

# ENGLISH 111, Introduction to Creative Writing

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Shane Stricker

Eng. 111, CRN: 85993

Tuesday/Thursday: 2:30-3:45, 102 Chitwood Hall

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Office Hours: 2:15 – 3:30 Monday/Wednesday

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## Texts (In order of Appearance)

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*The Name of the Nearest River*, Alex Taylor.

*Lighthouse*, Terrance Hayes

Bottom of the 33<sup>rd</sup>: Hope, Redemption, and Baseball's Longest Game, Dan Barry

## Description and Requirements of This Course

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This class requires that all students think substantially (and creatively), read widely, and write daily. The assignments are given in order to insure that every one of you gains a better understanding of how writing and language, more generally speaking, 'works'. There's **no** possible way to become a better writer and reader without reading and writing. The class will be fun but it will also challenge you. Come to class and to the work within the class with an attitude that says, "I want to learn. I want to be better." The hard work will pay off in the end.

Your final grade will be determined based on the journal assignments, attendance, participation, and the final portfolio of revised work (which will be turned in at the end of the semester). I also reserve the right to change the syllabus as we go along if our pace quickens or slows. Also, do not be surprised to see either multiple choice or essay-based quizzes added into the mix if the class (as a whole) demonstrates an unwillingness to read the assigned pages for one or multiple days.

## Attendance Policy

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I have often had students ask why I take attendance and why they are penalized for not coming to class. You are all 'grown' individuals and are responsible for your own behavior. In this life, there is **nothing** that you **have** to do. However, you must deal with the consequences of the choice to not do anything, in life as well as in this class. We need all of you in class every day in

order to facilitate a classroom dialogue and for each of us to grow beyond ourselves and get better as writers (myself included). With that said, students are granted three absences in this class before a penalty will be assessed to their final grade. If more than three classes are missed, a third of a letter grade will be reduced for each additional absence from the student's overall, end-of-the-semester grade.

As well, I only accept late work when there have been arrangements made previous to the due date (This does not mean sending me an e-mail at midnight the night before the work is due—which has happened on numerous occasions with the work always either being finished on time and turned in or it has received no credit because it was turned in late).

## A Note on Workshop Etiquette

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While it is in your best interest as both writer and reader to look at the work of others, including the work of your peers, with a critical eye there is a difference between being critical of an author's work and of the author, herself. We will be, to quote one of my former professors, "tough on writing but kind to writers." If there are problems, or if you feel that you are being attacked in an unfair manner, let me know after class. Chances are, since I don't put up with that type of behavior, that I will have handled it in the classroom before you'll even need to talk to me. However, do not hesitate to come discuss any issues with me either after class or in my office hours.

## Schedule of Classes/Due Dates for Assignments

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### Fiction

August 21—Meet and Greet, Syllabus look-through, In-class writing assignment

August 23—Discussion of The 'Rules' of Writing Fiction/Writing in General (Dufresne, Vonnegut Handouts), **Journal #1**

August 28—Discussion of "The Name of the Nearest River" (Taylor, pgs. 3-10), "Thanasphere" (Vonnegut, handout), **Journal #2**

August 30—Discussion of "The Evening Part of Daylight" (Taylor, pgs. 99-108), "Hal Irwin's Magic Lamp" (Vonnegut, handout), **Journal #3**

September 4—Discussion of “Things Both Right and Needed” (Taylor, pgs. 11-19), “Twin Forks” (Woodrell, handout), **Journal #4**

September 6—Discussion of “The Coal Thief” (Taylor, pgs. 21-42), **Journal #5**

September 11—Discussion of “A Lakeside Penitence” (Taylor, pgs. 129-138), Group 1 turns in their stories (one copy to me, one copy to each class member), **Journal #6 (Group 1)**

September 13—Workshop for fiction story (Group 1), Group 2 turns in their stories (one copy to me, one copy to each class member), **Journal #6 (Group 2)**

September 18—Workshop for fiction story (Group 2), Group 3 turns in their stories (one copy to me, one copy to each class member), **Journal #6 (Group 3)**

September 20—Workshop for fiction story (Group 3)

### **Poetry**

September 25—“Lighthead’s Guide to the Galaxy” and the **Entire** section entitled “The Last Train to Africa” (Hayes, pgs. 1-24) **Journal #7**

September 27—Read the first half of the section entitled “God is an American” (Hayes, pgs. 25-35, last poem in this part to read for this date is “Mystic Bounce”), **Poem #1 (Shakespearean Sonnet)**

October 2—Read the second half of the section entitled “God is an American” (Hayes, pgs. 36-45)

October 4—Read the first half of the section entitled “Coffin for Head of State” (Hayes, pgs. 49-57, last poem in this part to read for this date is “Snow for Wallace Stevens”) **Journal #8**

October 9—Read the second half of the section entitled “Coffin for Head of State” (Hayes, pgs. 58-69), **Poem #2 (Free Verse)**

October 11—**NO CLASS (Conferences in my office—we’ll set up times prior to this date), Journal #9/Poem #3**

October 16—Read the **Entire** section entitled “Cocktails With Orpheus” (Hayes, pgs. 73-93), **Poem #4 (A Pecha Kucha)**

October 18—Workshop in Small Groups (Bring the Shakespearean Sonnet on this day, revised as well as the Free Verse poem, revised)

October 23—Workshop in Small Groups (Bring the Pecha Kucha, revised)

### **Non Fiction**

October 25—Read the first 29 pages of *Bottom of the 33<sup>rd</sup>* (Barry, up to the page break that ends with “Play ball. Strike one. Hallelujah). **Journal #10**

October 30—Read to the end of the section entitled “Innings 1 To 9” (Barry, up to the section break where there are pictures of baseball cards—Bob Bonner, Win Remmerswaal, etc.)

November 1—Read pgs. 79 to 105 (Barry, up to the page break that ends, “‘Bazeball,’ it said.”) **Journal #11**

November 6 – No Class: Voting Day

November 8—Read pgs. 105 to 128 (Barry, up to the end of the section entitled “Innings 10 To 21”), **Journal #12**

November 13—Read pgs. 131 to 157 (Barry, up to the page break that ends, “And they are trying to visualize this strange place called Pawtucket that has men in its thrall, and will not let go.”), **Journal #13**

November 15—Read pgs. 157 to 175 (Barry, up to the page break that ends, “Thank you, Lord.”)

November 20, 22—No Class: Thanksgiving Break

November 27—Read pgs. 175 to 250 (Barry, up to the end of the section entitled “Thirty Years Later”), **Journal #14/Essay** (One copy due to me, and one to each group member)

November 29—Workshop in small groups

December 4—Workshop in small groups

December 6—**TURN IN FINAL PORTFOLIO OF REVISED WORK (One fiction story, three poems, and one essay). NO EXCEPTIONS.** And our tearful goodbyes.