ENGL 3362.001
Techniques of Creative Writing

Fall 2011

Instructor: Dr. Vanessa Jackson.
Office: Faculty Center 286.
Office Hours: Tues, Thurs: 10-11:00 & 12:30-2:00.
Please let me know if you need an appointment at a different time.
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Course Description

This course is designed as an introduction to the discipline and art of creative writing and is a core course for the Minor in Creative Writing. The course will focus on the techniques involved in the writing of short fiction and poetry. During the semester, the class will explore a range of techniques and tools used by writers of literature; you will try these techniques yourself, and you will study poems and stories to see how the techniques have been used by published authors.

Course Objectives

• to introduce you to the terminology and to give you practical experience in using as wide a range as possible of the creative writer’s “tools”;
• to expose you to a broad and eclectic selection of modern and contemporary poetry and fiction, i.e., to what is being written in your own time;
• to allow you to experiment, stretch, and take risks with your writing through a series of exercises not all of which will “work” or result in brilliant, finished pieces;
• to encourage and enable you to produce at least one or two brilliant, finished pieces during the semester that will surprise you;
• to prepare you for entry into ENGL 4330 & 4335 or any other creative writing workshop.

Student Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to
• discuss works of short fiction and of poetry, using appropriate critical terminology;
• demonstrate knowledge of various literary techniques through written exercises that employ these techniques;
• write a work of short fiction and a poem, employing appropriate and varied techniques from the range available to the “creative” writer.
Texts & Materials


Course Requirements

The first half of the semester will concentrate on fiction, the second half on poetry. At the end of each of these sections, you will hand in a portfolio of work, which will be graded.

The Fiction Portfolio will contain

- all the assigned exercises (both in and out of class), placed in the order in which they were assigned
- a minimum of two short stories, with all their drafts
- any other stories, or beginnings of stories, that you have written during this period of time
- your notes on the assigned readings
- a self-evaluative cover letter that addresses the work you have done and the progress you feel you have made in this section of the course

The Poetry Portfolio will contain

- all the assigned exercises (both in and out of class), placed in the order in which they were assigned
- a minimum of three poems, with all their drafts
- any other poems you have written during this time, also with all drafts
- your notes on the assigned readings
- any stories that you have revised since your fiction portfolio was graded
- a self-evaluative cover letter that addresses the work you have done and the progress you feel you have made in this section of the course

Both portfolios will be graded on their evidence of the work you have put into the course, the results you have achieved, and on the self-assessment of your work and your progress.

The Writing Exercises will not be formally graded, but will be checked off as done or not done. However, as your portfolios will be partially graded on how much work you have put into the course, skimpily done or missing exercises will inevitably count against you. You should put as much into these as you can, not just for the grade but for your own forward progress as a writer.

I suggest you try keeping a writer’s notebook (or journal or day book, whatever you want to call it), in which to store ideas, snippets, observations, useful quotes, images, musings, etc. This might be a leather-bound book, a spiral notebook, pocket note-cards, or a computer file—it’s entirely up to you. I am not making this mandatory, but I encourage you to experiment and to place the notebook in your portfolios when it comes time for grading as further proof of your commitment to the course and to your writing.
Attendance

It is very unwise to miss any class in this course, as some of your assignments will be done during class. However, if you do have an emergency or if you are sick, please let me know so that I can make provisions for you. I will allow you to miss two classes with no questions asked and no absence penalties, but each class missed after that without an excellent excuse will result in two points being deducted from your final grade.

Plagiarism of any kind will result in an automatic ‘F’ for the class.

Grading Policy

You will be graded on your work in this course as follows

- Fiction portfolio 50%
- Poetry portfolio 50%

Points may also be taken off for lack of attendance (see above).

Course grading scale (with absolutely no exceptions):

100-90 = A
89-80 = B
79-70 = C
69-60 = D
Below 60 = F
Further University/College Information:

*Notice to Students with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, the student’s assigned faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

*** Grade Appeal Process. As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**** Reminder to English Majors: As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres that they have completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should keep a copy of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative and report writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.
ENGL 3362—Techniques of Creative Writing

SYLLABUS

Fall 2011

Week 1
Thurs 25 Aug  Introduction to course

Assignment for next class
Read  *The Graceful Lie*, Ch 1 (1)
Do  Petracca’s three-freewrite exercise on p 27

Week 2
Tues 30 Aug  Round-table discussion about why we’re all here
Introduction to fiction

Assignment for next class
Read  *GL* Ch 2 (28)
Do  one of the journal prompts on pp 62-63

Thurs 1 Sep  First Things—time, place, tools for writing

Assignment for next class
Read  *GL* Ch 3 (65)
      Petracca: “Cockroach Miracles, Solvent Dreams” (74)
Do  Ex #1 (100) – bring the ad you used to the next class

Week 3
Tues 6 Sep  Starting to write stories

Assignment for next class
Read  *GL* Ch 4 (110)
      Houston: “Selway” (151)
Do  the Points to Consider about “Selway” (163-4)
Read  Ex #1 (164), and do its 1st half: find a newspaper story to bring to the next class

Thurs 8 Sep  Plot

Assignment for next class
Do  the 2nd half of Ex #1 (164), using the story you chose in class
**Week 4**

**Tues 13 Sep**  
Plot, cont.  
Share the stories generated from the exercise

**Assignment for next class**
- **Read**  
  *GL* Ch 5 (165)  
  Steinbeck: “The Chrysanthemums” (191)
- **Do**  
  Points #1 & 4 (199-200)

**Thurs 15 Sep**  
Characterization, dialogue, narration

**Assignment for next class**
- **Write**  
  a dialogue between two characters that is revelatory about at least one of them

**Week 5**

**Tues 20 Sep**  
Showing characters, cont.  
Share dialogue pieces

**Assignment for next class**
- **Read**  
  *GL* Ch 6 (202)  
  Durrell: From *Justine* (215)
- **Do**  
  Point #1 (222)

**Thurs 22 Sep**  
Showing vs. telling: using figurative language

**Assignment for next class**
- **Do**  
  Ex #3 (235)

**Week 6**

**Tues 27 Sep**  
Setting

**Assignment for next class**
- **Write**  
  a short piece (or the start of a longer piece) deliberately using setting to reveal character and/or mood—you may develop the previous exercise if you wish, or start a new piece

**Thurs 29 Sep**  
Showing through setting, cont.  
Share exercise pieces

**Assignment for next class**
- **Read**  
  Kostelanetz: “Retrospect on My Fictions” (257)  
  Moore: “How To Be a Writer” (Handout)
**Week 7**

**Tues 4 Oct**  
Breaking the rules: meta- and other fictions

**Assignment for next class**  
Read  
*GL* Ch 7 (236-45)  
Paley: “A Conversation with My Father” (252)  
Do  
Points #2 & 3

**Thurs 6 Oct**  
Rewriting/revising fiction

**Assignment for next class**  
Pick  
one of the pieces you’ve written this semester  
and prepare two typed copies for the next class

**Week 8**

**Tues 11 Oct**  
Small-group, peer evaluation of stories

**Assignment for next class**  
Work  
on revising stories for your portfolio

**Thurs 13 Oct**  
**FICTION PORTFOLIO DUE**

**Week 9**

**Tues 18 Oct**  
Introduction to poetry

**Assignment for next class**  
Read  
*Writing Poems*, Ch 1, “Starting Out” (1)  
Nye: “Famous” (16)  
De Luna: “Bent to the Earth” (19)  
Do  
Exercise #2 (14)  
(I’ll bring the scissors, glue, etc.)

**Thurs 20 Oct**  
Discuss reading and poems  
Work with exercise #2

**Assignment for next class**  
Read  
*WP* Ch 2, “Verse” (26)  
Stafford: “Traveling through the Dark” (38)  
Kizer: “Thrall” (41)  
Do  
Ex #5 or #6 (38)

**Week 10**

**Tues 25 Oct**  
Line, form, and balance  
Share exercises

**Assignment for next class**  
Read  
*WP* Ch 10 (207)  
Do  
Ex #5 (224)
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs 27 Oct</td>
<td>How to find poems&lt;br&gt;<strong>Assignment for next class</strong>&lt;br&gt;Go try it! (Look at ex #2 or #3 on p. 37 or #2 on p. 129 or #1 on p. 223 . . .)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tues 1 Nov</strong> Subject matter&lt;br&gt;<strong>Assignment for next class</strong>&lt;br&gt;Read <em>WP</em> Ch 6 (113)&lt;br&gt;<strong>Thurs 3 Nov</strong> Metaphor &amp; Figurative Language&lt;br&gt;<strong>Assignment for next class</strong>&lt;br&gt;Read <em>WP</em> Ch 7 (136)&lt;br&gt;Do Ex #1 or #3 (152)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 12</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tues 8 Nov</strong> Making lines in poetry – 1&lt;br&gt;<strong>Assignment for next class</strong>&lt;br&gt;Read <em>WP</em> Ch 3 (44)&lt;br&gt;Do Ex #1 or #3 (61-62)&lt;br&gt;<strong>Thurs 10 Nov</strong> Making lines in poetry – 2&lt;br&gt;<strong>Assignment for next class</strong>&lt;br&gt;Read <em>WP</em> Ch 4 (69)&lt;br&gt;Do Ex #1 (80-81) or #3 (81)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tues 15 Nov</strong> Sounds in poetry&lt;br&gt;<strong>Assignment for next class</strong>&lt;br&gt;Read <em>WP</em> Ch 5 (89)&lt;br&gt;Do Ex #3 (103)&lt;br&gt;<strong>Thurs 17 Nov</strong> Voice, persona, and point-of-view in poetry&lt;br&gt;<strong>Assignment for next class</strong>&lt;br&gt;Read <em>WP</em> Ch 8 (160)&lt;br&gt;Do Ex #1 (174) (feel free to add to the list) or #5 (175)</td>
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Week 14
Tues 22 Nov  Revising poetry

Assignment for next class
Read WP Ch 11 (231)
Choose a poem to bring to the next class—either the one you worked on for today or another one. Type it up and make two copies of it to bring to the next class.

Thurs 24 Nov  Thanksgiving—no class

Week 15
Tues 29 Nov  Small-group, peer evaluation of the poems

Assignment for next class
Read WP Ch 12 (256)

Thurs 1 Dec  Becoming a poet/writer: going public—when and how to publish

Assignment for next class
Work on poetry portfolio

Week 16
Tues 6 Dec  Individual Conferences

POETRY PORTFOLIO DUE by 4:00 in my office