

# ENGL 49: CALIFORNIA LITERATURE: GOLDEN STATE CULTURES, GEOGRAPHIES & HISTORIES

## Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	4
Hours:	4 lecture per week (48 total per quarter)
Advisory:	Demonstrated proficiency in English by placement via multiple measures OR through an equivalent placement process OR completion of ESLL 125 & ESLL 249.
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 3: Arts & Humanities
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

## Description

Introduction to literature written by and about Californians, from pre-contact California Indian creation myths to contemporary poetry, fiction, drama, essays, and autobiographical narratives. Emphasis on important literary contributions by authors from a range of ethnic, socio-economic, and regional communities representing the cultural complexity of California. Emphasis on the influence of ecology, geography, political and social developments, ethnicity, gender, and class on the formation of distinctive yet interconnected California cultures, as represented in literary works.

## Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Identify how social, cultural, historical, and political contexts shape the literature of California
2. Analyze the specific contributions and special achievements of individual California authors within the context of the communities and cultural groups they represent
3. Interpret how California authors and literary works reflect the themes, motifs, conventions, and movements that have characterized the broader American literary landscape
4. Understand literary works' representation of distinctive histories and cultures of regions and sub-regions within California
5. Recognize and apply basic literary terminologies, theories, and genres appropriate to an introductory college-level discussion of literature

## Course Content

1. Social, cultural, historical, and political contexts that have shaped the literature of California, such as:

- a. Early California history, including Native American experience, Spanish and Mexican colonial empires in California, and annexation by the United States
  - b. The Gold Rush era
  - c. The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl migration
  - d. World War II, Japanese-American internment, and the second Great Migration
  - e. Urbanization, suburbanization, and immigration in postwar California
  - f. The Civil Rights movement, the Free Speech movement, and postwar counterculture
  - g. The ascension of Silicon Valley and the Great Recession
2. California authors within the context of the communities and cultural groups they represent, such as:
    - a. Native American authors in California
    - b. Latino/Latina authors in California
    - c. African American authors in California
    - d. Asian American authors in California
    - e. Anglo-American authors in California
    - f. Gay and lesbian authors in California
    - g. Women authors in California
    - h. Low-income and working-class authors in California
  3. Themes and movements in American literature reflected by the work of California authors, such as:
    - a. Immigrant narratives
    - b. Nature writing
    - c. The frontier myth
    - d. Modernist literary movements emerging in the 1920s and 1930s
    - e. The Beat Generation of the 1950s
    - f. Postmodernist literary experimentation from the 1960s to the 2000s
  4. Literary works' representation of distinctive histories and cultures of regions and sub-regions within California, such as:
    - a. The San Francisco Bay Area and Central Coast
    - b. The Great Central Valley
    - c. The Sierra Nevada
    - d. Los Angeles and the Inland Empire
    - e. The California-Mexico Borderlands
  5. Relevant literary terminologies and analytic techniques
    - a. New historicist, Marxist, ecocritical, and/or other analytical tools for literary interpretation
    - b. Denotative and connotative meaning of language
    - c. Figurative and symbolic language in relation to central theme(s) of the work

## Lab Content

Not applicable.

## Special Facilities and/or Equipment

1. When taught on campus, no special facility or equipment needed.
2. When taught via Foothill Global Access, ongoing access to computer with email and basic software capabilities.

## Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Quizzes (comprehension, basic interpretation)  
 Participation through class discussion  
 In-class essays and exams, including final exam (analysis, argument, synthesis)  
 Formal papers (analysis, argument, synthesis)  
 Preparing presentations and leading discussion groups  
 Critical reading journals  
 Service learning project  
 Podcasts and videos

## Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Lecture presentations and classroom discussions using the language of literary criticism and analysis  
 Reading of a wide range of California literature, focusing on geographical, historical, and cultural contexts  
 Group presentations on California authors and their works  
 Actively engaging in service learning  
 Guest speakers

## Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Austin, Mary. The Land of Little Rain. 1903.  
 Boyle, T.C.. The Tortilla Curtain. 1995.  
 Chabon, Michael. Telegraph Avenue. 2012.  
 Chandler, Raymond. The Big Sleep. 1939.  
 Cleaver, Eldridge. Soul On Ice. 1968.  
 Coleman, Wanda. Heavy Daughter Blues: Poems and Stories 1968-1986. 1987.  
 Davidson, Ash. Damnation Spring. 2021.  
 Dick, Phillip K.. A Scanner Darkly. 1977.  
 Didion, Joan. Play It As It Lays: A Novel. 1970.  
 Fante, John. Ask the Dust: A Novel. 1939.  
 Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. A Coney Island of the Mind. 1958.  
 Freeman, John, editor. Freeman's: California. 2019.  
 Gilbar, Steven, editor. Natural State: A Literary Anthology of California Nature Writing. 1999.  
 Hammett, Dashiell. The Maltese Falcon. 1929.  
 Haslam, Gerald, editor. Many Californias: Literature from the Golden State. 1999.  
 Haslam, Gerald. Coming of Age in California. 1990.  
 Heide, Rick, editor. Under the Fifth Sun: Latino Literature from California. 2002.

Hicks, Jack, James D. Houston, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Al Young, editors. The Literature of California Volume 1: Native American Beginnings to 1945. 2000.

Hong Kingston, Maxine. The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts. 1989.

Jeffers, Robinson. Selected Poems. 1938.

Kerouac, Jack. The Dharma Bums. 1958.

Lam, Andrew. Birds of Paradise Lost. 2012.

Locascio, Lisa, editor. Golden State 2017: The Best New Writing from California. 2017.

London, Jack. Martin Eden. 1909.

Maupin, Armistead. Tales of the City. 1978.

Miranda, Deborah A.. Indian Cartography: Poems. 1999.

Muir, John. My First Summer in the Sierra. 1911.

Nanda, Aparajita, editor. Black California: A Literary Anthology. 2011.

Norris, Frank. The Octopus: A Story of California. 1901.

Pynchon, Thomas. The Crying of Lot 49. 1965.

Reed, Ishmael. The Last Days of Louisiana Red. 1974.

Sapigao, Janice. Microchips for Millions. 2016.

Saroyan, William. The Human Comedy. 1943.

Sarris, Greg. Grand Avenue: A Novel in Stories. 1994.

Sinclair, Upton. Oil!: A Novel. 1926.

Solnit, Rebecca. A Field Guide to Getting Lost. 2005.

Stegner, Wallace. Angle of Repose. 1971.

Steinbeck, John. Cannery Row. 1945.

Steinbeck, John. East of Eden. 1952.

Steinbeck, John. The Grapes of Wrath (available as OER). 1939.

Steinbeck, John. Tortilla Flat. 1935.

Tan, Amy. The Joy Luck Club. 1989.

Twain, Mark. "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County". 1865.

Viramontes, Helena. Their Dogs Came With Them. 2000.

Viramontes, Helena. Under the Feet of Jesus. 1995.

Vollmann, William T.. Imperial. 2009.

Vollmann, William T.. Whores for Gloria. 1991.

Waldie, D.J.. Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir. 1996.

West, Nathaniel. The Day of the Locust. 1939.

Although many of these texts are older than the suggested "5 years or newer" standard, they remain seminal texts in this area of study and are considered foundational texts.

Note: Text(s) may be chosen at the instructor's discretion.

Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* available as OER (2015): <https://www.oercommons.org/courses/the-grapes-of-wrath-by-john-steinbeck>

Online resources:

California Revealed: <https://californiarevealed.org/>.

Calisphere: <https://calisphere.org/>.

Lunch Poems: Gary Snyder: <https://www.oercommons.org/courses/lunch-poems-gary-snyder>.

Lunch Poems: Al Young: <https://www.oercommons.org/courses/lunch-poems-al-young>.

## Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Critical essays
2. Group presentations
3. Reading journals and portfolios
4. Midterm examination
5. Final examination
6. Class discussion in large-group and small-group formats
7. Attending California-themed cultural events, musical performances, or museum exhibits, and responding in writing
8. [Service learning projects \(e.g., Foothill College Research and Service Learning Symposium\)](#)

## Discipline(s)

English