Course Meets

Tues/Thur – 3:30-4:45 p.m., Island Hall 156

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, fiction, and literary nonfiction, 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 two or three well-developed pieces in each genre that surprise you during the semester
- to prepare you for entry into ENGL 4335: Creative Writing Studio: Development of Craft, 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 and through peer critique and analysis
- 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:

Attendance/Practice: 25% || Reading Responses: 20% || Group Peer Reviews 15% || Midterm Portfolio 10% || Final Portfolio: 20% || Final Exam: Multimedia Presentation 10%

My Course Policies

Attendance/Practice: (25%)
Your attendance and writing practice is an urgent part of what will help you and our community of writers in this course successful. In other words, you are one of the parts that make the whole. Your practice and contribution to our community requires your attendance, daily preparation, participation in the writing practice, and interaction. Participation in physical and virtual class discussions is an important part of this course. This course sees attendance as the ways you prepared, contributed to/engaged in the processes of reading, writing, online and face-to-face discussions and inquiry, collaborative work and discussion, peer-draft reviewing, drafting, revising, and critical thinking.

Attendance includes your writing practice--the writing exercises: In each class workshop, I will give you a prompt that asks you to apply one or more techniques from the assigned reading to your own practice of craft. I’ll review some of these and offer feedback. You will use this practice as a place for your growth as a writer and possible development into a prose piece or poetry. 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.

Blackboard Policy
You are responsible for checking our course on Blackboard every day. Check Announcements, for daily assignments and messages from me. Download the BB app for free on your smart phone, turn on notifications, and receive instant alerts when I announce updates weekly.

Cell Phone/Electronic Device Policy: I do not allow text messages during class. Please 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@tamu.edu.

I will respond to professional emails that include your subject and class section in the Subject Heading, address me by my professional title, Dr. Carstensen, and offer your signature.

Address your concern or question after you’ve thoroughly read an announcement on BB and the instructions. Be respectful, specific, and brief. Your professors receive hundreds of emails weekly regarding: 1. Teaching, course designs, assignments, feedback, assessment to student work, program work, department, etc. 2. Research and scholarly/creative activity and publications/conferences/events 3. Committee work with the university, college, department, and the community; 4. Professional development

Respect everyone’s time. If there’s a problem, offer a solution:

(i.e. Dear Dr. Carstensen, “I cannot meet in class on Thursday, and unfortunately will miss discussion. However, I have read the chapter and typed out a page of notes—here is the attachment. I plan to use the author’s technique of dialogue in my travel narrative piece by integrating a conversation at the restaurant along the Thames.” (Problem, solution). If it’s a complex situation, make an appointment to see your professor. Need help or extra feedback on a draft of your work? Make an appointment to meet during my office hours, and email me to confirm the date and time.

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 three absences, and very unlikely to earn a B after six 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.

Reading Responses (20%): journal entries, quizzes, and interactive exchanges with an assigned story, poem, or craft essay—a process of learning and arriving at a greater understanding through a conversation with the text and each other: For each reading assignment, I will prompt you to write a response either out of class or respond to a reading quiz and short answer in-class, sometimes on the Discussion Forum on BB. Show me you’re engaged and committed to reading and critically thinking about how to apply the writer’s techniques to your own work and vision.

Group Peer Reviews: (15%): Peer Reviews will occur at least six 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 for each genre.
Midterm Prose Portfolio (10%):

• 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.
• a minimum of two advanced-draft prose pieces (you’ll need to scan the draft with my comments, and at least two of the most helpful peer reviews for each piece.
• Your peer reviews on your peers’ work.

Final Portfolio—Prose and Poetry: (20%)

• a minimum of four poems (you’ll need to scan the draft with my comments, and at least two of the most helpful peer reviews) and any other poems you have written during this time.
• Two Prose Pieces (one must be the Creative Nonfiction piece)
• 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. See BB for more instructions.

Multimedia Presentation: A Reading (10%): Final Exam

7-minute presentation from any original work or combination of work done in the course, focused on a theme(s). Must include Artist's Statement:

1. **synopsis**--what do you explore, illustrate, meditate on, challenge, resist, delight in, invite the reader to explore?
2. **the background influences**--the writing exercise, musing, observation, event, person, thought, feeling that inspired the poem (I encourage you to include photos or images, excerpts from the work or figure of inspiration)
3. **the techniques**--specific poetic or prose devices and elements you focused on.

Medium: A visual, artistic, digital presence: Powerpoint, Blog, YouTube, Tumblr, PDF, Website

Extra Credit: I encourage you to attend literary events, performances, and guest-speaking engagements within and around the campus community. These opportunities are often integral to what you are learning in the classrooms, through course curricula, and through your life experiences. Your peers, professors, and campus community work very hard to coordinate these events and bring these opportunities to you.

Because I appreciate how integral these events are to your college learning experience, I award extra credit for attending literary, creative, and/or performance-based events, in full, and typing at least a two-page reflection for each one. 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. Attending two events and writing reflections for
each one may replace one class absence. Discuss with me in advance to make this arrangement. You may make up to two class absences with extra credits (a total of four extra credits).

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. 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. 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.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Policies

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.

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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

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 your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course.** 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. Friday, Nov. 8 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Grade Appeals
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, *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 Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, *Student Grade Appeals*. These documents are accessible online at: [http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf](http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html).  

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. 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.

Statement of Civility (can be in place of classroom/professional behavior)
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high-quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. 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.

**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 (                 ).

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism**

**Definition:** In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. Plagiarism is a violation of academic expectations, but it is sometimes difficult to understand what plagiarism actually is. Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes:

- Using the work of another as your own,
- Downloading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,
- Using resource materials without correct documentation,
- Using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation.
- Turning in a researched project without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

When you are confused about citation of quotes or ideas, please visit the Writing Center or me to get help. Information on MLA documentation rules and APA documentation rules is available at Purdue University’s OWL: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/), and from our local Writing Center at CASA.

**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.

**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.

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 weekly updates.

Week 1: Introductions to Creative Writing and Community
August 27: Course Curriculum and Peer introductions. In-Class Daily Writing Practice. Bring your journal!
August 29: Continue Introductions and In-Class Sharing.
Introductory Fiction Readings and Exercises from David Starkey’s Four Genres in Brief, and in-class writing exercises/tune-ins.
(Reading Responses--20% of Course Grade. Attendance/Practice--25% of Course Grade)

Week 2-6: Fiction Unit

Week 2
Sep 3- Sep 5: Discuss Readings, Responses Do in-class exercises for the daily practice.
Groups Forming
Assigning Fiction Readings from David Starkey’s text, and one exercise per week.
Thursdays continue discussions. In-class exercises from online sources; group share and review.
(Reading Responses--20% of Course Grade. Attendance/Practice--25% of Course Grade)

Week 3
Sep 11 - Sep 13: Deep Readings and Exercises for the Microfiction and Flash Fiction
(Reading Responses--20% of Course Grade. Attendance/Practice--25% of Course Grade)
Week 4
Sep 17-19: Developing the Longer Short Story
*Sep. 17: Extra Credit: Windward Review Reception: Featured Readings and Open Mic, from 6-8:30 p.m. in University Center Anchor Ballroom

Week 5
September 24: Peer Review of Longer Short-in Progress.
September 26: Revision Work Online, Focus on three areas (Dr. Carstensen out of town, presenting at TACWT, in Houston)

Week 6
October 1-3: Group Fiction Peer Reviews with Primary Responses (5% of Course Grade)
October 11: Midterm Prose Portfolio Due (10% of Course Grade)

Weeks 7--10: Poetry Unit

Week 7
Assigning Poetry Readings from David Starkey’s text and essays and poetry by Tracy K. Smith and Joy Harjo (former and current U.S. Poet Laureate, respectively; ), and one exercise per week.
Thursdays continue discussions. In-class exercises from online sources; group share and review.
(Reading Responses--20% of Course Grade. Attendance/Practice--25% of Course Grade)

November 5: Group Poetry Peer Reviews (5% of Course Grade)

Weeks 11-14: Creative Nonfiction Unit
Assigning Creative Nonfiction from Starkey, online memoir excerpts, and book reading recorded from Sydney Opera House, and one exercise per week.
Thursdays continue discussions. In-class exercises from online sources; group share and review.
(Reading Responses--20% of Course Grade. Attendance/Practice--25% of Course Grade)

Nov 27, Weds: Reading Day
November 28-29: Thanksgiving Holidays

Dec.3: Group Peer Review for Nonfiction (5% of Course Grade)

Dec 4, Tuesday: Last Class Day! Begin Final Exam: Multimedia Presentations. (10% of Course Grade)
Dec 5: Reading Day, No Classes.

Week 16
Dec. 11th/Weds. Portfolios Due (20% of Course Grade)
Dec. 12th/ Thursday: Our Final Exam Period, 1:45-4:14
Multimedia Presentation: A Reading (10% of Course Grade)