

# Introduction to Creative Writing ENGL 2133: Syllabus and Course Schedule

**Course:** ENGL 2133

**Section:** 201

**Time:** TR 12:30-1:50

**Place:** BW 122

**Instructor:** Dr. John Schulze

**Office:** BW 200

**Office Phone:** (940) 397-6249

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**Office Hours:** MW-2:00-3:00 pm; TR- 11:00 - Noon & 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm, or by appointment

“No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists.”

—T.S. Eliot

## **Course Description:**

This course runs as both an introductory seminar and writing workshop. As the key effort for this course will be to introduce you to the art and craft of creative writing, we will read and discuss numerous examples of poetry, nonfiction, and fiction. These examples will provide models for structure and aesthetic appeal, and they will serve as potential points of inspiration and creative production.

## **Required Course Texts:**

*Creative Writing: Four Genres in Brief (CWFGB)*-by David Starkey

## **Course Requirements:**

### Creative Work: 21%

Each student will compose two poems, a short story, and a narrative essay. One of the poems must be in one of the forms described in our textbook (sonnet, rondo, etc.), and the length of the two prose pieces will be as follows: one at least 1000 words and the other at least 2000 words. Neither piece should exceed 3000 words. You will receive a completion grade for each piece as long as it meets the length criteria and is submitted on time. Late work will lose 10% for each class period it is late.

### Final Portfolio: 14%

Your portfolio will include a thoughtfully revised poem, prose piece—please include original drafts—and a 1 to 2 page critical overview of your work during the semester. Please include thoughts about invention, drafting, your revision process, your overall vision for the pieces, and any struggles you may have encountered.

### Class and Workshop Participation: 50% (CP: 8%; WP: 42%)

Your Class Participation (CP) grade will be determined by how thoughtfully and constructively involved you are in any discussion or course related activities. This includes attending all

scheduled class meetings, reading all assigned material in preparation for class, and considering all seed-questions meant for discussion. As a habit, you will need to be prepared to examine and reflect on all the poems, stories, and essays in class. In so doing, you will hone your skills as both a reader and writer.

In order to earn a quality Workshop Participation (WP) grade, you are expected to provide specific and detailed notations (*no smiley faces or check marks*) on your peers' manuscript and a thorough and balanced written criticism. To keep your comments focused, divide your critique into two sections: **What is working** and **What still needs work**. A one or two sentence critique is simply inadequate. Each critique you write will be graded on how thoughtful and thorough the response is. Over the course of the semester, you will compose many critiques. Therefore, this component of the class will account for a significant portion of your grade.

#### Reading Response to Local (or Virtual) Literary Reading: 5%

You will be required to attend any public literary event in the area and write a 1-2 page response detailing your impressions. This assignment may be turned in at any point in the semester, though I do recommend that you complete it sooner rather than later. I will provide a list of readings as they are announced, but please feel free to seek out events on your own. With approval from the instructor, events outside the Wichita Falls area or non-reading events may be substituted. For instance, if you attend a play produced by the drama department you can compose a response to that play.

#### Author Presentation: 10%

Our final class meeting will be when students offer an oral presentation about one of the authors we read over the course of the semester. Each presentation should provide relevant details about the individual's biography, professional work (including awards), and an explanation of why the student chose to present about this particular individual. The presentation should last approximately five minutes and should also include a PowerPoint (or Prezi) slideshow with at least six slides.

#### **Course Policies:**

The learning process in a workshop is tied not only to writing but also to the mutual commitment to improving each other's work. My hope is that the following course policies will encourage a strong sense of community:

- Assignments must be submitted on time—**late work will lose 10% per day it's late.**
- In a workshop, your attendance and contributions are crucial. Attendance will be checked at every class meeting and only **three absences** will be allowed. (Upon your fourth absence & every absence thereafter, your final grade will be lowered by 5 points).
- Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices during class.
- Failure to follow directions on an assignment can result in a failing grade on the assignment.

**How your final grade will be determined:**

Final Portfolio -	14%
Creative Work-	21%
Workshop Participation -	42%
Class Participation -	08%
Written Response to a Local Literary Reading -	5%
Oral Presentation	10%
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Total –	100%

**Letter-grade System**

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

**Formatting guidelines:**

All submitted work must be typed, printed on one side, double-spaced, use a 12 pt. Times New Roman font, and standard margins (poetry is exempted from this last standard). Every assignment must have a title, your name, class and section, date, and my name, all in the upper left-hand corner. Assignments that are longer than one page are expected to have page numbers and title in the lower right hand corner beginning on the second page. All assignments that are printed out and are longer than one page must also be stapled in the upper left hand corner.

**Academic Integrity/Intellectual Property/ Plagiarism Policy:**

Any student found submitting work other than his or her own will fail the course. There are no exceptions to this policy. Plagiarism is the use of someone else's thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument in your own work without appropriate documentation (a parenthetical citation at the end and a listing in "Works Cited") whether you use that material in a quote, paraphrase, or summary. It is a theft of intellectual property and will not be tolerated, whether intentional or not.

**Student Honor Creed**

"As an MSU Student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else do so."

As students at MSU, we recognize that any great society must be composed of empowered, responsible citizens. We also recognize universities play an important role in helping mold these responsible citizens. We believe students themselves play an important part in developing responsible citizenship by maintaining a community where integrity and honorable character are the norm, not the exception. Thus, we, the Students of Midwestern State University, resolve to uphold the honor of the University by affirming our commitment to complete academic honesty. We resolve not only to be honest but also to hold our peers accountable for complete honesty in all university matters. We consider it dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations or quizzes, to use any unauthorized material in examinations, or to present, as one's own, work or ideas which are not entirely one's own. We recognize that any instructor has the right to expect that all student work is honest, original work. We accept and acknowledge that responsibility for lying, cheating, stealing, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty fundamentally rests within each individual student. We expect of ourselves academic integrity, personal professionalism, and ethical character. We appreciate steps taken by University officials to protect the honor of the University against any who would disgrace the MSU student body by violating the spirit of this creed.

-- *Written and adopted by the 2002-2003 MSU Student Senate.*

### **Students with Disabilities**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Services in Room 168 of the Clark Student Center, 397-4140.

### **Safe Zones Statement**

I consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect as a human being - regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided you can agree to disagree. It is my expectation that ALL students consider the classroom a safe environment.

### **Workshops:**

Poems, essays, and stories must be submitted to the class at least one class meeting prior the scheduled workshop date. All pieces must be typed, follow the prescribed format noted earlier in the syllabus, and the student writer must provide a sufficient number of copies so every other student receives their own copy. All class members (except the writer whose work is under consideration) will read the piece and type a response to each submission. During the workshop, the writer whose work is under consideration will remain silent. After everyone has weighed in on the piece, the writer will have the opportunity to ask questions and/or make comments about the piece.

### **Commenting on Your Peers' Work:**

As a member of the workshop, you will serve as Reader (by expressing your reaction and impression of your peers' work), Critic (by considering the overall success and quality of your peers' work), and Editor (by offering constructive criticism and suggestions for improving the written elements of your peers' work). For each workshopped piece of writing, please make comments in the margins of the manuscript and type end comments meant to summarize your thoughts, concerns, etc. on a separate piece of paper. A balanced approach is best: *what is working* and *what needs work*.

All written responses will pass through me so that I might ensure that everyone in class is providing thoughtful commentary. Comments like "This poems rocks!" or "I don't get it," do not allow writers to grow. These kinds of comments lack thought, insight, and real, useful engagement with the work. On the other hand, comments like "the third stanza really feels like the beginning because this is where the emotional context for the poems lies. This is where I became emotionally involved..." are pointed and work to let the writer know what is working and why. Student responses to a writer's work will be distributed to them the class following their workshop date.

## Course Schedule

(This schedule is subject to revision if needed)

### Week 1- Poetry

1/11- Introductions and Syllabus Distribution

1/13- Introduction to Poetry

**Read:** pp.14-30 (CWFGFB)

**Read:** "House Party Sonnet: '66" by Elizabeth Alexander p. 71

"Basketball" by Sherman Alexie p.71

"Postcard from Kashmir" by Agha Shahid Ali p. 72

"Poem for the Young White Man Who Asked Me How I, an Intelligent, Well-Read Person, Could Believe in the War between Races" by L. Cervantes p.72

### Week 2- Poetry

1/18- **Read:** pp.31-50 (CWFGFB)

**Read:** "I Feel Sorry for Jesus" by Naomi Shihab Nye p. 85 (CWFGFB)

"Nostalgia" by Billy Collins p. 76 (CWFGFB)

"A Quiet Poem" by Elaine Equi p. 77

1/20- **Read:** pp50- 70 (CWFGFB)

**Read:** "September Song" Geoffrey Hill p 79

"On Being Told I Don't Speak like a Black Person" by Allison Joseph p.80

"bitch bitch bitch bitch" by Alma Luz Villanueva p. 95

### Week 3- Poetry

1/25- Found Poems, Blackout Poems, and Shape Poems

1/27- Poetry Exercises

### Week 4- Poetry

2/1- Poetry Exercises

2/3- **Listen:** Taylor Mali, Kim Addonizio, Dorothy Allison, Bedful of Metaphysicians

**Due: Original poems for next week's workshop**

### Week 5- Poetry Workshop

2/8- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

2/10- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
4. \_\_\_\_\_

### Week 6- Introduction to Creative Nonfiction

2/15- **Read:** pp. 170-189 (CWFGFB)  
"Westbury Court" by Edwidge Danticat p. 217  
"Texas Observed" by Molly Ivins (handout)

2/17- **Read:** pp. 190-213 (CWFGFB)  
"In Bed" by Joan Didion p. 220  
"El Toro Rojo" by Dinty Moore p. 226  
"Mr. Plimpton's Revenge" by Dinty Moore

### Week 7- Creative Nonfiction

2/22- **Read:** "Dreads" by Alice Walker p. 231  
"Me Talk Pretty One Day" by David Sedaris (handout)

2/24- Researching Personal Essays/Issues

### Week 8- Creative Nonfiction

3/1- CNF Writing Exercise

3/3- **Listen:** Moth Radio Hour  
**Due: Essays for workshop**

### **Week 9- Creative Nonfiction Workshop**

3/8- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

3/10- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
4. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Week 10- Spring Break – No Class 3/15 and 3/17**

### **Week 11- Introduction to Fiction**

3/22- **Read:** pp. 98-116 (CWFGB)  
"Wolf's Head Lake" by Joyce Carol Oates p. 164  
"An Angel" by Margaret Atwood p. 145 (CWFGB)

3/24- **Read:** pp. 116-144 (CWFGB)  
"The Hit Man" by T.C. Boyle p. 149

### **Week 12- Fiction**

3/29- **Read:** "Loser" by Aimee Bender p. 146  
"Girl" by Jamaica Kinkaid p. 163

3/31- **Read:** "The Legend of Tweedles" by Penn Stewart  
Using Myths Exercise

### **Week 13-**

4/6- Character Exercises

4/7- Setting Exercises

**Week 14- Fiction Workshop**

4/12- **Read:** “What are Editors looking for?” (handout)  
Explore Publishing venues

4/14- **Listen:** Lorrie Moore’s “Dance in America” New Yorker Fiction Podcast  
**Due: Short Stories for Workshop**

**Week 15-**

4/19 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

4/21- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 16-The End**

4/26- A Reading – Students present a five minute piece/excerpt to the class

4/28- Final Words and Course Evaluation  
**Due: Oral Presentations**

**Final Exam: Portfolios are due**