

- **ONLINE SYLLABUS**

English 2310 Online Dr. Martha Witt

Creative Writing E Mail: [wittm@wpunj.edu](mailto:wittm@wpunj.edu)

Winter Session (12/26-1/14)

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**Course Mechanics:**

The course is run through the Blackboard website, accessed via the WP Connect Page.

From the Blackboard course site, students will be able to:

Check Syllabus

Read Sample Readings

Comment on Each Other's Work through Discussion Board.

**Course Objectives:**

“Creative Writing” has been designed as an introductory course to give students the opportunity to explore personal voice and style and to experiment with different modes of writing. By the end of the semester, the student writer will have written and revised one poem as well as a short piece of fiction. The student writer will have read examples of these different modes by masters of the forms, and will have experience receiving feedback both from the Editor-Professor, as well as from peer student writers. At the end of the course, students will e-mail me their journals containing samples of their drafts, writing exercises, etc. Please note that what you send in for workshop should not be YOUR first draft. You should hone a work as much as possible so that feedback is useful.

**Required Texts and Materials:**

- The assigned text for this course is *Creative Writing: Four Genres in Brief* by David Starkey, published by Bedford St Martin's Press.
- An online resource accompanies our text; you may use it to expand your knowledge of the genres being studied: (Web site for Creative Writing: Four Genres in Brief ([bedfordstmartins.com/starkey](http://bedfordstmartins.com/starkey))).

- Students are required to have access to a Microsoft Word program and to the Internet. You will post comments on peers' work on Discussion Board.
- An electronic journal for all class assignments including notes, observations, initial drafts. **YOU MUST TITLE AND DATE EACH JOURNAL ENTRY ACCURATELY.** You will send me this journal at the end of class. It will be graded.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the winter session, student writers will have gained experience in writing in the basic modes of poetry and fiction. They will have experimented as well with honing a personal voice and style in these two modes. They will have had the experience of readers (professor-editor as well as student-editors) responding to their posted works. In short, they will have had a sampling of a writer's life. Student writers will know better by the end of this introductory course if they want to continue writing creatively and, if so, whether their strengths and inclinations point towards a particular mode of writing. Please note: Creative Non-Fiction and Drama are not included in our text and are genres as valid as the others that we will study. We simply do not have time in this intense and condensed version of the course to cover all four genres.

### **Course Expectations:**

I have structured the syllabus to reflect a breakdown of the work day-to-day for each of our "class periods" as well as the homework that would normally be assigned. This is an asynchronous online class, which means that you can make your own schedule for completing assignments as long as the day's load is done by 12am that day. Please be aware of when your group is scheduled to post work on Discussion Board for workshop.

**Discussion Board:** Every day, I will post a Discussion Board question to which you must respond; in addition, each group will post work on Discussion Board, and everyone in the class must respond to each post.

**Journal:** Please keep an electronic journal for all your responses to writing prompts, drafting, observations, peer responses, etc. **Clearly label, date, and title each exercise.** On January 16th, you will e-mail me this journal in attachment.

**Workshopping:** All students have been divided into groups. Please look under "Syllabus" to know which group you are in and when to

post your work **in attachment** on Discussion Board and read and respond to others' work. Please label the attachment using your last name and draft #1. **Again, you must respond to work by 12am of the day assigned.**

**Responders:** You must respond to everyone's work. Select two questions from amongst the checklists in the Starkey book (**not two from each one but two in total**) relevant to the work under discussion, and answer them considering your peers' work. Remember that you are offering your peer feedback for revision (for example in the Poetry section these checklists can be found on pages 26, 45, 49 & 63—use the questions you find most relevant to the work at hand).

**Professor/Editor:** I will make comments and suggestions on the work itself using the Microsoft Word “Track Changes” option under “Tools” in the Word Processing program. This will be followed by my comments. **YOU WILL RE-WRITE YOUR POEMS AND STORIES ACCORDING TO MY COMMENTARY and include these in the journal you send at the end of the course.**

**Discussion Board:** Each day, you must check Discussion Board, read my comments for the class, and comment on your peers' work. You must also read my responses to your peers' work.

**Rewriting:** All good writing is, as the saying goes, rewriting. You should be polishing, honing, and revising your work throughout the course. Use assigned exercises to help you in the revision process. “Rewriting” will be considered very broadly as I might suggest an entirely new direction for a subsequent draft. “Rewriting” is not as simple as changing a word or two, and your grade will, in part, be determined by how seriously you undertake to rewrite.

### **Grading:**

In terms of your creative work, I, like you, will be using the checklists from each chapter as the guideline/rubric for my comments and grading. Please note that participation is a crucial component in this course and that your grade for the course is determined by the seriousness with which student-writers approach the assignments and the general consideration they show in meeting deadlines.

Creative Writing has its own subtleties as far as grading: I try to reserve “B” for those who have completed all work responsibly and in a timely manner. To receive below a “B,” a student must have handed in work late, not participated adequately in workshopping, not

completed assignments, or have committed serious grammatical issues of the sort usually reserved for English 110--“Writing Effective Prose.” An “A”--both in the final grade and on each completed work--is a more subjective sign of excellence that I reserve for those works that stand out in talent and execution. An “A” will always be somewhat of a judgment call. You may view your grades throughout the course on Grade Center.

**Poetry:** 25%

**Fiction:** 25%

**Journal:** 15%

**Participation** (including workshopping, responses to any Discussion Board questions, and timeliness of work): 35%

### **Online Introduction to Creative Writing**

#### **Winter Syllabus 2010-2011**

**Dr. Martha Witt**

#### **Wednesday, December 26<sup>th</sup>:**

Respond to Discussion question sent via e-mail and posted.

Journal Assignment #1: Exercise #2 under “kick-starts” on page 64.

Journal Assignment #2: Exercise #3 under “kick-starts” on page 64.

**\*\*\*Please note:** You MUST keep a journal. The poetry and fiction that you post on Discussion Board should NOT be your first draft. All drafts should be written and kept in your journal. You should have at least three drafts for each assignment

#### **Thursday, December 27<sup>th</sup>:**

Respond to question posted on Discussion Board.

Journal Assignment #3: Exercise #4 under “kick-starts” on page 64.

Journal Assignment #4: Exercise #7 under “kick-starts” on page 64.

#### **Friday, December 28<sup>th</sup>:**

Group #1 and Group #2 post poetry on Discussion Board. Poems can be on any topic and may be any length, but you must write 1-2 paragraphs discussing your poem in terms of two of the descriptors from one of the checklists in the Poetry Chapter: pgs. 26, 33, 37, 45, 49, 63. In other words, your aim is to think about the craft of your work and explain it to your readers (your peers and instructor).

Journal Assignment #5: Exercise #9 under “kick-starts” on page 64.

**Saturday, December 29<sup>th</sup>:** Respond to Group #1 and #2 poems posted on Discussion Board. Be sure to read the brief narratives written by the authors. **EVERYONE MUST RESPOND TO EVERYONE’S POEMS!** Your response should be one to two paragraphs in which you read your peers’ poems considering two of the descriptors from the checklists in the Poetry chapter. The descriptors should not be the same for every poem (though a bit of overlap is okay). You need not select the same descriptors selected by the authors.

I will be responding with the descriptors in mind, but my edits are to help the authors as they go into the rewriting stage. Yes, you will be re-writing your poems!

Journal Assignment #6: Exercise #10 under “kick-starts” on page 64.

**Sunday, December 30<sup>th</sup>:** Go over the week’s assignments and be sure that you have completed all seven of them. You should label and date each assignment clearly. You will send me the completed journal on January 14<sup>th</sup>.

Journal Assignment #7: Exercise #11 under “kick-starts” on page 64.

**Monday, December 31<sup>st</sup>: New Year’s Eve, no class.**

**Tuesday, January 1<sup>st</sup>: New Year’s Day.**

**Wednesday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

Group #3 and #4 post poetry on Discussion Board. Poems can be on any topic and may be any length, but you must write 1-2 paragraphs discussing your poem in terms of two of the descriptors from one of the checklists in the Poetry Chapter: pgs. 26, 33, 37, 45, 49, 63. In other words, your aim is to think about the craft of your work and explain it to your readers (your peers and instructor).

Read pages 67-91.

Journal Assignment #8: Write about one of the poems in the pages you read. Using two of the descriptors from our checklist, discuss this poem according to these descriptors in one-two paragraphs.

**Thursday, January 4<sup>th</sup>:**

Respond to Group #3 and #4 poems posted on Discussion Board. Be sure to read the brief narratives written by the authors. **EVERYONE MUST RESPOND TO EVERYONE'S POEMS!** Your response should be one to two paragraphs in which you read your peers' poems considering two of the descriptors from the checklists in the Poetry chapter. The descriptors should not be the same for every poem (though a bit of overlap is okay). You need not select the same descriptors selected by the authors.

I will be responding with the descriptors in mind, but my edits are to help the authors as they go into the rewriting stage.

**Friday, January 5<sup>th</sup>:**

Read pages 92-118.

Journal Assignment #9: Exercise #1 under "kick-starts" on page 136.

**Saturday, January 6<sup>th</sup>:**

Read pages 119-136.

**Groups #1 and #2: Post revised poems on Discussion Board.**

**In one to two paragraphs, discuss ways in which you changed your poem and why.**

**Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup>:**

Respond to Groups #1 and #2 revised poems on Discussion Board. Be sure to read the author's description of their edits of their work.

**Groups #3 and Groups #4 post revised poems.**

**In one to two paragraphs, discuss ways in which you changed your poem and why.**

**Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup>:**

**Tuesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>:**

Respond to Groups #3 and #4 revised poems on Discussion Board. Be sure to read the author's description of their edits of their work.

Read pages 139-159.

**Journal #9:** Use two descriptors from our checklist to discuss one of the stories in the Fiction Chapter.

**Wednesday, January 10<sup>th</sup>:**

Groups #1 and #2 post your short fiction on Discussion Board. Using two of our descriptors, in 1-2 paragraphs discuss your story in terms of these descriptors.

**Journal #10:** Exercise #2.

**Thursday, January 11<sup>th</sup>:**

Respond to Groups #1 and #2 fiction on Discussion Board. Be sure to read the author's description of the work.

**Journal #11:** Exercise #3.

**Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup>:**

Group #3 and #4 post your short fiction on Discussion Board. Using two of our descriptors, in 1-2 paragraphs discuss your story in terms of these descriptors.

**Journal #12:** Exercise #4.

**Saturday, January 13<sup>th</sup>:**

Respond to Groups #3 and #4 fiction on Discussion Board. Be sure to read the author's description of the work.

**Journal #13:** In one to two pages, write about how you would revise your story and why. What commentary was helpful? What edits would you make—be specific. More generally, what are your strengths as a fiction writer? What do you find more challenging?

**Sunday, January 14<sup>th</sup>:**

Send your journal to me via e-mail. Be sure that all exercises are dated and labeled i.e.: exercise #4, Kick-Start #7. Your drafts should be labeled as such; i.e.: “Funeral Blues” First Draft, 01/4/2011.

YOU MUST HAVE 13 EXERCISES LABELED IN YOUR JOURNAL. YOU SHOULD ALSO HAVE ALL FICTION AND POETRY DRAFTS— AT LEAST THREE OF EACH DRAFT.