

ENGLISH 117A AMERICAN LITERATURE & FILM FALL 2015  
Yoshihiro Ochida Hall 124 TUESDAY 13:30-16:15

JOHN ENGELL  
[John.Engell@sjsu.edu](mailto:John.Engell@sjsu.edu)

ENGLISH MAJOR ELECTIVE AND G.E. (SAN JOSE STUDIES) AREA S:  
SELF, SOCIETY, AND EQUALITY IN THE U.S.

Thursday 13:30:15:00  
FOB 218

GRADUATE ASSISTANT: Justin Bryant [j\\_bry34@hotmail.com](mailto:j_bry34@hotmail.com)

FOB 218 Tuesday 12-1

COURSE DESCRIPTION: We will study novels, films, and works of non-fiction prose set in and focused on California, specifically San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the Eastern Sierra. The novels are "Roman Noir"—dark novels about crime, the detection of crime, and moral corruption. The films are "Noir (c 1940-1960)," and "Neo-Noir (c 1960-present)"—dark films about crime, its detection, and moral corruption. The two works of non-fiction prose describe the Eastern Sierra before, during, and after the great Los Angeles "water grab," a woeful historical tale of crime and moral corruption evoked in the film *Chinatown*. The "Noir" sensibility is alive and thriving in California and in many recent literary and screen works created in and about the State. This sensibility extends to works involving all social classes and ethnic and racial groups. It represents the "dark underside" of the glowing "Golden State." The moral darkness often arises from individuals unscrupulously pursuing money and power. The moral darkness may also arise from jealousy, envy, fear, hatred, racism, sexism, classism, etc. These dark impulses are present in the works we will read and watch. As part of our investigations of "California Noir," we will discuss not only the moral but also the historical, sociological, class/ethnic, and artistic/aesthetic implications of the "Noir" sensibility. All works we will read and watch are examples of both popular and high art—an extraordinary accomplishment of their creators.

PREREQUISITES: Passage of the WST; upper-division standing; completion of Core G.E.

#### COURSE GOALS AND STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & COMPARATIVE LITERATURE [D stands for Department]:

- 1D. Students will demonstrate the ability to 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, rhetoric, or film.
- 2D. Students will demonstrate the ability to show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches in British, American, and World Literature.
- 3D. Students will demonstrate the ability to write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, context, and nature of the subject.
- 4D. Students will demonstrate the ability to develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
- 5D. Students will demonstrate the ability to articulate relations among culture, history, & texts.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR SAN JOSE STUDIES AREA S [S stands for G.E. Area S]:

- 1S. Students shall be able to describe how identities (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age) are shaped by cultural and societal influences within contexts of equality and inequality.
- 2S. Students shall be able to describe historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S.
- 3S. Students shall be able to describe social actions which have led to great equality and social justice in the U.S. (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age).
- 4S. Students shall be able to recognize and appreciate constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups within the U.S.

DEPARTMENT AND G.E. LEARNING OBJECTIVES COVERED ARE LISTED NEXT TO ASSIGNMENTS.

ASSESSMENT: All student writing shall be assessed for grammar, clarity, conciseness, and coherence. In accordance with the approved assessment plan, the course coordinator/department curriculum coordinator or chair will summarize the assessment results for English 117A according to the procedure for submitting courses for continuing certification in General Education.

REQUIRED LITERARY TEXTS IN ORDER READ:

Dashiell Hammett. *THE MALTESE FALCON*. Vintage (Random House), 1989.  
 James M. Cain. *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*. Knopf, Doubleday, 1989.  
 Chandler, Raymond. *THE LONG GOODBYE*. Vintage (Random House), 1988.  
 Austin, Mary. *THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN*. Penguin Nature Classics, 1997.  
 Reisner, Marc. *CADILLAC DESERT*, Revised Edition. Penguin, 1993.  
 Mosley, Walter. *SIX EASY PIECES*. Washington Square Press, 2003.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignments listed on the schedule are accompanied by Student Learning Objectives for the Department of English & Comparative Literature & for San Jose Studies Area S. All Learning Objectives are covered. Writing Assignments include short definition and short essay quizzes, an short critical essay with annotated bibliography, and a creative project. Guidelines and explanations will be provided in class.

GRADING:

Five Short Answer and Short Essay Quizzes	6% each	Total 30%
Short Critical Essay with Annotated Bibliography		Total 35%
Creative Project		Total 35%

Overall Total of 100%; Total writing approximately 5,000 words.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS [All class meetings are from 13:30-16:15 in YOH 124]:

T 8/25	DISCUSSION & LECTURE: Class Syllabus (handout), Film Terms (Handout), Literary Terms (handout), and the California Roman Noir and Film Noir; begin discussion of <i>THE MALTESE FALCON</i> (novel & film)
T 9/1	READING: Finish reading Hammett, <i>THE MALTESE FALCON</i> FILM SCREENING: <i>THE MALTESE FALCON</i> . Dir. John Huston BRIEF DISCUSSION AND/OR LECTURE: <i>THE MALTESE FALCON</i> , novel & film
T 9/8	READING: Review Hammett, <i>THE MALTESE FALCON</i> LECTURE & DISCUSSION: <i>THE MALTESE FALCON</i> , novel & film
T 9/15	1 <sup>st</sup> SHORT ESSAY QUIZ: Film Terms, Literary Terms, <i>THE MALTESE FALCON</i> , novel & film (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S) READING: Cain, <i>DOUBLE INDEMNITY</i> DISCUSSION & LECTURE: <i>DOUBLE INDEMNITY</i> (novel) and <i>THE MALTESE FALCON</i> (novel and film): greed, class, sexuality, power, social instability
T 9/22	READING: Review Cain, <i>DOUBLE INDEMNITY</i> . FILM SCREENING: <i>DOUBLE INDEMNITY</i> . Dir. Billy Wilder BRIEF DISCUSSION AND/OR LECTURE: <i>DOUBLE INDEMNITY</i> , novel & film
T 9/29	DISCUSSION AND LECTURE: <i>DOUBLE INDEMNITY</i> , novel & film 2 <sup>nd</sup> SHORT ESSAY QUIZ: Film & Literary Terms; <i>DOUBLE INDEMNITY</i> , novel & film (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 1S, 2S)

- T 10/6 READING: Complete reading Chandler, THE LONG GOODBYE  
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: THE LONG GOODBYE, the Roman Noir and Los Angeles; class, money, sexuality; power; assignment for the short Critical Essay and Annotated Bibliography due on 7 April
- T 10/13 FILM SCREENING: THE LONG GOODBYE, Dir. Robert Altman  
BRIEF DISCUSSION & LECTURE: THE LONG GOODBYE: novel & film
- T 10/20 SHORT CRITICAL ESSAY WITH ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE  
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: THE LONG GOODBYE, novel & film; reinventing/playing with the conventions of noir  
3<sup>RD</sup> SHORT ESSAY QUIZ: Film & Literary Terms; THE LONG GOODBYE, novel and film (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S)
- T 10/27 READING: Austin. THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN  
FILM SCREENING: CHINATOWN. Dir. Roman Polanski  
BRIEF DISCUSSION AND/OR LECTURE: CHINATOWN: neo-noir, class, money, power, corruption; creative project assignment
- T 11/3 READING: Reisner. CADILLAC DESERT, Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 10  
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: CHINATOWN, THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN, CADILLAC DESERT: power and money versus integrity and the natural world
- T 11/10 4<sup>TH</sup> SHORT ESSAY QUIZ: Film & Literary terms only if necessary; CHINATOWN, THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN, CADILLAC DESERT (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S)  
READING: Mosley. SIX EASY PIECES.  
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: Mosley, Chandler, detectives, race & class, money & power In [Southern] California
- T 11/17 FILM SCREENING: MULHOLLAND DRIVE. Dir. David Lynch  
BRIEF DISCUSSION AND/OR LECTURE: what is MULHOLLAND DRIVE about and how is it related to noir and neo-noir?
- T 11/24 CREATIVE PROJECT DUE  
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: SIX EASY PIECES, MULHOLLAND DRIVE and putting [Southern] California back together again
- T 12/1 FINAL DISCUSSION: SIX EASY PIECES, MULHOLLAND DRIVE  
5<sup>TH</sup> SHORT ESSAY QUIZ: SIX EASY PIECES and MULHOLLAND DRIVE (all G. E. and Department SLOs)
- T 12/8 THIS IS THE END, MY FRIEND. BRIEF DISCUSSION, COMMENTS, ETC.