

English 111

Mary Ann Samyn, English 111, Fall 2004, Introduction to Creative Writing

English 111: Introduction to Creative Writing

Fall 2004: TR 2:30-3:45 123 Armstrong Hall

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Texts (in order of appearance)

In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal. Judith Kitchen and Mary Paumier Jones, eds.

The Contemporary American Short Story. B. Minh Nguyn and Porter Shreve, eds.

The New Young American Poets. Kevin Prufer, ed.

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. Excessive tardiness will negatively affect your grade as will attendance without participation. And, if you are absent, be sure to contact me and/ or your classmates to find out what you missed. I only accept late work when you and I have made prior arrangements.

Special note

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

Also please note: This schedule is very specific in some ways (with regard to readings, for example) and less specific in others (concerning particulars about writing assignments). Follow the syllabus and expect more information on a "need to know" basis. You'll want to come to class having read all assigned texts, written the appropriate journal responses, and completed any and all drafts of essays/stories/poems. To fail to do any of these is, essentially, to be absent. Also, if I ask you to bring copies, you need to bring copies in order to receive full credit. Questions? Let me know.

WEEK 1

August 24: Introduction to the course. Getting started. Keeping a reading journal.

August 26: Creative Nonfiction. In Brief: Sandor (27), Price (39), Udall (43), Panning (54), Rogers (85), Darlington (100), Bets (116) and journal entry #1.

WEEK 2

August 31: In Brief: Baxter (119), Hampl (123), Cunnane (132), Geary (134), Ozick (143), Oliver (159), Kilgo (167) and journal entry #2. Freewriting/generating material/sorting it out.

September 2: In Brief: Shields (171), McClanahan (180), George (186), Gorall (191), Bass (224), Komunyakaa (234), Dybek (251) and journal #3. Journals due.

WEEK 3

September 7: Workshop: creative non-fiction: small groups. Draft due to me.

September 9: Workshop, cont'd. Revising nonfiction. Further possibilities.

WEEK 4

September 14: Fiction. The Contemporary American Short Story: Alexie (1), Atwood (17), Baxter (81) and journal #4.

September 16: Carver (109), Cisneros (133), Dubus (163), Dybek (176) and journal #5.

WEEK 5

September 21: Houston (233), Mason (328), Moore (360) and journal #6. Begin character sketches.

September 23: Character sketches due. Workshop in groups.

WEEK 6

September 28: Oates (406), O'Brien (422), plus one story of your choice and journal #7. Drafting the story. Journals due.

September 30: Workshop: short fiction: small groups. Draft due to me.

WEEK 7

October 5: Workshop, cont'd.

October 7: Finishing up fiction.

WEEK 8

October 12: Poetry. The New Young American Poets: Alexie, Beatty, Belieu, Campo and journal #7. Writing poetry...

October 14: Carbo, Duhamel, Harms, Joseph and journal #8.

WEEK 9

October 19: Poem #1 due. Workshop in groups.

October 21: Mattawa, McDaniel, McGrath, Powell and journal #9.

WEEK 10

October 26: Rohrer, Schwartz, Szporluk, Townsend, Volkman and journal #10. Journals due.

October 28: Poem #2 due and workshop.

WEEK 11

November 2: Election Day: no class

November 4: Poem #3 due and workshop.

WEEK 12

November 9: Finishing up poetry/thinking about the portfolio/working on a final piece of writing, your choice

November 11: Workshop.

WEEK 13

November 16: Writing the reflective essay... Workshop: writing due.

November 18: Workshop and time for conferences.

Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 14

November 30: Draft of final reflective essay due. Workshop.

December 2: Workshop, cont'd..

WEEK 15

December 7: Final revision workshop.

December 9: FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE. No exceptions. Last day of class.