

Fall 8-15-2017

ENG 2000 001: Intro to Creative Writing

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ENGLISH 2000, Fall 2017

Introduction to Creative Writing

T/TH 2:00 to 3:15

Coleman Hall 3159

Dr. Daiva Markelis/348-9230/dmmarkelis@eiu.edu

Office: Coleman Hall 3375

Office Hours:

Mondays 12:30 to 2:00

Tuesdays 12:30 to 2:00

Thursdays 12:30 to 2:00

and by appointment

Purpose of the Course

This introductory course will introduce students to writing creatively in four major genres of creative writing: poetry, fiction, nonfiction and drama. We will articulate the distinctions of each genre, such as the importance of dialogue in drama and character development in fiction, while simultaneously exploring the connections between the genres and the need to create a text that fully engages a reader's imagination. Finally, we will grapple with the larger questions of why it is that we write and why it is that we want to be a part of somebody else's imaginative world. Through analysis of literary models in each genre, individual and class criticism of students' work, and discussions on craft, students will create a portfolio of writing to present at the semester's end.

Catalog Description of the Course

(3-0-3) F, S. This course will introduce students to reading for craft and writing creatively across poetry, fiction, nonfiction and dramatic genres. Students will participate in workshops of their creative work and read writing in each genre. WC

Objectives of the Course

Students will develop a repertoire of artistic strategies in the writing of creative nonfiction, fiction, drama, and poetry.

Students will develop their eye for detail, dialogue, and voice.

Students will more fully realize the importance of revision.

Students will deepen their understanding of the historical importance of various genres through the reading of classic and contemporary authors.

Students will develop critical reading and interpersonal skills through vigorous workshop participation.

Books and Materials

Imaginative Writing, 4th edition, by Janet Burroway

Bird by Bird, by Anne Lamott

Notebook for in-class writing

Requirements

1. Read the assigned material by the assigned date and participate in class discussions and occasional in-class writing exercises. **YOU MUST BRING YOUR BOOK TO CLASS THE DAY WE'RE DISCUSSING STORIES.** Failure to do so may result in lower participation grades.
2. Participate in three writing workshops by having your work critiqued by classmates as well as by responding to the work of others in an insightful and constructive manner, both orally and on paper.
3. Submit a portfolio of your creative work at the end of the semester. The portfolio will include

a piece of creative nonfiction, a short story, a short play, and several poems.

Grade Breakdown

Writing Portfolio, including revisions: 60%

Written critique of other people's stories: 20%

Effectiveness at in-class discussion: 10%

Attendance: 10%

Writing Portfolio

In creative writing courses, grading is a necessary evil. Writers develop at their own pace, and teachers may be partial to certain styles or genres. I have found through experience that a specific grade on every written piece of work sometimes discourages writers. Often they look at the grade and skip the comments. Or, if their grade is a B, they ask themselves, "Why not an A?" However, students also have the right to know what they might expect at the end of the semester, grade-wise. I'll give you the option of having your individual stories graded, with the understanding that you can rewrite pieces to include in the final portfolio. Part of your grade will be determined by how thoughtfully you incorporate the suggestions of others as well as how well you develop your own inner writing critic. Final drafts of stories included in the portfolio must be free of grammatical and mechanical errors. Please visit the Writing Center if you need help with verb tense, sentence structure, comma use, etc.

Participation

Participation includes not only actively discussing the readings, but also making insightful and constructive comments on the writing of your peers. You must come into class with paper copies of the pieces to be workshopped. You should mark up the pieces with suggestions and also write a paragraph of what you like about them and what revisions would make them even better. I will eventually collect your marked up pieces and comments. You will be graded on them.

Attendance

Since the format of this class is primarily workshop, participation is extremely important. In addition, many of the ideas used in your essays will be generated in class discussions or in-class writing. I do allow for excused absences if they are properly documented. These include approved university activities and illness. Unexcused absences are pretty much all others—oversleeping, finishing papers for other classes, out-of-town trips "because I'm homesick." More than one unexcused absence will lower your attendance grade by one grade. More than two unexcused absences will lower your attendance grade by two grades. And so on.

Tardiness and Cell Phone/Computer Use

I expect you to be in class on time. Excessive tardiness may result in lower attendance grade.

No cell phone use in class other than in emergencies.

Computers to be used ONLY for class purposes—writing or reading others' stories. No checking social media, no emailing, no Googling.

University Policies

(1) Academic integrity - Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>) Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

(2) 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.

(3) 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) for assistance with time management, test 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.

Workshopping Procedure

A large part of this course will be devoted to the workshop, a popular method of critiquing creative writing. This is how it works: You make a copy of your piece for all class members and submit it to them the class period before workshopping. **You may email the story if you like, but it must be mailed out at least two days in advance. So, if your piece is workshopped on a Tuesday, you must email essays out by Sunday evening at the latest. I realize that emergencies do arise. In such a case, email or phone me to let me know your piece will be late. Even in emergency situations, however, no essays can be mailed to the class later than 8pm on the day before we workshop—we will simply do something else in class that day and your grade for workshopping (a requirement in this course) will go down.** In class you read the first 2-3 paragraphs of your work out loud (or an entire poem.) Class members discuss strengths and weaknesses while you remain silent. At the end of discussion you respond to the critique and have the option of asking for more feedback on specific sections that the class may have overlooked. Feel free to take notes on what is said in order to help you revise. **NOTE: You MUST have a paper copy of your own piece. No reading the story from your phone. No asking your neighbor to borrow his/her copy.**

The idea of class critique makes some people nervous. You may feel uncomfortable at first. Over the course of the semester, however, you will begin to find the comments and suggestions of the class and the instructor invaluable.

Guidelines/policies for criticism:

- 1) We'll begin with a more general opinion of the work. Example: "My sense is that you're trying for a tone of ironic humor throughout the piece. I think that, for the most part, you've succeeded, though the ending seems too flippant." Or: "I like this piece, especially the dialogue, but feel that it's too long."

We'll then move on to more specific comments. Example: "There's a lot of repetition of the word 'interesting' in paragraph three." Or: "You have a tendency to overuse commas."

- 2) Be honest. False praise does not help the writer in any way and compromises your role as critic.
- 3) Criticism should not be mean-spirited or vengeful. And it goes without saying that sexist, racist, homophobic or otherwise inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.

- 4) When it comes to taking criticism, be open-minded, but remember that what you revise—what you leave in, add, leave out—is ultimately your decision. Some remarks will resonate more clearly than others for you.

CLASS SCHEDULE

#1	T	08/22	Introductions
	TH	08/24	Read <i>Bird by Bird</i> (3 to 43 and 103 to 121) In-class Writing
#2	T	08/29	Read 226 to 237 in <i>Imaginative</i> Read <i>Standing By</i> by David Sedaris (29)
	TH	09/31	Read <i>Red Sky in the Morning</i> by Patricia Hampl (176) In-class writing
#3	T	09/05	Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
	TH	09/07	Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
#4	T	09/12	Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
	TH	09/14	Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
#5	T	09/19	Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
	TH	09/21	
#6	T	09/26	Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
	TH	09/28	Read 260 to 268 in IW and 44-73 in <i>Bird by Bird</i> Also Read <i>Bullet in the Brain</i> (34) by Tobias Wolff and <i>Girl</i> (38) by Jamaica Kincaid
#7	T	10/03	In-class writing
	TH	10/05	Read <i>The Werewolf</i> (153) by Angela Carter, <i>A Very Short Story</i> (279) by Ernest Hemingway, and <i>Bigfoot Stole My Wife</i> (290) by Ron Carlson
#8	T	10/10	Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
	TH	10/12	Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
#9	T	10/17	Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
	TH	10/19	Read 328 to 341 in <i>Imaginative Writing</i> Also read <i>French Fries</i> by Jane Martin (44) and <i>Telephone Bob</i> by Molly Campbell (131)

- #10 T 10/24 Read *Eukiah* by Lanford Wilson (190) and *The Philadelphia* by David Ives (158)
 TH 10/26 Read *Gas* by Jose Rivera (353) and *Good Morning, Romeo* by William Dunne (356)
- #11 T 10/31 Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
 TH 11/02 Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
- #12 T 11/07 Workshop _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
 TH 11/09 Read 297-326 in IW; read *Snow Day* by Billy Collins (41), *Facing It* by Yusef Komunyakas (42), *God Says Yes to Me* by Kaylin Haught (130), *Stillborn* by Sylvia Plath (319) and *Epithalamium* by Nick Laird (325)
- #13 T 11/14 *Nobody Dies in the Spring* by Phillip Appleman (156), *The Grammar Lesson* by Steve Kowit (320), *There is No Word* by Tony Hoagland (320), *Fathers* by Grace Paley (322) and *A Story about the Body* by Robert Haas (187)
 TH 11/16 In-class writing

THANKSGIVING BREAK WEEK

- #14 T 11/28 Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
 4 _____
 TH 12/30 Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
 4 _____
- #15 T 12/05 Workshop 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
 4 _____ 5 _____
 TH 12/07 Workshops 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
 4 _____ 5 _____

NOTE: I may make minor changes to this syllabus in order to suit the needs of the class. Changes will always be announced in advance.

FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE on Monday, December 11th by 4:00pm

NO FINAL EXAM in this class