

Creative Writing I, Spring 2011
Professor: Gord Sellar

Class Description:

This is a course in creative writing, covering the absolutely necessary basics in the writing process, from planning and generating ideas to the final stage of proofreading. It also will familiarize students with the standard problems faced by those attempting creative writing, including character creation and characterization, voice, style, plotting, voice, and narrative structure.

It is assumed that all students taking this course have successfully completed the required freshman level course *Understanding English: Reading & Writing* (or equivalent), and have adequate ability in English to begin study of this area. I will make a strong effort to alert those who seem unprepared for the course in time for them to enroll in the more basic course if necessary.

Course Content:

The content of the course will be tailored to the needs of the particular group of students. However, this course will proceed with regular (weekly) short writing assignments, as well as the production of one or two (or more, if the student wishes) major texts for peer critique. We will look at creative works of literature from various genres, and at student work, both reading for appreciation and for the development of critical skills. Students will give both written and spoken feedback to peers, present on a chosen or assigned creative work in class, and produce a portfolio of assignments and original creative work by the end of semester. Weekly reading and writing assignments must be completed before the date of their discussion.

Course Objectives:

The purpose of the course is equip students to write thoughtful, interesting, and creative texts, using English for their own self-expression. Students will, by the end of this class, have a good grasp of the skills needed for creative writing, have developed sensitivities to common problems among beginning writers, and will have of course developed their English through working in idioms, forms, and a context previously unexplored by them.

Class Activities:

Peer critique; group discussion & critique of classmates' work; occasional lectures; readings of written work aloud to the class; performing at a class reading; publishing work online or in a chapbook at the end of semester; keeping a daily blog in English.

Assessment:

- 25% - Participation/Critique
- 20% - Assignments & Written Homework (Handed In)
- 20% - Daily Blog
- 10% - Midterm Writing Project
- 10% - Final Writing Project
- 10% - Revisions (Portfolio)
- 5% - Department Events

Receiving a 0% in any of the above marks will result in an incomplete grade. Students must at least attempt all work in this course in order to complete the course.

Since students seem to feel that asking for higher grades for personal reasons is especially permissible with foreign teachers, please be advised that your final grade will remain final unless by some chance I have made a mistake in calculating it. Requests for the "gift" of a higher grade will be

considered an invitation to coldly, carefully reconsider the grade, and to lower one's final grade if it seems appropriate to do so.

Textbook:

TBA. Photocopies and online resources will be used for readings, and students must complete any assigned readings in a timely manner; failure to do so will be reflected in the student's participation grade.

My contact information:

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Class Website: <http://gordsclass.com>

Course Outline:

The following is somewhat vague and subject to changes at any time, but it should give you an idea of what I'm planning for you. As you can see, the course is separated into 4 larger sections.

This outline is subject to students' interests: for example, if the majority of the class is interested in poetry instead of prose, significant changes will result; if the majority of the class is interested in a specific style of fiction (detective fiction, fantasy, etc.) then small changes will be necessary to make the class useful to students. The following assumes that most students are interested primarily in prose fiction of a 'mainstream' type.

Part 0: Getting Started

Week 1: Intro & Paperwork

Week 2: Formatting Your Manuscripts, and Why Creative Writing?

Part 1: The Creative Process

Week 3: Characters & Characterization: The Flat Character & Critique Session

Week 4: Characters & Characterization: The Rounded Character & Critique Session

Week 5: Plotting the Plot & Critique Session

Part 2: How Stories Work

Week 6: Conflict & Dramatization & Critique Session

Week 7: Shovel on the Grief & Critique Session

Week 8: Midterm Conferences & Critique Session

Part 3: Making It Real

Week 9: The Telling Detail & Critique Session

Week 10: Researching for Your Fiction & Critique Session

Week 11: Showing vs. Telling & Critique Session

Part 4: Welcome to the Jungle: The Hard Stuff

Week 12: Making Characters Pop & Critique Session

Week 13: Autobiography and Transrealism & Critique Session

Week 14: The Subjective and the Objective & Critique Session

Week 15: Developing a Voice & Critique Session

Part 5: This Is The End

Week 16: Wrap-up, Final Crit and Final Project Due & (Possibly) Final Conferences