

**ENGLISH 226:  
INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING  
MW 12:45-2pm 111 Shideler Hall**

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*\*or by appointment\**

**ABOUT THIS COURSE:**

English 226 is a foundation course for anyone who wants to major in creative writing. The instructor assumes that anyone who enrolled did so out of a curiosity or joy in writing poetry and prose. The class requires attentiveness, both on the page and in the classroom, and a lot of hard work. We will consider writing as a practice—both meditative and explorative—that must be approached regularly and with discipline. In other words, we will be writing constantly, with faith that the more we write, the better our writing will be. That said, will undoubtedly have fun, but the fun comes out of the work.

We'll begin the semester by focusing on poetry—what makes a poem strong—while developing a keen eye for language. This will carry into the second part of the semester, when we will replace line breaks with narrative prose, in the form of short fiction.

Each segment will end with a round of full-class workshops. This means you will have one poem and one story read and critiqued by the entire class.

Throughout the course, we will examine the fundamentals of poetry and fiction by reading published work with the writer's eye. We will also complete writing exercises to bolster and experiment with the craft, both in class and at home.

**TEXTS:**

1. Coursepack of poems and essays (You can buy this at the Oxford Copy shop, on Poplar Street, near High.)
2. Behn, Robin and Chase Twitchell. The Practice of Poetry. Harper Collins: New York, 1992
3. Johnston, Bret Anthony. Naming the World. Random House: New York, 2008
4. Martone, Michael and Lex Wilford. The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction. Touchstone Press: New York, 2007

## **REQUIRED MATERIALS:**

*For your journal:*

- packet of loose-leaf paper
- folder with three clasps to insert the paper
- pen

Please bring these journals to every class session before the workshops.

## **CLASS REQUIREMENTS:**

### **Journals: (40%)**

As part of our writing practice, we will use a single notebook for all in class and at home writing assignments. These may include:

- responses to reading assignments
- exercises from our texts
- in-class writing prompts
- at-home writing prompts

In addition, each student will complete **four extra** entries per segment (poetry or prose) in the form of their choice—free writes, observations, practice poems or paragraphs, character bios, etc. In order to keep up with these, students should write one or two per week. These entries must fill at least a page of your notebook.

I will collect the journals twice: once before the poetry workshops begin and again before we begin the fiction workshops.

### **Workshops (10%)**

At the end of each segment, we will complete two rounds of full-class workshops—one for our poems and one for our short stories. We will read and respond each other's writing generously, with both kindness and honesty, so as to keep a positive dynamic within the workshop community.

This means you will need to make twenty-three copies of your poem and stories, so that the class and I can read and respond to them.

You will be required to write a response for each poem or story we workshop in class:

- Poem responses must consist of at least 50 words.
- Story responses must consist of at least 150 words.

## **Participation (10%)**

Each student will be expected to speak at least one time per week in class. Questions count.

## **Outside Readings (5%)**

You will attend and write a response to two public readings during the semester, one for poetry and one for fiction.

## **Mid-term Portfolio (10%)**

This will consist of drafts and revised versions of three poems, including the one you submitted for workshop.

## **Formal Fiction Exercises: (5%)**

Because we're only completing one short story in the course, you will be assigned three exercises; each will be one page typed.

## **Final Portfolio (20%)**

This will consist of:

- two drafts of your short story (draft and revised after workshop)
- responses to outside readings, one poetry and one fiction, that you will attend over the course of the semester (I will alert you to when these will happen).
- a two-page letter to yourself responding to your work over the course of the semester.

## **POLICIES:**

### **ATTENDANCE :**

Because this class will take the workshop structure, attendance is a crucial element of your grade. Each student is allowed two absences, no questions asked. Every additional absence will then affect your grade accordingly:

-After three absences: by 1/3 of a grade (Ex. A- to a B+)

-After four absences: by 2/3 of a grade (Ex. From an A- to a B)

-Five or more--your grade will drop by a full letter for each additional absence. (ex. A- to B-, to C-, etc...)

### **POP QUIZZES:**

If it appears that no one is reading the assignments (i.e. silences every time we're trying to discuss them in class), I will give a quiz about the reading. If you don't pass the quiz, you will

have to complete additional public reading responses to make up the grade (which will be taken out of your participation grade at the end of the semester).

### **GRADING:**

All formal (typed) writing assignments will be graded according to a point-system:

- Followed directions/evidence of applying the fundamentals we discussed in class (i.e. sharp imagery, character development). (10 points)
- Proofread (10 points)
- Completion (proper length for workshop responses) (80 points)

The rest will be graded upon completion only. These assignments are your writing playground—feel free to play; don't be afraid to take risks and be bold.

Grade percentages break down like this:

A ... 100-94%	C ... 76-74%
A- ... 93-90%	C- ... 73-70%
B+ ... 89-87%	D+ ... 69-77%
B ... 86-84%	D ... 66-64%
B- ... 83-80%	D- ... 63-60%
C+ ... 79-77%	F ... <60%

### **TARDINESS:**

Three lates make an absence.

### **LATE ASSIGNMENTS:**

If you turn in an assignment late, your grade will drop a full letter for each day after it's due.

### **PLAGARISM..**

(i.e. stealing other people's work and saying it's yours or turning in a paper you've used for another class) is not tolerated at this university. To make sure you don't have to sit through an embarrassing conference with the department head, or get expelled, carefully read pages 156-158 of your old CCM, *Intentional and Accidental Plagiarism*, and see to it that you don't commit this crime.

### **IF YOU MISS CLASS...**

You are still responsible for completing the in-class writing assignments. Please email another student, rather than the instructor, for details about these and complete them in your journal on your own time.