

English 212
Introduction to Creative Writing
Wed./Fri. 11:45-12:55
Fall 2014

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Office Hours: Tues., 1-2:30; Wed., 2:30-4;
Thurs. 10-11:30; Fri. 1-2; and by appointment.

Goals

English 212, Introduction to Creative Writing, will focus on theory and practice in the writing of two imaginative genres: poetry and short fiction. Our focus on poetry, during the first part of this course, will have one primary goal: a close attention to, and heightened awareness of, the power of language; such awareness is crucial to good writing of any kind, and particularly to the writing of imaginative works. Here is the first of innumerable instructor's biases about writing that you will encounter in this class: **No good writing can happen without this passionate concern for language.**

Instructor's bias number two: **Good writers read.** For this course, then, plan on not only writing, but *reading*. We will read about the painstaking craft of writing poetry and fiction, as well as accomplished poems and short stories, which will serve as models and as inspiration.

Number three: **Besides reading, good writers write *all the time*.** They record their thoughts on the things they've read; they jot down random expressions, overheard conversations, ridiculous remarks at the grocery store or the gym; they hold on to items in the news that make them laugh or make them cry; they hear, suddenly and for no apparent reason, words that sound like music in their heads--and they race for the nearest scrap of paper or digital device to get those words down before they disappear just as suddenly. All this is building toward another important aspect of this course (one that combines both theory and practice): you should plan to keep a thorough journal that includes all of these things and more.

Finally, the most crucial practice components of all: writing, then rewriting, then reading your work to others and hearing others read their own, then rewriting some more, then rewriting some more. In short, this will be a workshop course, demanding (1) the sharing of your own work; (2) your careful reading of, and constructive responding to, the work of others; and (3) **the ongoing act of revising that no good writer can avoid** (instructor's bias number four--and a lesson I continue to learn myself).

Required Texts

Billy Collins, *Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry* (Random House, 2003).

Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook* (Harcourt Brace, 1994).

Michael Kardos, *The Art and Craft of Fiction: A Writer's Guide* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013).

Additional costs:

--Some photocopying, or printing of multiple copies, of your own work for small groups and full-class workshops (as needed).

--\$10 deposit for Oct. 23 Dodge Poetry Festival ticket (part or all of which will be refunded).

Attendance and Academic Honesty

We will meet twice a week for fourteen weeks (with no class meetings at all during Thanksgiving week); that isn't much time when you consider all we have to do. If you are serious about writing, you will show up on time, every time; you will also devote your entire attention to what's happening in the class. Please *turn off* your phone during class (don't merely set it to

vibrate), unless it is the tool you use for writing.

Also note that more than two absences (excused or unexcused) will automatically lower your final grade.

I certainly hope it goes without saying that any work you submit for this course must be your own; see the College's Academic Honesty policy in the Student Handbook.

The Journal

Journal entries (in response to assigned reading) must be turned in or sent to me by email (we will determine which in class) by our agreed-upon time before class sessions for which the readings are assigned. Each journal entry should be a minimum of 300 words long (please include word count at the entry's end), and should include a brief summary of what you consider the most important points of one of the chapters included in that day's reading, along with your application of the chapter's important ideas to a published poem of your choice (during the poetry unit) or to one of the assigned short stories in Kardos (for the fiction unit).

I will look over these journal entries quickly prior to our class discussions, eventually assigning each a plus/check/minus mark. On these discussion days, several students will be randomly selected to present their summaries and applications, as a group. In addition, you will be required to turn in hard copies of your completed and annotated journals at two points during the semester: Wed., Oct. 8 (poetry) and Wed., Dec. 3 (fiction). Each will be assigned a letter grade at this point.

Note that in addition to these more formal journal assignments, you are advised to have a notebook (or laptop or tablet) for recording ideas, completing in- and out-of-class writing exercises, etc. Try to have this notebook or device with you at all times, and particularly in class.

Small Groups, Full-Class Workshops, Writing Center, Individual Conferences

We will negotiate the formation of small groups in class, but my assumption is that you will work with one group during the first portion of the course (poetry) and another during the second (fiction). For the four poem drafts you write during the first portion of the course, you will receive feedback from a small group (two or three) of your peers. In addition, you will receive full-class workshop feedback for one poem and one short story, as well as more detailed feedback from one class member for one poem and one story. You will also receive focused feedback on one of your short stories during a required visit to the Writing Center (and failure to schedule this visit will negatively affect your participation grade). Finally, you are always welcome to schedule an individual conference with me, to spend more concentrated time on one of your poems or stories or any other work that you request.

Evaluation

You will receive comments and a cumulative grade on a portfolio of your work submitted to me at two points in the semester: week 7 (30% of final grade) and week 15 (35% of final grade). While I will evaluate your work for originality and craft (skill with language and form), it is important to realize that in determining your final grade, I will place equal (or even greater) emphasis on your level of commitment to writing itself; this will be gauged by your class participation, the seriousness of your responses to fellow writers in the class, and the time and attention you have put into revising and improving your own work. Note the following requirements:

Portfolio I (30% of final grade): All drafts to be included.

- Introduction/Self-evaluation
- Minimum of four poems, two of which are significantly revised (that is, reworked at least twice)
- Editor's Letter (written response—minimum 300 words—to one poem by another student)

Portfolio II (35% of final grade): All drafts to be included.

- Introduction/Self-evaluation
- Opening, first, second, and final drafts of a complete short story (minimum 1,800 words for final version)
- Editor's Letter (written response—minimum 300 words—to one story by another student)

Journals

Poetry Unit: Minimum 5 total entries, submitted on time, then compiled, annotated, and turned in as hard copies on Wed., Oct. 8 **(15%)**

Fiction Unit: Minimum 5 total entries, submitted on time, then compiled, annotated, and turned in as hard copies on Wed., Dec. 3 **(15%)**

Participation in class discussions, small-group and full-class workshop sessions, and class reading; required visit to the Writing Center **(5%)**

*****Note to English Majors:** In preparation for creating an English Major Portfolio in your senior capstone seminar, please save both digital and hard copies of your work for this class, including drafts with peer and instructor comments.

Moravian encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact the event sponsor at least one week prior to the event. Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability must contact Ms. Elaine Mara, assistant director of academic support services for academic and disability support, at the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling [610-861-1401](tel:610-861-1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Schedule

Week 1 (8/27, 8/29)

- Wed. Introductions; going over syllabus.
- Fri. Oliver, first three chapters (through “Imitation”) plus selected poems; modeling of journal entry plus discussion; in-class writing and writing exercises; use of Collins text; etc.

Week 2 (9/3, 9/5): Journal entries due prior to class on 9/5

- Wed. One draft poem due; discussion and modeling of workshop method; assembling of groups and scheduling of featured writers, etc.; in-class work on first poems.
- Fri. Bring copies of first poem for entire class plus instructor.
Two group-led discussions of the following in Oliver:

“Sound” and “More Devices of Sound”
“The Line”

Week 3 (9/10, 9/12): Journal entries due prior to class on 9/12

Wed. Full-class discussion of first poem drafts

Fri. Two group-led discussions of the following in Oliver:
“Imagery”
“Some Given Forms” and “Verse That Is Free”

Week 4 (9/17, 9/19)*: Journal entries due prior to class on 9/17

Wed. Two group-led discussions of the following:
“Diction, Tone, and Voice” (in Oliver)
Ron Wallace handout

***You are urged to attend Julie Zickefoose’s talk, titled “The Bluebird Effect,” on Thursday, September 18 at 7 PM in the UBC Room of the HUB.**

Fri. Guest speaker: Julie Zickefoose (see <http://www.juliezickefoose.com/index.php>).

Week 5 (9/24, 9/26): Journal entries due prior to class on 9/24

Wed. 2 draft poems due; small group workshops; featured writers (half of class) must bring copies of one chosen poem for entire class plus instructor.

Fri. Full-class workshop: discussion of featured writers’ poems; Editor’s Letters (written by writers who are featured today) due to writers.

Week 6 (10/1, 10/3)

Wed. 2 draft poems due; small group workshops; featured writers (half of class) must bring copies of one chosen poem for entire class plus instructor.

Fri. Full-class workshop: discussion of featured writers’ poems; Editor’s Letters (written by writers who are featured today) due to writers.

Week 7 (10/8*, 10/10)

Wed. Reading in Oliver: “Revision,” “Workshops and Solitude,” and “Conclusion.”

Fri. **Complete Poetry Journal and Portfolio I due.**

***You are urged to attend a talk by journalist Maria Hinojosa on Wed., Oct. 8, 7 PM in Foy Hall on the Hurd Campus. I can drive up to 4 students if needed.**

Week 8 (10/15, 10/17)

Wed. Kardos, chs. 1-2, plus Everett, “The Appropriation of Cultures” and Updike, “A&P”; modeling of journal entry plus discussion; in-class writing; assembling of groups and scheduling of featured workshop writers, etc.

Fri. Kardos, ch. 11; quiz; story openings shared and discussed.

***All students must schedule at least one Writing Center appointment, for work on short story drafts, during Weeks 9-13.**

Week 9 (10/22, 10/24—no class*): Journal entries due prior to class on 10/22

Wed. Group-led discussions of Kardos, chs. 3 and 4, plus Packer, “Drinking Coffee Elsewhere” and O’Brien, “On the Rainy River.”

***Thursday evening, Oct. 23: Required attendance at Dodge Poetry Festival.**

Fri. No class.

Week 10 (10/29, 10/31): Journal entries due prior to class on 10/29

- Wed. Group-led discussions of Kardos, chs. 5 and 6, plus Tobias Wolff, “Bullet in the Brain” and Sherman Alexie, “This Is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona.”
- Fri. Small group workshops: first draft of complete short story. Featured writers (half of class) to share work for next week.

Week 11 (11/5, 11/7)

- Wed. Full-class discussion of featured writers’ stories; Editor’s Letters (prepared by featured writers) due.
- Fri. Full-class workshop, cont’d.

Week 12 (11/12, 11/14): Journal entries due prior to class on 11/12

- Wed. Group-led discussions of Kardos, chs. 7 and 8, plus Saunders, “CivilWarLand in Bad Decline” and Bausch, “Tandolfo the Great.”
- Fri. Small group workshops: second draft of story. Featured writers (half of class) to share work for next week.

Week 13 (11/19, 11/21)

- Wed. Full-class discussion of featured writers’ stories; Editor’s Letters (prepared by featured writers) due.
- Fri. Full-class workshop, cont’d.

Week 14 (11/26, 11/28): Thanksgiving week—no class.*

***This week, work on final revisions to your story and on compiling and annotating your Fiction Journal; also read Kardos, chs. 9 and 10, plus at least two of Chuck Wendig’s stories (of your choice) at <http://terribleminds.com/ramble/holy-shit-free-thing/>.**

Week 15 (12/3*, 12/5)

- Wed. Discussion of Kardos chs. 9-10 and Chuck Wendig’s work.
- *Required attendance at reading/talk by Chuck Wendig at 4 PM today.**
- Fri. **Complete Fiction Journal and Portfolio II due.** Course evaluations.

Final class reading to be scheduled during final exam period.