

ENG 203.1  
Fall 2011  
Mondays 12:05-2pm  
Helen C. White 6108

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-2 or by appt.

## Introduction to Creative Writing

### Course Description:

Welcome to creative writing! Because we will cover both fiction and poetry during the semester, and because we only meet once a week, this class will move quickly. Your attendance and participation are absolutely crucial to success. We are going to write a lot, read a lot, and have fun. You will develop the following: an understanding of contemporary short fiction and poetry, a vocabulary that allows you to discuss work in those genres, and experience with the workshop process. Some of that ground will be covered via lectures and reading assignments, but much of it will also be conveyed less formally during workshops. You will be expected to engage vigorously with your own work, your classmates' work, and a variety of published contemporary texts.

### Required Texts:

*The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction*, ed. Martone and Williford (available at A Room of One's Own, 307 West Johnson Street)  
One coursepack (available for purchase at Bob's Copy Shop, 208 N Charter St.)

### Requirements:

- Attendance at every class
- Weekly assignments (1 poem or ~2pg. fiction exercise)
- 1 workshop poem
- 1 8-11 pg. fiction piece
- ½ page (300-400 words) comments on each of your peers' workshop pieces, plus on-page edits
- Attendance and written response to at least two literary readings
- A 'review' of one book of poetry from the Gaus Collection in College Library (3 pages/1,100 words)
- Final portfolio containing revisions of three poems and your story

### Expectations:

That you complete all assignments, arrive on-time and prepared, every week. That you treat each other with respect. That your comments and responses are thoughtful and well-executed. Spelling counts!

### Assignments:

Your assignments should always be typed. Poetry should be single-spaced; fiction should be double-spaced (or 1.5-spaced). **If assignments are over a page, they should be stapled.** Your assignments should always

be proofread, and I reserve the right to lower your grade due to sloppy grammar. Take your work as a writer seriously in this course. Take pride in your writing. If you don't, it will show, and you'll be graded accordingly.

Comments on your peers' work should always be two paragraphs long, addressed to the author. Bring in two copies of each letter: one to give your classmate, and one to turn in to me so I can review them. These should not be formal, but should also not be informal. Emoticons are discouraged.

Workshops come up quickly since our meetings are limited to once a week. **The week before your workshop is scheduled, you should arrive to class with eighteen copies of your piece. If you are not prepared with copies of your workshop piece, or if you are absent on the day of your workshop, you will receive a zero for the unit.** If you must be absent the day you are to distribute your piece, drop it off to me early (or by proxy) so that I can distribute it for you.

I will not accept late work. If your peer comments are late, send them anyway to be fair to your classmates. **You will receive a zero on any and all late assignments**, and I will not give you feedback. By "late," I specifically include assignments that you have forgotten/failed to print, and promised to e-mail to me right after class. Zero. If you are honestly experiencing printer problems, e-mail them to me before class. Better yet, don't wait until the five minutes before class to print, especially for workshop pieces.

### **Formatting:**

In short, here's what I'd like to see: your assignments must be typed, and I won't require that they be in Times New Roman as long as they're in a similar font (Baskerville, Book Antiqua, Garamond, and Caslon are all acceptable alternatives). They may be between 10.5 and 12-pt. font (no smaller), and may be 1.5-spaced instead of double-spaced (for prose assignments--poetry is always single spaced unless it's a stylistic choice to do otherwise.)

### **Absences:**

You are allowed **one free absence**, and after that, I reserve the right to significantly lower your grade. **If you are absent three times during the semester, or if you miss your own workshop, you will automatically fail the course. If you are more than 20 minutes late, you take an absence for that day. Two severe tardies (10 minutes late) amount to one absence as well.** If possible, please let me know in advance if you are to be absent so we can work around it (religious holidays, etc.). **If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to e-mail me your assignment no later than the start of class time, and to get information regarding the next assignment from a classmate.** I will circulate an email list for this purpose. If you must take an unexpected absence, you may email me your assignment no later than class time, with one exception: **if you are absent on the day your workshop piece is due for distribution, you must drop off paper copies to me before class** (either in person, or by proxy if you are contagious/out-of-town). E-mail any peer comments directly to your peers by the end of class time, and cc me on them.

### **Conferences:**

Though not mandatory, I encourage you to schedule at least one conference with me to talk about your progress as a writer, your vision for your writing, and your revision process. You are always welcome to drop

by my office hours, or to make appointments with me outside office hours. I would be happy to talk about your writing assignments and/or make suggestions for additional reading or prompts.

**Workshop Etiquette:**

All of you are taking a risk exposing your writing to the criticism of your peers. The workshop can only function in a culture of mutual respect and friendliness. This means treating not only your classmates with respect, but their work as well. In workshop, you should always provide honest, constructive criticism, which neither denies nor exaggerates the works' shortcomings or accomplishments.

**Outside Readings:**

For the two literary readings that you attend, any university fiction or poetry reading is acceptable, as well as any reading at the Wisconsin Book Festival. If you are thinking of attending a different event, please run it by me first. Check these websites to find information on readings at the university and at the book festival:

UW Creative Writing Program blog: [uwcreativewriting.blogspot.com](http://uwcreativewriting.blogspot.com)

Wisconsin Book Festival: <http://www.wisconsinbookfestival.org/>

**Grading:**

40% Weekly exercises, critiques, and other assignments

30% Participation (includes attendance, class participation, and attending/responding to a reading.)

30% Final Portfolio

Because writing is a skill that requires patience and tuning, I will not put letter grades on individual assignments, but you will receive extensive comments on everything you turn in. If you have any questions about grading or about how you are doing in the course, please make an appointment with me and I'll be glad to discuss it with you.

*Syllabus subject to change at instructor's discretion. Students with questions or concerns about the course should contact the instructor or one of the Co-Directors of the Undergraduate Creative Writing Program (Ron Wallace and Jesse Lee Kercheval).*

**ENG 203.1 Intro to Creative Writing**  
**Course Schedule for Fall 2011:**

Date	In-Class	What's Due?
Sept. 12	Intros, Syllabus, Writing What You Know	
Sept. 19	<p><b>Concrete Detail.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> O'Brien, "The Things They Carried" (Scribner); Siken, "Saying Your Names"</p> <p>Workshop 101</p>	Poem.
Sept. 26	<p><b>Character.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> Packer, "Brownies" (Scribner); Stern, "Character"; Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"</p>	Flash Fiction #1. Group A Workshop Stories.
Oct. 3	<p><b>Setting.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> Barthelme "The School" (Scribner); Komunyakaa, "The Hanoi Market"</p> <p>Workshop Group A Stories.</p>	Comments for Group A. Group B Workshop Stories.
Oct. 10	<p><b>Plot, Story, Conflict.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> Butler, "Jealous Husband Returns in the Form of a Parrot" (Scribner); O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must Converge"</p> <p>Workshop Group B Stories.</p>	Flash Fiction #2. Comments for Group B. Group C Workshop Stories.
Oct. 17	<p><b>Narrative Voice.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> Banks, "Sarah Cole: A Type of Love Story" (Scribner); Stern, "Point of View," "Facade"; Brooks, "kitchenette building"; Cheever, "Reunion"</p> <p>Workshop Group C Stories.</p>	Comments for Group C. Group D Workshop Stories.
<p>(Note: The <b>Wisconsin Book Festival is October 19-23</b> here in Madison! There will be many readings going on in town, and this would be an excellent time to attend one or both of your required readings and turn in a written response to me.)</p>		
Oct. 24	<p><b>Dialogue.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> Sontag, "The Way We Live Now" (Scribner); Stern, "Dialogue," "Iceberg"; Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants"; Foer, "A Primer for the Punctuation of Heart Disease"; Komunyakaa, "Nude Interrogation"</p> <p>Workshop Group D Stories.</p>	Flash Fiction #3. Comments for Group D. Group E Workshop Stories.

Oct. 31	<p><b>Prose Poems.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> Kincaid, “Girl” (Scribner); Van Jordan, “With,” “From,” “To”; Lon Otto, “A Very Short Story”; Carolyn Forché, “The Colonel”; Paz, “Blue Bouquet”</p> <p>Workshop Group E Stories.</p>	<p>Dialogue Exercise.  Comments for Group E.  Group A Workshop Poems.</p>
Nov. 7	<p><b>Metaphor &amp; Simile.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> Kevin Brockmeier, “The Ceiling” (Scribner); Lucille Clifton, “forgiving my father”; Margaret Atwood, “You Fit Into Me”</p> <p>Workshop Group A Poems.</p>	<p>Prose Poem.  Comments on Group A.  Group B Workshop Poems.</p>
Nov. 14	<p><b>Sound.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> Mary Oliver “Sound”; Burroway, “Prosody”; Kinnell, “Blackberry Eating”; Brock-Broido, “Am Moor”; Day, “On What I Didn’t Hear You Say”</p> <p>Workshop Group B Poems.</p>	<p><b>Poetry Book Review.</b>  Metaphor/Simile Poem.  Comments on Group B.  Group C Poems for Workshop.</p>
Nov. 21	<p><b>Image, Diction, Cliché.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> Bishop, “The Fish”; Olds, “My Son the Man”; Neruda, “Ode to My Socks”; Doty, “Crêpe de Chine”</p> <p>Workshop Group C Poems.</p>	<p>Sound Poem.  Comments on Group C.  Group D Workshop Poems.</p>
Nov. 28	<p><b>Poetic Forms &amp; Revision.</b>  <i>Discuss:</i> Strand &amp; Boland, “Sonnet,” “Villanelle,” and “Sestina”; Bishop, “One Art”; Cassarino, “New York Sonnets”; Young, “True/False”; Miller Williams, “The Shrinking Lonesome Sestina”; Addonizio &amp; Laux, “The Energy of Revision”</p> <p>Workshop Group D Poems.</p>	<p>Form Poem.  Comments on Group D.  Group E Workshop Poem.</p>
Dec. 5	<p><b>Surrealism &amp; Experiments.</b> Addonizio and Laux, “Stop Making Sense: Dreams and Experiments”; Saunders, “Sea Oak” (Scribner); Tate, “It Happens Like This”; Harvey, “Setting the Table”</p> <p>Workshop Group E Poems.</p>	<p><b>FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE.</b>  Comments on Group E.</p>
Dec. 12	<p>Class reading!</p>	<p>Surrealism Experiment.</p>