

English 111

Mary Ann Samyn, ENGL 111, Fall 2002, Introduction to Creative Writing

English 111: Introduction to Creative Writing ~ Fall 2002

Mary Ann Samyn

MWF 1:30-2:20 p.m. ~ 248 Hodges

Office: 463 Stansbury ~ 293-3107 x453 ~ MaryAnn.Samyn@mail.wvu.edu

Office hours: MWF 10:00-11:20 a.m., 1:00-1:20 p.m. and by appt.

Texts

The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories ed. by Tobias Wolff

American Poetry: The Next Generation ed. by Gerald Constanzo and Jim Daniels handouts

Course Description and Requirements

This course is exploratory in nature; that is, you should expect to read widely, write daily, and discover much about language, how it "works," what it "means," and what it requires. This is a fun, challenging class, especially when you approach the reading assignments and writing exercises with the sort of seriousness and intensity that says "I'm here to enjoy the process of working hard. " This good energy will pay off both in terms of your own production and growth and in terms of the development our class community of writers.

As for the course evaluation, your grade will be determined by your final portfolio of revised writings and reflections on yourself as a writer, your reading journal, your daily readiness/willingness for class, and your participation. You can do as well as you are determined to do. Remember that writing is a craft and that, like any craft, it requires—and rewards—hard work. I'm looking forward to this course; you should too.

Attendance

I take attendance, and participation, very seriously as should you. In creative writing classes our success depends on our ability to create a community that honors one another, that gives honest yet kind feedback, that enjoys the challenge of working with language. In order to establish such a community,

everyone needs to be at every class. This means you! Because bad things happen to good people, you're allowed three absences, no questions asked. That doesn't mean that you are entitled to three absences; rather, it means that if for some unavoidable reason you need to be absent, you won't immediately penalize yourself. Beyond three absences, your final grade will suffer (1/3 of a letter grade per absence). Of course you should keep absences, and tardiness, to a minimum. And, if you are absent, be sure to contact me and/ or your classmates to find out what you missed.

Special note

In this and every creative writing class, we are tough on writing but kind to writers. Remember that. And have fun.

Weekly schedule

This human document is subject to change... it's your responsibility to contact me and/or your classmates if you're absent. More specific information regarding due dates for drafts, etc. will be given in class. **All reading is due on the Monday of the week it's listed.**

Week 1 (August 19-21-23): Where are you going, where have you been?

You as a reader. You as a writer.

Generating material/invention exercises.

Remembering. Narrowing.

Week 2 (August 26-28-30): First Pieces

Starting small.

What is workshop?

Week 3 (September 4-6): Re-Vision

The *process* of writing.

Week 4 (September 9-11-13): Fiction

Character sketches: bouffant or pig tails? Harley or scooter? You decide. No.

They decide.

reading: Stuart Dybek, "Chopin in Winter" and Raymond Carver, "Cathedral" begin journal. . . (one entry per week of assigned reading...)

Week 5 (September 16-18-20): When characters make a scene...

Small details. Setting. Doors and drawers, opening and closing.

reading: Joyce Carol Oates, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

Week 6 (September 23-25-27): Consequences happen.

You gotta let go: allowing characters to do what they want/ need to do.

reading: Tim O'Brien, "The Things They Carried" and Mona Simpson, "Lawns"

Week 7 (Sept. 30, October 2-4): **A sense of story...**

Re-thinking fiction. Successes and challenges.

reading: Joy Williams, "Train"

Week 8 (October 7-9-11): **You are a magician...**

...and this is your magic box: prose poetry.

reading: hand-outs...

Week 9 (October 14-16-18): **Images are our friends**

Getting going. Five senses. Show don't tell. Be more specific. No, more.

Generating good nouns, active verbs.

reading: Alexie, Brouwer, Kalytiak Davis, Dougherty

Week 10 (October 21-23-25): **Poetry: Mystery Solved!**

Reading to understand.

Cryptic vs. complex

reading: Duhamel, Harms, Hayes, Jordan

Week 11 (October 28-30, November 1): **Wish you were here**

Postcard poems.

Leapiness.

reading: Joseph, LaFemina, Levin, Markus

Week 12 (November 4-6-8): **Try this on for size**

Haiku.

Color poems.

Persona poems.

Poems a la Wallace Stevens.

Assignments of all shapes and sizes.

reading: McDaniel, Roripaugh, Shaughnessy, Szporluk

Week 13 (November 11-13-15): **So you want to write about your mother...**

Essential material meets essential language.

reading: Crystal Williams, Zandvakili, your choice

Week 14 (November 18-20-21): **What Next?**

Reflecting on yourself as a reader and writer.

Portfolio: what it is and how and why.

Journal due (10 entries: at least one typed or two handwritten pages each: a decent length: you know what I mean!)

Thanksgiving holiday...

Week 15 (December 2-4-6): **Front and center**

Talent Showcase.

Final portfolio due...