

Literatures of the Americas

ENGL 123A

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

Contact Information

Professor: Dr. Maite Urcaregui (she/they)

Email: maite.urcaregui@sjsu.edu

Office: Faculty Office Building (FOB) 216

Office Hours

Monday, Wednesday, 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM, Zoom

<https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/89770941217?pwd=ob2FfnsEGgZgPVC7VAthuckBM8s6Qg.1>

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Course Information

English 123A: Literatures of the Americas promotes global understanding and transnational analysis by examining literature across the Americas, a broad term that brings together many different regions, nations, cultures, and languages across North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean. In this course, we will explore how the idea of “the Americas” has been shaped, in part, through European colonial enterprises, U.S. imperialism and neocolonialism, global capitalism, and migration. At the same time, we will examine the ways in which authors and artists across the Americas create counternarratives that challenge the coherence of that concept and envision alternative forms of identity, community, and belonging. We will historicize and analyze distinct literary traditions across the Americas as they are shaped by historical, cultural, and political contexts. Given the wide scope of the course (both geographic and otherwise), much of our reading will focus on Indigenous literature from the Turtle Island, or North America, specifically the U.S. and Canada; Black diasporic literature from the Caribbean, specifically Antigua; and South American literature, specifically Columbia. Reading across these diverse literary texts and cultural contexts, we will consider what productive connections emerge within the broad, diverse, and vexed category of “Literatures of the Americas” and what gets left out.

Lecture, Class Discussion, & Various Learning Activities

Tuesday, Thursday, 1:30 PM to 2:45 PM, Boccardo Business Center (BBC) 225

Course Description and Requisites

Examines the literatures of the Americas including the cultural, historical, and political contexts from which they emerge.

Satisfies UD Area: 3. Cultures and Global Understanding (Formerly Area V).

Prerequisite(s): Completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all UD GE courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.

Grading: Letter Graded

Sustainability Related - SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities 

* Classroom Protocols

Attendance

Regular attendance is vital to your learning and success in the course. We don't want to miss out on the opportunity to learn from/with you! If you are sick, or are unable to make it to class for whatever reason, you can catch up on the material you missed on our course Canvas page, via a friend/peer, and/or in my office hours or by appointment.

Preparation & Participation

We all have a responsibility and an opportunity to be an active participant in our own learning and to contribute to the knowledge that we'll create together in this class! Please come prepared to do so. This means that you've completed the assigned reading for the day in advance of class; you have access to those readings during our class discussion; and you have basic materials like pen/pencil, paper, and a device if you would like or are requested.

Devices

You are welcome to use larger devices like an tablet or laptop for class-specific activities, but please refrain from using your cell phone. Please be present and help create a respectful and distraction-free class by using your devices for class work only during our time together.

Engaging in Class Discussion & Building Community

Given the history of the Americas, this course explores challenging issues around colonialism, race and racism, and gender-based and sexual violence, among others. I encourage you to engage in these discussions to the degree you feel comfortable, to connect what we read to your own life and to the world around you, and to listen to and learn from your peers with respect and care. We will continue to discuss our collective goals and guidelines around developing safe and inclusive classroom discussions throughout the semester.

Course Communication & Emails

All course materials can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). Please check both our course Canvas and your email regularly to stay up to date.

Please be aware that I do not respond to emails outside of traditional business hours, M-F 9-5. I encourage you to also maintain professional boundaries around email and step away from it when you can/need. Unless it is a weekend or I am sick or away for travel, I should respond to your message within 48 hours. If you worry that I haven't seen or responded to your email, please do not hesitate to send me a follow up. I would appreciate it in fact!

When you email me, I'd appreciate it if you included a specific subject that states the purpose of your email as well as a greeting, message, and your name.

Academic Originality, Honesty, and AI

The literature we will be reading and discussing is so, so good, and it explores narratives and experiences that are often ignored, distorted, or marginalized. I want you to do justice to that literature by seriously engaging with it and developing your own original analysis of it. In short, I want to hear what you, and only you, have to say. While AI is now an unavoidable part of our reality, it is important that we understand how AI works and the ethical and environmental issues it raises. There are two types of AI tools, generative AI (which processes large amounts of text in order to learn and predict patterns and generate new content) and assistive AI (which do not produce content but helps users refine the content they've created).

Generative AI Tools are any platform that creates content based on user inputs and prompts (e.g., ChatGPT, JASPER, Bard, DeepMind, DALL-E, some functions of Grammarly, etc.). Generative AI for many assignments is the antithesis of the kind of learning we are engaged in in the Humanities Department. But for some creative assignments, it might be used consciously and specifically for a learning goal. So students should always be cautious and vigilant when considering whether or not to use an AI tool, considering whether a) the use of AI thwarts the goals of the assignment, and/or b) the use of AI is not permitted in your class or on this assignment. It is up to the student to know the

Assistive AI Tools are platforms that aid the user in producing or refining their own original content, but which do not generate new or creative content on their own (e.g., Hemingway, MS Editor, etc.). In general, Assistive AI platforms don't generate their own content, they aren't considered academic integrity violations. But for various reasons (e.g., students' need to develop their own mastery of grammar and syntax) individual instructors may prohibit their use. Using assistive technology when it is explicitly and clearly prohibited would be a violation of academic integrity.

For this class, you may use assistive AI tools but not generative AI tools. If I suspect you have used generative AI, I will first schedule a meeting with you to get more information and, if necessary, will assign an F for that assignment and report the issue to SJSU's Office of Student Conduct. The model that generative AI uses to generate material is fundamentally derivative and is also known to be inaccurate and incomplete and to reproduce misinformation, biases, and stereotypes. I want to hear your original ideas, arguments, and writing that can only be achieved by engaging with the texts we're reading and the writing

process! Additionally, we want to make sure that the scholars and authors whose ideas we engage with are properly cited and credited to not only credit their labor/talents/insights but also to build our own credibility as an writer.

Ultimately, it is your responsibility to take ownership over your education and to practice the mental muscle of developing, refining, and communicating ideas through writing. It is also is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and how to properly cite all sources.

Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

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

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

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

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

English Program Information

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

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

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

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able to:

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

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

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

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

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

GE UD Area 3: Cultures and Global Understanding

SJSU Studies courses -- GE UD Areas 2/5, 4, and 3 -- help students integrate knowledge between and among disciplines. SJSU Studies courses develop abilities that enable students to live and work intelligently, responsibly, and cooperatively in multicultural societies and to develop abilities to address complex issues and problems using analytical skills and creative techniques.

Courses in **UD Area 3: Cultures and Global Understanding** examine multiple aspects of human expression in cultures and societies outside the United States. By reflecting on how traditions of cultures outside the United States have influenced the United States' cultures and societies, students deepen their understanding of various cultures.

GE UD Area 3 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an UD Area 3 course, students should be able to:

1. analyze the historical, social, and/or cultural significance of creative works of human expression (examples include, but are not limited to, written works, images, media, music, dance, technologies, and designs) , from at least one cultural tradition outside the United States;

2. examine how creative works of human expression [as defined in #1] outside the United States have influenced United States' cultures;
3. explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external influences; and
4. appraise how the study of creative works of human expression from outside the United States shapes one's own understanding of cultural experiences and practices.

Content

1. Courses shall focus on issues or present perspectives from different academic disciplines and include an integrative assignment appropriate to the course content.
2. Courses shall require students to apply basic skills (reading, writing, speaking, critical thinking, research, and mathematics/quantitative reasoning) gained in Core General Education courses.
3. Assignments must utilize library research and oral and written communication skills.
4. Courses shall promote reflective processes and critical analysis of the civic relevance and ethical dimensions of course topics.
5. Materials must include primary sources appropriate to the disciplinary approaches used in the course (Examples include, but are not limited to, original creative works, scholarly journal articles, interviews, oral histories, historical documents).

Writing requirement

The minimum writing requirement is 3,000 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

ENGL 123A Specific Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

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

1. **Historicize "the Americas" as a contentious category that is shaped by colonial histories and comprises multiple literary traditions that emerge from specific national, geographic, linguistic, and cultural contexts (aligned with GLO 1).**
 1. You will demonstrate your understanding of this CLO throughout all class readings, discussions, and assignments.
2. **Discuss how literature of the Americas critically portrays and creatively resists coloniality, imperialism, racism, and capitalism and reflect on how these literary works shape our own understanding of cultural experiences and practices across the Americas (aligned with GLO 1-3).**
 1. You will demonstrate understanding of this CLO primarily through class participation and your discussion posts.
3. **Analyze, contextualize, and critically respond to both content and form of literary texts through close readings (aligned with GLO 4).**
 1. You will demonstrate understanding of this CLO through the passage presentation & discussion, discussion posts, close reading paper, and the final project.
4. **Practice writing and researching across genres and forms within the discipline with a particular audience and purpose in mind (aligned with GLO 4).**
 1. You will demonstrate understanding of this CLO through the discussion posts, close reading paper, and the final project.

Course Materials

While you are not required to buy these texts, you are responsible for getting access to the required readings, whether you purchase them through the campus bookstore, find them online, or check them out through the course reserves or the SJSU or SJPL libraries. **If you are able, I encourage you to purchase print copies to support the authors/artists and to bring to class.**

All other course readings will be available on Canvas.

Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir

Author: Deborah Miranda

ISBN: 9781597145862

Dakwakada Warriors

Author: Cole Pauls

ISBN: 9781772620412

No One Writes to the Colonel

Author: Gabriel García Márquez

ISBN: 978-0060751579

A Small Place

Author: Jamaica Kincaid

ISBN: 9780374527075

Lucy

Author: Jamaica Kincaid

ISBN: 9780374527358

Course Requirements and Assignments

All assignment instructions and grading criteria will be discussed in class and posted on Canvas prior to the deadline.

Participation (15%)

I encourage you to participate in class discussion not only by sharing your thoughts and asking questions but also by actively listening and creating space for others to share. I understand, however, that we all process knowledge in different ways and that our level of comfort participating in the classroom may be influenced by our own relationships to power and privilege and by our educational experiences. Every day

students will be asked to participate in a short introductory assignment that will fulfill their participation for the day. *Participation assignments will not be excused unless there is an emergency or extenuating circumstance that you communicate with me. However, each students' lowest three participation grades will automatically be dropped.*

Passage Presentation & Discussion (25%)

The purpose of these presentations is to give you an opportunity to learn by becoming the teacher. You will take leadership over guiding your small group through your close reading and discussion of a passage of your choice from the text.

Research & Close Reading Practice + Paper (30%)

In the close reading practice, you will develop a tentative research question, argument, and a draft of a body paragraph to begin brainstorming ideas and getting feedback. You will then use that feedback to develop a 4-5-page paper. This process allows you to engage in writing as a *process* and offers a space for you to practice close reading as a methodology for exploring: what literature means, how it communicates meaning formally, why it is important, and how it contributes to cultural understandings of the Americas.

Final Project (30%)

In your final project (about 6-8 pages) you will have the option of showcasing your learning in a format of your choice: an analytical paper, an original creative work and reflective statement, or a reflective essay. All three options must critically engage with scholarly and literary texts that we've read in class as well as your own outside research.

Grading Information

Grading Breakdown

Participation 15%

Passage Presentation & Discussion 25%

Research & Close Reading Practice + Paper 30%

Final Project 30%

Extensions & Late Work

I am willing to work with you if you anticipate that you may need extra time to submit your best work in an assignment. In order to avoid last-minute stress, please email me in advance of an assignment deadline to discuss an extension. If an emergency or other extenuating circumstance arises that makes this impossible, please contact me, and we can work out a solution. If late work is submitted, it will be graded at my discretion and may receive a deduction.

University Policies

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

Course Schedule

Please note that this schedule, including specific readings and assignment deadlines, are subject to change to meet the needs of the class. While I may make changes, I will never add to the workload.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 0	Course Introductions	Thursday, Jan. 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course Introductions• Complete Start-of-Semester Self-Reflection
Week 1	What is "the Americas"?	Tuesday, Jan. 27 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conocimiento exercise• Start-of-semester self-reflection Thursday, Jan. 29 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alexandra T. Vazquez's "Americas" from <i>Keywords for Latina/o Studies</i>
Week 2	Decolonial Counternarratives of the Americas	Tuesday, Feb. 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deborah Miranda's <i>Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir</i> "Introduction"<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Content warning: this text discusses various forms of physical violence, child abuse, and rape within the context of settler colonialism• Nichole Meyers-Lim's "Educating Elementary School Children about California Missions and the Perpetuation of Genocide" Thursday, Feb. 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 1-36 (The End of the World: Missionization 1776-1836)

When	Topic	Notes
Week 3		<p>Tuesday, Feb. 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 37-74 (Bridges: Post-Secularization 1836-1900) • Miranda's "Disobedient Texts: Mining the Archive for (Voluntary and Involuntary) Collaborators from <i>The Field Guide to Graphic Literature</i> <p>Thursday, Feb. 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 75-106 (The Light from the Carrisa Plains: Reinvention 1900-1961)
Week 4		<p>Tuesday, Feb. 17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last day to drop class without W on transcript • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 107-175 (Teheyapami Achiska: Home 1961-present *Read Silver through Testimony*) <p>Thursday, Feb. 18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miranda's <i>Bad Indians</i> pp. 176-208 (finish book)
Week 5	Graphic Narratives of Native North America/Turtle Island	<p>Tuesday, Feb. 17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class lecture and discussion on reading comics • Discuss research & close reading practice & paper assignment <p>Thursday, Feb. 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected comic shorts from <i>Deer Woman: An Anthology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Content warning: Portrays sexual violence and graphic violence of self-defense.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 6		<p>Tuesday, March 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marnette Federis and Mina Kim's "Examining the Painful Legacy of Native American Boarding Schools in the US" • Watch & discuss Reservation <i>Dogs</i> season 3, episode 3 "Deer Lady" in class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Content warning: Does not graphically portray but discusses child abuse and sexual assault within the context of Native American boarding schools. <p>Thursday, March 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1 "Dakwākāda Warriors in Sha Catcher" & "Language Key" from Cole Pauls' <i>Dakwākāda Warriors</i> <p>Friday, March 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research & close reading practice assignment due by 6:00 p.m. PST
Week 7		<p>Tuesday, March 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 2 & 3 "Dakwākāda Warriors II & III" from Cole Pauls' <i>Dakwākāda Warriors</i> <p>Thursday, March 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 3 "Dän K'e Futurism" & from Cole Pauls' <i>Dakwākāda Warriors</i>
Week 8	Stories of South American	<p>Tuesday, March 17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop for research + close reading paper <p>Thursday, March 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gabriel García Márquez's <i>No One Writes to the Colonel</i> pp. TBD
Week 9		<p>Tuesday, March 24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gabriel García Márquez's <i>No One Writes to the Colonel</i> pp. TBD <p>Thursday, March 26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gabriel García Márquez's <i>No One Writes to the Colonel</i> pp. TBD <p>Friday, March 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research & close reading paper due by 6:00 p.m.

When	Topic	Notes
Spring Break		<p>March 30-April 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest and relax! • Catch up on any reading and makeup work if necessary.
Week 10	Postcolonial Caribbean Prose	<p>Tuesday, April 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Jamaica Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i> <p>Thursday, April 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i> pp. 1-37
Week 11		<p>Tuesday, April 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>A Small Place</i> pp. 41-81 <p>Thursday, April 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 3-16
Week 12		<p>Tuesday, April 21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 17-42 <p>Thursday, April 23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 43-84
Week 13		<p>Tuesday, April 28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 85-132 <p>Thursday, April 30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamaica Kincaid's <i>Lucy</i> pp. 133-164
Week 14	Final Reflections & Preparations	<p>Tuesday, May 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final project workshop <p>Thursday, May 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final discussions, preparations, & course evaluations
Finals Week		<p>Tuesday, May 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit final project by 6:00 p.m.