**Syllabus & Course Policies**

**Syllabus – English 253 Sec 1 Spring 2018**

**Intro to Creative Writing – Poetry and Fiction**

University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, 3 Credits

Patricia R. Dyjak, Ph.D. & M.F.A.

Monday & Wednesday 9:30 – 10:45 am 206 CCC

email: [pdyjak@uwsp.edu](mailto:pdyjak@uwsp.edu) Office: CCC 429

Cell: 715/572-0316 text is fine. Office Hours: MW 11:00 – Noon, TR 2:00 – 3:00 pm

*& by appointment*

First Half of Semester: Poetry

The syllabus is subject to change. Citations are on the material on the handouts/coursepack.

You must read the poems and stories assigned for that class meeting **BEFORE** you come to class.

**Read each poem THREE times (be sure that one of those times, you read the poem aloud).**

Week 1 1/22 & 1/24

**Introduction and handouts:** What is poetry? Course focus, syllabus and policies, Basic Terms for Discussing Poems. Poems that give commands: Mary Oliver “Wild Geese” & Charles Baudelaire “Get Drunk”

Exercise: reverse admonitions (“You do not have to be good.” and “Get drunk!”)

**Sports, Hunting, and Games:** Football, fishing, softball, basketball, hunting, rock-paper-scissors and other sport poems.

Due: pick four poems from the above as your favorites and write their titles (handwritten ok) on a sheet to hand in at the start of class.

**Exercises:** Detailed description

Week 2 1/29 & 1/31

**Traditions: Family, Ethnic, Religious, etc**. selections from *Bamboo Among the Oaks: Contemporary Writing by Hmong Americans*, and Tony Hoagland “Jet” & “Benevolence,” & Terrence Hayes “Talk” & “Root” and Louise Erdrich “Avila,” “The Visit,” “Potchikoo's Life After Death” Muriel Rukeyser “Ms Lot,” “Myth;” Ola Broumas “Artemis”

Due: pick three (3) poems from the above as your favorites and write their titles on a sheet to hand in at the start of class.

**Exercises:** personal mythologies

**Repetition and Re-looking – Repetition:** Ana Blandiana “Magic Spell of Rain;” Anna Akhmatova “The Last Toast;” Kim Addonizio “A Childhood” [Pantoum]; Elizabeth Bishop “Sestina;” Etheridge Knight “Feeling Fucked Up;” Bernadette Mayer “Essay;”Jane Cooper “Long Disconsolate Lines;” Etheridge Knight “A Poem for Myself;” Sandra McPherson “Bad Mother Blues”

**Exercises:** repetition and weather metaphors, and pantoum

☼ expectations for poetry workshop [handout] & **sign-up for workshop days**

Continued

Week 3 2/5 & 2/7

**Re-looking:** Herbert Scott “The Apprentice Gravedigger”

**Exercise:** 12 section poem: ways of looking at college or football or Schmeekle Nature Preserve using various approaches (images, animals, exact literal description, dialog or quotes, alliteration, metaphors, 1st & 3rd person, Benedict Cumberbatch)

**Fairy Tales, Myths, and Religions, re-told**: The Cinderella Series - Denise Duhamel “The Ugly Stepsister,” Richard Shelton “The Glass Slipper,” Ola Broumas “Cinderella,” Anne Sexton “Cinderella.” P.R. Dyjak “Fairy Tales Are Cautionary Tales” Also -- Anne Sexton “The Frog Prince;” P.R. Dyjak “Woman Without a Country”

**Exercise:** Persona poem [or not!] and literal description and metaphorical description.

2/7 ***Distribute* poems for Workshop A on 2/14**

Week 4 2/12 & 2/14

**Re-looking - part 2**: Joy Harjo - “Transformations,” “Eagle Poem,” “A Postcolonial Tale,” “Promise,” “Perhaps the World Ends Here,” “In Praise of Earth,” “The Everlasting,” “When the World as We Knew It Ended”

**Exercises:** commonplace things (i.e. kitchen table), and praise poem (quatrains of decreasing

length), and prose poem – rhythm and melody

**☼Get** web exercise assignment- Audio Archives, due 2/21 typed!

Wednesday 2/14 **Workshop A; distribute poems for Workshop B on 2/21.**

Week 5 2/19 & 2/21

**Funny poems**: Bernadette Mayer: “To a Politician;” Richard Shelton: “Brief Communications From My Widowed Mother,” “The Hole;” Tony Hoagland “Suicide Song;” Maxine Kumin “The Excrement Poem;” Stephen Dunn “John & Mary;” Cathleen Calbert “My Dead Boyfriend,” “Bad Judgement;” William Shakespeare Sonnet #130 [My mistresses' eyes are nothing like the sun]; poetry postcards by Robert Hershon & Eileen Nyle

**Exercises:** bad ‘good ideas’; what’s in a name; the poetic rant (detail, baby!)

Wednesday 2/21: Audio Archive paragraphs Due, typed;

Wednesday 2/21: **Workshop B; distribute poems for Workshop C on 2/28**

Week 6 2/26 & 2/28

**Language Poetry & Concrete Poetry.** Language Poet**:** Bernadette Mayer: review by Molly Bendall; Bernadette Mayer “Index,” “Yellow-Orange,” “Laura Cashdollars,” François Villon Follows the Thin Lion,” “Tapestry,” “Thick,” “I Want to Talk Now about Reason, Riddle,” “Say Goodbye to Legacy,” “Beginning Middle End,” “Experiment in Rubrics,” “Before Sextet,” “After Sextet”

**Exercises:** Bernadette Mayer’s experiments

Wednesday 2/28 **Workshop C; distribute poems for Workshop D on 3/7**

Continued

Week 7 3/5 & 3/7

**Poems About Everything: The Unspeakable Spoken**. lucille clifton “poem in praise of menstruation;” Norman Stock “Do You Want a Chicken Sandwich;” Muriel Rukeyser “Despisals,” “St. Roach;” Marie Howe “The Attic;” Sharon Olds “The Pope's Penis;” Theodore Roethke “Dolor;” Marge Piercy “To Have without Holding;” Denise Duhamel “Barbie Joins a Twelve-Step Program,” “Bisexual Barbie,” “Kinky;” Diane Wakoski “Loveletter Postmarked Van Beethoven;” Stephen Dunn “What They Wanted;” Bernadette Mayer “Booze Turns Men Into Women;” Pablo Neruda “A Dog Has Died;” Sita Rose “bessie smith/my grandma casson;” Alice Fulton “Some Cool;” Sharon Olds “Grandmother Love Poem,” “The Eye;” Kim Addonizio “The Numbers;” Audre Lorde “Power,” “Coping;” Jim Harrison “Porpoise;” Tony Hoagland “The Replacement,” “Benevolence,” “Dickhead,” “Man Carrying Sofa;” Mark Doty “At the Gym;” Richard Shelton “If I Were a Dog;” lucille clifton “mulberry fields,” “the photograph: a lynching,” “jasper texas 1998”; Lombardo, Tom “Going Off Tackle,” “*Harrison’s Principles of Internal Medicine*, Chapter IV Mechanism,” “*Harrison’s Principles of Internal Medicine*, Chapter VI Treatment,” “The Touchdown Pass,” “Figures of Speech,”Harry Schaut “We Are”.

Due: pick three poems from the above as your favorites and write their titles on a sheet to hand in at the start of class. Exercise: models to try

Wednesday 3/7: **Workshop D; distribute poems for Workshop E on 3/14.**

Reminder: Poetry Portfolios due Friday 3/17.

Week 8 3/12 & 3/14

**The Sonnet and Smashing a Sonnet** – William Wordsworth [The world is too much with us; late and soon]; Judith Johnson “Sonnet of the Rain,” “Whatever I've Taken;” Bernadette Mayer “Sonnet” [Love is a babe as you know and when you], “A Chinese Breakfast,” “Sonnet” [You jerk you didn't call me up], “Sonnet” [ash Ash is left behind from things], “Sonnet We Are Ordinary C'mere,” “Sonnet” [a little tiny poem], “Sonnet” [name address date]

**Forms in Harmony with Content** (i.e., any well-written poem!): Mary Oliver “The Journey;” Maxine Kumin “In the Park;” Stephen Dunn “Stations;” Ishmael Reed “beware : do not read this poem;” Muriel Rukeyser “Poem White Page/ White Page Poem;” e.e. cummings “she being Brand.”

**Exercises:** writing sonnets, smashing sonnets

Wednesday 3/14: Workshop E

**Poetry Portfolio** due in my office **Friday 3/17** by 5:00 pm, 429 CCC

You may hand them in sooner.

There will be a cardboard box to the left of my door.

Those in Workshop E have until 3/23 hand in their portfolios.

Continued

Second Half of the Semester: Short Fiction

The syllabus is subject to change. Full citations are on the material on the handouts/coursepack.

Week 09 3/19 & 3/21

Basic Terms for Discussing Fiction; Expectations for Fiction workshop and typed comments; Margaret Atwood “Happy Endings”

**Exercise:** Character creation

Metaphors: Anne Petry “Like a Winding Sheet”

**Exercise:** dialog

☼ Sign up for Workshops

**Spring Break Week of March 26 through March 30, 2018 – No Classes**

Week 10 4/2 & 4/4

Fantasy in a real world/Fractured Fairy Tales: Ursula K. Le Guin “The Lady of Moge” **Exercise:** connotations of colors, place, age, etc. The Frame.

Structure and alternate value systems: Sherman Alexie “What You Pawn I Will Redeem”

**Exercise**: Point of view [1st/3rd]

**☼Receive Eavesdropping – Dialog and Body Language exercise**

Week 11 4/9 & 4/11

Unreliable narrators we love: Hollis Seamon “The Strange History of Suzanne LaFleshe”

**Exercise:** writing lies sincerely

Unreliable narrators we dislike: Gina Berriault “Who Is It Can Tell Me Who I Am?”

**Exercise:** blind to the conflict

**Due Wednesday** 4/11: Eavesdrop/dialog & body language assignment

REMINDER: Stories due next week for workshop 1

Week 12 4/16 & 4/18

Self-Discovery (presenting unconscious change), Cultures Clash? & Memoir:

Ouroboros – the snake with its tail in its mouth: infinity; rebirth and regeneration; the dark subconscious; the soul

selection from Gloria Anzaldúa *Borderlands/la frontera* (2 pages before Gonzalez story)

Ray Gonzalez “Rattlesnake Dreams”

**Exercise:** Dawning awareness – Kinds and Expressing w/o defining or stating (telling)

The Absurd – Lydia Davis Short Fiction and “Short Short” fiction, selections from *Samuel*

*Johnson is Indignant.* Exercise: wry observation, the absurd

Wednesday 4/18: distribute stories for Workshop 1 on 4/23

And distribute stories for Workshop 2 on 4/25

continued

Week 13 4/23 & 4/25

Monday 4/23: Workshop 1:

Wednesday 4/25: Workshop 2: distribute stories for Workshop 3 on 4/30

and distribute stories for Workshop 4 on 5/2

Week 14 4/30 & 5/2

Monday 4/30: Workshop 3:

Wednesday 5/2: Workshop 4: distribute stories for Workshop 5 on 5/7 and

distribute stories for Workshop 6 on 5/9

Week 15 5/7 & 5/9

Monday 5/7: Workshop 5

Wednesday 5/9: Workshop 6

Your Fiction Portfolios or Plans are due to me by Thursday, May 17, 2018 by 12:15 pm. I will have a cardboard box outside my office 429 CCC for your materials. This is in lieu of a Final Exam. You may hand this in earlier.

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**Required Texts:** Handouts & Coursepack

**Materials Needed:** a pocket folder for in-class writing (save) and handouts, and another one for portfolios, a notebook, pen. You may want to get a folder or binder for the coursepack/handouts.

**Course Description:**

Being a writer – and I assume that you have taken this class that you want to be or consider yourself a writer – means being a part of a writing community, living and dead. It means talking to other writers about your work, their work, and writing that excites you. It means reading as much poetry and fiction as you can, reading as much of everything as you can. I can *not* over-emphasize the importance of reading other people's work. There is a history of creative writing that stretches back into 2000 B.C.E. The earliest piece of extant writing (*Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth,* Sumerian) is poetry. We are part of that time line.

Poetry and fiction have heart. Human beings need to express themselves, ritually, in song, in poems, in writing. We are a part of a long history of people wanting to communicate, wanting to make sound, wanting to share their observations of the world, wanting to ask questions. Poetry and fiction are fun, exciting, scary, romantic, horrifying, fantastic. Enjoy them!

Poetry and fiction writing are arts. They, like other arts, play with reality or build art with reality – reality being images, words, syntax, sounds, memory, dialog, scenes, etc. [Language reflects and creates culture: culture reflects and creates language.] Poetry and fiction can be said to play with the audience who reads/hears them. In any case, writing well takes practice. Writing is an instrument: you don't pick-up the violin for the first time and expect to be a virtuoso. You wouldn't trust someone who says they play the guitar, but never listens to music. You wouldn't trust someone who claims to be a football player, but who never watches football. Writers spend a lot of time writing *and* reading to learn their craft. This is practice, which is what anyone who wants to get good in any field does. Art requires discipline. You should be writing every day; you should be reading authors who excite you as much as you can.

As a class we will look at poems and short stories to examine how they work to build meaning. That is, we will consider the composite elements and how they combine to create the poem, story, memoir, etc. This is known as a “craft” approach, as opposed to a thematic approach. The readings are models, as well as part of our community. We will cover the basic terminology for discussing each genre and how to read closely and carefully AS POETS AND WRITERS in order to better understand literature, in order to be better writers ourselves.

The class will do writing exercises every class, some modeled on the reading and some not. In addition to this, each student will be required to produce a specific number of poems and short stories. (see **Requirements** below)

CONTINUED

As this is an introductory course, I expect you all are beginners. I will be exposing you to a variety of voices, traditions, and techniques. It's important that new writers know the variety of options available to them as they develop their own voices. This is a **process-oriented class**, not a product-oriented one. That means that effort counts more than how professional the final product is. I do not expect you to be writing at the level of the writers we read. I want you to try new ways to write, to do all the exercises. That will earn you full credit. You do not have to be an excellent writer: you have to try. Everyone begins rough. We all can fly.

Poets and fiction writers write about everything in the world. You do not have to agree with any position or perspective or style a poem or story presents. Know that I have selected these texts as examples of different styles and techniques. They all have literary merit. Please see me with any concerns.

You have my permission to be madly in love with language.

**Requirements:**

25% Poetry Portfolio: Six Revised Poems written this semester (may be from in-class exercises), PLUS all poetry exercises, PLUS workshopped poem, PLUS other poems written this semester.

**Graded A – F** (gently graded)

25% Fiction Portfolio: One [5-8 page] Short Story written this semester and workshopped PLUS its revised version and/or have plan for revision. **Graded A – F** (gently graded)

30% exercises (in-class, save these) **Process**: do them all for A/100%

10% typed, do-at-home exercises (1 poetry & 1 fiction, 5% each) **Process**: do them both for A/100%

10% Participation & Possible Quizzes

+ Attendance

**Attendance:**

Your participation in class is important: *it is work*. Therefore, you must come to class well-prepared. I expect you to have done the assigned readings, looked-up in a dictionary (not spell check) any unfamiliar words, and thought about the assigned reading. You should read each poem three times (3x). You should read the poems **aloud**. You should read the stories at least twice (2x) each. You read the first time to understand. You read the second time *as a writer*, to notice the craft or art of how the author put the story together. There will be short reading quizzes at random intervals.

Attendance is crucial. That being said, this is not a perfect world. Everyone gets two (2) free absences. These two absences will not affect your grade. I do **not** want to hear excuses, see doctor’s notes, etc. You have a right to privacy. The third absence, and any absence thereafter, is excessive and will lower your grade half a letter-grade for each absence over two (B to B-). There is a possibility for excused absences. If a student has a total of seven (7) absences, s/he will automatically fail the course. SAVE your absences if you know you will be gone.

Absences for religious reasons are usually excused. Please inform me if this is the case.

**You are not excused from being prepared for class just because you were absent.** Being late to class also will count as either a partial absence or full absence if lateness is chronic or if a large amount of the class period is missed.

**Exercises - In-class writing:**

Exercises will receive a communication mark of ✓- or ✓ or ✓+ . You get credit for doing the assignment. These marks are my communication as to whether you are on-target as to what I hoped you to get out of the exercise/style/practice. Please continue to write and revise these in-class exercises outside of class. Students are required to do all in-class assignments. In-class writings will be collected each class; however, you ALWAYS have the option, if you are in the middle of a thought and want to continue, to take the assignment home and hand it in the next class. CONTINUED

**Exercises - typed, take-home assignments:**

You will receive one poetry assignment, the Audio Archive Assignment that must be typed-up and handed in the next week. You will receive one fiction assignment, Eavesdropping ‒ Dialog & Body Language, which must be typed-up and handed in the next week. Each is worth 5% of your grade, for a total of 10%.

**Workshops:**

Poems and stories submitted for workshop must be TYPED. You will need to make enough copies of the poems for all members of the class/your group + me, and bring them to class the week *before* we workshop to distribute them. You need to email me your short story the week before it’s workshopped. My expectations of workshop comments will be discussed at length before workshops. Written comments need to be clear and specific, noting what your associations are, and any place you are confused. Oral and written comments need to be focused on the poem or story, never the person who wrote it. Your responses, as a critical, engaged reader, are a responsibility. “Good” and “bad” are not useful terms to poets and fiction writers. You should indicate both what you think is working, and what confuses you, and any associations or expectations brought up in the text. Disrespectful, dismissive comments are not acceptable in writing or verbally. Please notify me IMMEDIATELY if someone writes disrespectful comments on your work.

Oral and written comments need to be focused on the poem or story, never the person who made it. We want to help each other make the poem or story stronger. Sign your name at the bottom of your comments on others poems. **I will collect these first to assess your contribution, then pass the sheets on to the poet.** For fiction workshop, I will collect a paragraph of comments (typed) that you write concerning the story in question. I am not here to tell you that your poem/story is wonderful. Your fellow students are not here to tell you that your poem is wonderful. That is not helpful literary criticism. We have a responsibility to each other as artists to give serious consideration to each other's poems, and give a thoughtful and respectful assessment. You will want to tell each other where you are confused in the poem, and what associations you get from it. [I will distribute a handout with specifics on workshop.] Certainly, if you like what a poet is doing, tell the poet what you like. People need to hear the positive as well as the negative. Personal attacks or negative rants are not tolerated. That does not help make anyone’s poem or story stronger.

The workshop is a forum that employs a dialectic or discussion involving the class members, except for the poem or story writer. It is not editing. The authors are the “fly on the wall” overhearing what in their poem is understood as they meant it to be, by the class. In this way, the writer whose work is being workshopped learns what the class did and did not understand, where they were confused, where wrong, and other associations that may or may not have been intended. Because authors cannot be with every reader explaining their poem/story, and because no serious writer wants to have to explain what should be clearly expressed to a reader, the workshop is the place for the writer to find out what is and is not working in their piece.

**Professionalism:**

Give others the courtesy you expect from them. I expect everyone in class to treat each other respectfully. We will have strong, very different opinions about a number of topics. It is possible to politely disagree with someone's interpretation by focusing on ideas, arguments – the text – never the person. I reserve the right to remove a student from the classroom if his/her behavior is inappropriate; I reserve the right to remove a student from the course if I determine that the student’s behavior is egregious.

**Plagiarism:**

Come speak to me if you are feeling overwhelmed or lacking in ideas.Plagiarism is stealing; it is cheating. Anyone who plagiarizes – who uses someone else's **words, facts, or ideas** and presents them as their own – will fail the course. I have a dim view of poems written using all song lyrics, as the lyrics are written by others.

CONTINUED

**Portfolios:**

Each student will produce a **poetry portfolio** of at least six poems WRITTEN DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THIS SEMESTER, **and revised.** This will be handed in half-way through the semester. You do not include poems written before this course or in other courses. You may use poems you developed from in-class writings. These six poems must include revised versions. Staple the original behind the newest, typed version. Put these in the right side pocket of a pocket folder. **ALSO**, please include all of your in-class writing/exercises. Put these in the left side pocket of the pocket folder. Put the poem that you workshopped in the right side if you revised it, otherwise, put it in the left hand pocket. Write your name, my name, and the course number on the outside of the pocket folder.

Each student must produce a piece of **fiction, a short story,** (6-10 pages) or two short-shorts (1-2 pages, which each act as a complete story). You can do fiction, or memoir; you can do absurdist pieces (like Lydia Davis). This will be what is workshopped. The story(ies) must be WRITTEN DURING THIS SEMESTER. Stories will receive my written comments when we consider them for workshop. We will discuss the fiction portfolio/plan in class. In addition to annotating the story, students will type a paragraph of comments concerning the story and give one copy to the author and one to me. Students are required to either revise their short story, or have a one-paragraph, typed plan for revision, depending on when they workshopped. I will explain this later in class.

**Reasonable Accommodations:**

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. Please contact me by phone, email (pdyjak@uwsp.edu), or in person for arrangements. My office hours are listed at the top of this packet.

**Other Writing Class Options**

There are independent, individual courses and tutoring available, as well as the advanced workshops.

**Independent Writing** Engl 157, 257, 357 – variable credits

contact: Prof. Lynn Ludwig, English Department and The Tutoring and Learning Center (TLC) rm 018 LRC

You can do a one-on-one tutorial in poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, essays, etc., for credit, with tutors in the TLC. This has to be set-up through Prof Ludwig in the English Dept; it is a course. These are held in The Writing Lab in the Tutoring-Learning Center (TLC), in LRC 018 (aka the library basement), Mon-Thurs 9:00-8:00, Fri 9:00-12:00, [tlctutor@uwsp.edu](mailto:tlctutor@uwsp.edu), 346-3568.

Tutors in the TLC also can work with you on poems or stories on a drop-in or one time appointment (best to call first). Tutorial assistance is done by your peers, website: http://www.uwsp.edu/tlc/. The tutors at the TLC can assist you in looking critically at your own writing, and can suggest appropriate strategies, exercises, and tools.

After you have complete Engl 253 Intro to Creative Writing, you meet the pre-requisites for Engl 353 sec 1 Advanced Creative Writing - Poetry or English 353 sec 2 Advanced Creative Writing – Fiction. Creative Writing Minors must take an advance workshop in Poetry, and one in Fiction. They may take English 353 twice in one genre. Occasionally, the English Department offers a novel writing course.

**Learning Outcomes ‒** Investigation Level – Arts

Students will

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

We will do this by discussing the assigned readings and workshop material.

demonstrate an understanding of creative expression by producing or performing a creative work.

We will do this through workshopping, in verbal and written comments, and creative writing.

end