

SPRING 2026

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Course offerings listed below are subject to change. All courses may not be listed.

Please consult the My.SDSU online class schedule for specific days and times of these courses.

ECL 725.02 **Issues in Literature of the U.S.** **B. LARA**
Ghosts in the Archive: Hauntology, Death Studies, and Spectral Literature

This course explores the intersections of Hauntology, Death Studies, and Critical Theory to examine how literature and archives preserve, distort, and resurrect past traces. Drawing on key thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Avery Gordon, Christina Sharpe, and Domino Perez, students will investigate how spectrality complicates historical narratives, cultural memory, and literature. Through theoretical readings and analyses of Latinx Gothic literary works and special collection artifacts, students will consider how ghosts (both metaphorical and material) inhabit texts, images, and institutions. The course invites them to explore how presence and absence shape the concepts of memory, identity, and belonging.

ECL 727.01 **Happy Gothic** **P. SERRATO**

The very first scene of the very first Gothic novel is a rather funny one. Conrad, the dumbass son of Manfred, Lord of Otranto, has been “dashed to pieces” by a bigass helmet that has fallen from the sky. Rather than descend into despair over the horrible fate that has befallen his offspring—“a homely youth, sickly, and of no promising disposition” anyway—Manfred cannot help but be astonished by the “stupendous object” atop Conrad. “Nor could even the bleeding mangled remains of the young Prince divert the eyes of Manfred from the portent before him,” we are told. While the rest of the novel has some moments of haunting and dread, it also delivers some additional moments of amusing excess.

As cliché as it is for me to begin this course description with mention of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764)—I have asserted my aversion to beginning any discussion or study of the gothic tradition with Walpole’s novel on many an occasion—I do so here to suggest that since its beginnings, different variations of play, humor, and fun show through in the gothic tradition. Indeed, there is a tradition unto itself of “happy gothic,” which includes texts that are comical, celebratory, and/or otherwise playful as they simultaneously work within and explode gothic aesthetic and critical conventions.

This semester, we will explore happy gothic. Eschewing familiar/tired gothic studies approaches that center on fear, dread, and anxiety, we will see what more lighthearted versions of gothic offer and how doing so might encourage us to go back and re-read the gothic tradition writ large.

For our first class meeting on Monday, January 26, please have read *The Castle of Otranto* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) and have watched *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993, Dir. Henry Selick).

Requirements: Weekly responses, a weekly coloring page, a picture book presentation, a group presentation, research updates, and a final research paper.

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ECL 727.01

Happy Gothic

P. SERRATO

Texts to be covered likely include:

Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948, Dir. Charles Barton)

The Ghost and Mr. Chicken (1966, Dir. Alan Rafkin)

Mad Monster Party? (1967, Dir. Jules Bass)

Hotel Transylvania (2012, Dir. Genndy Tartakovsky)

Warm Bodies (2013, Dir. Jonathan Levine)

Queens of the Dead (2025, Dir. Tina Romero)

Beetlejuice (1988, Dir. Tim Burton)

Starling House, Alix Harrow, (2023)

ECL 750F.01

MFA SEMINAR: Fiction Writing

M. de la PENA

Fiction Workshop

This course will function primarily as a writing workshop, welcoming all forms of original creative work. In addition to writing and revising fiction, we will examine published literature across genres to spark in-class discussions and generative exercises. You will provide both written and oral feedback on your classmates' work and will lead the workshop at least once during the semester. While the primary focus is on developing original fiction, we will also explore aspects of the marketplace and the business side of the writing life.

ECL 750F.02

MFA SEMINAR: Fiction Writing

M. de la PENA

Professional Writer

This course focuses on the professional side of being a working author. Students will research the current literary marketplace and meet virtually with multiple literary agents while workshopping their own query letters. We will examine the author–editor relationship through the perspectives of editors at both “Big Five” publishers and independent presses. The course will also address the pros and cons of developing a focused social media platform, along with other marketing and publicity opportunities available to new authors.

In addition, students will build and deliver personalized keynote speeches, practice participating in panels across various literary settings, and draft editorial reviews of contemporary novels within their chosen genres. We will also discuss the responsibilities of literary citizenship in today's publishing landscape. While there will be some opportunities to workshop creative excerpts, the primary focus of the course will be on cultivating the skills, strategies, and professional presence necessary to thrive as a career writer.

ECL 750F.03

MFA SEMINAR: Fiction Writing

S-P MARTIN

The 750F class is linked to my section of ECL 791B to provide students with six units of academic credit and lots of time to work on a novel or collection of stories. Classes will not be held in classrooms, but in one-on-one conferences in my office (AL 253), focusing specifically on your text and your text alone. You won't be in workshops reading your classmates' work. You'll be writing your own book for the whole semester (Fall 2025) and next semester too (Spring 2026) since this is a two-semester class (a total of 12 units). I may suggest readings if I think it might help you develop your text, but these optional readings will be tailored to your book, not designed for a whole class of separate writers. You should finish with a first or

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ECL 796.01
(CR/NC Course)

INTERNSHIP – Poetry International

B. FALCONER

Poetry International is one of the oldest and most respected literary journals in the world that's specifically dedicated to poetry and poetics from around the world. A semester internship at *Poetry International* is always an exciting opportunity to gain experience in the practical management of a literary journal and a literary community—to make professional and personal connections with contemporary writers while producing a journal that the President of the Guggenheim Foundation Edward Hirsch called “a full and inventive anthology,” a reading experience that Fady Joudah described as “diving for pearls in pearl-infested waters.” The three-credit internship also satisfies requirements within the Undergraduate Creative Writing Minor / Certificate, and the Creative Publishing & Editing Minor /Certificate

Interns at *Poetry International* develop experience in various facets of production of the journal, focused primarily on: reading journal submissions through Submittable; participating in production of print and online material; mastering social media. Interns are also invited, but not required, to contribute to additional projects, such as editing the master file of the annual edition or enhancing the distribution network of *Poetry International*.

Interns are expected to: complete 5 hours of PI-related work per week, including one hour at a weekly Wednesday Round Table or team meeting from 2-3 pm. Contact Blas Falconer bfalconer@sdsu.edu if you have questions.