Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
English 3362-001: Techniques of Creative Writing

2:00-3:15 pm MW
BH 126
Office Hours: 10:00-11:00 am TR; 3:30-5:30 pm MW
& by appointment
Dr. Robb Jackson
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Fall 2012

Course Design & Objectives
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.

The objectives of the course are

- 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, or any other creative writing workshop

Student Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to

- demonstrate knowledge of various literary techniques through written exercises that employ these techniques;
- write original works of short fiction and poems, employing appropriate and varied techniques from the range available to the “creative” writer.

Texts & Materials

A writer’s notebook. This may be anything you like, bound or unbound, plain or fancy, handwritten or computer-generated, as long as you use it.

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 simply 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 exercises will inevitably count against you. I hope you will put as much into these as you can, not just for the grade, but for your own forward progress as a writer.

I would suggest that 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, if it works, to place the notebook in your portfolios when it comes time for grading.
**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

**Academic Advising**
The College of Arts and Humanities 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, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**Notice to Students with Disabilities**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance.

**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 Website 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.

**ENGL 3362—Techniques of Creative Writing**  
**SYLLABUS**  
**Fall 2012**

| Week 1 |  
| --- | --- |
| 22 Aug/W | Introduction to course |
| **Assignment for next class** |  
| Read *The Graceful Lie*, Ch 1 (1) |  
| Do Petraccia’s three-freewrite exercise on p 27 |

| Week 2 |  
| --- | --- |
| 27 Aug/M | 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 |
| 29 Aug/W | First Things—time, place, tools for writing |
| **Assignment for next class** |  
| Read *GL* Ch 3 (65) |  
| Do Ex #1 (100) – bring the ad you used to the next class |

| Week 3 |  
| --- | --- |
| 3 Sep/M | Labor Day—No Classes |
| 5 Sep/W | 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

**Week 4**

10 Sep/M  Plot

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

12 Sep/W  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)

**Week 5**

17 Sep/M  Characterization, dialogue, narration

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

19 Sep/W  Showing characters, cont.
Share dialogue pieces

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

**Week 6**

24 Sep/M  Showing vs. telling: using figurative language

Assignment for next class
Read  Johnston: “Waterwalkers” (handout)
Do  Ex #3 (235)

26 Sep/W  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

Week 7
1 Oct/M  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)

3 Oct/W  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

Week 8
8 Oct/M  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

10 Oct/W  Small-group, peer evaluation of stories

   Assignment for next class
      Work on revising stories for your portfolio

Week 9
15 Oct/M  FICTION PORTFOLIO DUE

17 Oct/W  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.)

Week 10  
22 Oct/M  
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)  

24 Oct/W  
Line, form, and balance  
Share exercises  

Assignment for next class  
Read WP Ch 10 (207)  
Do Ex #5 (224)  

Week 11  
29 Oct/M  
How to find poems  

Assignment for next class  
Go try it! (Look at ex #2 or #3 on p. 37 or #2 on p. 129 or #1 on p. 223 . . .)  

31 Oct/W  
Subject matter  

Assignment for next class  
Read WP Ch 6 (113)  

Week 12  
5 Nov/M  
Metaphor & Figurative Language  

Assignment for next class  
Read WP Ch 7 (136)  
Do Ex #1 or #3 (152)  

7 Nov/W  
Making lines in poetry – 1  

Assignment for next class  
Read WP Ch 3 (44)  
Do Ex #1 or #3 (61-62)
Week 13
12 Nov/M  Making lines in poetry – 2

Assignment for next class
Read  WP Ch 4 (69)
Do  Ex #1 (80-81) or #4 (81)

14 Nov/W  Sounds in poetry

Assignment for next class
Read  WP Ch 5 (89)
Do  Ex #3 (103)

Week 14
19 Nov/M  Voice, persona, and point-of-view in poetry

Assignment for next class
Read  WP Ch 8 (160)
Do  Ex #1 (174) (feel free to add to the list) or #5 (175)

21 Nov/W  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.

Week 15
26 Nov/M  Small-group, peer evaluation of the poems

Assignment for next class
Read  WP Ch 12 (256)

28 Nov/W  Becoming a poet/writer: going public—when and how to publish

Assignment for next class
Work on poetry portfolio

Week 16
3 Dec/M  Individual Conferences
POETRY PORTFOLIO DUE by 7:00 in my office (FC257)