

## English 253: Introduction to Creative Writing, Sec. 1/Fall 2019

Dr. Patricia Gott

Office: 318CCC

Email: [pgott@uwsp.edu](mailto:pgott@uwsp.edu)

Office Phone: 715-346-4347

Office Hours:

--Tuesdays: 3:30-4:15

--Wednesdays: Electronic Office Hour from 1-1:50 (I'm online then)

--Thursdays 12:50-1:50

--Other times by appointment

**Class emails:** [ENGL253.01\\_2198@uwsp.edu](mailto:ENGL253.01_2198@uwsp.edu)\*\*

**Email Policy/Format:** You will be using email regularly this semester as it is the best way to reach me and it's a good way to reach classmates. You will be expected to use proper grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation in your emails, in addition to respectful and appropriate language.

**Please use your UWSP account for all correspondence related to this class.**

**\*\*Later in the term, you will be emailing your classmates your written work.\*\***

### Course Description:

This course will explore the ways in which language—sharpened, focused, and refined to the quality of art—helps us navigate the vagaries of the human condition. Reading and writing intensively, we hope to uncover the strengths and limitations of poetry and fiction. We will critique classic examples of each form, take what we learn, and experiment in our own writing. Students will be expected to complete at least one 6-10 page short story, one 3-page short flash fiction piece and 5-7 poems. Roughly half the semester will be devoted to each genre. We will share our work in class and regularly open it up to a peer critique. Students must be willing to test their imaginations and improve their work through revision. By semester's end, you'll be expected to turn in a portfolio of revised work. Despite the size of the class, everyone should expect to be fully engaged with the material and attentive to their classmates: attendance and participation are mandatory.

### UWSP Learning Outcomes – Investigation Level-Arts

Students will:

- Describe, analyze or critique creative works utilizing knowledge of relevant aesthetic criteria or stylistic forms.

Do at least ONE of the following

- Identify and explain the relationship between traditions or genres of creative expression and their social, historical or cultural contexts.
- Demonstrate an understanding of creative expression by producing or performing a creative work.

Required Materials:

- One notebook for notes and in class writing assignments
- One pocket folder for collection of work and presentation of portfolios at the end of class.

**Required texts:**

--Starkey, David. *Creative Writing: An Introduction to Poetry and Fiction*. Bedford, 2014.

**AVAILABLE: TEXT RENTAL**

--Joseph, Allison. *Confessions of a Barefaced Woman*. Red Hen Press, 2018.

**AVAILABLE: PURCHASE TEXT.**

--Selected texts available on Canvas or online (see syllabus)

--Handouts of poetry and a few short shorts (distributed in class)

**Cell phone/Laptop policy (PLEASE READ AND COMMIT TO MEMORY!):** Use of cell phones, unless for a specific class purpose, IS PROHIBITED. I will deduct points from your final grade if I observe you texting during class. I would prefer that you write up your exercises in a notebook or on notebook paper so you can share your writing in class with others and get written comments on it. See me if you need an exception to this to use a laptop computer.

**Recording Policy:** Students may not make audio, video, or photographic recordings of lectures or other class activities without written permission from the instructor. Anyone violating this policy will be asked to turn off the device being used. Refusal to comply with the policy will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom, and possibly being reported to the Dean of Students.

**Grade Range:** As far as the grade range, a C represents average but satisfactory development of the above criteria, a B represents above average development, and an A representing superior development and effort towards the criteria above. Work that represents below average development will receive a D. D work suggests that a writer is not involved in his or her writing and is unaware of the contexts, format, and stylistic choices that affect that writing. Work that is not submitted will receive an F. **Note: Incompletes can be given only in the case of a medical emergency.** We will discuss the grading rubric in more detail later.

**SCALE:** A = 94-100 %    A- = 90-93%    B+ = 87-89%

B = 83-86%    B- = 80-82%    C+ = 77-79%    C = 73-76%    C- = 70-72%    D+ = 67-69%

D = 63-66%    D- = 60-62%    F = 0-59%

**Attendance Policy:** Students are required to attend all class meetings—this is part of your participation grade. **Final course grades may be lowered by one-third letter grade for each absence over two** (i.e., B to a B- with 4 misses, a B to a C+ with five). I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences except for religious holidays or officially organized and documented UWSP events. In the case of religious holidays and college events, you must notify me in writing one class period in advance of an absence and complete the required work ahead of time. **PLEASE NOTE: I DO NOT NEED TO KNOW WHY YOU ARE OR WILL BE ABSENT—UNLESS YOU ARE DEALING WITH A SEVERE AND/OR CONTAGIOUS ILLNESS THAT NECESSITATES YOU MISSING MORE THAN A CLASS OR TWO**--in which case you should email me about this. You are also responsible for acquiring any handouts or assignments you miss. I cannot reteach the class you have missed for you.

**\*\*If you are missing a lot of class because of health issues or for some other reason, it is always a good idea to contact me and all your professors BEFORE YOUR ABSENCES PILE UP in**

order to determine whether an accommodation can be made.

### Participation:

This course will involve a blend of lecture, workshop, and discussion. It is important that you come prepared to participate in class activities and complete all the reading. For workshops, this includes reading and marking stories for the workshop sessions. Discussions are particularly important in creative writing classes, and you are expected to offer their opinions as both readers and writers. Good participation involves thoughtful responses to the assigned readings and a willingness to share written work (formal and informal). The participation requirement will not be met if you sit quietly through discussion and workshop and fail to engage with the material. Sometimes, a probing, thought-provoking question can be more useful than an assertion. The essence of discussion is play, trying out new ideas and seeing how they "work." Art is dynamic, and one line of thinking—even if it seems "wrong" or incomplete—will always lead to something new and potentially beautiful. Art without risk is so often mired down in conventionality; thinking without risk (or, put another way, without play) leads to stagnation.

### Grading:

Grades will be based on the following:

In Class Written and Verbal Participation:

	30%
Major Assignments: ONE 6-10 page short story	
=and one 3 page short short	15%
*5-7 poems	15%
Portfolio of revised work	<u>40%</u>
	100%

\*Collected as we go

(The portfolio should include revisions of at least 5 poems and the story/stories.)

NOTE: No letter grades will be assigned to any of the stories/poems written during the term; instead, students will receive feedback on drafts of their work, with the expectation that some will be revised and submitted as the final portfolio, which will be graded. All stories and poems must be completed and handed in by the last week of the class.

**Assignment Format: ALL OUT OF CLASS** assignments must be typed on white paper **double-spaced**, in **12 pt. Times New Roman or Calibri**. Use **one-inch margins all around**.

At the top of each assignment you should type:

Your name

(FOR WORKSHOP PORTION) Date your story is to be workshopped

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### Workshop:

Everyone is expected to put their short story up for workshop; this is part of your participation grade. This is a chance to hear what other people have to say about the text. Sit back, take notes and watch how people have reacted to your work. This immediate feedback is invaluable and gives you the opportunity to assess the successes and shortcomings of what you've hoped to achieve.

**All stories must be emailed to the class list (253, Section 1) a FULL 48 HOURS before they are supposed to be workshopped. For example, if your story is up on Wednesday, Week 12, your story is due by Monday, Week 12 at 5 pm. Readers (everyone in class) are encouraged to print off a copy, read the story twice, make helpful notes in the margins (or on a separate sheet of paper), and present their findings to the class.**

**Late Assignment Policy:** All work is due the day indicated on the syllabus. Please make every attempt to make your workshop date/time (discussed later in the semester). Unless I indicate otherwise, final drafts of creative work will be docked a letter grade if they are not handed in the class period they are due. I will not accept late assignments one week beyond the due date except in the case of a documented illness or family emergency. **Please do not email me your portfolios unless you have made arrangements with me to do so. In most cases, I only accept final projects in extreme emergencies, and you will need to contact me for my approval of this.**

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is taking credit for work that is not your own. There will be serious consequences if I find that you have stolen another writer's work and turned it in as your own.

**Double-dipping:** I assume that all work that you turn in during the term is original and current. Creative work written in high school, or for another class, should not be submitted here (unless you clear it with me first). Work that has already been published on the Internet should not be submitted for class. I want you to write your very best work; it is important that this work draws from your fullest experiences as a student, writer, and aesthetic being. If I discover that work submitted for this class was written for another class, I will penalize the final course grade.

**Academic Freedom Policy:**

This course has a NO CENSORSHIP policy for both the writing you submit, and the comments peers make on that work. I will not censor because of sexual content, elements of violence, religious or political perspectives. (However, writing on topics that are illegal, dangerous and/or present a violation of safety IS NOT ALLOWED. (ex. child pornography or terroristic threats IS OFF LIMITS as is harassment of others via writing). This policy also applies for materials submitted for sessions. Students are expected to respond to the writings of others with judiciousness, deliberation, and fairness. However, honesty is expected in all critiques; if a story contains sexism, homophobia, or intolerance, then readers are responsible for pointing out potentially unsavory aspects of a work.

**Students with learning differences** may want to visit UWSP's Office of Disability Services (6<sup>th</sup> floor ALB Hall x 3365) to work with that office.

## English 253 Fall 2019 Writing Assignment and Reading List

**VERY IMPORTANT:** Make sure you complete the assigned reading (including your peers' work in the workshop section) for each class period BEFORE you come to class. \* **ALSO BRING THE SPECIFIC TEXT FOR EACH CLASS TO THAT DAY'S CLASS.** *Most of the shorter writing exercises will be completed in class UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE ON THE SYLLABUS.*

**\*\*Note that changes will most likely BE MADE TO THIS SYLLABUS; I'll email them to you and pass out a paper copy in class.**

**Week One/Sept. 4:** Introduction to the class and one another/First in-class writing assignment and Introduction to poetry/Dove spill piece/Poetry You Tubes (Bill Murray and "Metaphor")

**Week Two/Sept. 11** How poetry works---Poetry exercises to begin. Line breaks, etc. READ from Starkey: 20-29/Read from Allison Joseph: "Grown Up Shoes," "Perfect Ride," "Advice on Being a Pesky Little Sister" and "Vacation" (Others TBA). Pick two others from the first half of the collection to discuss with our group. **ALSO BRING IN POETRY PACKET FROM WEEK 1**

**Week Three/Sept. 18:** Poetry exercises continued, List poems/Bring in a poem you're partial to (search at either poets.org and poetryfoundation.org)/READ from Starkey: 30-53 , and poems pages 74-76, 82-84, 88-91/Pick 2-3 lines from at least 3 poems that you want to discuss with your group. Write those lines out before class.

**Week Four/Sept. 25:** READ: Starkey 70-80/Nature and Political Poetry  
PLACES: **Bring in** a photo or a postcard of a scene to write about and **HAND IN A TYPED DRAFT OF A POEM YOU'RE WORKING ON** READ: "Open Letter to America" by Ian Ramsey, "I, Too" by Langston Hughes  
<https://www.terrain.org/2017/poetry/letter-to-america-ramsey/>  
<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/i-too>  
**\*\* June Jordan "Letters to the Local Police" (poetryfoundation.org) and Harryette Mullen "European Folktale Variant" from Black Nature.Ex: Write a letter to America in the form of a poem/PICK UP MICROFICTION COPIES FOR NEXT WEEK**

**Week Five/Oct. 2:** Bring in 2 objects to describe and write about /Wisconsin Death trip photo exercise in class/Read from MFictions: "Cough" 26, "Daydreams," 28, "Your Fears are Justified" 36/ Poetry workshop order TBD workshop format/guidelines passed out

**Week Six/Oct. 9:** **TWO additional POEMS DUE**/Introduction to short shorts  
MFiction: "Changing the Channel" 44 , "Chickens" 95  
Read from Starkey: Raymond Carver's "Popular Mechanics" 168 and Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl" (Handout)/ **\*Poetry Workshop I**

**Week Seven: Oct. 16 /Introduction to the short story--Read Starkey 117-133/Creating characters and conflict/\* Poetry Workshop II/Read Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried" (Canvas) and John Cheever's "Reunion" 175 (Starkey)**

**Week Eight/Oct. 23: Short story continued/Read Amy Bloom's "Hold Tight" and Bobbi Ann Mason's "Shiloh" (Canvas)/Conflict exercise**

**Week Nine/Oct. 30: Read Starkey on Dialogue: 134-138 Powerpoint/Exercises/Lydia Davis (Handout) on Family Trip (compare to Flannery O'Connor's "Good Country People" (Canvas)**

**Week Ten/ Nov. 6:\*\* Hand in two new poems. One of them should be around one page in length.**

**\*\*Workshop of 6 of your classmates' stories begins/Order will be determined before this class**

**Week Eleven/Nov. 13: \*\*Workshop of six more stories continues/ Read Joyce Carol Oates's "Where are You Going, Where Have You Been?" (Canvas)**

**Week Twelve/Nov. 20: Workshopping of stories continues**

**Week Thirteen/Nov. 27: NO CLASS! HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

**Week Fourteen/Dec. 4: Workshopping concludes**

**Week Fifteen/Dec. 11: NO class—OPTIONAL CONFERENCES THIS WEEK IN MY OFFICE, 318 CCC (Sign up in advance)**

**Finals Week: ALL PORTFOLIOS Due Friday 12/20 in CCC 318 (my office) by 12:15 .**

*Reminder: A class that is this exercise and workshop intensive CANNOT BE RETAUGHT, so make sure to ATTEND REGULARLY to get full credit.*