

# English 111

English 111 Section 02

Introduction to Creative Writing

"Creativity demands nothing less than all you have. Talent alone is never enough." -- Erica Jong

Spring 2004

M-W-F 2:30- 3:20

46C Stansbury Hall

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## Required Texts

Addonizio Kim, and Dorianne Laux. *The Poetis Companion*. New York: Norton 1997.

Hayes, Terrance. *Hip Logic*. New York: Penguin, 2002.

Miller, Brenda, and Suzanne Paola. *Tell it Slant: Wnting and Shaping Creative Nonfiction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

Updike, John. *The Best American Short Stories of the CenturY*. Ed. Katrina Kenison. Expanded Edition. Boston: Houghton, 2000.

Ward, Sandi. *English 111 Syllabus. My House: My Computer*, 2004. Read this syllabus thoroughly and hold onto it! It outlines all of the course's policies and requirements, provides information about assignments, and lists most of the work due for each day of class. If you have a question or you miss class, refer to this syllabus before asking/emailing me, please.

## Course Description and Objectives

In English 111, we will explore creative writing techniques and study the craft of each of three genres: Creative Nonfiction, Fiction, and Poetry. We will use in-class prompts and journal writing to stimulate ideas for longer works. We will read and discuss published works in each genre: from well-known writers to new voices to classic texts, we'll enjoy a little of everything. We'll also read work from literature's newest voices -- the writers in our class -- by sharing work in peer response groups to learn to give and receive helpful criticism, praise, and suggestions. Students in English 111 will learn to view reading in a new way: as writers. Students will develop a vocabulary for discussing published work and their classmates' writing. In developing the ability to discuss the craft behind a piece of writing, students will

also develop their own voices, creative skills, and the ability to critique and revise their own work based on writing techniques they've studied in class.

## **Writing**

This is a writing class. Therefore, we will be writing, -- a lot! You will keep a journal (see below), which you will write in during class and on your own time. You will also be composing eight longer pieces -- two creative nonfiction pieces (minimum of five pages each), two short stories (minimum of five pages each), and four poems. You will also write responses to the published pieces we read for class and you'll compose responses to other students' work. At the end of the semester, you will turn in a portfolio showcasing revised versions of all of your eight major assignments (more information will be announced at a later date).

## **Requirements**

All assignments beyond the Writing Journal must be typed, and ALL must be handed in on time to receive credit.

### **Writing Journal: 10 percent of final grade**

Not all of the writing we do needs to have an audience. We should never be embarrassed about the things we write -- we should allow ourselves to experiment with our writing, to fail, to get better. We should give ourselves a criticism-free space where process of writing is more important than the writing itself. The journal is this space.

Purchase a notebook you can carry with you at all times. Find one whose size and style you're comfortable with. Some people write best in a steno-sized notebook, others like a composition-style book, while others prefer something more sophisticated, like a fancy journal with puppies on the cover or a leather-bound blank book. It's up to you. What's important is what you put in the journal -- you'll be filling it with the writing activities we do in class as well as with ideas, observations, and writing exercises you do outside of class. I'll provide a handout with some ideas for exercises. We will use the journal in class throughout the semester, so you should always bring it with you. Repeated failure to do so will hurt your grade, because I'll spot-check journals several times during the semester, and at the end of the semester, I'll grade your journal based on the amount you have written both in and out of class and the variety of the writing you've attempted. The writer's journal is a space to explore creative writing. You should not use it solely as a place for unfocused ranting, rambling about your weekend, etc. I'll be looking to see that you've attempted a variety of activities in the journal.

### **Workshops: part of participation grade, which is 20 percent of final grade**

One goal of this class is to create work to show to an audience. Your audience may receive your work differently from how you expected it would. Several times during the semester, we will read and discuss your work in small groups. You will share one creative nonfiction piece, one short story, and two poems. You will be required to make copies of your work and distribute them to your workshop group several days in advance of the workshop. Failure to bring in copies of your work on the day it's due will adversely affect your participation grade. We'll discuss other guidelines for the workshop later in the semester.

After each workshop, you will type up a 1-2 page review of your workshop based on questions I will provide. This review will outline the suggestions you received during the workshop and will lay out a plan for the future direction of the piece.

### **Graded Work in Each Genre: 5 percent of final grade per genre/15 percent**

A copy of the first piece(s) in each genre (one essay, one short story, two poems) will be due to me on the day of the peer response workshop for that genre. I will comment on the work, as well as on your review of the workshop session, and return the work to you with ideas about how to revise it for your portfolio.

The second essay, story, or set of poems will be due about a week after the peer response workshop (see Schedule of Classes and Work Due). Again, I will comment on the piece(s) and return them with ideas for revision. The two pieces of work in each genre (or two sets of poems) will be worth five percentage points, for a total of fifteen percentage points of your final grade.

### **Reading Responses: 10 percent of final grade**

We will read several selections per week in the genre we are studying. About a week in advance of each set of reading, I'll give you a list of questions

for each selection. Use these questions to compose an essay-style reading response about each selection. Your reading response should be a well-thought-out analysis of the reading, not a summary or a retort. Responses should measure about a page, singlespaced, for each selection. Your typed responses will be due on the day we discuss that reading, as indicated in the Schedule of Classes and Work Due.

### **Author Presentation: 5 percent of final grade**

Once during the semester you will be asked to give a five-minute presentation on one of the writers we are reading or on a contemporary writer from a list I provide. The presentation will require a small amount of research to give us an introduction to the writer's work. You will also photocopy a short selection of the

writer's work (a piece of creative nonfiction, a short story or novel chapter, or three to six poems). You'll receive a handout with further instruction on the presentation format. You must be in class on the day your presentation is due; if you miss class for any reason, you will not have the opportunity to make up the presentation.

### **Participation: 20 percent of final grade**

Participation is a critical part of any writing course. To get better at writing, you need to write and to read, but you also need to share your writing, ideas, and opinions about writing and reading with others. You must be willing to speak up during class discussion, group activities, and workshop sessions. Repeated failure to do so will hurt your participation grade, which is 20 percent of your final grade. Additionally, I will reduce your participation grade if you fail to prepare critiques of your classmates' work for the workshop. Refusal to submit your own writing for workshop will result in an automatic five percent reduction of your final grade for each missed workshop. I will also deduct points from your participation grade for negative participation -- obviously failing to have read the assigned work, failing to bring your book or journal, sleeping in class, belligerently interrupting your classmates, etc. Please help maintain a positive class atmosphere -- it'll have a positive effect on your grade.

### **Attendance: considered in final grade**

You must take the class in order to pass it; in other words, you must be in class, on time. Attendance, like participation, is critical to this class. If you do not attend, you cannot participate; additionally, if you're not in class, you can't learn from the class, and you miss instruction, handouts, guidance, etc. More than three absences will result in your final grade being lowered by one letter grade. Six or more absences will result in a failing grade for the course. No exceptions! Because I want to foster a sense of community in this class, I will strictly enforce the attendance policy.

In case of an emergency, contact the Dean of Student Life immediately. The Dean will inform your instructors of the emergency and will provide me with the certification I need to consider excusing you -- keep in mind that an excuse from the Dean does not automatically guarantee an excuse from my class or from your work; generally the Dean leaves excuses up to individual instructors' discretion. Contact Office of Student Life, E. Moore Hall, 293-5611.

### **Late Work**

Writing requires discipline. I will not accept late work for any reason -- not for flat tires, sick roommates, make-up tests, or anything else. If you know you must miss class, consult with me ahead of time or send

your work with a classmate. I do not accept work via email or my mailbox unless you and I have made prior arrangements.

### **Portfolio: 40 percent of final grade**

For the portfolio, you will revise the longer pieces you completed during the semester. You should revise both writing that was workshopped, and writing that was commented upon by me only. You should the earlier draft bearing my comments to the final draft of each piece -- so hold onto your drafts. In the portfolio, you will also include at least five pages of additional writing in which you may experiment with writing styles or forms that you are not as comfortable with as you'd like to be. I will grade the portfolio based on revision, improvement, ingenuity, and versatility. You will receive more information about the portfolio at a later date.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is counter to the goals of education and of creative writing. I will not tolerate plagiarism. Any form of plagiarism will result in an immediate F for the course.

### **Grade Breakdown 100%**

Two Creative Nonfiction Pieces: 5%

Two Short Stories: 5%

Four Poems: 5%

Journal: 10%

Reading Responses: 10%

Author Presentation: 5%

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Portfolio of Revised Work: 40%

### **Social Justice Policy**

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. What this means in the context of this class is that I will not tolerate hurtful comments about any race, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin. I expect you, as writers, to be able to separate the speaker from the writer in any piece of writing, and to not assume your classmates or the writers we're reading have the same background or beliefs as you. If you find material questionable, you should question it tactfully and in the context of the piece. I will not tolerate personal attacks or harassment. I expect our class to maintain a

sense of community in which all students feel free to share ideas and creative work. If you have concerns, please feel free to speak to me after class.

### **Schedule of Classes and Work Due (Subject to Change as Needed)**

Date; Class Schedule/Work Due; Night's Homework

Monday January 12; Introduction to class, syllabus, policies, texts, favorites; Buy books and journal. Bring journal to class Wednesday.

Wednesday January 14; Introduction to journal writing. Author presentations sign-up; Begin writing in your journal. Start making it a habit to write in it every day.

Friday January 16; Introduction to creative nonfiction. Assign reading responses; Read Tell It Slant (TIS) Ch. 1 and do reading response as indicated on handout.

Monday January 19; No Class -- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day; Continue reading as needed and work on your journal.

Wednesday January 21; Discuss reading. Ch.1 response due as indicated. Writing exercises; Read TIS Ch. 2 and Didion and do responses as indicated on handout distributed 1/16.

Friday January 23; Ch.2 and Didion responses due. Author presentations, discuss reading, writing exercises, assign next reading responses.; Read TIS Ch. 3 and do responses as indicated.

Monday January 26; Ch.3 response due. Discuss reading, writing exercises. McClanahan; Read McClanahan handout and do response as indicated.

Wednesday January 23; McClanahan response due. Discuss reading, writing exercises; Read TIS Ch. 4 and Duncan and do responses as indicated.

Friday January 30; Ch. 4 and Duncan responses due. Author presentations, discuss reading. Assign reading responses; Read TIS Ch. 7 and Rekdal and do response as indicated.

Monday February 2; Ch. 7 and Rekdal responses due. Writing exercises; Read Sedaris in TIS and do response as indicated.

Wednesday February 4; Sedaris response due. Discuss outlines and composition; Outlines of both of your essays due Friday.

Friday February 6; Outlines due, author presentations; Continue working on essays. Outlines returned with comments Monday.

Monday February 9; Outlines returned. Discuss writing process. Be sure to bring T/S to class; Finish essays -- copies of one due Wednesday for workshop.

Wednesday February 11; Copies of one essay due for workshop. Discuss creative nonfiction workshop strategies. Determine workshop sequence; Respond to group members' work. Responses due as indicated by workshop sequence.

Friday February 13; Peer responses due. Creative nonfiction workshop, author presentations; See above.

Monday February 16; Peer responses due. Creative nonfiction workshop; Write review of workshop -- due Wednesday. Don't forget that second essay -- due a week from today.

Wednesday February 18; Workshop review due. Introduce fiction; TBA

Friday February 20; Author presentations, writing exercises, assign reading and responses; Do readings and responses as indicated on handout. Responses due on dates indicated.

Monday February 23; Second essay due. Responses due. Discuss reading, writing exercises; Do readings and responses as indicated on handout.

Wednesday February 25; Responses due. Discuss reading, writing exercises; Do readings and responses as indicated on handout.

Friday February 27; Responses due. Author presentations, discuss reading, writing exercises; Do readings and responses as indicated on handout.

Monday March ; No class. Do readings and responses as indicated on handout.

Wednesday March 3; Responses due. Writing exercises; Do readings and responses as indicated on handout.

Friday March 5; Responses due. Discuss reading, author presentations, writing exercises; Do readings and responses as indicated on handout.

Monday March 8; Responses due. Discuss reading. Work on story outlines; Outline both your stories -- outlines due Wednesday.

Wednesday March 10; Story outlines due. Discuss outlines; Reading and response TBA.

Friday March 12 Outlines returned. Discuss reading, response due. Author presentations; Finish up stories -- one due for workshop Wednesday after break.

Monday March 15, Wednesday March 17, Friday March 19; No Class -- Spring Break; Finish up stories -- one due for workshop Wednesday after break.

**Monday March 22; story block exercises; finish up stories**

copies due Wednesday for workshop groups

Wednesday March 24; Copies of stories due for workshop. Discuss fiction workshop strategies, determine sequence; Respond to group members' stories -- responses due Friday and Monday as according to your workshop sequence.

Friday March 26; Peer responses due. Fiction workshop, author presentations; See above.

Monday March 29; Peer responses due. Fiction workshop; Write review of your workshop -due Wednesday.

Wednesday March 31; Workshop review due. Introduce poetry, assign reading and responses. ; Do readings and responses as indicated on handout. Don't forget that second story -- due a week from today.

Friday April 2; Responses due, discuss reading, writing exercises. ; Do readings and responses as indicated on handout.

Monday April 5; Responses due, discuss reading, writing exercises; Do readings and responses as indicated on handout.

Wednesday April 7; Second story due. Responses due, discuss reading, author presentations, writing exercises; Do readings and responses as indicated on handout.

Friday April 9; Responses due, discuss reading, author presentations, writing exercises; Map poems (procedure TBA)

Monday April 12; Poem maps due. ;TBA

Wednesday April 14; Poem maps returned. Discuss drafting; Finish poems -- copies of two due Friday for workshop.



Friday April 16; Copies of poems due for workshop. Discuss poetry workshop strategies, determine workshop sequence. Author presentations; Respond to poems. Responses due as according to your workshop sequence.

Monday April 19; Peer responses due. Poetry Workshop; See above.

Wednesday April 21 Peer responses due. Poetry Workshop; Write review of your workshop-- due Friday.

Friday April 23; Workshop review due. Author presentations. Discuss revision; Final two poems due in portfolio. Schedule a conference with me to review them before then, if you wish.

Monday April 26; Discuss revision/portfolio.; Work on portfolio. Homework TBA.

Wednesday April 28; Discuss revision/portfolio.; Prepare piece to share. Portfolio and writing journal due Friday.

Friday April 30; Class read'n'tell day. Portfolio and writing journal due during class time--no exceptions; Portfolio and writing journal return time TBA.

Monday May 3 through Friday May 7; Finals week. Portfolio and writing journal return time TBA.

### **Formatting Quotes**

When you use another person's exact words, whether those words were originally written or spoken, you must put those words in quotation marks and you must tell who wrote or spoke them. Refer to this sheet when writing any assignment -- Reading Responses, stories, papers, etc. -- in which you need to quote another writer or speaker. I will look to see that you've used quotations where necessary and that you've formatted them correctly.

The part of the quote that tells who wrote or spoke the words in quotation marks is called the attribution. You must attribute all quotes -- you must tell who said/wrote them: "This is the best pizza I've ever eaten," John Doe said.

DO NOT leave a sentence floating in quotation marks with no attribution:

"I really like playing piano."

This is incorrect because it is confusing -- we aren't sure who said/wrote "I really like

playing piano."

An attribution between two sentences can function for both sentences -- you do not need

an attribution after the second sentence:

correct: "I went to see my Aunt Naomi," Sara said. "She was reading a book."

incorrect: "I went to see my Aunt Naomi," Sara said. "She was reading a book," Sara said.

Direct quotes -- the writer's/speaker's exact words -- must appear in quotation marks: "My favorite book is Norwegian Wood," John Smith wrote. "The language is so beautiful."

Capitalize the first letter of the first word of a direct quotation that is a whole sentence (a "full quote"):

"My major is difficult, but it's worth it," Jane Smith said.

Do not capitalize the first word of a direct quotation that is not a full sentence (a "partial quote"): Jane Smith said pre-pharmacy is "difficult."

If your attribution or some other text interrupts a full quote which then continues in the same sentence, do not capitalize the first word of the second part of the quotation, and place a comma after the attribution: "I really enjoy watching basketball," he said, "but nothing compares to playing it."

Except in situations such as the above example (when the rest of a quoted sentence comes after the attribution), place a period after the attribution if it falls in the middle or at the end: "You have to see Spellbound," she said "It's such a good movie." "I'd love to go on vacation, but I'm broke," he said

If you place the attribution before the quote, separate it from the quote with a comma: He said, "Hasta la vista, baby."

Use a comma to separate quoted material from the quotation marks and the attribution: "Hasta la vista, baby," he said. He said, "My father wove a tapestry of obscenities."

Punctuation goes inside quotation marks :

"Which way to San Jose?" Jane asked. The man said, "Not again"

..... except in the case of question marks or exclamation points which apply to the entire

sentence:

Did he really say, "I can't believe it's not butter"~. I can't believe you like the song "Bad"