
Syllabus and Course Description

Week Description

Week 1 -- The Writing Life -- Motives, Processes, Habits, Methods, and Environments
Preview of the course

Poetry

Week 2 -- Poetry - kinds & elements; poetic processes; begin poetry exercises.

Discussion of published poems in course text (and in past editions of *The Southern Quill*)

Week 3 – Continue with poetry exercises (and begin crafting some complete poems of your own)

Small-group sharing of your unfolding poems.

Week 4 – Continue forming your own poetry collection.

Discussion of more published poems.

Begin whole-class “workshopping” of poems

Week 5 -- Continue whole-class “workshopping” of poems.

Continue revising your poetry portfolio.

→ your revised and polished poetry collection is due Friday of Week 6: Sept. 29

Week 6 – Finish our poetry unit – final workshops and revisions

→ your revised & polished poetry portfolio is due Friday of Week 6: Sept. 29

Short Fiction

*** For this next section, we will closely read and examine several stories that will help to inspire your own stories. Be sure to see the reading schedule (a separate handout) for this phase of the class. ***

Week 7 – Short Fiction - kinds and elements; writing processes; points of view.

Discussions of published stories. (See schedule for when you lead a story discussion.)

Read handout: from John Gardner’s *The Art of Fiction* - “Plotting” (183-190)

Week 8-- Description exercises. Plot & Theme Development. Another POV exercise. Begin writing.

More discussions of published stories. (See schedule for when you lead a story discussion.)

**** Want to know your midterm grade? Fill out your self-assessment guide (end of this syllabus.)**

Week 9 -- Begin two stories of your own! (Also, we’ll discuss character, POV, and plot development.)

Discussion of more published stories. (See schedule for when you lead a story discussion.)

Week 10 -- Workshops begin (ie. sharing of one of your stories-in-progress).

Continue to revise and polish your story (or stories).

Read handout from J. Gardner’s *The Art of Fiction* - “Delay” (159-163)

Week 11 -- More “workshopping” of your stories. (See schedule for when you share your story.)

[Remember to find a sample of very good (or very bad) dialogue (to bring to class - week 13)]

As you revise, read (and apply to your stories) the tips in J. Gardner’s chapter:

“Common Errors” (copied excerpts)

Week 12 -- Continued work on short story (or stories)

- Final drafts due *Tues* of Week 16: Dec. 5, by noon. (Slide it under office door, McD 222.)

Week 13 -- Library instruction on publishing resources (and other creative writing resources) - TBA

Dialogue – Stage, Screen and Page

Week 14 -- Begin dialogue exercises. → Bring in your dialogue sample - see assg. description.

**** *Want to know your current grade? Fill out your self-assessment guide (see end of this packet).***

Week 15 -- Continued examples of effective and ineffective dialogue (and application of concepts)

Week 16 -- Based on your new knowledge of dialogue, revise and polish your one or two short stories.
- final draft(s) due *Tues* of Week 16: Dec. 5, by noon. (Slide it under office door, McD 222.)

Discussion of *The Southern Quill*, other publication avenues, and query letters.

Week 17 -- Final Exam – Friday, 12/15, 12:30 - 2:30

Other important dates for your planning calendar:

Labor Day (no classes) Monday, Sept. 4

Last Day to Drop or Audit any class Sept. 27

Semester Break (no classes) Thurs-Fri, Oct. 12-13

Career Day (only night classes meet) Tuesday 11/14

Thanksgiving Wed-Fri, Nov. 22-24

Instructor: Dr. Brad Barry
Office: 222 McDonald Center
Office Phone: 652-7819
Office Hours: Mon & Wed: 1-3 p.m.; Thur: 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
→ **And by appointment – please contact me if the above days and hours do not work with your schedule**

E-mail: barry@dixie.edu
→ **If you e-mail me**, be sure to put the following 2 things in the *subject* line:
your name - English 2140. If you don't, my junk-mail rules may automatically delete your e-mail before I get a chance to see it.

Class Location: McD 207
Course Prerequisite: Proper placement scores or a passing grade in English 0990 or 0991
Writing Center: Browning Building (bottom floor-below testing cntr), 652-7743, Hours: TBA
Browning Library: Next to Browning Building – check campus web page for hours and services

Required Texts and Materials:

- Schaefer & Diamond's, *The Creative Writing Guide*; Longman, 1998.
- Dixie State College's literary journal *The Southern Quill* (to be provided by instructor).
- A password for using campus computers.
- 2 "floppy" disks, OR 2 flash memory sticks (1 for an original, 1 for a back-up).

Description of Course and Our Objectives:

This course is for anyone with an interest in developing expressive skills through the writing of poetry, short stories, and dramatic dialogue (for stage or film). The course will be a student-centered, workshop class in which we will all collaboratively participate. We will focus just as much on the *process* of writing as we will the final *product* of each written assignment.

This course will also increase your understanding of literature, other people, and certainly your own ideas and feelings. By the end of the course (and with genuine effort) you will have significantly grown in your knowledge and use of creative writing techniques. While it is certainly important for creative writers to have a firm grasp of traditional English grammar, usage and punctuation, this class will not focus on such matters. Instead, it will attempt to help you grow in your ability to captivate readers by using the following: point of view, description, dialogue, rhythm (in poetry and prose), plot, setting, theme, alliteration and assonance. Not only will you learn how to model the writings of others, but you will also learn to develop your own writing styles, approaches and voices. This course will also explore avenues for publishing the creative writing which you produce.

So What Will We Be Doing in This Class?

As you can see from the syllabus, we will be focusing on three specifics of creative writing: poetry, short fiction, and dialogue (as it pertains to the stage, screen and page). As we explore these three styles of writing, we will also discuss creative processes in general. To this end, I will ask each of you to find and share an artist's (or a researcher's) definition of the creative process: what it is, and how to nurture it. (If you get stumped, see me for a list of possible resources.)

Also, throughout the semester, I will ask each member of this class to share the following:

- your findings on the creative process (see above paragraph)
- several of your poems
- at least one story you've written for the fiction section
- a passage of great (or miserable) dialogue from a play or movie
- in conjunction with another student, your thoughts on a story that the whole class will read (ie. you and one other student will lead a discussion on a previously published story)

I will give out a sign-up sheet so that you will have advanced notice on when you will give these informal presentations.

Note: Are you taking this course to learn more about memoir writing? If so, you are more than welcome in this class. However, memoir writing is a distinct style of writing unto its own, and we will not directly focus on its features. You may therefore end up being a bit frustrated if memoir writing/life writing is your primary goal in this course.

Some Tips for Success

Be sure to save all pre-writing and early drafts! These phases are part of your creative writing process, and they are important.

I also encourage you to have at least one back up copy of every draft of every assignment. This is a good idea for two reasons: 1) you may have computer problems and lose entire assignments, and 2) you may misplace an assignment or disk. I have seen many students come to tears over both reasons!

You will also be assigned readings on a regular basis. Each time we are scheduled to discuss a particular reading or a topic related to a reading, please come to class prepared with at least the following thoughts:

- 1 thoughtful affirmation of the reading
- 1 thoughtful disagreement (or criticism of how it's written)
- 1 question about some aspect (*any* aspect) connected to the reading.

Also, throughout the semester, I may add one or two reading and/or writing assignments to those listed on the syllabus and the self-evaluation guide. Sometimes, student questions and discussions will lead me to revise the syllabus in order to better tailor the class to students' interests and goals. So, if I end up adding an assignment or two, please know that they can factor into your grade (even though they are not on this syllabus).

Revision Policy:

While extensive revision is highly encouraged for most of the assignments, the goal is for you to write and revise your texts **before** you share first drafts in peer workshops. The harder you work on your first drafts, the more meaningful your peer feedback will be, and the better your final drafts will be. As you revise your works-in-progress, I encourage you to visit me in my office. I'm available to help as you draft your assignments!

Late Work:

All drafts and final versions are due on their given due dates. If they are turned in late, the grade will be reduced (1 letter grade every three days). If for some reason you have a *legitimate emergency* arise, try to let me know as soon as you possibly can.

If you do miss class, know that you are still responsible for the material covered during the class session. Also, if you are ill on the day a major assignment is due, please have a friend or classmate turn it in for you at the beginning of class.

Also note that, even if you receive strong grades on all major writing assignments, missing class and/or homework assignments will affect your grade. For example, if I have two A writers—and one often misses class, comes in late, and/or submits weak homework responses—should they both receive the same grade? I think not. Usually the students who are most concerned with learning have the better experiences in this class—as well as the better grades.

Attendance:

Please attend all class sessions. If you must be absent, remember to communicate so that I can help you be prepared for the next class (that follows after your absence). While I will not apply a strict grading formula in terms of attendance, I will share with you some observations I've made over the years. In MWF courses:

- Most people who miss 4 or more classes generally don't earn A's.
- Most people who miss 7 or more classes generally don't earn B's.
- And most people who miss 10 or more classes risk passing the class at all.

In classes like this, I have found that attendance is almost always a strong reflection of how much one learns, and how strong one's writing ends up being.

General Workload:

As with many of your college courses, you will have 5-6 hours of homework each week. This will be divided up between reading (about 25%), writing exercises and experimentation (about 30%) and final-draft writing projects (45%).

A Few Final Notes:

Please remember that it is my job to help you do well in this course. If at any time you have any questions or worries about the above requirements, or about your writing, please feel free to talk with me.

Also: If you are a student with a physical or mental impairment, and if you would like to request accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (652-7516) in Room 201 of the Student Services Center. The Disability Resource Center will determine your eligibility for services based upon complete professional documentation. If you are deemed eligible, the Disability Resource Center will further evaluate the effectiveness of your accommodation requests and will authorize reasonable accommodations that are appropriate for your disability.

Self-Appraisal Sheet

Name: _____

To keep track of your grade, please fill this out every few weeks.

Note:

To determine your grade at any point in the semester, simply divide the number of points earned by the number of possible points up to that moment in the semester.

(Example: 88 divided by 100 = .88 = 88% = B+)

Poetry Project (90 total points):	Points Possible:	Points Earned:
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Did you attend the peer-response days (with the homework exercises)?		_____
Were you prepared for the whole-class workshop of your poem(s)?	10	_____
Your Poetry Collection	80	_____

Your Presentation on the Creative Process

(definitions and examples of)	15	_____
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Readings/Pre-Writing/Drafting (90 total points):

Prep Check #1	18	_____
Prep Check #2	18	_____
Prep Check #3	18	_____
Prep Check #4	18	_____
Prep Check #5	18	_____

With your partner, did you help lead a discussion of a short story?	10	_____
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Short Story Project (120 total points)

Prepared for whole-class workshop?	10	_____
Did you show up for others' workshop days?		_____
Short Story (or stories)		
If one longer story:	(120)	_____
OR		
If two shorter stories: story #1	(60)	_____
story #2	(60)	_____

Dialogue – Stage, Screen and Page

Did you bring in a 2 page (or 10 minute) excerpt of effective (or ineffective) dialogue?	10	_____
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Final Exam	50	_____
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Your Semester Total (out of 395 points): _____