Stephen F. Austin State University Department of English
English 566.700: Teaching Creative Writing
Summer II 2020
M-TH 12:30-2:25PM
Online (Zoom and D2L)

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Course Description: The study of various pedagogical approaches to the
 teaching of creative writing from the high school to the college level. Prereq:
 Graduate Standing

Objective
The objective of this course is to prepare you for teaching creative writing—
poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction—from the junior high school to the college
level and beyond. We will read texts on both teaching creative writing and
writing creatively. We will look at the historical and pedagogical issues behind
teaching creative writing and dive into the practicalities such as designing
exercises, leading workshop discussions, and building grading rubrics. You will
write one scholarly response to these issues as a midterm and also compose
creative works (in poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction) since one of the tenets
of contemporary creative writing pedagogy is the belief that active writers make
the most effective creative writing teachers. We’ll put that into practice.

Required Materials:
There are no required texts to buy; I will supply handouts for our reading. The
source books will include, but aren’t limited to, Creative Writing in America, ed.
Joseph Moxley (NCTE, 1989), Teaching Creative Writing, ed. Heather Beck
(Palgrave MacMillan 2012); Can It Really Be Taught?: Resisting Lore in
Creative Writing Pedagogy, ed. Ritter and Vanderslice (Boynton Cook 2007);
The Elephants Teach, David Gershom Myers (U of Chicago Press, 2006); and The
Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing, Mark McGurl
(Harvard UP, 2011), as well as work by creative writers such as Colum McCann,
Joyce Carol Oates, and Dean Young.

We may also look at excerpts from a host of CW textbooks aimed at high school
and college-level students.

Our main goals by the end of this semester:
To identify the purpose of teaching creative writing
To identify and employ technical aspects of teaching multiple genres of creative
writing.
To design assignments which will help students become more skillful creative writers.
To develop leadership skills which will help students run effective workshops.
To design rubrics which will assist you in evaluating creative writing.

Grading Breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoom Discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100-90 = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2L Discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>89-80 = B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Editing</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>79-70 = C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>69-60 = D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>59-0 = F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Portfolio</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment Portfolio</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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English 566 addresses these Program Learning Outcomes in the English Department’s MA program:

1. The student will be able to write well-organized, substantial, grammatically and syntactically clean essays on literary and/or related topics (in this case, creative writing).

2. The student will be able to demonstrate retention of key contents of selected literary texts as well as key concepts and themes informing literary study (in this case, writing both prose and poetry).

3. The student will be able to analyze a literary text with respect to form, contextual, and thematic matters. Here we’ll put the emphasis on form and context. Theme, the darling of most literature classes, takes a backseat.

So part of learning to teach creative writing is attaining these goals:

- demonstrating close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.
- employing these techniques and strategies, crafting carefully composed, competent creative work in fiction.
- articulating useful, critical editorial advice for peer writers.
- demonstrating strategic revision on completed creative work.
- composing a polished manuscript of substance.

Your major assignments:

- Regular online responses to assigned readings
- An essay in the five-six page range which will focus on a specific issue of teaching creative writing—workshop management, editorial approaches, readings as modeling, etc. I expect some engagement with the required readings, but you may also do outside research.
• A single presentation on a particular issue in creative writing pedagogy (about five minutes, paired with visual aids and/or handouts). Usually this is an in-class presentation—for our purposes, this will be a video presentation.

• An Assignment Portfolio which collects the prompts and exercises we discuss and develop as the semester progresses. You will explain the benefit of each proposed assignment. There should be ten assignments with brief accompanying defenses of each. (Why did you choose this exercise? What is its goal?)

• A Creative Portfolio which serves as an anthology of the fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction you write this semester. I expect one short story (roughly 2000-3000 words); two poems, one in a fixed form; and one flash creative non-fiction essay. This is to make sure teachers understand the process of creative writing, which will strengthen their ability to teach the discipline, and to offer substance to our discussions of workshop methodology.

Here are some university polices you need to know I take seriously:

**Academic Integrity (A-9.1)**
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.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**
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/

**Last Bits of Advice**
Here’s where I normally say, “Come to every class. Successful creative writing courses are always dependent on consistent attendance (it’s difficult to have a decent conversation if students are skipping).” Well, in this new era of pandemic education, the idea of “coming to class” has altered quite a bit. We’ll put into practice what we’ll have to discuss about those new realities (synchronous versus asynchronous lectures and discussion, video readings, etc), but the compressed schedule does make keeping actively involved with the work even more important. This is also when I usually give a pep talk (threat?) about not accepting late work. One of the best things writing can teach you—and your students—is to meet deadlines. I’ve always treated deadlines seriously. That said, if current domestic and/or health issues get in your way, let me know. If you don’t have the work ready in time, I can cut you some slack—but once we get to a workshop schedule, you’ll discover that deadlines are your friend (both as an instructor and writer).
TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

WEEK 1

July 7
ZOOM DAY.
Introduction to course. What do we talk about when we talk about creative writing? What is this thing? How much do we know about this topic? Can creative writing be taught? What the heck does “creative” mean, anyway?
Where to begin? Creativity and technique, of course!
Homework: Watch APA videos on creativity and the classroom, read excerpt from “Letter to a Young Writer” by Colum McCann.

July 8
First D2L day. Post comment reactions to videos, McCann’s letter, and your own take on what it means to teach creative writing.
Homework: Read essays by Henry and Myers on the origins of creative writing programs.

July 9
ZOOM DAY. Discuss essays. Let’s talk about writing poetry. Let’s talk about workshops.
Homework: Read David St. John’s article on poetry workshops for undergraduates. Read Hoagland’s essay about reading poetry. Read formal poetry guidelines. Start working on your original poems.

WEEK 2

July 13
ZOOM DAY
Let’s talk about poetry and workshop guidelines.
Homework: Keep writing your original poems. Read Dean Young’s excerpt from “The Art of Recklessness” and poetry samples.

July 14
D2L day. Let’s chat about how it feels to be creative: work spaces, how to get quiet time, embracing frustration and failure. Confidence versus security. What are your thoughts on Young?
Homework: Finish writing those poems.

July 15
D2L day.
Let’s do more D2L chatting about workshop and editing guidelines. Send everyone two poems of your choosing, at least one of which should be a fixed form.
Homework: Read peers poems, write constructive comments on poems.
July 16
**ZOOM DAY**
Let’s workshop some poems! This is sort of strange—workshopping original work while thinking about how workshopping works in the classroom.

**HOMEWORK:** Write Midterm Essay regarding a specific issue regarding some aspect of teaching CW that has been raised in the first half of the course.

**WEEK 3**

July 20
**ZOOM DAY**
Poetry Workshop, Day Two.
**Homework:** Finish that Midterm Essay, due tomorrow. Read Karr’s excerpt on memoir and Oates essay on stories.

July 21
**D2L Day.**
**Midterm Essay due.**
Turn in Midterm Essay. First presentation submission. Chat board responses/questions on presentations.

**Homework:** Write Flash Creative Nonfiction essay. Read Leahy article and NAGC essay on using CW in standardized tests.

July 22
**D2L Day.** Let’s chat about the articles.
Turn in Flash CNF. 2nd Presentation submission. Chat board responses/questions on presentations.

**Homework:** Comment on peer essays.

July 23
**ZOOM DAY**
Let’s workshop 3 essays.
**Homework:** Continue offering constructive criticism on CNF.

**WEEK 4**

July 27
**ZOOM DAY**
Second day of CNF workshop, 3 essays.
**Homework:** Read Kaplan’s essay on style and Dan Harmon’s on story structure. Work on short stories.
July 28
D2L day. Let’s chat about writing fiction and the efficacy of textbooks in the CW classroom. 3rd presentation submission and chat board discussion.
**Homework:** Write those stories!

July 29
D2L day.
Keep working on those stories. Let’s chat about craft issues in building fiction. 4th presentation submission and chat board discussion.
**Homework:** Turn in stories for workshop.

July 30
**ZOOM DAY**
Fiction Workshop (3 stories).
**Homework:** Read peer stories and comment on them.

**WEEK FIVE**
August 3
**ZOOM DAY**
Fiction Workshop (3 Stories)
**Homework:** Read essays by Raz and Persichetti. Gather exercises for portfolio.

August 4
D2L day. Let’s chat about literary journals as teaching tools. 5th presentation submission and chat board discussion.
**Homework:** Read essay by Appleman about teaching CW in a prison. Gather exercises for portfolio. Revise fiction.

August 5
D2L day. Let’s chat about Appleman’s essay. 6th presentation submission and chat board discussion.
**Homework:** Gather exercises for portfolio. Revise creative work.

August 6
**ZOOM DAY**
**Homework:** Polish dual portfolios

There is no final exam for this course. Creative and Assignment Portfolios are due in my e-mail by Friday, August 7 by noon.

You made it. Enjoy the rest of the summer!