**ENGL 218R - Creative Writing**

**Fall 2016**

**Section 009: 1013 JKB on T from 5:10 pm - 7:40 pm**

**Instructor Information**

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**Course Information**

*Be free at the hour of creation. What’s important is to let out the things you want to say, the things that want to come out, either because they hurt too much inside, all these bits of broken glass that cut you, or because they want to be shared, want to be contagious, want to give of themselves.* — Eduardo Galeano

If you participate actively in this class, you can expect to learn techniques and strategies for writing poems, personal essays, and short stories. You can also expect to learn (somewhat) what makes good writing good, what makes your own writing better, what makes for a successful beginning, an interesting middle, an emotional ending, etc. You will learn to critique others’ writings in order to help them improve, as you learn to accept constructive criticism to help you improve. And you will learn to read carefully, finding inspiration and examples (good and bad). As a result of all this, you will begin to find your own writing voice and gain confidence as a writer.

During this semester we will make a focused study of three genres of creative writing: fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry. You will write in each of these genres and you will have the opportunity to study a number of contemporary examples from each. However, a course like this can never hope to be exhaustive. Our goal this semester is to begin a conversation about why creative writing matters, what it can accomplish, and the best practices a writer can use to develop his or her skills.

**Materials**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Item | Price (new) | Price (used) |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| EmptyCoverPicture.png | [PRACTICE OF CREATIVE WRITING 2E](http://booklist.byu.edu/Items/ById/170881) *Required* by SELLERS, H | [72.70](http://booklist.byu.edu/Items/ById/170881) | [54.55](http://booklist.byu.edu/Items/ById/170881) |

**Learning Outcomes**

**Effort, Discipline, and Knowledge**

Demonstrate effort and discipline in their creative work as well as a knowledge of various creative genres and their conventions.

**Reading Literary Models Analytically**

Read literary models analytically, with an eye to authorial intention and technique and be able to articulate the same.

**Grammar, Punctuation, and Style**

Use correct grammar, punctuation, and an appropriate style in their writing.

**Successful Writing using Literary Models**

Write a successful poem, short story, or essay using literary models and following explicit instructions from the teacher.

**Revising, Editing, and Sharing**

Revise intelligently, edit carefully, and share one's work with others in the class.

**Participation Policy**

According to Henry James, “Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints.” Class participation is absolutely essential to the success of a creative writing workshop and community. Come prepared each day having read assigned readings and classmates’ work and having done your writing exercises. Then ask or answer questions and discuss energetically.

You will be graded upon your embodiment of this principle.

**Grading Policy**

The evaluation of good writing is, at least partially, subjective. This does not mean, however, that the evaluation is random or without rationale. There are many elements of good writing that distinguish it from poorly crafted or formulaic writing. For major genre assignments, I use a rubric given in class. As I evaluate your other writing assignments, I will ask the following questions:

1) Has the assignment been completed?

            Did you do what you were asked you to do?

2) Is it free of error?

            Do you avoid spelling and grammar mistakes?

            Is your formatting consistent and appropriate for the genre?

            Have you proofread your writing rigorously?

3) Is the writing attentive to language?

            Do you find the right word?

            Do you avoid tired or worn expressions?

            Does the language enhance, rather than simply relay, the ideas of your writing?

4) Does the writing challenge the writer and the reader?

            Do you attempt to follow the advice of Ezra Pound who said that the artist must always “make it new” and that "[a]ny work of art which is not a beginning, an invention, a discovery is of little worth.”

**Printing Policy**

You will print a lot in this class. The tactile experience of writing is different than interacting with text on a screen. This will help you catch errors, but will also help peers workshop and me grade more interactively. Therefore, print all assignments unless directed otherwise. If you do not print your assignment and turn it in electronically, you are not guaranteed to receive feedback.

**Attendance Policy**

You should come to class every day. But since life is unpredictable, you may miss class once without penalty. (You are still required to turn in any work due, to me or to your classmates, and to get any classmates’ work that you have to read for the next class.) After that, you will lose three points for every absence. Three tardies also accumulate to the equivalent of one absence.

**Assignments**

**Creative Philosophy**

Your task is to draft a one-page paper that addresses your position and beliefs about the nature of creativity. It doesn't have to be certain or argumentative; it can be exploratory and hopeful. You might address questions like: Where does creativity come from? Can it be taught? Are people born with it? Do people "lose" creativity? Can creativity be developed, and if so, how?

**Weekly Writing Exercises (“WE”; 10 total)**

Each week you will complete a writing exercise designed to help you focus on a specific aspect of writing in the genre assigned. These are graded according to the Grading Policy above.

**Genre Pieces (Poem, Short Story, Essay)**

At the end of each major unit, you will turn in a polished piece from the genre. This should be a representation of your best work after completing this unit. Follow the guidelines on the rubric, and apply what you’ve learned from class discussions, exercises, workshop, readings, etc. Do not turn in work you have turned in for a previous assignment unless it is heavily revised.

**Writer's Notebook (turned in three times)**

The first rule to becoming a writer is to **write REGULARLY**. To do this it is necessary to set up a time during each day when you can sit down somewhere and write for a given period of time. Of course the longer that time is the better. But all of us have lives to lead with a variety of responsibilities to fulfill. You should set up at least a twenty-minute block of time when you can write, regardless of what you will be writing. Many writers prefer the early morning hours as the best time to do this. Writers are notorious for getting up early and working before their minds and their days become cluttered with the mundane events and responsibilities of life insinuate themselves. There are, however, some notorious night owls who preferred late night and even the very early morning hours (Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel,* and Marcel Proust, *Rememberance of Things Past*, are two classic Twentieth Century masters).

Many of us aren't sure what we should be writing about during that space we set up to write in every day. At first we might have a good idea for a poem, or a few phrases that might fit into a song, or maybe some interesting conversation that we think could be part of a story, novel, or play, but the next day or the day after we might not have such a good idea. What should we do then? This is where keeping a journal comes in.

You should designate a thin notebook as your journal for this class. Choose a style that you can easily carry with you at all times. Recognize unusual situations and events, observe people, listen to bits of conversation, try to understand the emotional responses of others, notice settings where you find yourself (both natural and constructed), and be aware of your own thoughts, discoveries, and insights. Jot down notes to yourself about these observations because they will be the source of creative work. In this notebook also keep a file of words and that interest you, phrases that surprise you, character names and descriptions, etc. Write down ideas for poems, stories, and essays.

You will also use this journal for reading responses and possibly keep track of what you have read and your thoughts on your reading for your Outside Reading and Report. You will turn in this journal periodically throughout the semester.

**English Reading Series**

BYU offers an incredible resource to students and the surrounding learning community: the English Reading Series. Every week in Fall and Winter semesters, renowned writers of various genres are invited to BYU campus to read their work, respond to questions, and meet attendees after the reading. BYU has one of the strongest reading series in the country.  During recent semesters, we’ve enjoyed visits from Pulitzer prize winners among many others. ERS is held Fridays at noon in the HBLL auditorium.

To encourage you to take advantage of this terrific opportunity and thus gain a better understanding of contemporary literature, you are required to attend the English Reading Series three times. You will turn in a 250-word substantive response (well thought-out, reflecting on elements we've learned in class, techniques (with examples) you admire, personal connections and insights, etc.) to each reading. The Reading Series is on Fridays at noon in the HBLL auditorium.

If you are unable to attend the readings at noon, you can watch the readings online at http://ers.byu.edu/.

**Creative Philosophy Revisited**

At the close of this introduction to creative writing, revisit your original thoughts about your creative philosophy. Has it changed? How? What pieces/discussions/theorists have influenced your understanding?

Synthesize your experience in the class and give your philosophy of the value of personal and creative writing. Basically, answer the following question: What did you learn about creative writing, yourself, and human culture during this semester? What power does creative writing and the arts in general have on human culture? Where does that power come from? How can we harness that power? To what ends?

**Final**

The final exam will be a substantive revision of a piece you worked on during the semester. You will submit on LS this final revision along with the original draft and a one-page self-analysis detailing what you changed and why. Although your goal should be to make your piece better than the earlier draft, the primary objective of this assignment is to demonstrate your growth as a writer. To that end, your self-analysis should be a rigorous investigation of the changes you made (or chose not to make), and should demonstrate the careful consideration you gave to the revision process.

**Outside Reading & Report**

Read during the term at least 200 pages of creative writing in any genre (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama) beyond the assigned readings in class. Choose something you haven’t read before. You may ask us for guidance in finding magazines or authors that might suit you. By semester’s end, turn in a 500-word report/response to the reading you did, plus a list of what you read and a statement that you followed the requirements of the assignment.

**Workshop**

Our primary focus in this class will be on critiquing and revising our own creative work. One class period before we are scheduled to workshop your piece, bring in double-sided, stapled copies of it for every student and instructor in the class. Before class, every student will read your work, make marginal and intralinear notes on it (regarding such large-scale things as characterization, believability, self-awareness, and beauty, as well as small-scale mechanical issues of grammar and usage), and write a 150-word response noting strengths and suggesting improvements. During class, you will take copious notes while the rest of us discuss your work. This will give you insight into how a group of readers has enjoyed and understood your writing. From there, you will have some guidelines for revision.

Because the workshop is inherently critical, I would like to suggest that *critical* does not mean *mean*. Readers should be kind-hearted and encouraging, but not blind to faults. On the receiving side, if we really want to improve, we have to thicken our skins, quash our egos, and accept others’ opinions of our work. There is such a thing as good writing, and you can improve.

**Student Selection**

In addition to pieces selected by me, you will also be expected to use the library's resources to discover and select a piece you deem worthy of your classmates' attention. You will lead a discussion on your selection(s) in which you will defend your choice in terms of aesthetic and technical principles we discuss in class.

NOTE: This is not a book report. This is a discussion of artistic elements and execution. You should draw from your Outside Reading materials to select your piece, not simply sharing a favorite book from childhood.

**Writing Community Contribution**

According to Henry James, “Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints.” Class participation is absolutely essential to the success of a creative writing workshop and community. Come prepared each day having read assigned readings and classmates’ work and having done your writing exercises. Then ask or answer questions and discuss energetically.   
  
This assignment is graded upon your embodiment of this principle. This category is also influenced by your attendance.

**Point Breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Categories** | **Percent of Grade** |
| Major Assignments | 64.29% |
| Writing Exercises | 14.29% |
| Additional Assignments | 21.43% |

**University Policies**

**Honor Code**

In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university's expectation, and every instructor's expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

**Sexual Misconduct**

As required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the university prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in its education programs or activities. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment-including sexual violence-committed by or against students, university employees, and visitors to campus. As outlined in university policy, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are considered forms of "Sexual Misconduct" prohibited by the university.  
  
University policy requires any university employee in a teaching, managerial, or supervisory role to report incidents of sexual misconduct that come to their attention through various forms including face-to-face conversation, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. If you encounter sexual misconduct, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at t9coordinator@byu.edu or 801-422-2130 or Ethics Point at <https://titleix.byu.edu/report> or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours). Additional information about Title IX and resources available to you can be found at <http://titleix.byu.edu>.

**Student Disability**

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (UAC), 2170 WSC or 422-2767. Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified, documented disabilities. The UAC can also assess students for learning, attention, and emotional concerns. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures by contacting the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-285 ASB.