

Poetic Craft and Theory

ENGL 202

Spring 2026 Section 01 Hybrid 4 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/26/2026

Contact Information

Instructor(s): J. Michael Martinez

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Office Hours: TR, Noon-1pm and by appointment

Class Days/Time: T, 7:00pm - 9:45pm PST

Classroom: Faculty Office Building 104

Course Information

Attention to the theories of poetics. Prior permission of graduate advisor may be repeatable once for credit.

This course is an introduction to the theory and practice of translating poetry. We will study elements of prosody, essential to the translation of literary works. Students will analyze published translations as well as generate their own. Students will develop their awareness of a range of strategies and techniques used to translate. The class will involve readings of the most important texts in the theory of translation, from the early reflections by Cicero and Horace to those by Jakobson and Derrida.

In our discussions, we will reflect on the demands imposed by the aesthetics of literary texts. Additionally, we will ponder translatability, fidelity, and relations of power affecting the translation processes. While knowledge of a foreign language would be helpful, it is not necessary. A practical objective of this course is to build a portfolio of translation exercises and submit a selection of poems to a literary journal or magazine for publication.

The questions this course engage may include the following issues: representations of power or ideology embedded in characterizations of sex and gender, class, race, and nationality, etc.; the reader's implied relation to the text alongside authorial "intent," when that can be established; whether ethics matter in relation to the creation and reception of literature; what roles expression and emotion play in the generation and interpretation of texts; whether literary or their corresponding cinematic texts, as art objects, are independent of external relations and depend purely upon a unique system of internal relations, among other questions.

We will explore the art of translating poetry with the aim of coming toward an understanding of knowledge production. It is a class about asking questions concerning difficult issues—both about the works themselves and how we, as a society, produce them.

Course Description and Requisites

Poetry as a literary genre - its patterns and sub-types (such as the epic, lyric, pastoral, and elegy). Attention to the theories of poetics applied to practical criticism. Prior permission of graduate advisor may be repeatable once for credit.

Course may be repeated for credit for up to 6 units.

Prerequisite(s): Classified standing or instructor consent.

Grading: Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Course Format: *In-person*

While an in-person seminar meeting will regularly require a computer and internet connectivity, students can also expect various classes to also contain an asynchronous component. I will be regularly assigning small group work and asking you to meet with me on Zoom one-on-one to check in about your participation and writing. Our class will be employing Canvas throughout the course.

Course Materials and Canvas

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU on [Spartan App Portal](#) (or other communication system as indicated by the instructor) to learn of any updates.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

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

- Be familiar with the formative text and innovative texts in the field of translation theory
- Have translated from at least three different languages

- Have spent effort researching a writer to translate their poetry.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

A = excellent;

B = above average;

C = average;

D = below average;

F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the MA English program, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research
3. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.
4. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to
 - a. organize and present material in a cogent fashion,
 - b. formulate and defend original arguments,
 - c. employ effectively the language of their discipline and
 - d. write under time constraints.
5. Demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.

Upon successful completion of the MFA in Creative Writing, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a high level of ability to propose and complete a publishable, full-length work of literature in a primary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
2. Demonstrate high level of proficiency to write works of literature in a secondary genre concentration (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or scriptwriting).
3. Demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of literary history, literary theory, and craft and theory of creative writing.
4. Demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the evaluation and interpretation of literary texts.
5. Demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to:
 - a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion;
 - b) formulate and defend original arguments;
 - c) employ effectively the language of their discipline;

d) write under time constraints.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: english@sjsu.edu (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Materials

Texts/Readings (Books are available at the Campus Bookstore).

- Required Book: *Theories of Translation*, ED. Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet
- Required Book: *The Craft of Translation*, ED. John Biguenet and Rainer Schulte
- Recommended: The Ecco Anthology of International Poetry, ED. Ilya Kaminsky and Susan Harris
- A Physical Journal/Daybook
- Poetry Course Readings: on Canvas as PDFs or Links.

There will also be handouts in class. All required readings, whether online or in our books, must be brought to class.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Course Requirements and Assignments

Participation: while there may be lectures, the course will be organized as a single continuous discussion requiring everyone to voice their opinion.

The quality of your class participation will be judged through the following: your effort at completing short assignments and, as necessary, sharing them; the effort you put into responding to the reading assigned for class, responding to the writing of your peers and your willingness to share your thoughts with the class as a whole; and the effort you bring to reading critically.

All required readings, whether online or in our books, must be brought to class.

In class, you are being asked to respond to each other and to questions raised in class: I WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY DISRESPECTFUL CONVERSATION OF ANY MANNER WHETHER IN CLASS OR ONLINE. Participation is essential to this course: we will work both in large and small groups.

Your class participation will be assessed as follows:

A: Regular, helpful questions and comments that demonstrate full preparation for class meetings. Active, positive participation in all classroom discussions and activities. Conformity to all course policies as stated in this syllabus.

B: Occasional, pertinent questions and responses; good listening. Conformity to all course policies as stated in this syllabus.

C: Infrequent, tangential questions or comments; attentive. Conformity to all course policies as stated in this syllabus.

D: Inconsistent conformity to policies stated in this syllabus; disengaged from discussion; not prepared for class.

F: Regularly absent, physically, or mentally; failure to contribute meaningfully to the classroom's learning community; repeated violations of classroom policies.

Students are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to review the course calendar in light of their other commitments. The instructor will determine on a case-by-case basis whether or not an out-of-class commitment merits special consideration.

Regarding AI: There is a place for AI, but not in this class. Our Class is designed to develop students' abilities to think and write critically about literary texts. To that end, the use of any artificial intelligence tools, including but not limited to ChatGPT and Grammarly, is expressly forbidden. All graded student work is submitted to Turnitin, which flags AI above 20%. Any student work that is flagged with an AI score above 20% will be considered a violation of SJSU's academic code and result in a minimum penalty of zero for the assignment in question.

Reading Like a Writer: during the semester you will pair up with a colleague to present some opening thoughts on the day's reading. Both of you must speak/present. Both of you will receive the same grade. A good discussion will include the following:

1. Introduction to the Author—Biography, Important Notes, Etc.
2. CONCISE Summary of Poem/Essay
3. Identification of the Author's Use of Prosody we are studying. This should be a close-reading that pays attention to a SPECIFIC passage of text and explicates the writing for significance of language, imagery, tone, etc. I will assign one such technique or point of emphasis; you must choose another interesting feature of the Poem/Essay.
4. A discussion of the Poem/Essay's significance, with special attention to the deeper questions the events and reflections prompt.

You must prepare a visual aid for this presentation. You may make a Powerpoint presentation. I will be evaluating these Presentations for their depth and sophistication, your abilities to engage the class, your speaking dynamics—volume, clarity, rate, etc., and your overall professionalism.

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Final Examination or Evaluation

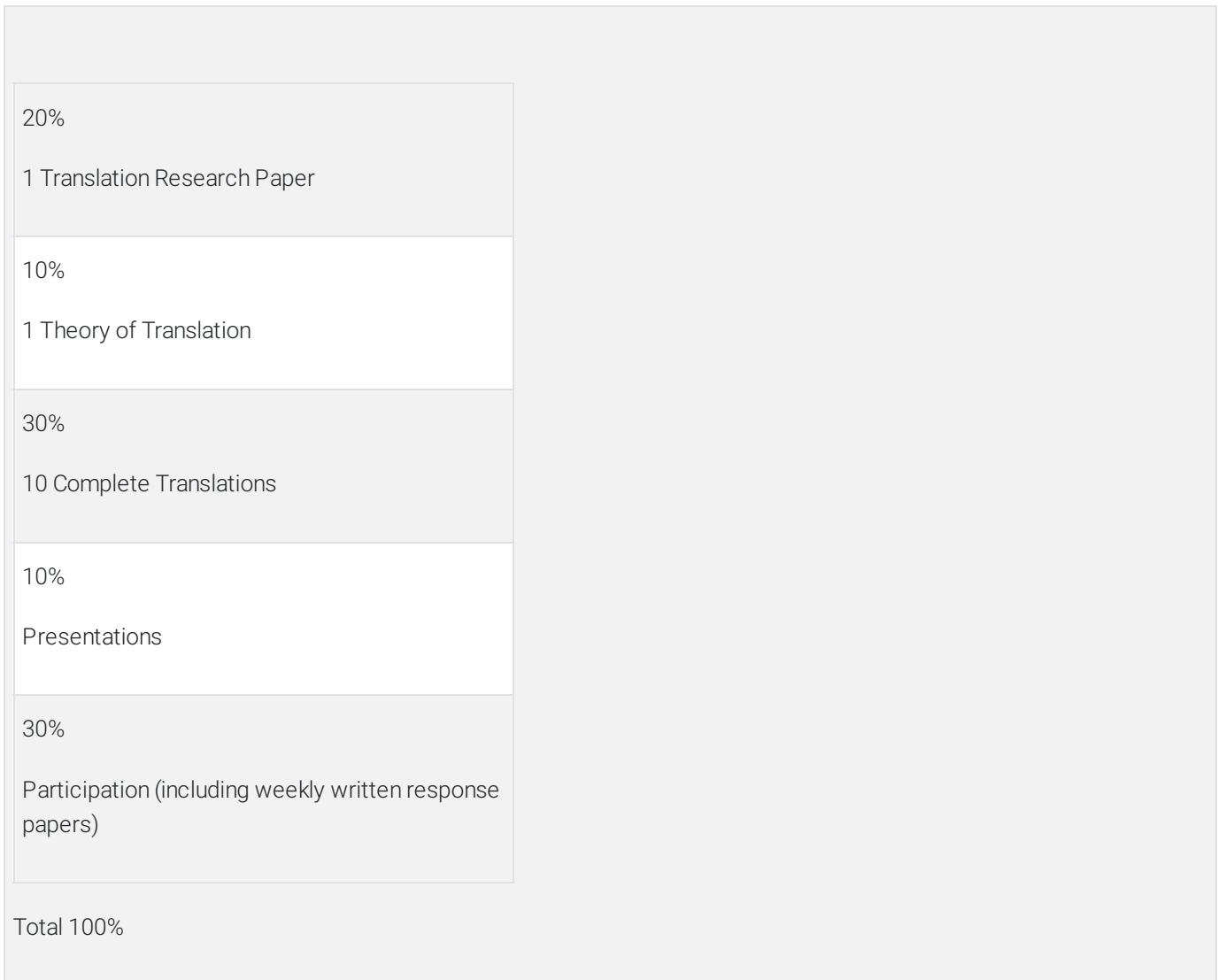
The course will complete with each student turning in a final portfolio of their written work. More information will be provided nearer the time the assignment is due.

✓ Grading Information

Grading Information

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>A plus</i>	<i>96 to 100%</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>93 to 95%</i>
<i>A minus</i>	<i>90 to 92%</i>
<i>B plus</i>	<i>86 to 89 %</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>83 to 85%</i>
<i>B minus</i>	<i>80 to 82%</i>
<i>C plus</i>	<i>76 to 79%</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>73 to 75%</i>
<i>C minus</i>	<i>70 to 72%</i>
<i>D plus</i>	<i>66 to 69%</i>

<i>D</i>	63 to 65%
<i>D minus</i>	60 to 62%



Grades given conform to the English Department and university grading policy. The Department of English is committed to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure.

Department of English and Comparative Literature Student Learning Goals

This course supports several of the English Department's Student Learning Goals. The Department of English and Comparative Literature seeks to foster the intellectual development of its majors by encouraging study of literature and writing—whether creative, technical, or other professional writing. The Department strives to make its majors familiar with a wide range of works of British, American, and World literature, including folk and popular forms; and with the nature of the canon and of canon-formation, including issues of culture, history, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

Department of English and Comparative Literature BA Program Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](#), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](#) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](#) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](#) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

 Course Schedule

English 202 Poetry Craft & Theory, Spring 2025

(As the course progresses, we may get off schedule--this is natural--as such, our daily assignments may be revised as necessary with fair notice given by email or in class).

Please be sure to have completed the assigned reading **before** that day's class.

WEEK ONE:	No Class
January 22	
Week TWO:	Intro, Translation Theory, Homophonic Translation
Jan 27	-
WEEK THREE: Feb. 3	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Willis Barnstone - ABC of Translating Poetry,Walter Benjamin - The Task of the Translator.pdfBassnett, Susan - SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF LITERARY TRANSLATION.pdfBlanchot - Translation-Sulfur_26-TOTAL.pdfChamberlain - Gender Metaphorics Translation-1988.pdfDeCampos - Holderlins-Red_Word.pdfVenuti -On-Invisibility-Translation.pdf

<p>WEEK FOUR: Feb. 10</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Bernstein-DOUBLETALKING THE HOMOPHONIC SUBLIME.pdf · Zukofsky-A-9.pdf · Notes to Zukofsky's "A-9" · LANG-To Tune in to the Human Tradition-Zukofskys Homophonic Practice.pdf · Stein-BEFORE THE FLOWERS OF FRIENDSHIP FADED FRIENDSHIP FADED.pdf · Melnick-MEN IN AIDA · Bernadette Mayer, "Catullus #42" · Jabberwocky by Apple
<p>WEEK FIVE: Feb. 17</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Paz, Octavio. "Translation: Literature and Letters." (Theories of Translation) · Rabassa, Gregory. "No Two Snowflakes Are Alike: Translation as Metaphor." (The Craft of Translation, p. 1)
<p>WEEK SIX: Feb. 24</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Robert Bly-Eight Stages of Translation-1982.pdf · Form and Spirit in Poetry Translation by Chan Sin Wai <p><u>Group Presentation Dates Assigned</u></p>

<p>WEEK SEVEN: Mar. 3</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · John Dryden, "On Translation" · Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On the Different Methods of Translating" <p><u>Workshop 1</u></p> <p>Group "Jan" PRESENTERS:</p> <p>§ §</p>
<p>WEEK EIGHT: Mar. 10</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, TRANSLATIONS · Friedrich Nietzsche, ON THE PROBLEM OF TRANSLATION <p><u>Workshop 2</u></p> <p>Group "February" PRESENTERS:</p> <p>§ §</p>

<p>WEEK NINE: Mar. 17</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Jose Ortega Y Gasset, THE MISERY AND SPLENDOR OF TRANSLATION · Vladimir Nabokov, PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION: ONEGIN IN ENGLISH <p><u>Workshop 3</u></p> <p>Group "March" PRESENTERS:</p> <p>§</p> <p>§</p>
<p>WEEK TEN: Mar. 24</p>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Roman Jakobson, ON LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION · Peter Szondi, THE POETRY OF CONSTANCY <p><u>Workshop 4</u></p> <p>Group "April" PRESENTERS:</p> <p>§</p> <p>§</p>

WEEK ELEVEN: Mar. 31	Spring Recess
WEEK TWELVE: Apr. 7	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Jacques Derrida, <i>Des Tours de Babel</i> · Yves Bonnefoy, <i>TRANSLATING POETRY</i> <p><u>Workshop 5</u></p> <p>Group "May" PRESENTERS:</p> <p>§</p> <p>§</p>
WEEK THIRTEEN: Apr. 14	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ON PAUL CELAN <p><u>Workshop 6</u></p>
WEEK FOURTEEN: Apr. 21	Workshop 7
WEEK FIFTEEN: Apr. 28	Workshop 8

Last Week:	Poetry Reading
May 5	

Final Manuscript is DUE, by end of day, of the day OUR FINAL IS SCHEDULED