Course Meets

Tues/Thur – 5:30-6:45 p.m., O’Connor 255

Required Texts and Materials

- A notebook (electronic notebook, laptop, iPad, or paper notebook for exercises and journaling)

Course Design and 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, creative non-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, stories, and creative non-fiction 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, creative nonfiction and poems, employing appropriate and varied techniques from the range available to the “creative” writer.
Course Requirements and Grade Distribution

Grades will be determined according to the following percentages for each component of the course requirements:

- Professionalism: 10%
- Final Portfolio: 30%
- Final Presentation: A Reading: 10%
- Exercises: 20%
- Reading Responses: 20%
- Group Peer Reviews: 10%

My Course Policies

Professionalism: (10%)  
Your professional conduct is an urgent part of what will help you and our community of learners in this course successful. In other words, you are one of the parts that make the whole. Your professional contribution to our community of learners requires your attendance, daily preparation, participation, and interaction. Participation in physical and virtual class discussions is an important part of this course. This course sees professionalism as the ways you prepared, contributed to/engaged in the processes of reading, writing, online and face-to-face discussions and inquiry, collaborative paired or group work and discussion, peer-draft reviewing, drafting, revising, and critical thinking.

Blackboard Policy
You are responsible for checking our course on Blackboard every day. Check our Reading and Assignment Schedule for weekly updates. Check Announcements, for daily assignments and messages from me. Also, we will use Blackboard Messages to contact one another and send drafts to our partners.

Cell Phone/Electronic Device Policy: I do not allow text messages during class. Keep cell phone quiet and out of sight unless needed for accessing information pertinent to course activity. Texting and reading notifications and messages during class is rude and disruptive to the learning environment and to your ability to focus, and the university policies on cell phone usage in class support my policy.

E-Communication Policy
- The best way to contact me is through my email address: robin.carstensen@tamucc.edu.
- I will respond to professional emails that include your subject and class section in the Subject Heading, address me by my professional title, and offer your signature.
- I will respond to email within 24 hours between 9 a.m. - 9 p.m., M-F.
- Though I do respond to e-mails from students who have very specific questions, I never respond to tweets, instant-messages, badly misspelled, and vague, unprofessionally addressed e-mails or text-messages, such as “hey, slept thru alarm. what’d i miss?”
- If you need an appointment with me outside of my office hours, please ask me after class or email me.
Absence Policy: It is impossible to earn an A after four absences, and very unlikely to earn a B after seven absences. So, try to save your absences for unexpected illnesses and crises (i.e., don’t use them all up recuperating from all-night festivities). Typically, an “A” student exemplifies outstanding community professionalism and self-initiative.

Late work Policy: In the case that a document is turned in or posted late with no prior arrangement with me, that document’s grade will be lowered ten percentage points for each class meeting that the student fails to turn it in. If the student has made arrangements with me prior to class, due to job, sports team travel or family crisis, late work may be accepted with no grade penalty.

The Writing Exercises (20%) will be reviewed throughout the course, placed in your portfolio, and used as a place for your growth as a writer, possible development into prose or poetry, and dialogue with me, if you choose. 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.

Reading Responses (20%): an interactive exchange with an author’s content and delivery—a process of learning and arriving at a greater understanding through a conversation with the text and each other: For each reading assignment, you will need to write a response that includes your personal reactions and questions. You will also write about the actions or ideas of the author, narrator, speaker, or characters, discuss the literary elements and devices being employed, and analyze the passage in relation to the entire work, etc. Point out a literary device in operation, or an idea sparked in your imagination. Each response should be at least one page double-spaced. Show me you’re engaged, committed to reading and critically thinking about how to apply the reading to your own work.

Group Peer Reviews: (10%): Peer Reviews will occur at least three-five times in the semester, as you develop a major piece in each genre. Reviews occur in the advanced stages of a draft. You will receive a criteria sheet for peer reviewing and will need to review at least two peers’ work in your group.

Electronic Portfolio (30%): Final Portfolio:

The Fiction and Creative Non-Fiction Section (15%)

- a minimum of two polished prose pieces, with at least two substantial rough drafts and peer reviews (you’ll need to scan the draft with my comments, and at least two of the most helpful peer reviews. You might also want to scan a handwritten rough draft or exercise or journal response that led to this piece).
- any other stories, or beginnings of stories, that you have written during this period of time
- 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 Section (15%)**

- a minimum of three poems, with at least two substantial rough drafts and peer reviews (you’ll need to scan the draft with my comments, and at least two of the most helpful peer reviews. You might also want to scan a handwritten rough draft or exercise or journal response that led to this piece).
- any other poems you have written during this time.
- 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

**Writer’s Presentation: A Reading (10%):** Final Exam

- You will read an excerpt from your prose or a poem or two.
- Discuss the impulse for the subject matter, and influence, tradition, and innovation of technique.
- Discuss your writing process of this piece from rough draft to final.

**Extra Credit:** I encourage you to attend literary events, performances, and lectures within and around the campus community. To that end, I award you extra credit for attending a literary, creative, and/or performance-based event, in full, and typing at least a two-page detailed reflection, using literary concepts and vocabulary that you are learning in class. I announce these events on Blackboard and in class, and welcome your own announcements of such events hosted by any student organizations and extracurricular groups in which you are active.

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**Grading Standards**

**A (90%-100%):** Outstanding work. An A document superbly addresses all components of the assignment. It clearly and logically expresses and develops an idea for a particular audience in an interesting way. An A writing is highly polished and generally contains no errors in the use of English.

**B (80%-89%):** Very good work. A B document does a better than average job of addressing all components of the assignment. It expresses and develops an idea in a clear, logical way, and it is well adapted to the needs of its intended readers. A B writing contains few or none of the common errors in the use of English. The professional appearance of B work is generally neat and polished.

**C (70%-79%):** Competent work. A C document manages to address most of the components of
the assignment and develops an idea for its intended readers, but does little to create a positive or lasting impression on them. C writing avoids serious errors in the use of English. The professional appearance of C work is acceptable but unremarkable and needs revision, polish, or redesign.

**D (60%-69%):** Unsatisfactory work. A D document is flawed by one or more of the following: insufficient attention to the assigned task and its audience, poorly developed ideas, inaccurate information, errors in the use of English.

**F (50%-59%):** Unacceptable work. An F document is flawed by one or more of the following: failure to accomplish the assigned task and adapt to its audience, failure to develop an idea, serious errors in the use of English language.

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**Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Policies**

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**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism.**

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in (be clear about consequences here).

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**Dropping a Class**

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Nov. 6th is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

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**Classroom/professional behavior**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program
may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

**Grade Appeals**

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

**Disabilities Accommodations**

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 at (361) 825-5816.

**Statement of Academic Continuity**

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

**Academic Advising:** It is imperative that all students visit regularly with an academic adviser. Each college within the university has an academic advising center, staffed by full-time, professional advisers to assist students with course selection, degree plans, and other academic matters. To find out how to contact the right adviser, go to: http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/advising.php
Students who have yet to declare a major are advised by the Academic Advising Transition Center. For more information, go to: http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac

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, 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.

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**Recommended for ENGL major undergraduates**

**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.

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**Student Resources**

**The Center for Academic Student Achievement (CASA):** The Writing Center of CASA provides free writing instruction to any student interested in improving his/her writing abilities. Tutors will assist you with all aspects of writing. The Writing Center’s purpose is not to correct or proofread your drafts but to help you learn strategies that good writers use during the processes of writing. You may visit the Center for assistance with a writing project for any of your classes. It is located in the Glasscock Building (825-5933).

**University Counseling Center**

We all encounter stress, problems, and difficult decisions in our daily lives. Sometimes, these problems may seem overwhelming or it might be difficult to talk about certain issues with your friends or family. The University Counseling Center is available for all students enrolled at TAMUCC. Students seek counseling for a multitude of reasons and the University Counseling Center offers individual therapy, group counseling, psychiatric services, psychological testing, consultation, outreach services, alcohol and drug education and prevention programs, and personal skills training. If you are in need of counseling services or just someone to talk to, please call or visit the University Counseling center at (361) 825-2703 in the Driftwood Building. Visit: http://counseling.tamucc.edu for more information.
For the Schedule, see Blackboard Announcements for daily updates.

Week 1
August 27th Course introductions.
Assigning Introductory Fiction Readings and Pathways from Lisa Roney’s Serious Daring, and in-class writing exercise.

Week 2
Sep. 1st: Discuss Readings, Responses, Out of Class Pathway Exercises, In-Class Exercises.
Sep 3rd: In-class exercise. Discuss readings, pathways, do in-class exercise.

Weeks 3-7: Reading and Response Sessions in Fiction
Assigning Fiction Readings from Lisa Roney’s text, Serious Daring, and one pathway per week. Thursdays continue discussions. In-class exercises from online sources; group share and review.
October 6: Group Fiction Peer Review

Weeks 8-11: Reading and Response Sessions in Poetry
Assigning Poetry Readings from Lisa Roney’s text, Serious Daring, and one pathway per week. Thursdays continue discussions. In-class exercises from online sources; group share and review.
November 10: Group Poetry Peer Review

Weeks 12-15: Workshop Sessions in Creative Non-fiction
Assigning Creative Nonfiction from Serious Daring, and one pathway per week. Thursdays continue discussions. In-class exercises from online sources; group share and review.
Dec 1: Group Peer Review for Nonfiction

No Workshops Thanksgiving: November 27th.

Week 16
Dec 1st/ Tuesday: Last Class. Group Peer Review on Creative Nonfiction.
Dec. 3rd/ Thursday: Our Final Exam Period, 4:30-7:00. Writer’s Presentation: A Reading | Portfolios Due.