

Syllabus for English 2310

Introduction to Creative Writing

Section / Days / Times:

2310-80

Room Assignment:

Online

Instructor: Martha Witt

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Course Mechanics:

2310-80 Introduction to Creative Writing is an online writing workshop course in which we will discuss and experiment with the principles, techniques, styles and forms of fiction and poetry. Through a combination of reading, writing, revision and discussion, students will become familiar with a variety of genres and will compose poems and stories of their own. Throughout the intensified winter semester, you will be doing many short assignments, each focusing on different aspects of the writing process and aimed at lending insight into which methods are most effective for you as a writer in generating and revising your own work. In the writing workshop portion of this class, students will receive and provide feedback on their peers' work on Discussion Board. You will also be asked to reflect upon your writing process as you integrate your own edits along with peer and professor critiques into draft revisions.

Course Objectives:

"Introduction to Creative Writing" has been designed to introduce students to the field of creative writing and give them 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 produce a portfolio of fiction and poetry showcasing various drafts, editing strategies, and reflections on process. Please note that drafting is a crucial component of the writing process and drafts of work submitted to be read by others should never be YOUR first draft but should represent at least a third or fourth draft that you will then be re-drafting (after commentary) for your final portfolio. In this course, we will discuss the recursive process of writing, the importance of drafting, and techniques for effective editing. Students will be encouraged to experiment, take risks, and explore new approaches to writing as well as to reading their own and others' work as they are introduced to different modes by masters of both forms.

Required Texts and Materials:

- *Creative Writing: An Introduction to Poetry and Fiction* by David Starkey, published by Bedford St Martin's Press (available at the bookstore).
- 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)).

Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, 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 work. 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 whether their strengths and inclinations point towards a particular mode of writing. Please note: Drama and Creative Non-Fiction are the other two genres included in our text, but these will be covered only cursorily this semester. The choice of genres simply reflects the professor's primary fields of study as well as the decision to give more profound consideration to two genres rather than a more superficial overview of all four. Much of what you will learn can be extrapolated and applied to Drama and Creative Non-Fiction, which we will discuss when appropriate.

Course Expectations:

Discussion Board: You will post a total of 20 journal responses (10 Poetry and 10 Fiction) on Discussion Board. The deadline for each journal response is midnight of the day it is assigned, and each one will become unavailable when the deadline has passed. These cannot be made up. Please use your best writing for all correspondence in this class. It is a writing class, and as such I expect to see work that is proofread carefully. Every email you send, all notes that you give to one another, and all Discussion Board posts should be edited before it is shared. Work should be spell-checked, capitalized and punctuated properly.

Portfolio: Please keep an electronic portfolio of your drafts. In your portfolio, you will submit the first draft that you submitted to class (along with commentary), the second draft (with commentary) and then the final draft. **Clearly label, date, and title each draft.** On the date listed in the syllabus, you will submit this portfolio under Blackboard's Assignments in a single Word document (titled with your last name followed by "portfolio" (SmithPORTFOLIO.doc, for example).

Workshopping: You will continue to hone your editorial skills in order to effectively respond to your own and to others' work both in class and on Discussion Board. The Starkey text provides checklists for each genre we will be studying. For example, in the Poetry section these checklists can be found on pages 26, 45, 49 & 63. We will use the checklists as well as descriptors that we develop through class discussions.

Editing: Whenever possible, comments and suggestions on all work should be made using the Microsoft Word "Track Changes" option under "Tools" in the Word Processing program.

Rewriting/Process Narratives: 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 your professors might suggest an entirely new direction for a subsequent draft. “Rewriting” is not as simple as changing a word or two, but nor is it a matter of following “directions” from peers or the professor. In fact, you will be asked at certain points to dialogue both orally and in writing about your work and your reflections on editorial feedback. Process Narratives, in which you will detail what edits you integrated into your revised work, what edits you rejected, what new directions you chose to explore, and why, will be most crucial in communicating your thinking and creative process.

Grading:

Creative Writing has its own subtleties as far as grading: as writers ourselves, we recognize and would like to stress the importance of creative thinking, experimentation, and willingness to take risks throughout the process. The Process Narrative will give us greater insight into your engagement with writing as process and your willingness to grapple with ideas and strategies introduced in this class. Discipline and deadlines are just as instrumental to producing writing as talent and creativity. Therefore, process, timeliness, participation, editorial feedback, and willingness to experiment and consider a variety of ideas are as important as natural talent and ability. Process Narratives, ability to articulate and dialogue about process as well as participation are crucial components in this course, and your grade is determined by the seriousness with which you approach the assignments and the general consideration you show in meeting deadlines.

We also recognize that there are many different standards for the great variety of fiction and poetry that you have encountered throughout your reading and writing lives both inside and outside the classroom. The aim of this course is to introduce you to the standards and conventions of *literary* fiction and poetry. Therefore, in terms of your creative work, we, like you, will be considering the checklists from each chapter as the guideline/rubric for our comments and grading.

Grading of Poetry Section

Ten Journal responses: 20%

Portfolio: 20%

Grading of Fiction Section

Ten Journal Responses (includes drafts of fiction): 20%

Portfolio: 20%

Participation (including responses to peers, Discussion Board, timeliness of work, preparedness for class, attendance): 20%