ENGLISH 4368.001  
Creative Writing Senior Thesis  
Spring 2024  
Thursdays, 6-8:30PM/Individual Meeting Times TBD

Dr. John A. McDermott  
214 Liberal Arts North  
Department of English & Creative Writing  
Phone: 468-2344  
e-mail: mcdermotja@sfasu.edu (*note the single “t” in my address)  
office hours: 10-11AM (MWF), 11-Noon (TTH), and by appointment.

Course Description:  
A two-semester progression of senior thesis culminating in a well-crafted book-length creation of either poetry or prose.

Official Credit Justification  
ENGL 4368 “Senior Thesis” (3 credits) is a supervised independent study for creative writing majors undertaking a substantial final project: the composition of a novel, a collection of short stories, a volume of poetry, or collection of creative essays. Typically, students meet one-on-one with faculty for approximately an hour each week to discuss composition and revision strategies. Assigned reading varies dependent on the student’s project, but may include both creative and critical texts. Writing expectations are demanding: at minimum, fifty to sixty pages of prose or twenty pages of poetry, plus drafts of revised work. These activities average a minimum of nine hours of work to prepare outside of classroom hours.

Prerequisites  
✓ The student has 15 credits of creative writing, including ENG 459, ENG 461 or ENG 462  
✓ The student has consent of faculty adviser.

OBJECTIVES  
The official Program Learning Outcomes for this course include:  
✓ The student will demonstrate close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.  
✓ The student will employ techniques and strategies for crafting carefully composed, competent creative work.  
✓ The student will demonstrate strategic revision on completed creative work.  
✓ The student will compose and sustain a complete, polished manuscript of substance in the focus-genre.
The **Student Learning Outcomes** for this senior level project are:

- Ability to discuss elements of fiction in one’s own work
- Ability to discuss the influence of strategies used by professional, contemporary writers on one’s work
- The ability to improve a body of work (short stories or novella) through revision
- The ability to complete a significant part of a finely polished full-length work.

**GRADING BREAKDOWN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE (of meetings)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRAFT (for first semester students)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVISION OF MANUSCRIPT</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ATTENDANCE (of meetings) 10%**
The student will attend scheduled meetings with instructor. If the meeting must be cancelled, twenty-four notice must be given and an alternative meeting time must be scheduled.

**ROUGH DRAFTS 50%**
A thesis should be roughly 100-plus pages of prose or 40-50 pages of poetry to be considered substantial. Rough drafts must be of complete stories or poems, not fragments. A novel project, clearly, moves via a clear progression of chapters.

**REVISION OF MANUSCRIPT 40%**
The entire manuscript will go through an edit for the final of the course. The manuscript must be arranged in a cohesive fashion. It should be presented professionally, spiral-bound and clean. There must be a title page, table of contents and a 1-2 page afterword/discussion of the completion of the manuscript.

**Grading:**

- All work MUST be turned on assigned due dates. Otherwise, you will receive an F for that assignment.
- All stories/chapters will be graded on professional format, spelling, etc.
- All drafts must be typed on clean paper.
- Make sure you follow professional format.
- All comments will focus on how well you employ the elements of fiction and can improve the story/novel.

**A** For prose students: compelling plot with well-drawn characters, consistent point of view and well-established conflict, well-written dialogue and excellent details, professionally presented in correct format. For poets, an excellent sense of craft and originality.

**B** A well-defined plot with good characters, consistent point of view and good conflict, well-written dialogue and good details, professionally presented in correct format. Not as exceptional as an A but could get there
with revision. Poetry—well-crafted, but not as original or polished as “A” work.

C Simplistic or derivative plot, flat characters, conflict needs to be developed or point of view is inconsistent, professionally presented in correct format. Average poetry: competent, but not compelling.

D Poorly developed plot, characters, conflict or dialogue, minimal details OR incorrect format, errors in terms of grammar or in terms of meeting assignment requirements. Incoherent or technically flawed poetry.

F plagiarized, grammatically unreadable, incomplete, does not fulfill assignment, not handed in.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (10.4)

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on
a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

**WITHHELD GRADES Semester Grades Policy (5.5)**
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 coursework 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 to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

**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 promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

**STUDENT WELLNESS AND WELL-BEING**
SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

**ON CAMPUS RESOURCES:**

**The Dean of Students Office** (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
[www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents)
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

**SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic** Human Services, Room 202
[www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp)
936.468.1041

**The Health and Wellness Hub** “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.
To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

[www.sfasu.edu/thewhub](http://www.sfasu.edu/thewhub)
936.468.4008
 thehub@sfasu.edu

**Crisis Resources:**

- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

---

**Tentative Calendar**

*For first semester students, the goal is to produce as much work as possible, so you are in a comfortable by the beginning of the second semester. For second semester students, the goal is revision of the final manuscript.*

**WEEK ONE**

Go over Syllabus/Policies. Set up meeting times. The following weeks will be largely dependent on the size of the project, the pace of the student’s writing, and the demands of revision. These are simply suggestions which will change depending on the needs of the project.

**WEEK TWO**

Discuss first half of project and how much to achieve in the semester.
HW: Write Story 1 or first chapters for collection/8-10 pages

**WEEK THREE**

Turn in work. HW: Write 8-10 pages.

**WEEK FOUR**

Discuss first pages/submission. HW: Write 8-10 pages.
**WEEK FIVE**  
Discuss work. HW: Write 8-10 pages.

**WEEK SIX**  
Discuss work. HW: Write 8-10 pages.

**WEEK SEVEN**  
Discuss work. HW: Write 8-10 pages.

**WEEK EIGHT**  
Discuss work. HW: Write 8-10 pages.

**WEEK NINE**  
Discuss work. HW: Write 8-10 pages.

**WEEK TEN**  
Discuss work. HW: Write 8-10 pages.

**WEEK ELEVEN**  
Discuss work. HW: Read suggested material.

**WEEK TWELVE**  
Discuss work. HW: Write 8-10 pages.

**WEEK THIRTEEN**  
Discuss work. HW: Write 8-10 pages.

**WEEK FOURTEEN**  
Discuss final edits. HW: Finish final version of manuscript of first half of project or full project. Editing.

**WEEK FIFTEEN**  
Discuss final edits & format. Plans for second semester of course, if needed.

**WEEK SIXTEEN**  
Turn in final manuscript Friday of finals week.