
Scrambling for courses and worrying about fee hikes can be difficult. When faced with this harsh reality . . . page 6

Are they surviving? . . . for all the aspiring writers who intend to pursue a career in writing . . . page 7

Eighty people pack themselves into a small room of the Steinbeck Center like it's the Obama inauguration . . . page 10



Spring 2009

Concentrating on Creative Writing

English Department Offers a New Creative Option

Inside This Issue

The BA in creative writing is one of the fastest growing degrees

The Department of English & Comparative Literature Newsletter is a publication of the English Department at San Jose State University.



. . . continued on page 2

SJSU's creative writing concentration also addresses the key subjects of "creative reading," and the "business of writing" that students need to make it in the profession. Professor Soldofsky says that SJSU students will still be exposed to literature, but will be approaching it from the viewpoint of understanding how a text is created, not just what it means, giving students the "creative reading" insight. While SJSU doesn't have a business course in creative writing, students have the opportunity to cover much of the same material concerning the publishing world by taking the

Scholarships!

Mark your calendars and plan ahead for next semester!
The English Department has several awards for non-fiction,
fiction, and poetry, as well as a

Glimpse at Honors English Fall 2009

An Exploration of Power, Class, Sexual Status and Gender Roles

Kristin Yurkovich

In fall of 2009, an Honors course will be available to upper-division students who are majoring in English and have a GPA of 3.5 or better. The class is usually taken by students in their senior year. It will be taught at a graduate level, so be prepared to be challenged. For a little sneak peak into the class, read the course description and some of the readings provided below:

... dressing, sodomy, and female masculinity. Whenever possible, the course will include reception of such texts. Ideally, this course will enable an examination of the shifting cultural attitudes about same-sex desire to more thoroughly ground our contemporary appreciation of queerness in a nuanced understanding of its history. The central discussion will

English 190
Honors Colloquium

Course Description: The course will trace the emergence of what we now proudly (post Stonewall) claim as "homosexual" identities as they have appeared in literature from the 16th century to today. It will feature a variety of literary and cultural texts that address issues of homoeroticism, cross-

Taking English to the Land Down Under

Major opportunity to explore Australia and New Zealand

For those majoring in English and feeling confined to campus, Dr. David Mesher has a way to spend three weeks in two foreign countries while earning General Education (GE) credits.

Thirteen applications have been received from students who are interested in this chance to explore Australia and New Zealand from June 1st to June 22nd. Dr. Mesher and his faculty partner, Dr. Shannon Bros-Seemann, will be leading the pack to explore the region's land, culture, and art.

Each participating student will earn 3 to 6 units. Three units will cover GE Area V (if taking the trip for ENGL 117: Film, Literature, and Cultures) or GE Area S (if taking the trip for ENGL 123C: South Pacific Literature). The other three units will cover GE Area R (if taking the trip for BIOL 110, BIOL 180, or BIOL 280). Because this trip is not simply a vacation, students are expected to complete course work that includes participating in discussions about Maori and Aboriginal films and novels. Students will also present and write about the conservation of the area's land and natural resources for the

biology portion of the trip.

Since these are upper division courses, those who are interested will need to have passed the Writing Skills Test, completed all lower division GE courses, and have upper-division standing to receive upper-division GE credit. Students must also comply with the travel prerequisites, which include obtaining a passport and the necessary Australia-New Zealand visa well in advance. Current lower division students should be aware

Other hot titles include:

- ◆ *Dying Well* by Ira Byock
- ◆ *True Colors* by Karen Traviss
- ◆ *Ender's Shadow* by Orson Scott Card
- ◆ *Writing for Comics* with Peter David by Peter David
- ◆ *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- ◆ *A Child Called It* by David Pelzer
- ◆ *Angels and Demons* by Dan Brown
- ◆ *Confucius Lives Next Door* by T.R. Reid
- ◆ *Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits, and How Baseball Got Big* by Jose Canseco

impacted by the cuts in enrollment more than other departments across campus.

Are Publishers Surviving Today's Economy?

How companies in the industry prepare for and respond to current economic changes

The current economic crisis has taken a toll on everything from automobile manufacturers to Starbucks, with people worldwide feeling the effects of the economic downturn. Millions have lost their jobs and their homes, and some unlucky individuals have even lost everything they had while trying to survive in today's economic crisis. But what about the businesses that aren't publicized in the media? Are they surviving? Being that we are English majors, it seems fitting to find out about local book publishers for all the aspiring writers who intend on pursuing a career by writing novels, short stories, or poems.

I interviewed a couple of publishers based in San Francisco on this topic. The California Publishing Company and GLB Publishing offered contrasting information regarding the economic effects on their current business. One publisher appears to be greatly affected, while the

other appears to be unaffected and optimistic about the future.

It's only right that I begin with the first company that was willing to answer my questions without reluctance:

Visiting the Past With Bonnie Cox

An SJSU alumna and professor shares memories and advice

It's hard to believe that the university is always in flux. Yet, it does subtly change, shifting and altering itself to meet the demands placed upon it by the society that surrounds it. But those changes are difficult to see. In many ways, it is like trying to watch a forest grow. Only by looking back at it from the perspective of many years can a proper picture be seen. I did not think it would be possible for me to see how the forest of this campus has changed, but I could concentrate upon one of its trees, the English department. In order to see the changes that the English department and its students have gone through, I would need the experience and perspective of one of its long-time professors.

I felt that Professor Bonnie Cox could offer some of the insight I was looking for. When I was in Professor Cox's class, I found her to be a confident, relaxed speaker with a certain coiled energy. She was direct, answering frankly, bluntly, and honestly. Furthermore, she possessed a loving passion for the English language, as well as for teaching it. It was this mix of passion, honesty, and bluntness, tempered over 27 years of teaching, that I felt would offer a good perspective on the English department.

A native Northern Californian, Professor Cox has seen a lot of changes on the campus between her time as both an undergraduate and graduate student, and as a faculty member

today. The changes that stand out the most to her are the changes in English major students. "[The] student is very different now from what the students were... back in the day... mostly everybody who was majoring in English was born here, white... it was very rare that we would have a non-native speaker on campus, let alone as an English major." Professor Cox points out that we reflect the demographics of the area. As the demographics of California

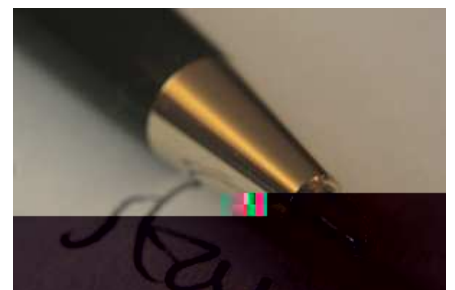
Writers Associations:

A Professional Networking Opportunity

Pam Stair

“Sometimes it’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” This old saying is the basis for networking – be it for personal or professional purposes. Think about it: wouldn’t you rather work with someone you know? For writers there is a plethora of professional associations that offer the opportunity to connect with other writers, editors, publishers, and potential employers.

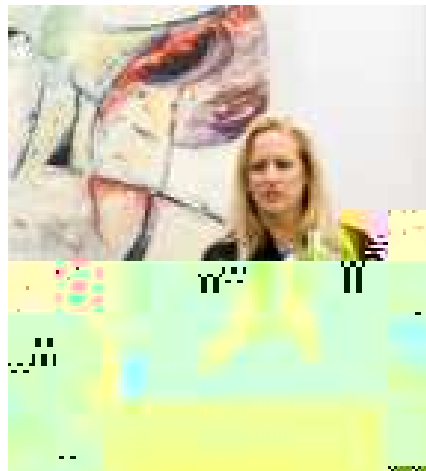
Belonging to a professional association isn’t just about completing a form



Celebrating the Alumni

An event for SJSU's English Department Graduates

Vincent Woodruff



Kate Evans
with mentor
Gabriele
Rico

On the fifth floor of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library is the Steinbeck Center. About 80 people pack themselves into a small room within the Center, like it's the Obama inauguration, to listen to a reading by fellow alum and professor at San José State University, Kate Evans. She is the author of a collection of poetry entitled *Like All We Love*, a book about gay and lesbian teachers called, *Negotiating the Self*, and her first novel, *For the May Queen*. This is deemed an alumni event but, amazingly, about 75% of those who attended were either creative writers in the English department or students of Evans herself. Indeed, this event was a way to bring former English majors home to share with future graduates the success of a former student of SJSU.

Tim Peck, a former SJSU graduate, became a high school English teacher in the Dublin, California area and taught for twenty years. He ev

Useful Supplemental Courses

So you think you're a writer, eh? Be forewarned my friend, it's one of those "road less traveled" sort of things. The career of a professional writer is one that will be damned competitive, but SJSU does offer a few classes that may help give you an advantage on the rest of the world's prospective scribes.

Here's a short list of four classes that may help give you an advantage over the next aspiring writer.

Journalism 132C: Magazine Reporting. If you're interested in narrative non-fiction writing, chances are you may one day write a feature for a magazine. This class will teach you the basics of magazine writing: interviewing skills, reporting, and article types.

Journalism 153: Magazine Writing and Editing. It never hurts to get something published, and this class will

ENGL 112A. Children's Literature

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

TR: 1500-1615 Rice

M: 1630-1915 Krishnaswamy

ENGL 112B: Literature for Young Adults

This course will acquaint students with YA books and authors. We will read six books as a class: *After the First Death*, *Speak*, *Whale Talk*, *Witness*, *Prisoner of Azkaban* and *First Crossing*. The texts for the class are *Literature for Today's Young Adults* and *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the P*

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.

M: 1630-1915 Taylor

ENGL 135. Writing Nonfiction
Advanced writing workshop in creative nonfiction. In this class we will experiment with four subgenres of nonfiction: the personal essay, travel writing, profiles and feature articles. Prerequisite: ENGL 71, 100W, 105, 129, or instructor consent. Repeatable once for credit.
T: 1800-2045 Miller

ENGL 140A. Old English
Introduction to the language, with short selections for translation.
TR: 0900-1015 Stork

ENGL 144: Shakespeare I
This course will introduce some of the major plays of William Shakespeare. Play will be considered within the context of the cultural and political atmosphere of Elizabethan England and by postmodern theories of literature. Students will gain a basic knowledge of Shakespeare's thematic questions and a solid understanding of the language he used to explore these themes.
MW: 1030-1145 Eastwood
TR: 1500-1615 Fleck

ENGL 145: Shakespeare and Performance
We will examine in-depth several of Shakespeare's plays.

**ENGL 190: Honors Seminar –
Pride and/or Prejudice: The
Emergence and Suppression of
Queer Identities in Literature.**

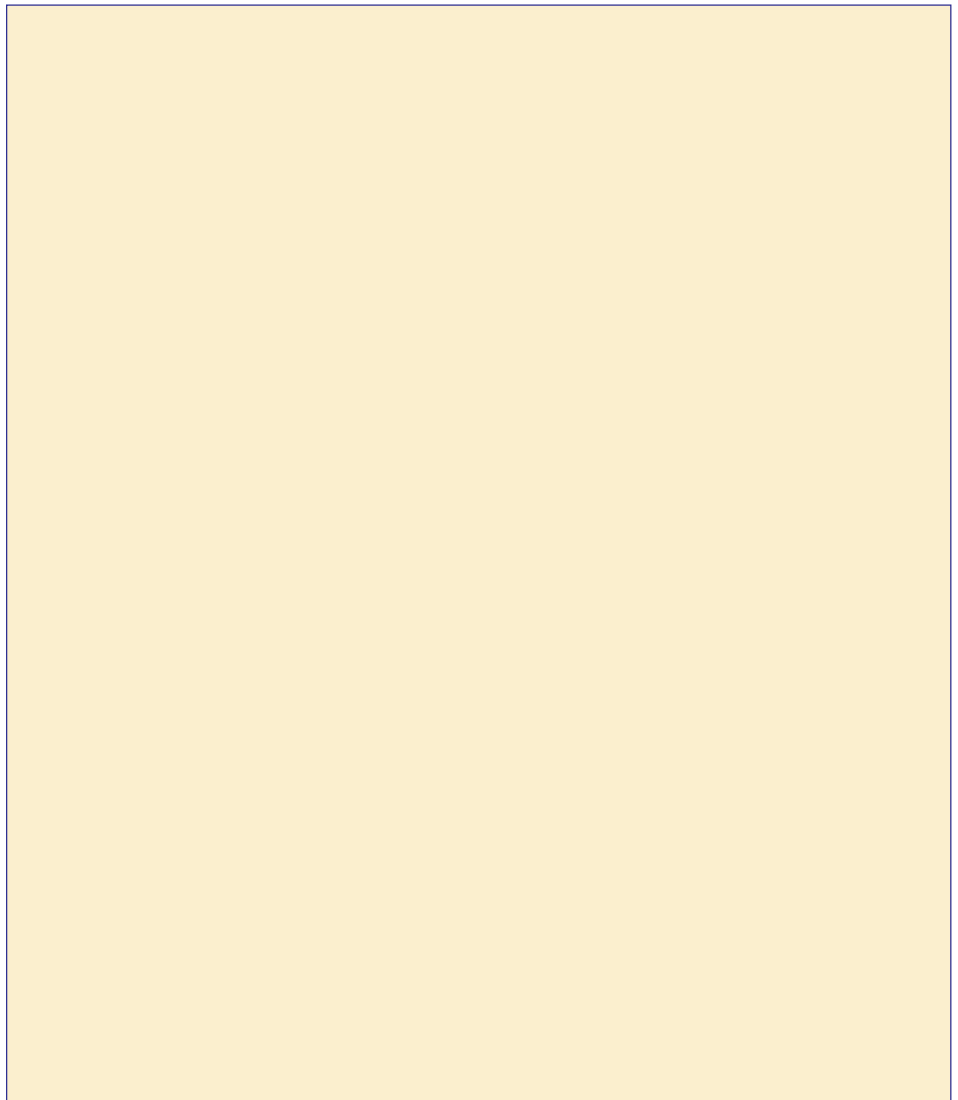
This course will trace the emergence of what we now proudly (post Stonewall) claim as “homosexual” identities as they have appeared in literature from the sixteenth century to today. The central discussion will take shape around the consideration of the ways in which literature serves both to express and to suppress homosexual desire.

MW: 1200-1315 Eastwood

ENGL 193: Senior Seminar

This course invites students to reflect on their experiences in the English major and in light of the department’s Learning Goals.

Assignments will include: A portfolio, revisions and expansions on previous



Letter from the Department Chair

John Engell

This has been a rewarding year in the department. We have instituted the new Concentration in Creative Writing and a number of students have already declared that concentration as their major. We have revised the basic literature major, emphasizing a thorough grounding in both British and American literature as well as reaffirming our commitment to World and Comparative Literature. We have enjoyed record enrollments, especially in Freshman Composition and lower-division General Education, but the major and its concentrations have also been successful. Our graduate programs—M.A. and M.F.A.—are thriving. The Center for Literary Arts under the direction first of Kelly Harrison and later Charles McLeod has brought many superb writers to campus; readings have been well attended. The Publicity Committee, chaired by Cathleen Miller, has coordinated several events including Creative Writing Week (with thanks to Persis Karim and Nick Taylor for organizing the Career Fair that introduced the week) and Kate Evans's superb reading followed by a celebratory party for faculty, students, and alumni. The Steinbeck Center and its director, Paul Douglass, have sponsored several splendid speakers, including Susan Shillinglaw.

In Fall 2009 there will be a few changes among the tenure-line faculty. Bonnie Cox will be stepping down as Composition Coordinator and Nancy Stork will be returning to full-time teaching. Bonnie will assume the duties of Associate Chair, and Cathy Gabor will begin her work in a newly