Fall 8-15-2016

WRTG 205-000: Introduction to Creative Writing

Charlotte Pence
Eastern Illinois University

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# Introduction to Creative Writing – WRTG 205

## Fall 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class time:</th>
<th>Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 2.10 – 3 pm</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>The Morning Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Faculty:</td>
<td>Professor Pence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact details:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cpence@eiu.edu">cpence@eiu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office hours:</td>
<td>Mondays and Thursdays from 3 – 4pm in the classroom (MR)</td>
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## Course Description

**Introduction to Creative Writing (3)**  
This course introduces basic experience and techniques of description, characterization, poetry, and narration.

## Credit Hour Policy Statement

This class meets the federal credit hour policy of:
- Standard lecture – e.g. 1 hour of class with an expected 2 hours of additional student work outside of class each week for approximately 15 weeks for each hour of credit, or a total of 45-75 hours for each credit.

## General Education Objective

This course meets the General Education requirements for:-  
Outcome 5: Understanding of Human Aesthetic Creation and Artistic Creativity and  
Overlay Outcome E: Writing across the Curriculum

## Learning Objectives

Listed below are the Learning Objectives for the course:

a. Students will develop skills in craft analysis by discussing, reading and writing across poetry, fiction, nonfiction and dramatic genres.

b. Students will develop the ability to produce and revise original creative work across poetry, fiction, nonfiction and dramatic genres.

c. Students will develop the ability to analyze their creative work in the context of a tradition across poetry, fiction, nonfiction and dramatic genres.

d. Students will hone their ability to critique creative work in a creative writing workshop.

e. Students will develop skills to effectively present their creative work produced for this course.

## Further Information about 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.
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<th>Schedule of topics</th>
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**Course Requirements**

One poem, one play, one short story, and one creative nonfiction essay will be submitted to the class over the course of the semester. These works should have seen a number of drafts before submitting to workshop. Please use a standard font such as Times, and in the right hand corner include your name, the date, and the assignment's genre. Also, note that it is your responsibility to make copies of your work for your peers.

A writer's notebook is key to the writing process and a requirement for this course. Most weeks, I will provide writing exercises. Some of them will be turned in and some of them will not be. All of the writing exercises will either raise your awareness about key craft elements and/or help you practice craft elements that can be used for one of the four major writing assignments. We will also write in class together, so always bring the notebook to class. Most writers I know carry a notebook with them at all times to record images, bits of dialogue, poem ideas, etc., so this is a good habit to acquire. I encourage all of you to try to write at least six lines a day in this notebook since a writer is simply one who writes often. I will collect these notebooks periodically during the semester and grade based on completed exercises and regular entries. One may earn either full, half, or no credit per entry.

“A writer is a reader moved to emulation.” —Saul Bellow

Reading will be one of the major ways that we learn about the craft and find inspiration. We will have a number of pop quizzes to ensure careful and close reading. These will be given at the start of the class. If you are late or absent, you will not be allowed to make these up. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

One of the joys of this class is experiencing the vibrancy of contemporary writing. While we will be reading a diverse array of writers from many different time periods, we will focus on contemporary writers to better understand what is happening now in this field. Given that we are in England for this term, I have included a number of British writers, both contemporary and historical, to help provide a sense of this country's rich literary landscape.

Also, to help give us a sense of this country's rich literary history, we will take a daytrip to Stratford with other Harlaxton students on September 17.

Also, I'd like to point out that contemporary writing, especially nonfiction, is an art that addresses both the quiet moments of our lives and the tragedies of our lives. Be aware that readings in this class may hit upon difficult emotional ground for some of you and that many of our writing exercises ask you to explore your past memories, both positive and negative. Please come see me if you'd like to talk about this more in private.

Workshops will encompass half of the in-class work that we will do. For each workshop, you are required to write editing and revision suggestions on each piece of writing before class. (Line edits and at least a full paragraph of reflective comments that will occasionally be checked as a pop quiz.) During workshop, I will randomly ask a few students to read their revision suggestions in full, which should address at least three strengths and three weaknesses. These comments will factor into the participation grade.

If you are being workshopped, you will need to bring copies for every person in the class on the class day before you are workshopped. No emailed material will be allowed. If our class size is somewhat large, you
will choose one genre that you will not workshop with the class, such as poetry, fiction, drama, or nonfiction. You will still turn in the work to me, though, on a specified day. We will individually meet to discuss that work.

In order for the class to function smoothly, if you fail to turn in your material on your due date, you miss your workshop turn and lose 25 points from that draft for each day late. For more details, see the “attendance, punctuality, and meeting deadlines” section of this syllabus.

We will discuss proper workshop etiquette in class, but the general guideline is to braid together honesty, specificity, and kindness since one without the others will not serve the writer. Also keep in mind that material for workshop should have undergone at least two to three revisions before bringing them to us for suggestions. Not everything you write will be wonderful and not everything you write will be horrible. These are the extremes. What is more likely is that you will write something that lies somewhere in between—and we will help each other move the work in the direction the work wants to be moved.

A final portfolio will be submitted for the final exam. The manuscript needs to be submitted in a paper folder (no three-ring binders), preferably black. Within this manuscript, include in this order—a title page, an epigraph, a table of contents, one revised poem, one revised play, and either the story or creative nonfiction essay revised. Everything needs to be hole-punched and placed in the brads so that I can read the work easily and so that nothing gets misplaced. I would like the original work submitted directly behind each revision. Please note: it is your responsibility to keep your work throughout the semester.

In addition to the above material, also include a two-to-three page critical introduction on what you wanted to revise, why, and how you went about the process with each piece. Also, mention at least three specific examples from other works that we read that influenced your decisions. For example, did you decide that you wanted to include research in a way similar to Traci Brimhall? Did you decide that you wanted to create character through the nuance of dialogue like Richard Bausch? Don’t simply state the fact, but provide examples such as the sentence or passage that was your model. It’s this type of influence that I am interested in: specific craft moves rather than explanations of a literary kinship.

An alternative final exam option would be to submit three different finished works in three different genres that explore the same subject or obsession, such as the same personal anecdote but presented three entirely different ways. Your two-to-three page critical introduction for this option would explore what you learned about each genre by doing this approach. What did you find had to change based on the genre? What did you notice translated well in one genre but not in another? Which genre best fulfilled your intentions and why? These and any other points you’d like to address would all be a part of the introduction. All other requirements, such as formatting, would be the same for this final portfolio.
Teaching Methods

Key Text(s):
Imaginative Writing, 4th edition edited by Janet Burroway
Writing Down the Bones by Natalie Goldberg

Other Class Materials:
Purchase of a course packet of reading material.
Access to a printer to print additional assignments.
A writer’s notebook of your choice. (Bring to every class.)
Three-ring binder or folder to keep all of the workshop pieces and handouts.
Stratford day trip

Teaching Methods:
Class discussions; individual/small group exercises; lectures; workshops; individual/small group class presentations.

Schedule of Assignments

Assessment and Grading Criteria

I want the reader to feel something is astonishing. Not the ‘what happens,’ but the way everything happens.” —Alice Munro on the short story

Participation is critical in this course. The time we spend together is our opportunity to expand our views on what is literary writing, to build a writer’s community, and to learn the craft behind the art. In Mystery and Manners, fiction writer Flannery O’Connor reflects on the value of writers interacting with one another. She says that unless the writer “has gone utterly out of his mind, his aim is still communication, and communication suggests talking inside a community.” At the end of the semester when I reflect on your participation, I will consider not only how often you contributed to class discussions, but the quality of those comments. I will also consider your seriousness with in-class writing assignments, your workshop responses, and any pop-quizzes if given, in the participation grade as well.

Finally, one of the more challenging aspects to writers is being able to shut off the world in order to write. Therefore, we will practice mindfulness in class. Text messaging (even once) and other distractions such as checking email in class (again, even once) will result in a failing participation grade for the semester. Since cultivating a supportive and challenging writers’ community is critical to our growth as writers, participation counts as 20% of your grade.

“A poem is an event, not the record of an event.”
—Robert Lowell

Grading

Assignments are proportioned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Story</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Nonfiction Essay</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s Notebook Pre-Midterm</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Grading scale is as follows:

- **A** = 90-100
- **B** = 80-89
- **C** = 70-79
- **D** = 60-69
- **F** = 0-59

**Attendance Policy**

Harlaxton College operates a mandatory attendance policy that is binding on all faculty and students.

Attendance, punctuality, and meeting deadlines are all part of academic life. There are days you may not want to work, but successful students work—when they feel inspired or not. Coming to class is part of your obligation to your academic career and to your community. **Therefore, missing four courses will lower your final grade by five points; Five or six absences will lower your final grade by ten points. Seven absences will result in failure of the course.**

To allow adequate time for class discussion and in-class writing, arrive on time. Being late twice (or leaving early twice) will be considered an absence. This attendance policy applies to all students regardless of the reason for the absence. The only exception will be school-sanctioned events or illness for which I receive notice, in writing, from a university administrator. **Finally, if you arrive without the day’s reading in front of you, it will count as 1/2 an absence.**

Also, I do not accept **late work for most of our work (exception detailed below),** which includes occasions when you are absent. If you must be absent, you may email me your work before the class to receive credit for it. If you fail to turn in your work that the class plans to workshop by your assigned deadline, you will lose your turn in the workshop rotation plus twenty-five points will be deducted from your work for each day late (not each class, but each day). The four genre pieces are the only ones that I will accept late. Everything else, including journal checks, quizzes, final portfolios, etc., must be turned in on time to receive any credit for them. **Also, if you miss a day that you are workshoped, you will simply miss your workshop. Since we schedule these in advance, you should be able to foresee any difficulties that may arise. The reason for this strict policy on late work is to help build discipline as writers. Procrastination can be the creative killer to writers, so I am trying to take the option of “later” off the table.**

**Drop/Add and Withdrawal Policy**

There is normally about a 10 day period at the beginning of semester what a student may drop and class and/or add a class. The deadline date is published in the Semester Guidance handbook. Drop/Add forms are available from the library and completed forms should be returned to the same place. Faculty signatures are required for all classes being added.

Students may withdraw from a class, with the exception of British Studies, for a longer period of time.

Again the deadline date is published in the Semester Guidance handbook. Forms are available from the College Secretary, to whom completed forms should be returned. Forms must be signed by the faculty member of the class being withdrawn from and the Principal.

**All students must register for, and be continuously enrolled in, 12 credit hours of study to be eligible to study at Harlaxton and remain in the United Kingdom.**

**Disability Policy**
It is the policy of the University of Evansville (Harlaxton College) to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. University of Evansville students should contact the Office of Counselling and Health Education to seek help with this. Students from Partner Universities/Colleges should contact their own relevant student support office. For assistance whilst at Harlaxton students should contact the College Secretary whose office is located adjacent to the Principal’s office.

Written notification to faculty from the College Secretary is required for academic accommodations to be implemented.

Honor Code

All students at the University of Evansville (Harlaxton College) agree to and are bound by the principles and practice of the honor code:

‘I understand that any work I submit for course credit will imply that I have adhered to this Academic Honor Code: I will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid, nor will I tolerate an environment that condones the use of unauthorized aid.’

The full Honor Code is available online:
https://www.evansville.edu/offices/deanstudents/downloads/honorcode.pdf