Study of professional practices and demands, including those of career preparation and workplace culture.

Letter from the Chair

Spring 2024 Newsletter

This semester I have been substitute teaching in a class on Holocaust literature. Working with this material has reminded me how fast civil society can spiral into an authoritarian one which can deny our collective humanity. It also reminds me that we too are living in a perilous time for our nation and our planet. Yet I have come to believe there has never been a been a greater need for English majors.

Here's why: All four of the BA concentrations in this department focus on fine tuning our understanding of the impact of language as a form of communication between people. In the midst of reading literature, students develop empathy for characters and narrative voices outside their own experiences. Creative Writers not only explore language as a means of self-expression, but imagine the emotions of characters—and audiences—in spheres different from their own. Technical Writers work at imagining the needs of end users, and those preparing to be teachers study how best to meet the needs of future students. In other words, English majors of all kinds work on developing relationships between people and understanding what our words mean and how words impact us emotionally and logically. Language and empathy are key to bringing people together to create positive change and to heal rifts between people. We certainly need more of that in a world where violence is too often the default when differences arise.

Empathy allows us to see others as part of a potential community. Language then can strengthen those connections and inspire collective action. In "Compassion is Making a Comeback" (*Vox,* April 23, 2024), Jamil Zaki of the Stanford Social Neuroscience Lab reports on the work of researchers who have been studying empathy levels since the 1970's by asking research subjects whether or not they agree with "statements such as 'I feel tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.'" In 2009 they measured empathy levels among American college students that were 75% lower than they had been in the 1970's. But recently researchers "found that empathy among young Americans is rebounding, reaching levels indistinguishable from the highs of the 1970's." Now 50 years later, we are seeing a renewed spirit of activism on college campuses, with many students, even those from privileged backgrounds, putting their own comfort, safety, and even liberty, on the line for causes they believe will help others who are less fortunate than themselves.

Can we use language to deter violence? To unite people? Can we use our empathy to imagine ways of communicating to people who do not yet share our beliefs? Can we use our research skills to examine the root causes for the injustices and inequalities we see in our world and create solutions? What words would make enemies see that they have shared values, shared humanity? How could we use language to focus people on the environment and persuade people to act collectively to protect our climate and planet?

Our nation and our world will also require people trained in the nuances of language to help answer questions such as: Is a lie protected by the rules of free speech? What if one's words cause harm to others? What or who determines harm? If I am uncomfortable with a truth about the world, does that mean I should prevent you from stating it? What is the difference between free speech and hate speech? Whatever the answers to these questions are, and however difficult it is to find the answers, people should be the ones to do it. We cannot leave these discussions essential to what defines human society to AI or an authoritarian power to tell us what to do.

This past year we designed a new motto for the department. In addition to "Where practicality meets passion," we now also have stickers that read: "Read! Write! Think!" I have always felt that what we focus on in this department is at the core of what defines a college education and "read, write, think" covers everything we do. But in recent months, after we received the stickers designed by H&A Marketing with the exclamation points, I have been thinking of this motto as a kind of imperative, a demand to use the skills we are all working on together to make our world a better place.

—Noelle Brada-Williams

EDNL STAFF

Managing Editor: Mark Thompson

Copyediting: Mikaela Anderson (lead), Zach Drew (lead), Jaden Giacchero, Samantha Denny, Kiara Schuette, Michael Lopez, Nicholas Nash

Graphics: Koh Henderson (lead), Nick Li, Sarah Howard, Joshua Togonon, Paul Anagaran, Tanvir Kaur

Course Descriptions: Daniela Sanchez Martinez, Phyllis Aboagye

Layout: Kyle Chow (lead), Vivian Ly, Dania Quiroz Lara

Proofreading: Casey Wickstrom (lead), Vienna Alexander, Fatima Mejia, Arya Emadi, Roula Seikaly, Andrew Allison