Introduction to Creative Writing
English 261.002
T/Th 9:30 – 10:45
Ferguson 177

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Office: LAN 258
Office Hours: MWF 12-1 pm, TTh 11-12:00 pm, & by appt.

“We’re trying to build birds, not birdhouses.” – Dean Young

Required texts:
Readings are posted on the class D2L site (or I will provide them to you). You will be responsible for retrieving, printing, reading, annotating, and bringing these materials to class. A good style guide and a dictionary are recommended.

Class Description:
Introduction to Creative Writing - An introduction to the writing of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction with opportunities for practice and peer workshop.

Program Learning Outcomes:
1. The student will demonstrate close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.
2. The student will employ techniques and strategies for crafting carefully composed, competent creative work in a variety of genres (fiction, poetry, literary non-fiction).
3. The student will articulate useful, critical editorial advice for peer writers.
4. The student will demonstrate strategic revision on completed creative work.
5. The student will compose and sustain a complete, polished manuscript of substance in the focus-genre.

Class format:
The basic structure of this class is simple: you will read and you will write. You’ll do a lot of each, but mostly the latter. We will be working with three genres: poetry, nonfiction, and fiction. The class will include readings and discussions, as well as in-class peer review (workshops).

You will all get a chance to receive feedback on your work from me and from your peers. You are welcome to come to my office anytime to talk about your writing or what we’re reading or anything related to writing or this class. This includes asking specific questions about your work-in-progress. However, I will not read and give feedback on your work before it is turned in.

Grading:
Your final grade will be composed of the following percentages:

- Discovery craft analysis - 10%
- Portfolio - 45%, comprised of:
  - Poems - 15%
  - Creative Nonfiction - 15%
  - Fiction - 15%
- Complete creative work - 20%
- Participation - 25%
Assignments:

Imitations and Exercises (Poetry, Nonfiction, Fiction)
You will write brief craft-focused exercises (or imitations of the works we’ve read, as assigned) in response to the ideas presented and discussed in class. You may have the chance to share these exercises with your peers. At the end of the semester, you will compile these into a portfolio. Your final portfolio must consist of at least 10 poems, 3 short nonfiction pieces, and 2 short fiction pieces; this should be a minimum of 20 pages.

Complete creative work
Along with your short exercises, you will write one original work (or collection of poems) in the genre you wish to focus. Though this may be inspired by the works we read in class, it is not an imitation. This should be 6-8 pages of prose, or approximately 5 poems. Again, these works are distinct from the imitations and the portfolio. These works will receive a more detailed workshop and should demonstrate your synthesis slash mastery of the various aspects of craft you’ve learned in the class. We will discuss these in greater detail in class.

Workshops
We will be having periodic peer-review workshops where we read and discuss your short exercises. You will all also turn in your full-length work for the entire class to read and workshop in the final weeks of the course. We will discuss workshopping in greater detail in class.

Critical Responses
For each of the pieces we workshop in class, you are expected to turn in an approximately one-page (350-500 words) critical response to the writer’s work. You will turn in two copies: one that goes to the writer, and one that I will collect (I prefer this via email, but will accept hardcopies). We will discuss the specifics of these critical responses when we begin the workshopping process.

Discovery craft analysis
I will loan you all an issue of a literary magazine. During the course of this semester, you must read a minimum of three works beyond those we will be discussing in class. I want you to discover one work, in the genre you wish to focus, that you will read closely and analyze and present on to the class. (Creative works discovered via other means, i.e. not in the journal you are given, will not count for the analysis.) These presentations will be approximately 10 minutes long. You can do this by focusing on one aspect of craft or multiple. This is not a summary of what you read or why you liked it; this is a substantive critical analysis of the particulars of a work you’ve discovered. The presentations will be at the end of the semester; however, I will be asking you along the way what works/writers you’re discovering and enjoying.

Participation
It’s a small class, so you must be ready to share your ideas and insights on all the assigned readings (you MUST do the readings). You are expected to come to class having carefully read (and annotated) the works assigned, and to actively engage in critical discussion of these works.

Attendance / Tardiness
Because most of what you’ll be learning you’ll be learning from class discussion and your classmates’ input and comments, it’s very important that everyone comes to class (in both body AND mind). If you are unable to make it to class for a legitimate reason, you must tell me at least 24 hours in advance. It is up to you to be responsible for all work and assignments you miss.
3 absences = no higher than a B
4 absences = no higher than a C
5 absences = no higher than a D

If you are absent more than 5 times (the equivalent of three weeks of class) I will fail you. If you are more than ten minutes late twice, that counts as an absence. If you show up to class without the text, without your work, or without being prepared for class discussion, that counts as an absence. This includes in-class naps, texting, disruption, etc.

Late work
Since we will be discussing your short and long creative works in class, it must be on time. Late exercises will impact your overall portfolio grade. Creative works that are not turned in on time for the workshop, as well as works whose authors do not show up for their workshop, will receive no higher than a C. I will fail work that is not turned in for the workshop at all.

Acceptable Student Behavior
A recent policy from the Provost’s Office states, “Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.”

Academic Integrity (A-9.1)
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work
because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Students with Disabilities
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Course Calendar (Subject to possible change)
I. Poetry

Week 1
Jan. 19 – Introductions, syllabus
21 – “Awful Poems,” awful poems

Week 2 – Image / Metaphor
26 – Petrosino, Beer, Roethke, Gibson
(UN)AWFUL POEMS DUE
28 – Moore, Harrison, Phillips, Larkin

Week 3 – Line
Feb. 2 – Corral, Kuipers, Lantz, Murillo
POEMS DUE (3)
4 – Bishop, Auden, Whitman, Pound, Williams

Week 4 – Form / Tale, teller, tone
9 – Villanelle, pantoum, sestina, ode, sonnet
POEMS DUE (3)
11 – Fell, Christle, Rancourt, Bishop

II. Nonfiction

Week 5 – To essay
16 – Klaus, “Toward a Poetics of the Essay;” Montaigne, from “Of Practice,” “Of Repentance,” “Of Vanity”
Blurring the Boundaries: Aldrich, Biss
POEMS DUE (3)
18 – John D’Agata, “2003”
BTB: Kimbell, Church

Week 6 – Form / Peronsa
23 – Monson, “Essay as Hack”
BTB: Monson
Next American Essay: Alexie
ESSAY EXERCISE DUE
25 – Levine, “Self on the Shelf”  
    *NAE*: Didion

**Week 7 – Memoir maps**
Mar. 1 – *BTB*: Moore  
    *NAE*: McPhee  
    **ESSAY EXERCISE DUE**
3 – Wallace, “Tennis, Trigonometry, Tornadoes”  
    *NAE*: Dillard

**III. Fiction**

**Week 8 – Character**
8 – Watkins, “The Archivist”  
    **ESSAY EXERCISE DUE**
10 – Johnson, “Emergency”

**Spring Break – NO CLASS – March 17/19**

**Week 9 – POV**
22 – Diaz, “How to Date a Brown Girl (Black Girl, White Girl, or Halfie)”  
    O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find”  
    **STORY EXERCISE DUE**
24 – NO CLASS (Easter Break)

**Week 10 – Setting**
31 – Cheever, “The Swimmer”  
    **STORY EXERCISE DUE**
Apr. 2 – Brockmeier, “The Ceiling”

**Week 11 – Structure**
7 – Barthelme, “The School”  
    Jackson, “The Lottery”
9 – On workshopping **WORKSHOP SUBMISSIONS DUE (6-8pp)**

**IV. Workshopping**

**Week 12**
14 – *Workshop* – 1 & 2, Discovery craft presentation 1 & 2
16 – *Workshop* – 3 & 4, Discovery craft presentation 3 & 4

**Week 13**
21 – *Workshop* – 5 & 6, Discovery craft presentation 5 & 6
23 – *Workshop* – 7 & 8, Discovery craft presentation 7 & 8

**Week 14**
28 – *Workshop* – 9 & 10, Discovery craft presentation 9 & 10
30 – *Workshop* – 11 & 12, Discovery craft presentation 11 & 12

**Week 15**
May 5 – *Workshop* – 13 & 14, Discovery craft presentation 13 & 14
7 – On revision and portfolio prep

**Week 16**
TBA – **Portfolios and all revisions due**