

ENGL 200: CREATIVE WRITING, VOICE, AND COMMUNITY

Description

Creative Writing, Voice, and Community is an introduction to writing as a form of social engagement. By examining creative work by established writers, we will discover formal strategies we can put to use in creative assignments. Both the outside texts and your writing assignments are geared toward helping you to explore and assert your own identities and aesthetic values. The class will be divided into three units:

- **Self-discovery and Questioning Known Values:** In this unit, we will examine texts in which authors question known values, and we will explore how through the process of writing we can come to both understand and express what we believe and what society wants us to believe about ourselves.
- **Writing a Community:** Texts will look at the rituals and values that define communities, highlighting the many different roles within those communities. We'll think of the way behavioral norms define different kinds of communities, and many of our texts will urge us to consider the risk and value of stepping outside of norms.
- **The Value Of Attention/What We Value Through Attention:** In this unit, we'll start with the premise that how we direct our attention is an expression of both values and aesthetics. Some of the texts we look at will focus attention on particular images in the everyday world, while others will look at the strangeness of language itself and the processes of thought and memory. And we'll consider how "attention" itself is a value.

In addition to reading and analyzing outside texts and creating poems and stories of our own, we will become accustomed to describing and helping further the development of our classmates' writing, the ultimate goal being the creation of a workshop community in which everyone feels able to take risks in their writing.

Catalog Description:

Workshop course on creative writing with a focus on values, ethics, and social responsibility.

I. Learning Outcomes

Upon successfully completing the course, students will be able to:

- identify the source and function of values.
- create works of literary art that demonstrate proficiency in fiction and poetry.
- demonstrate an understanding of the importance of values, ethics, and social responsibility for the self and for contemporary society.
- reflect on how values shape personal and community ethics and decision making.
- analyze works of literary art with regard to style, period, and composition.
- build an in-class writing community and workshop that fosters personal creative expression.

Carolina Core Outcome

VSR - Students will be able to examine different kinds of social and personal values, analyzing the ways in which these are manifested in communities as well as individual lives.

AIU - Students will be able to create or interpret literary, visual or performing arts.

II. Class Procedures

Turning in Creative Work

For each unit, we will write and workshop two pieces that result from specific assignments. For each assignment, we will establish a set of guidelines for what the piece must do, contain, and address. You will “workshop” each piece with your classmates before turning them into me in order to find ways to revise the writing and to see if you are effectively meeting the requirements for the piece. We will have two types of assignment for each unit. The first piece for each unit we will workshop in groups of four, so you should bring four typed copies to class that day. The second piece for each unit we will workshop in groups of eight, and you should bring eight copies to class and we will workshop over two days.

Class Discussions

To receive good marks in participation, you should join the discussion often and with the aim of furthering the main goal of a workshop discussion: helping a writer see what they’ve written, and offering advice for how they might improve that writing. People who never talk, or who talk often but without that “workshop” goal in mind will not receive good participation grades.

A creative writing workshop is not like most other classes. People, rightfully, feel strongly about their work and discussions can occasionally become emotionally charged. Bear this in mind and remember that the goal is always to make suggestions that are useful to the poet or writer

Grading Creative Work

I will not grade the aesthetic quality of your writing, but I will grade your writing based on how well it meets the goals and requirements of each assignment.

III. Course Requirements

Reaction papers:

Two reaction papers will also be due throughout the semester (see schedule). These papers should be typed and 1-2 pages in length. I’d like you to use these papers as a place to think through some element of the course that, for whatever reason, matters to you as a writer and as a person—it can be a piece of writing from a class handout, the experience of doing an in-class writing exercise, some aspect of the workshop process itself, or any issue or value raised in class. These papers can be an opportunity to challenge an idea, to apply a concept we’ve discussed to your own writing experience, to figure out why a certain piece of writing affected you in a powerful way, or simply to talk about what you see happening in a particular author’s work—your thoughts on what this author thinks a poem or story should do or something in their work which you find compelling or useful. This is a free-form assignment, and there’s no need for the formal structure of a typical academic paper, but I’d still like to see some rigorous thought and examples to back up your ideas when necessary. Raise difficult questions, pose potential answers, look closely at something, find complexity within a seemingly simple issue. Whatever you choose to discuss in these papers must pertain to your experience as a writer and must address some aspect of the course. Do not hand in a paper that merely analyzes a poem or story; instead, draw a connection between the text you’re discussing and your own growth as a writer and as a member of a writing community.

Final Portfolio

At the end of the semester, you'll turn in six creative pieces and a "manifesto." When you look at the aesthetic and social values of the various authors we've encountered over the course of the semester, and then turn to the writing you've produced, what aesthetic and social values do you hold? Considering our classroom a community of writers, how do your values fit in (or not) with the values of that community? Don't be limited to what you've written, but think more broadly about how you would like to write. Consider as well what subjects and issues you as a writer in a larger world should be taking up.

IV. Absences

Let me know ahead of time if you are going to miss workshop. Please try not to be absent, and if you are, please bring responses for the writers who were up in the class you missed. The University allows three absences before your grade is affected, and counts excused and unexcused absences the same. Your fourth and fifth absence will affect your grade, and your sixth absence will mean your grade will become an F.

V. Grading

Assignments 50%

Final Portfolio 20%

Workshop Participation 20%

Reaction Papers 10%

Grading Scale:

A+ = 97-100%

A = 90-96%

B+ = 87-89%

B = 80-86%

C+ = 77-79%

C = 70-76%

D+ = 67-69%

D = 60-66%

F = 0-59% (A missing assignment will count as a zero; work on any course requirement that is incomplete or inadequate enough to earn an "F" will receive a numerical percentage grade)

Academic Integrity

You are expected to know, and adhere to, the university's policies on academic honesty, and to **ask** if you think you might be at risk of violating them. The English Department's First-Year English website, the reference librarians at Thomas Cooper, and the consultants at the Writing Center can answer questions or concerns about citation and/or receiving help on your assignments. **Plagiarism will result in a grade of F for the course (not just the assignment, even if it's a small one), and I will refer any instance of plagiarism to the Office of Academic Integrity for investigation and disciplinary action.**

Disability Accommodations

Students who require disability accommodations in order to participate fully in this course should consult the Student Disability Resource Center.

VI. Schedule

August 20 Intro to Class

August 25 UNIT ONE: Self-Discovery and Questioning Known Values

Readings: (Self-Discovery) Mark Levine “Work Song,” Kara Candito “Whistleblower”

Begin Assignment 1: (Self-Discovery) Name Poem

August 27 Workshop Assignment 1: Name Poem
(Bring Four Copies Assignment 1 First Draft)

September 1 **Assignment 1 Final Draft Due In Class**

Reading: (Social justice) June Jordan “Poem About My Rights”

Begin Assignment 2: Questioning a Value Poem

September 3 Reading: (Family) Robert Hayden “Those Winter Sundays,” Larry Levis “Family Romance,” Jon Anderson “Tucson: a Poem About Wood”

September 8 Reading: (Patriotism) Adrienne Rich “What Kind of Times Are These,” Lorenzo Thomas “Inauguration,” Allen Ginsberg, “America”

September 10 Reading: (Unexpected Values) Andrew Marvell “To His Coy Mistress,” Timothy Donnelly “To His Debt,” “To His Detriment”

September 15 Workshop Assignment 2: Questioning a Value Poem

September 17 Workshop Assignment 2: Questioning a Value Poem

September 22 UNIT TWO: Writing a Community

Assignment 2 Final Draft Due In Class

Reading (Listing a Community): Francine Harris: “what you’d find buried in the dirt under Charles F. Kettering Sr. High School (Detroit, Michigan)”

Begin Assignment 3: what you’d find buried under [particular location important to a community of which I am a member (or not a member)]

September 24 Workshop Assignment 3: what you’d find buried...

September 29 **Assignment 3 Final Draft Due In Class**

October 1 Reading (Outside the Community): James Baldwin “Sonny’s Blues”

Begin Assignment 4: Writing Yourself In And Out Of a Community

October 6 Reading (Labor And Community): Richard Hugo “Degrees of Gray In Phillipsburg,” James Wright “Autumn Begins In Martin’s Ferry,” Phillip Levine “What Work Is”

Reaction Paper 1 Due In Class

October 8 Reading (Microaggression, Race, and Community): Claudia Rankine excerpts from *Citizen*

October 13 Reading (The Rules Of Community): Junot Diaz, “How To Date a Brown Girl (black girl, white girl, or halfie)”

October 15 Workshop Assignment 4: Writing Yourself In And Out Of a Community

October 20 Workshop Assignment 4: Writing Yourself In And Out Of a Community

October 27 UNIT THREE: Attention As Value/What We Value Through Attention

Assignment 4 Final Draft Due In Class

Reading (Attention As Self/Critical Reading): Joe Brainard, excerpts from *I Remember*, Joan Retallack excerpts from *The Poethical Wager*

Begin Assignment 5: I Remember List Poem

October 29 Workshop Assignment 5: I Remember List Poem

November 3 Reading (Attention As Seeing/Critical Reading): James Schuyler “February,” Frank O’Hara “The Day Lady Died,” Andrew Epstein excerpts from *Attention Equals Life*

Assignment 5 Final Draft Due In Class

Begin Assignment 6: Walking Around Poem

November 5 Reading (Attention In the Everyday/Critical Reading): Bernadette Mayer, excerpt from *A Midwinter Day*, Lyn Hejinian “The Rejection of Closure”

November 10 Reading (Attention As Remembering): Marcel Proust, excerpt from *Swann’s Way*

Reaction Paper 2 Due In Class

November 12 Reading (When We Look Away): Solmaz Sharif, excerpts from *Look*

November 17 Workshop Assignment 6: Walking Around Poem

November 19 Workshop Assignment 6: Walking Around Poem

November 24 **Assignment 6 Final Draft Due In Class**

December 1 Final Assignment: Portfolio and Manifesto

Reading: Various Manifestos and Poetics Statements

December 3 Manifesto Workshop

December 10 – 9:00 AM **Final Portfolio and Manifesto Due** You can turn it in early.