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### ENG 2000-001 Introduction to Creative Writing

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## English 2000: Introduction to Creative Writing (Fall 2023)

Amie Whittemore (she/her) 

### What is Introduction to Creative Writing?

Creative writing is a means to thinking and writing both critically and creatively. You will learn about the forms of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and playwriting through discussion and critical reading of and writing about published creative texts; you will apply this knowledge to the work you and your peers create through written and oral critiques.



You will also invent sentences, images, new ideas, perhaps even a dialogue between unicorns and divorce lawyers. You will muck around in language before you revise—and you’ll hopefully discover the challenge and delight in revision. And in all these activities, the aim is that both sides of your brain will improve their ability to work together: that logic and emotion, rationality and absurdity, your inability to properly load a dishwasher and your ease with quadratic equations will create new ways of understanding yourself and the world around you, through writing and thinking about writing. Furthermore, by using multiple facets of your intelligence, your awareness of how your mind processes, assesses, and organizes information, and then writes about it will develop. Ideally, you’ll write something you like—and understand why you like it.

Thus, Introduction to Creative Writing isn’t simply about “expressing yourself” (though self-expression is often involved in the work of writing), but a course that will help you balance creativity, criticism, and self-reflection: it’s a place to think and feel and write and read and experiment and surprise yourself and practice curiosity and see what happens.

### What will we read?

- *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft* by Janet Burroway
- Texts provided on D2L

You will also be responsible for sharing your work and responding to your classmates’ work; more on that later.

### What will we do?

This course will require active participation, which will include a mix of in-person and

asynchronous online discussion and sharing of reading and writing. You will write numerous informal exercises and will be asked to turn these exercises into poetry, prose (both fiction and nonfiction), and plays.

You will also be expected to discuss what you and your peers have written, in addition to the other texts we read. **Thus, regular and engaged participation in the class is expected.**

Although you will never be forced to discuss them if you are not comfortable, please bear in mind that we will be reading texts that may deal with sensitive material and/or works that may represent different belief, cultural, and/or religious systems. I thank you in advance for bringing an open, curious mind to our discussions!

### **What will I write?**

- **Invention Work** (this includes writing exercises, reading responses, and participation in class & online discussions). The work in this category is informal and to support your thinking about the genres we'll be working with (poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction) as well as your ability to experiment in these genres.
- **Poetry Portfolio:** While you will determine the exact contents of the portfolio, it will include poems written during this unit and a short reflection.
- **Creative Nonfiction Portfolio:** While you will determine the exact contents of this portfolio, it will include at least one creative nonfiction essay and a short reflection.
- **Fiction Portfolio:** While you will determine the exact contents of this portfolio, it will include at least one story and a short reflection.
- **Playwriting Portfolio:** While you will determine the exact contents of this portfolio, it will include at least one play and a short reflection.
- **Final Portfolio:** With input from me, you will determine what you want to include in your final portfolio to demonstrate your development as a writer this semester. It will need to include work from at least three of the above genres, including revision and, potentially new work, and a reflection on the semester as a whole. You will also be asked to share some of your work during our final in-person meeting.

### **How will my work be evaluated?**

This course uses a labor-based approach to grading. While you are most often graded on the “quality” of your writing (and the quality is entirely context-based and can be performed with little effort at times), I will grade you on the quality of your “labor.” That is, I will grade your performance this semester on the amount of work you complete, on your ability to meet deadlines and fulfill expectations, and on the demonstrated time and effort you put toward achieving course goals. Yes, your classmates and I will address the quality of your writing, and I expect that after careful construction and revision, your writing will be of the highest quality. I will also expect you to put forward the substantial time and effort it takes to improve upon the quality of your writing. My feedback to you will be primarily through written commentary.

I’m grading your labor this semester because an emphasis on the time and effort you dedicate to this class, rather than an emphasis on quality, helps you to focus on your learning and

development as a creative writer. It also invites you to take greater risks: this risk-taking is the most important thing you can do to develop as a writer. Also, this transparency (you will know exactly the grade you're going to get in this class, because you determine the effort and time you choose to put into it) allows all members of the class to be intellectually honest with each other, and transparency is fundamental to my teaching philosophy.

## **Grading Contracts**

Although your grade is dependent on labor, to receive credit for a project it must be complete. Thus, if your project does not meet the requirements of the assignment (if it does not include required components, use appropriate citation (if applicable), meet length requirements, or adhere to academic integrity standards, for instance), then it will not receive credit.

A = satisfactory completion of all five writing portfolios and completion of 90% or more invention work (as defined above)

B = satisfactory completion of all five writing portfolios and completion of 80-89% of invention work (as defined above)

C = satisfactory completion of four of the writing portfolios and completion of 70-79% of invention work (as defined above)

D = satisfactory completion of four or fewer of the writing portfolios and completion of 60-69% of invention work (as defined above)

F = satisfactory completion of four or fewer of the writing portfolios and completion of 60% or less of invention work (as defined above)

\* In the instance where a student completes the invention work required for a specific grade but is missing a portfolio, the grade will drop one letter grade (i.e. if the student turns in four portfolios and completes 90% of the invention work, they will earn a B, etc.).

\* Failure to complete work will result in a failing grade in the course. But there is no need to fail! Just do the work, and talk to me if you're in a jam.

## **What's your late work policy?**

I will be generous with deadlines if you communicate with me in advance of them passing. Ideally, all Invention Work should be done by the time it is due as it will support your ongoing development as a writer this semester and it is unlikely I will grant extensions on these informal assignments. Missing a couple of these assignments will not adversely affect your grade.

If you need an extension on one of the portfolios, please email me to arrange an alternative deadline *before the original deadline has passed*. In general, work should be submitted within one week of the original due date if an extension is granted.

Deadlines serve us as writers and as a community in several ways:

1) they encourage us to produce work despite our anxieties about doing so;

2) by participating in discussion together, in a timely fashion, we can help each other learn and think about the texts we are engaging with and trying to create ourselves. Frequent missing of deadlines will make it difficult to pass the course and get as much out of it as you can.

### **So, what will learning look like in this class?**

Our in-person meetings will be supplemented with asynchronous work online. Occasionally, we may meet on zoom to accommodate guest speakers. My hope is we can use some of the learning tools the pandemic has made more prevalent in a way that enriches our in-person meetings rather than distracts from them.

I do not have an attendance policy as my assumption is that you want to be in class; however, few students do well after missing two weeks of class (6 class meetings). That said, if you are feeling unwell, PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS. While regular attendance is important to getting the most out of the class, your health—and the health of those around you—is more important. If you've got the sniffles, stay home and email a classmate, check D2L, or email me to find out what you missed.

### **How should everyone behave in class, including the instructor?**

In this course we will discuss writing and ideas with which you may disagree, find uncomfortable, or that you may question—and that's a wonderful thing. I hope you find yourself challenged and introduced to new perspectives, from our readings and from your fellow classmates. I expect you to engage with others' ideas respectfully and thoughtfully, to put forth honest effort in your work, to ask questions when you're uncertain, and to approach our work together with curiosity and openness.

### **I'm feeling a little lost. What should I do?**

Zoom, stop by, or email me during my office hours (listed on page 1 at the top). In general, I will respond to emails within 24 hours (usually more quickly) on weekdays, 48 hours on weekends. I also recommend having an "email/text buddy" in the class to go to when you have questions.

### **Tell me about The Writing Center.**

I encourage you to use the EIU Writing Center located at 3110 Coleman Hall. This free resource provides one-to-one conferences with writing consultants who can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support, documenting, and revising your papers.

The Writing Center is open to work with any student from any major at any stage of his or her

writing process, and its system of one-to-one conferences demonstrates value and respect for individual writers, all of whom can benefit from feedback about their works in progress. The center is not a proofreading or editing or remedial service, however. It is a place where you can learn how to become a more thoughtful, independent, and rhetorically effective writer.

To schedule an appointment, you can drop by the center (3110 Coleman Hall) or you can call 581-5929. The writing center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. On Friday hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Consulting sessions last anywhere from 10 to 45 minutes.

### **A Note on Academic Integrity**

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—“The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s own original work” (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Office of Student Standards. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

### **The Student Success Center**

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](http://www.eiu.edu/~success)) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

### **Is everything in this document set in stone?**

We will stick to this schedule as closely as possible. Any changes will be posted in D2L.

### **Schedule:**

See below for schedule information.

## English 2000 Schedule

(see D2L for specific deadlines and details)

Date	Reading & Writing Assignments Due
Week 1	
Introduction to Class & Poetry	
8/21/23	<p>Introductions Generative Writing</p> <p><b>HW for 8/23/23:</b> Read and annotate “Why I Write” by George Orwell, excerpts from “Why I Write” by Joan Didion and Natasha Trethewey, and “Positive Obsession” by Octavia Butler</p>
8/23/23	<p>Discuss Readings Generative Writing</p> <p><b>HW for 8/25/23:</b> Write your own “Why I Write” essay and submit to dropbox. Be prepared to share in class as well.</p>
8/25/23	<p>Discuss “Why I Write” essays Intro to Poetry</p> <p><b>HW for 8/28/23:</b> Read excerpts from Mary Oliver’s <i>A Poetry Handbook</i> and example poems (on D2L)</p>
Week 2	
8/28/23	<p>Discussion &amp; Generative Writing</p> <p><b>HW for 8/30/23:</b> Read “Image” (Burroway, 15-27) and example poems on pages 39-43.</p>
8/30/23	<p>Discussion &amp; Intro to Poetry Portfolio Guidelines</p> <p><b>HW for 9/1/23:</b> Read pgs 302-310 in Burroway and example poems on D2L. Post to generative writing forum.</p>
9/1/23	<p>Discussion</p> <p><b>HW for 9/6/23:</b> Read “The Four Temperaments of Poetry” by Gregory Orr on D2L and analyze one previously assigned poem (more instructions on D2L).</p>
Week 3	
9/4/23	No class. Happy Labor Day!
9/6/23	Discussion and Generative Writing

	<b>HW for 9/8/23:</b> Read assigned essay, definitions of forms, and example poems on D2L.
9/8/23	Discussion & Workshop Prep  <b>HW for 9/11/23:</b> Submit Poems and Author Statements for Workshop to D2L (see D2L for staggered deadlines).
Week 4	<b>Workshop</b>
9/11/23	Workshop Day 1
9/13/23	Workshop Day 2
9/15/23	Workshop Day 3  <b>HW for 9/18/23:</b> Poetry Portfolio Due to Dropbox
Week 5	<b>Intro to CNF</b>
9/18/23	Finish Workshop (if necessary) / Intro to Creative Nonfiction  <b>HW for 9/20/23:</b> Read “Introduction: The Art of the Personal Essay” by Philip Lopate and TBD
9/20/23	Discussion & Generative Writing  <b>HW for 9/22/23:</b> Read “Voice” and “Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self” by Alice Walker (Burroway 47-68)
9/22/23	Discussion & Generative Writing  <b>HW for 9/25/23:</b> Read Burroway 229-236 and example flash essays on d2l. Post to generative writing forum.
Week 6	
9/25/23	Discussion and CNF Portfolio Guidelines  <b>HW for 9/27/23:</b> Read “Writing Through Innocence and Experience: Voices in Flash Nonfiction” by Sue William Silverman, and “Bye-bye, I, and Hello, You” by Ira Sukrungruang (on d2l).
9/27/23	Discussion  <b>HW for 9/29/23:</b> Read “Over the River and Through the Woods, to Almanac We Go: On the Use of Research and Lists in Flash Nonfiction” by Aimee Nezhukumatathil. Submit analysis of one CNF piece to D2L dropbox.



9/29/23	Discussion and Generative Writing; Workshop Prep <b>HW for 10/4/23:</b> Submit CNF for workshop and author's statement to D2L.
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Workshop</b>
10/2/23	Workshop Day 1
10/4/23	Workshop Day 2
10/6/23	No Class. Attend optional online writing class (see D2L) for extra credit. <b>HW for 10/9/23:</b> CNF Portfolio Due
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Spring Break!</b>
10/9/23	Intro to Fiction <b>HW for 10/11/23:</b> Read "Subtotals" by Gregory Burnham and "Notes for a Young Writer" by Shirley Jackson.
10/11/23	Discussion <b>HW for 10/13/23:</b> Read Chapter 9 "Fiction" in Burroway (259-269) and "A Temporary Matter" by Jhumpa Lahiri in D2L.
10/13/23	Discussion and generative writing <b>HW for 10/16/23:</b> Read Chapter 5 "Setting" in Burroway (135-147) and "Speech Sounds" by Octavia Butler in D2L.
<b>Week 9</b>	
10/16/23	Discussion <b>HW for 10/18/23:</b> Read Chapter 6 "Story" in Burroway (166-175) and "Jealous Husband Returns in form of Parrot" by Robert Olen Butler in D2L.
10/18/23	<b>HW for 10/23/23:</b> Read the "Flash Fiction Packet" in Perusall and Post to Generative Writing Forum.
10/20/23	No Class. Happy Fall Break!
<b>Week 10</b>	
10/23/23	<b>TBD</b>
10/25/23	<b>TBD / HW for 10/27/23: Fiction Analysis Due to dropbox.</b>

10/27/23	<b>TBD</b>  <b>HW for 10/30/23:</b> Share short story and artist statement on D2L for workshop next week.
Week 11	<b>Fiction Workshop</b>
10/30/23	Workshop Day 1
11/1/23	Workshop Day 2
11/3/23	Workshop Day 3  <b>HW for 11/6/23: Fiction Portfolio to Dropbox.</b>
Week 12	
11/6/23	Intro to Playwriting.  <b>HW for 11/8/23:</b> Read Chapter 11, “Drama” in Burroway (328-340) and “The Proposal” by Anton Chekhov (341-352)
11/8/23	  <b>HW for 11/10/23:</b> Read Chapter 4 “Character” in Burroway (94-108) and “Telephone Bob” by Molly Campbell (131-134) and post to D2L discussions.
11/10/23	<b>No Class. Participate in D2L Discussions (on reading and generative writing)</b>  <b>HW for 11/13/23:</b> Read TBD by Claudia Barnett and prepare questions for her.
Week 13	<b>Playwriting</b>
11/13/23	Zoom with Claudia!  <b>HW for 11/15/23:</b> Read Chapters 2 and 8 from Gary Garrison’s <i>A More Perfect 10</i> .
11/15/23	<b>TBD.</b>
11/17/23	<b>TBD</b>  <b>HW for 11/27/23:</b> Post Play for Workshop to D2L (Perusall)
Week 14	

11/20-24	No Class. Happy Thanksgiving!
Week 15	
11/27/23	Workshop Day 1
11/29/23	Workshop Day 2
12/1/23	Workshop Day 3
Week 16	
12/4/23	Workshop Day 4 <b>HW for 12/6/23: Playwriting Portfolio Due.</b>
12/6/23	Optional Conferences / Work Day
12/8/23	Revision Party Course Evaluations
Finals Week	
Tuesday, December 12, 12:30-2:30	Final Open Mic Style Reading & Celebration  Final Portfolio due by 12:30pm to dropbox.