Stephen F. Austin State University
English 261, Introduction to Creative Writing

Professor: Andrew Brininstool  
Office: LAN-256  
Office Hours: T 12:30-1:30; W 3-6  
Email: brininsta@sfasu.edu

Section Number: 002  
Classroom: Ferguson 184  
Meeting: TR 11 – 12:15  
Phone: 936 468- 5759

Course Description
An introduction to the writing of poetry, fiction and non-fiction with opportunities for practice and peer workshop.

Specifics
This course is intended to acquaint interested persons with basic principles and techniques involved in the writing of short fiction and poetry. Through readings and discussions, brief lectures, exercises, revisions and workshops, students will develop a voice and a method by which they can potentially continue their artistic pursuits. I will lecture occasionally, but for the most part this class will be discussion based. A portfolio will serve as your final exam for this class.

I am operating under the assumption that many of us are unfamiliar with the workshop. In short, the workshop (or at least the version of workshop we will be using) was developed at the University of Iowa in order to give working writers the opportunity to read others’ work and have their own work read and criticized in order to offer the writer insight helpful for the revision process. Each student will write a number of exercises, some of which will be discussed by the class. Further, each student will offer longer works of both fiction and nonfiction to the class in order to receive criticism. Students will provide criticism in the following ways: (a) classroom discussion; (b) annotated drafts; (c) informal, written responses.

Texts
Materials Provided by Instructor

Course Load
Short Fiction and Nonfiction Exercises (5 total): We will write a number of different exercises intended to help creative flow and inspiration. There are no word limits on these exercises except when noted; they are meant as an entry point for our writing. Certainly, the exercises can serve as the beginning of a longer work, though longer works and exercises ought not be identical.

Short Story (1,000 – 7,500 words): Each student is required to write and workshop a full-bodied piece of fiction.

Nonfiction Manuscript (1,000 – 7,500 words): Each student is required to write and workshop a piece of nonfiction prose.
**Written Critiques**

We will be dividing the class into three groups—Group A, Group B, and Group C. You are required to bring with you a 300 – 500 word informal response for your group-mates at the time of their workshop (in addition to reading and marking their stories in-draft, as well as reading and discussion work from the other groups).

**Class Discussion / Attendance / Participation**

Regular attendance to a workshop is necessary. I give students two absences. These are to be reserved for emergencies and the like. A **third absence will drop your final grade by one full letter point.** After five absences, you will automatically fail the course. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for the material missed. **I do not accept late work** except in the most radical of situations (i.e., Death or Dismemberment). Late arrivals to class are distracting and, quite frankly, rude. Please be on time. Attendance is taken within three to five minutes of the start of the period. As for participation: I am defining participation rather liberally, though it should be understood as active engagement in the class. Contribution to class discussion is not the only manner in which one participates.

**Annotations:** Throughout this course, we will be reading a number of published short stories and nonfiction pieces. Your duty is to pick four—two from fiction and two from poetry—and write an annotation. A handout on what an annotation is will be forthcoming.

**Final Portfolio:** For this class, your portfolio will consist of all the writing you do throughout the course. Do not throw away anything. We will discuss the portfolio at length in the near future.

**Grading:**

**Fiction:**

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<td>Written Responses (6 or 7)</td>
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<td>Short Fiction Mss.</td>
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<td>Two Annotations</td>
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**Nonfiction:**

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<td>Written Responses (6 or 7)</td>
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<td>Nonfiction Manuscript</td>
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<td>Two Annotations</td>
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**Professionalism**

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**Final Portfolio**

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Workshop Logistics and Conduct

- **Formatting Your Work:** I hate to be draconian, but for the benefit of all members of this course, I am implementing the following rules:

  1) Double-space everything except your header
     a. Always have a header
     b. Your header ought to include your name, my name, the course and section number and the date

  2) Use Times New Roman, twelve-point font.

  3) Do not bold your title. In fact, do not bold anything.

  4) Include page numbers.

- **Turning in Your Work:** The “due” date for your work is two class dates before you are to be workshoped. This allows me the opportunity to make copies of your story/poems and hand them out to the rest of the class.

- **Discussing Your Work:** While the class discusses your work, the gag order will be in place: You may not speak until we have finished our criticism, at which point I will allow you to ask questions or respond to our thoughts.

Content

Finally, I would like to make a note concerning the content of your work. Provided your fiction is not about causing bodily/emotional/psychological harm on one of your classmates or your instructor, you are free to write about any subject matter, using the words you feel would be appropriate. If you choose to write about vampires or detectives or any other quote-unquote genre subjects, be advised that this class is geared toward literary fiction and poetry, and works will be discussed through that lens.

Course and Program PLOs (Program Learning Outcomes):
1. The student will demonstrate close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.
2. The student will employ techniques and strategies for crafting carefully composed, competent creative work in a variety of genres (fiction, poetry, literary non-fiction).
3. The student will articulate useful, critical editorial advice for peer writers.
4. The student will demonstrate strategic revision on completed creative work.
5. The student will compose and sustain a complete, polished manuscript of substance in the focus-genre.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on
the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54):**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Students with Disabilities:**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations.

For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.
Tentative Class Schedule

Jan. 15 – Feb. 5
  Introduction to the course
  What is a workshop?
  Cartography and Narrative
  Discussion of Objective Correlative
  Discussion and Mock Workshop

Feb. 12 – March 5
Workshops, Round One

March 7 – 14
Readings and Spring Break

March 19 – April 16
Workshops, Round Two

April 30 – May 7
Final Portfolio Discussions

May 7 - 11
Final Portfolio Due