

English 212
Introduction to Creative Writing
Mon/Wed. 2:35-3:45
Fall 2015

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Office Hours: Mon. 1-2; Tues. 2-3; Wed. 9-10;
Fri. 12-1; and by appointment.

Course Description and Objectives

English 212, Introduction to Creative Writing, provides guided practice in the writing of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction in a reading- and workshop-based course setting. Students in English 212 will work to achieve the following course objectives:

- demonstrate an awareness of, and close attention to, the **complexities of language** (in both your reading and your writing)
- demonstrate **careful reading** of works of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, as well as works addressing the craft of writing in all three genres
- cultivate, and use, an improved **vocabulary of analysis** for poetry, fiction, and nonfiction
- cultivate a sustained **habit of writing and note-taking** (both the writing of original work, and the writing of responses to published works and work by student peers)
- respond critically and thoughtfully** (in both speaking and writing) to the work of student peers
- demonstrate **growth and improvement in the writing of poetry** (form, rhythm, line, language and syntax choices, imagery); **short fiction** (openings and endings, balance of scene and summary, character development, development and use of setting, understanding of point of view, handling of narrative time, grammatical and mechanical correctness); and **creative nonfiction** (evidence of consideration of audience, attention to structure and form, grammatical and mechanical correctness)
- provide evidence of **substantial revision** of all creative work submitted for final evaluation
- manage and reflect** upon final writing projects (poetry and fiction portfolios and final personal essay), from planning and drafting through peer review (small-group and full-class workshop sessions) and revision.

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).
Tim Bascom, "Picturing the Personal Essay: A Visual Guide" (*Creative Nonfiction* Issue #49, Summer 2013: <https://www.creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/picturing-personal-essay-visual-guide>), plus several works of creative nonfiction (links to be provided).

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

Attendance and Academic Honesty

We will meet twice a week for fifteen weeks; 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. In addition, if you are late for class more than twice, I will begin counting latenesses as absences.

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), to one of the assigned short stories in Kardos (for the fiction unit), and to one of the assigned essays during the brief creative nonfiction unit at the course's end.

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 poetry and fiction journals at two points during the semester: Wed., Oct. 7 (poetry) and Mon., Nov. 23 (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), another during the second (fiction), and a third during the final creative nonfiction unit. 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, and you will be required to attend a conference with me to discuss your creative nonfiction personal essay.

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 6 (25% of final grade) and week 13 (30% of final grade); you will also receive comments and a grade on a work of creative nonfiction submitted during week 15 (15% 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.

Lateness policy: Late journal entries will not be accepted; grades for late portfolios or creative nonfiction personal essays will be lowered by one-half letter grade (i.e., a B becomes a B-) for each day they are late.

Poetry Portfolio I (25% 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)

Fiction Portfolio (30% 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)

Creative Nonfiction Personal Essay (15% of final grade): All drafts to be included.

- Introduction/Self-evaluation
- First and final drafts of essay
- Notes from conference and small-group workshop

Journals

Poetry: Minimum 5 total entries, submitted on time, then compiled, annotated, and turned in as hard copies with Poetry Portfolio **(10%)**

Fiction: Minimum 5 total entries, submitted on time, then compiled, annotated, and turned in as hard copies with Fiction Portfolio **(10%)**

Creative Nonfiction: 1 entry, submitted before class on Monday, Nov. 30 **(2%)**

Participation in class discussions, small-group and full-class workshop sessions, and instructor conference; required visit to the Writing Center **(8%)**

*****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.

Academic & Disability Support

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 should contact Ms. Elaine Mara, Assistant Director of Academic and Disability Support at 610-861-1401 (office

located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic & Disability Support Office.

Schedule

Week 1 (8/31, 9/2)

Mon. Introductions; going over syllabus.

Wed. 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 (9/7, 9/9): Journal entries due prior to class on 9/9 (one journal entry per numbered reading assignment below).

Mon. 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.

Wed. Bring copies of first poem for entire class plus instructor.

Two group-led discussions of the following in Oliver:

(1) “Sound” and “More Devices of Sound”

(2) “The Line”

Week 3 (9/14, 9/16): Journal entries due prior to class on 9/16

Mon. Full-class discussion of first poem drafts

Wed. Two group-led discussions of the following in Oliver:

(3) “Imagery”

(4) “Some Given Forms” and “Verse That Is Free”

Week 4 (9/21, 9/23): Journal entries due prior to class on 9/21

Mon. Two group-led discussions of the following:

(5) “Diction, Tone, and Voice” (in Oliver)

(6) Ron Wallace handout

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.

Week 5 (9/28, 9/30)

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

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.

Week 6 (10/5, 10/7)

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

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

Complete Poetry Journal and Portfolio due.

Week 7 (10/12—no class, 10/14)

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.

Week 8 (10/19, 10/21): Journal entries due prior to class on 10/21 (one for Kardos, ch. 3 plus Packer; one for Kardos, ch. 4 plus O'Brien).

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

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

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

Week 9 (10/26, 10/28): Journal entries due prior to class on 10/26 (one for Kardos, ch. 5 plus Wolff; one for Kardos, ch. 6 plus Alexie).

Mon. 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."

Wed. Small group workshops: first draft of short story. Featured writers (half of class) to share work for next week.

Week 10 (11/2, 11/4)

Mon. Full-class discussion of featured writers' stories; Editor's Letters (prepared by featured writers) due.

Wed. Full-class workshop, cont'd.

Week 11 (11/9, 11/11): Journal entries due prior to class on 11/9 (one for Kardos, ch. 7 plus Saunders; one for Kardos, ch. 8 plus Bausch).

Mon. Group-led discussions of Kardos, chs. 7 and 8, plus Saunders, "CivilWarLand in Bad Decline" and Bausch, "Tandolfo the Great."

Wed. Small group workshops: second draft of story. Featured writers (half of class) to share work for next week.

Week 12 (11/16, 11/18)

Mon. Full-class discussion of featured writers' stories; Editor's Letters (prepared by featured writers) due.

Wed. Full-class workshop, cont'd.

Week 13 (11/23, 11/25—no class)

Mon. Reading: Kardos, chs. 9-10

Complete Fiction Journal and Portfolio due.

Week 14 (11/30, 12/2—no class; essay draft conferences with instructor):

Journal entry due prior to class on 11/30

Mon. Creative Nonfiction packet (or read online via links in shared Google doc)

Wed.-Fri. Scheduled conferences to discuss personal essay drafts

Week 15 (12/7, 12/9)

Mon. Small-group workshops: personal essay drafts.

Wed. **Final Creative Nonfiction Personal Essay due.** Course evaluations.