Stephen F. Austin State University
ENGLISH 261: Introduction to Creative Writing (Spring 2020)

Course number/section: ENG 261-001
Meeting place: Ferguson 177
Meeting time: 12-12:50 p.m. MWF

Professor: Dr. Sara Henning
Office: LAN 263
Office hours: M 2-4 pm, WF 2-5 p.m.
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, students will practice the craft of writing in multiple genres, specifically poetry and nonfiction. This course is part workshop and part lecture, which will culminate in students producing a final portfolio of work. Through the semester, students should expect to read critically, write inventively, and engage in the art of revision.

Credit Hour Justification
“Introduction to Creative Writing” (3 credits) typically meets twice each week in 75-minute segments for 15 weeks or three times a week for 50-minute segments for fifteen weeks. There may be a 2-hour in-class final examination or a final portfolio of revised work due at the end of the semester. Students have regular reading assignments, regular writing assignments which cover multiple genres of creative writing (poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction). They must actively engage in editing workshops and offer constructive editorial advice to their peers. The final outcome of revised work, seen in both draft and polished form, is a brief collection of poetry, and at least two prose pieces (short stories or creative non-fiction essays). These activities average at a minimum 6 hours of work each week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

REQUIRED TEXTS


A notebook
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

WRITER’S NOTEBOOK

In her essay “On Keeping a Notebook,” Joan Didion writes:

We forget all too soon the things we thought we could never forget. We forget the loves and the betrayals alike, forget what we whispered and what we screamed, forget who we were. [...]
It is a good idea, then, to keep in touch, and I suppose that keeping in touch is what notebooks are all about. And we are all on our own when it comes to keeping those lines open to ourselves: your notebook will never help me, nor mine you.

This class is meant to generate writing, and much of class will be spent on exploring creative writing exercises. To that end, please bring a notebook (spiral-bound, moleskin, etc.) to class with you every day to record your in-class writing. I will collect your writer’s notebook at regular (and unannounced) intervals for a grade.

WEEKLY EXERCISES

You will be responsible for writing weekly poetry and nonfiction pieces in response to creative writing exercises offered either in class or in your form and technique manual (Telling It Slant or The Poet’s Companion, depending on our genre of study).

WORKSHOPS

Writing Group Workshops
Every week, we will have workshops over exercises generated in response to weekly creative writing exercises. Each student must provide hard copies of their work, in addition to posting them in the weekly course Dropbox. This will allow the instructor to log submission (and associated grades) in an efficient manner. During these writing group workshops, students will read each other’s work, giving instructive, holistic feedback guided by an author’s note, which could include initial reactions, broad-stroke comments, and noting places that are particularly strong/need additional development.

Formal Workshops
In addition to the weekly group workshops, there will be two formal workshops where each student will submit a draft of a poem (revised or extended exercise) or nonfiction work (revised or extended exercise) as assigned for detailed feedback from peers and instructor. In addition to submitting individual work, each student will be required to read and respond to all drafts submitted by every student in our class. In addition to marking their work with margin comments, each student will submit a typed critique (250 words). These critiques will be turned in for grading, and you will also pass them on to the appropriate writer.

NOTE: A detailed model with instructions, etiquette, and expectations for workshop will be provided prior to the first formal workshop. Due dates for submitting drafts and submitting feedback will also be provided.
FINAL CREATIVE WRITING PORTFOLIO

You are to submit a final creative writing portfolio composed of revised final versions of your original, creative work. Your portfolio must also include a preface statement summarizing, synthesizing and reflecting on the writing and revising process—discussing and evaluating the ways in which the work has changed, evolved, and improved as a result of the revision process/in-class workshopping, as well as your understanding/appreciation of the form of poetry and creative nonfiction.

The portfolio must include all of the following:

1) ‘Table of Contents’ page listing all pieces in portfolio, including page numbers
2) Preface Statement
3) Original and final drafts of completed exercises

All work must be compiled in an electronic document, formatted using MLA standards, and submitted (in person) to your instructor during your final exam period.

Notes on Grading Criteria:

This portfolio assignment is worth a total of 300 points (roughly 30% of final grade). The portfolio will be scored by completeness of assembled work, attention to detail and description in analyses for each piece submitted, obvious attempts at development and revision in creative work, and obvious ability to utilize subject specific terms discussed in class throughout the semester.

GRADING

Weekly Exercises (25 points per exercise): 300 points (30%)
Final Creative Writing Portfolio: 300 points (30%)
Formal workshop pieces (50 points per formal workshop piece): 100 points (10%)
Formal Workshop Critiques (100 points per workshop) /Participation: 200 points (20%)
Writer’s Notebook: 100 points (10%)

Total: 1000 points

Note: Because this is a studio workshop, I expect each student to participate fully in class discussion and attend class. Lack of attendance and participation will negatively impact your grade.

Grading Standard:

A (excellent performance): 90-100.
B (above average performance): 80-89.
C (average performance): 70-79.
F (failure): 0-59.
COURSE POLICIES

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Desire2Learn (D2L)

D2L will be used to facilitate some aspects of the course. In D2L, you will be able to:

- Access additional required materials not found in your textbook (additional assigned readings on elements of craft and additional poems or stories which illustrate those elements).
- Access your course grades.
- Access supplemental resources/activities which are not required but may be useful.

Email

Course news and updates will be sent to you via email, so you will be responsible for checking your SFA email account regularly. Emails sent to the instructor on weekdays (Monday-Friday) will receive a response within 24 hours.

ABSENCES

Because this is a hands-on, activity-oriented studio class, attendance is a significant factor for success in this course. You will be allowed three absences during the course of the semester. For each absence beyond this, there will be a half-grade deduction in your final grade (a final grade of 95 would be reduced to a 90). It is up to the student to arrange to meet with the instructor to discuss missed course material. Make-up work will not be arranged or accepted.

Students who miss three or more class meetings, regardless of circumstance, will receive a course grade of “F.”

Valid excuses are limited to health, religious observation, family emergencies, and participation in certain SFASU-sponsored events. Students must provide written documentation from which a decision will be made regarding the absence’s excusability. Without written documentation, the absence will automatically be considered unexcused. Students with acceptable excuses may be permitted to make up work when the nature of the work missed permits. However, no absences beyond the allotted number will be permitted, whether unexcused or excused. Whether an absence is excused or unexcused, students are still responsible for all course content and assignments. Note also that you must turn in all major assignments to pass the course.

I take attendance at the beginning of class; arriving more than five minutes after class begins will result in your being marked absent.

Please note that I DO NOT make distinctions between excused and unexcused absences, and an absence always counts as an absence. I will expect you each to manage your own attendance accordingly. Please let me know ASAP if you have specific concerns or questions.
LATE WORK

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned due date. Work will not be counted late if brought to the instructor by the time she leaves campus on the day of class. Late work will be accepted for all major assignments, but a 10% late penalty will be applied for each day past the deadline. For example, if a paper is due at the beginning of class on Monday, there will be a penalty of 10% if turned in by Tuesday, and 20% if turned in by Wednesday, and so on. You should save your work in multiple places; I highly recommend using online storage options such as OneDrive, which is included as a free service in the university's downloadable subscription of Microsoft Office 365, to prevent lost work.

COURSE CITIZENSHIP

Sleeping or reading other materials during class are not acceptable. All cell phones must be turned off prior to coming to class, and no text messaging or web surfing will be tolerated. Laptops and cell phones should not be used unless I indicate that you may use them for a particular activity.

Although students with disciplinary problems tend to be few and far between at the college level, if behavioral disruptions persist within a single class meeting (or, for that matter, across multiple meetings), the student in question will be asked to leave the class with a lowered participation grade and an absence for the day.

Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance available to help SFA students succeed.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

You must submit all written work in person to the instructor. All work submitted for workshops (group workshop and formal workshop) must also be submitted hard-copy to class colleagues. Assignments are due by class time on their due date.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Adhering to academic integrity standards at all times by producing your own work and successfully attributing others’ ideas to them is a necessary aspect of university communication. 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) falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assignment; 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 include, but are not limited to: (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 the Internet or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper or presentation without giving the author due credit.
Any appeals on academic integrity cases must be made within thirty days after the first class day of the next long semester. Students should appeal to the instructor first then to the chair if the situation is not resolved. Further appeals can be made to the dean and provost if necessary.


COURSE EVALUATIONS

Course evaluations will be available online near the end of the semester. I highly encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to give feedback about how effective this class and my teaching was, particularly because I read evaluations to help make decisions about future classes. In other words, your feedback can help my future students have a good class experience.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES (PLOs)

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.

TITLE IX STATEMENT

Stephen F. Austin State University strives to provide an educational and work environment that affirms the rights and dignity of each individual. It is the policy of the university, in accordance with federal and state law, to prohibit unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, citizenship and veteran status. Additionally, Stephen F. Austin State University prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Unlawful discrimination based on sex includes discrimination defined as sexual harassment.

The Discrimination Complaints policy (2.11) and the Sex and Gender-Based Discrimination, Violence, Harassment, and Misconduct policy (2.13) outline the university's commitment and detail the procedures used to prevent, respond, and investigate complaints. It is the responsibility of the university president to ensure that SFA and all its constituencies comply with the provisions of this policy and with all federal and state laws, executive orders and regulations regarding non-discrimination.

The university prohibits and will not tolerate sexual misconduct because such behavior violates the university's institutional values, adversely impacts the university's community interest, and interferes with the university's mission. The university also prohibits retaliation against any person who, in good faith, reports or discloses a violation of this policy, files a complaint, and/or otherwise participates in an investigation, proceeding, complaint or remediation under this policy. Once the university becomes aware of an incident of sexual misconduct, the university will promptly and effectively respond in a manner designed to eliminate the misconduct, prevent its recurrence and address its effects.
Stephen F. Austin State University is dedicated to providing an environment of non-discrimination and equal opportunity in its programs and employment opportunities. The Title IX office supports the University’s commitment by offering training, programs and processes that promote an inclusive, diverse and supportive environment consistent with the SFA Way.

To fulfill its mission, the Title IX office:

▪ Coordinates the delivery of detailed educational programs and training concerning discrimination, harassment, sexual violence, interpersonal violence, and stalking;
▪ Recommends, develops, interprets and implements policies and procedures in support of non-discrimination;
▪ Oversees investigations into complaints of discrimination, harassment and sexual violence by promptly organizing an impartial administrative review and addressing any patterns or systemic problems that might be identified during the review of such complaints;
▪ Serves as the university's designated office responsible for coordinating the University's compliance with state and federal law, including, but not limited to:
  ▪ Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972,
  ▪ Violence Against Women Act,
  ▪ Campus SAVE Act.
▪ Works with the Office of the General Counsel to investigate and respond to external complaints (e.g. EEOC, OCR).

The many terms and definitions that surround sexual misconduct issues can be confusing and may create unintended barrier to reporting incidents of sexual misconduct.

It is important to remember, only those options clearly identified as confidential assistance can keep your information private. Generally, any person not identified as a confidential reporter is required to report an incident that is reported to them. This requirement is intended to protect members of the campus community, visitors and guests from criminal and discriminatory behavior.

ACCOMMODATIONS

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 your instructors and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations, and no accommodations can be made except through the ODS. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).