

ENGW 2300: Introduction to Creative Writing
Dr. Amy Clements, M.F.A., Ph.D.
Spring 2014

"Between my finger and my thumb/the squat pen rests; snug as a gun."
—SEAMUS HEANEY, "DIGGING"

"The society to which we belong seems to be dying or is already dead. . . . But the tradition of artists will continue no matter what form the society takes. And this is another reason to write: people need us, to mirror for them and for each other without distortion—not to look around and say, 'Look at yourselves, you idiots!' but to say, 'This is who we are.'"—ANNE LAMOTT, *BIRD BY BIRD*

Office Hours

Mondays from 11:15 to 12:15
Wednesdays from 1:45 to 2:45
Thursdays from 5:00 to 5:45

I am also readily available by appointment (including evening phone appointments), and I respond to email queries within 24 hours on weekdays. Feel free to communicate with me through the Facebook account I created for student use.

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Description from the Undergraduate Bulletin

This course provides an introduction to creative writing in multiple genres: fiction, poetry, playwriting, and/or creative nonfiction. It also provides an overview of and practice using the techniques involved in writing in these genres, a familiarity with the terminology of creative writing and the various genres, as well as exposure to and appreciation for published work in the various forms. Prerequisite: ENGW 1302 or FSTY 1313.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to

- * Identify the standard features of classic narrative development
- * Identify a variety of poetic forms
- * Produce polished fiction, poetry, and drama that anticipates the reader's experience
- * Develop a unique and authentic literary voice
- * Demonstrate familiarity with the current literary marketplace
- * Follow appropriate conventions for submitting work for publication

Required Reading

1. *Poetic Form: An Introduction* by David Caplan, published by Pearson
ISBN 978-0321198204

(Note: there is another book called *Poetic Form*, but it's published by Cambridge; make sure to use Pearson edition)

2. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* by Anne Lamott, published by Anchor Books

ISBN 978-0385480017

Tabulation of Final Grade

Three quizzes and one marketplace report: 20%

Short story and other fiction writing assignments: 20%

Poems: 20%

Scripts for two scenes: 20%

Final exam (heavily revised work submitted for publication): 20%

Peer editing will be required in order to earn Attendance Credit (AC) assignments. *If you don't participate in the assigned peer editing, you'll be counted as absent.*

Class Policies

• **Late projects will only be accepted if accompanied by written confirmation of a medical emergency.** Projects must be submitted to me before class time on the designated day. To prepare you for life after college, and to help you overcome writer's block, late work earns zero points.

• **You're allowed 3 absences without penalty. After that, 3 points per absence will be deducted from your final grade. If you miss more than 6 classes (i.e. 2 weeks), I may withdraw you from the class;** instructors have the authority to "unenroll" a student who abandons a course. This applies to absences for any reason—including but not limited to brief illnesses, family vacations, work schedules, and funerals. Save those 3 non-penalty absences for true emergencies, trying to avoid using them at all. You will only be granted additional absences penalty-free in cases of documented hospitalization.

The discussions that take place in class are valuable. If you're absent, it's your responsibility to get class announcements and notes from a classmate. Tests and essays only comprise a portion of the college experience. This attendance policy is one of the benefits of being admitted to a smaller, private university with a low student-to-professor ratio. The policy is designed to ensure that your diploma

reflects a true immersion in the material covered in your coursework, beyond what I'm able to measure by grading your tests and essays. Active participation in class is an important aspect of your professional development. *Note: if you are disruptive in class or do not participate in classroom projects, you will not earn attendance credit for that day.*

- **If you are absent on the day of a quiz**, you may schedule a re-take with me in my office ONCE. You may not do this more than once during the semester, regardless of the reason for your absence, so don't squander that makeup. Quiz dates are marked with an asterisk.

- **Check your St. Edward's email every weekday**. It's linked to Blackboard, alerting you when I post an announcement.

- **Turn off your phone before class**. If your phone addiction is severe, it will be necessary for me to keep the device at my desk until class has ended.

- **Cheating on tests and plagiarism on writing assignments = failing grade in the course**. Academic dishonesty is in conflict with the University's core values and with our fundamental purpose of pursuing knowledge. We will discuss this further in class, but be aware that I maintain a zero-tolerance approach to academic dishonesty.

- **Accommodations for Special Circumstances**

Upon request, St. Edward's provides appropriate instructional adjustments for qualified students with disabilities. If you have a medical, psychiatric, or learning disability and require accommodations in this class, please let us know early in the semester or as soon as you are eligible for accommodations. You will first need to provide documentation of your disability to the Student Disability Services office. All students in our courses must meet the same grading criteria, but I am happy to work with all students (whether diagnosed with a disability or not) to develop strategies for success.

- **Additional Resources**

St. Edward's provides a variety of services to support you in achieving academic success.

Computer Help: Located in Moody Hall or the Computer Help Desk 448-8443.

Tutoring/504 Forms: Academic Planning and Support is in Moody Hall 155 (<http://think.stedwards.edu/apss/>).

Help with anxiety or depression: The Counseling and Consultation Center in 110 Lady Bird Johnson Hall (<http://think.stedwards.edu/healthcounseling/>) is available for your emotional needs. Another resource is Campus Ministry in Mang House (<http://think.stedwards.edu/ministry/>).

Scoring Rubric for Creative Writing

A

The work reflects superior mastery of the principles of its genre and would be a strong candidate for publication. It avoids clichés, offers a fresh point of view, is free of sloppy mechanical errors, contains a carefully constructed plot and/or well-honed imagery, is precise and intriguing in its descriptive power, conveys an authentic voice, presents unique characters or images, meets the basic page-length requirements or other formatting requirements, and is introduced by a meaningful title. Its author gives the impression that the story was refined, polished, tweaked, and loved over a period of numerous editing sessions.

B

These works demonstrate a dedication to the craft and fulfill the essential requirements of the assignment. The plot or imagery is cohesive, the characters and/or descriptive elements are arresting, and the overall command of the language is strong. They represent a good start and considerable effort on the part of the writer. They read like second drafts that received a good dose of care.

C

A “C” story, poem, or scene is average. It has solid components but many grammatical or mechanical errors, is riddled with clichés, predictable outcomes, hackneyed phrases. On the other hand, it meets the formatting requirement, represents some attempt on the part of the author to develop a storyline or central concept, and contains occasional flourishes of insight and originality. This type of story reads like a rough draft that received about forty-five minutes of quick editing.

D

These are the abandoned literary orphans. Everything about the work conveys weakness: trite plot, trite characters, trite dialogue, unimaginative descriptions, and a general sense of mediocrity. These works read like rough drafts—the humble beginnings for much great literature—that were discarded by their careless authors and left to fend for themselves long before they were mature enough to adequately care for themselves. A good foster parent might have saved them, but unfortunately fiction writers have to care for their own literary offspring.

F

These works were either never written (and therefore not turned in), or they read as if they were written just a few minutes before class began.

Class Calendar

Tuesday, January 14: Welcome to class! We'll familiarize ourselves with the expectations of the course and with each other.

Thursday, January 16: In-class exercises.

* Tuesday, January 21: Quiz and discussion, Lorrie Moore's story "People Like That Are the Only People Here"

Thursday, January 23: Student story showcase (SSS)

* Tuesday, January 28: Quiz and discussion, complete book, *Bird by Bird*

Thursday, January 30: Student story showcase (SSS)

Tuesday, February 4: Student story showcase (SSS)

* **Thursday, February 6: Imperative Mood Exercise Due.**
In class, student story showcase (SSS)

Tuesday, February 11: Student story showcase (SSS)

Thursday, February 13: In-class fiction exercise.

Tuesday, February 18: Student story showcase (SSS)

Thursday, February 20: Student story showcase (SSS)

Tuesday, February 25: Student story showcase (SSS)

Thursday, February 27: Student story showcase (SSS)

Tuesday, March 4: In-class introduction to scripts. I'll supply the reading material in class.

Thursday, March 6: More scripts.

Week of March 10: Spring Break! Yay!

Tuesday, March 18: Performances: seven scripts, Group A.

Thursday, March 20: Performances: eight scripts, Group B.

Tuesday, March 25: Bring Caplan for introduction to metrical forms.

Thursday, March 27: Bring Caplan for in-class discussion of sonnets and the rondo.

*** Tuesday, April 1: MARKETPLACE REPORTS DUE. Also due: Sonnet, uploaded to Blackboard as all of your poetry assignments should be. Bring Caplan for in-class discussion of terza rima.**

Thursday, April 3: Due: Terza rima. Bring Caplan for in-class discussion of the villanelle.

Tuesday, April 8: Due: Villanelle. Bring Caplan for in-class discussion of Asian forms.
Thursday, April 10: Due: Asian forms.

Tuesday, April 15: For attendance credit, participate in the "I Wish I'd Written That" Free Verse assignment

Thursday, April 17: NO CLASS in observance of Maundy Thursday

Tuesday, April 22: In-class free verse exercise.

Thursday, April 24: Due: Free verse.

*** Tuesday, April 29: Quiz over prosody.**

Thursday, May 1: Final Student Readings. Final Exam Project due today.