

**Introduction to Creative Writing**  
English 111: Section 2, Fall 2012  
M, W, F 12:30PM-1:20PM in Armstrong Hall 407  
Instructor Name: Connie Pan  
E-mail: cpan1@mix.wvu.edu  
Office Hours: W 10:30AM-12:00PM and by appointment  
Office Location: Clark 330

“You must stay drunk on writing so reality cannot destroy you.”

--Ray

Bradbury

“The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars.”

--Jack Kerouac (*On the Road*)

**Objective:** The course’s goal is to transform the curious reader and writer into a serious reader and writer through dedication to the reading, writing, and analysis of literature.

**Policies, Procedures, and Other Things.**

**Attendance:** I hope all of you attend class 100% of the time; however, if you must miss class due to illness, the blues, concert, a long weekend at the Hamptons, personal emergency, religious observances, an away football game, etc., you are responsible for the assignments, handouts, and material that you missed. As for lateness, things happen, but excessive lateness will affect your grade. Attendance will be graded as follows: 0-2 absences (A); 3-4 absences (B); 5-6 absences (C); 7 absences (D); 8 or more absences (F).

**Participation:** Everyone is expected to contribute their ideas, insights, and interpretations to class discussion. This weighs heavily on your being prepared. Being prepared means having read and digested the material thoroughly and thoughtfully. Come to class prepared to answer questions and discuss the material.

**Grades and Major Assignments:** Grades in this class will be based on the following: attendance and participation (10 percent); Writer’s Notebook (5 percent); Tests on terms and readings (15 percent); Discussion Questions (10 percent); Style Presentation (10 percent); Poetry Recitation (5 percent); Reading Analyses (10 percent); Imitation Exercises (10 percent); your original creative work to be critiqued by a partner then revised and collected in portfolio with a short introduction to your work (25 percent) Grading Key: 100=A+; 94-99=A; 90-93=A-; 85-89=B+; 83-84=B; 80-82=B-; 75-79=C+; 73-74=C; 70-72=C-; 65-69=D+; 63-64=D; 60- 62=D-; 59 and below=F. Note: If you miss more than seven classes, you will not pass this class.

**Brief Explanations of Some of the Major Assignments:**

Writer's Notebook - You will keep a separate notebook in which you will write, paste, or tape anything that inspires you and your writing: images, photos, quotes, song lyrics, excerpts from stories / poems / essays, charts, magazine articles, etc.. Try to record at least one thing a day. The point of keeping this notebook is to encourage you to observe more and to revisit the things that inspire you. Your Writer's Notebook will be turned in periodically throughout the course. Please bring it to each class and carry it with you constantly. I will ask you to share from them often.

Tests on terms and readings - In order to assure you complete the readings, there will be a short quiz on each reading prior to discussion. To assure you are gaining fluency in literary terms, there will be tests on major handouts.

Discussion Questions - Depending on the size of the class, you will be responsible for leading the discussion for at least one of the readings. On the day your reading is due, you will bring copies of questions for the class. For book-length works (Addonizio, Hayes, and Thomas), two people will be assigned to prepare Discussion Questions.

Style Presentation on Fiction Writers - During the fiction portion of the class, each of you will present on a writer's style. On your own time, you will be expected to read one book-length work (a novel or a collection) by the author and prepare a handout for the class. (Note: Your first imitation exercise will be based on the author you present on.)

Poetry Recitation - During the poetry portion of the class, each of you will be expected to recite a poem by an influential poet. The poem must be at least ten lines. Be prepared to talk a little bit about why you chose your particular poet and the poem. Please bring a copy of the poem for me on the day of your recitation. (Note: Your second imitation exercise will be based on the poem you recite and two additional poems by the author. Please turn in copies of the three poems with your imitation exercise.)

Reading Analyses - From the schedule of assigned readings, you are required to write a double-spaced 2-3 page analysis on one short story, one poem, and one essay (or 2-3 vignettes by Thomas). These analyses are to be treated like mini-papers (thesis-driven) and are to be turned in no later than the date of your revised Workshop piece (September 26 for fiction, November 2 for poetry, and December 3 for creative nonfiction). Please do not wait until the last minute to turn these in. If I receive them all at the same time, close to the first deadline, I will schedule staggered due dates.

Imitation Exercises - In *Sacred Wood*, T. S. Eliot states, "Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different." I don't think imitation is all bad. When starting out, imitation is a big part of finding your voice and your own personal writing style. For each genre, you will complete an imitation--or theft--exercise (some details above). For the creative nonfiction imitation exercise, find any published essay and imitate voice, structure, etc. using your own life experiences. These exercises should strive for "flash" fiction and nonfiction length: 1,000 words or less. For poetry, the length of the imitation exercise should reflect the average length of the three poems you select to imitate (or "steal").

**Extra credit:** You may attend and write a single-spaced one-page review of two special events connected to the English Department. Please get approval from me for your special event in advance. A review consists of a summary of the event as well as your opinion of the event. The extra credit assignment counts for five extra points on one of your tests. Please type your review.

**Additional Help:** University Counseling Services. The Carruth Center provides resources to help manage stress, improve relationships, make healthy lifestyle choices, and face new challenges and transitions. The Carruth Center is located on the 3rd Floor of the Student Services Building. Phone: (304) 293-4431 Disabilities. If you have a documented learning disability or any special needs that may impair your participation and / or performance in class, please make me aware of it as soon as possible, so that I may better accommodate you. Also, there is a support system available through West Virginia University Office of Disability Services. It is located in G30 in the Mountainlair. Phone: (304) 293-6700

**Social Justice Policy at West Virginia University:** The following core values establish the foundation for Social Justice at West Virginia University: Every person has intrinsic worth and dignity; Respect for the law is fundamental; Freedom from fear is universal; A climate of opportunity, mutual respect, and understanding engenders a feeling that the future should be shared by all community members; There is an absence of discrimination and harassment based on age, color, disability, ethnic origin, marital status, pregnancy, race, religious beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, and veteran status; and The rich diversity of people, their cultures, and the bonds that tie people together are appreciated and celebrated.

### **Texts (in order of appearance)**

*Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* by Sherman Alexie

*St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves* by Karen Russell

*Lucifer at the Starlite* by Kim Addonizio

*Lighthouse* by Terrance Hayes

*Safekeeping: Some True Stories from a Life* by Abigail Thomas

Creative nonfiction and other PDFs TBA and uploaded to eCampus later in semester (according to the class's tastes and progression)

### **Required Materials**

One thumb drive/flash drive

Two notebooks (one for class notes and in-class writing and one for your Writer's Notebook)

Two folders (one for class handouts and one that will be submitted to me as your portfolio)

Mountie Bounty for photocopies, PDFs, presentations, writing assignments, etc.

### **Class Schedule and Day-to-Day Assignments**

\*I reserve the right to make minor changes to the syllabus according to the class's progress if the changes benefit the class.\*

Monday, August 20 Icebreakers and Introductions. Review Syllabus. For next class: Sign Student Agreement and scan student ID. Read: first paragraph of each short story in Alexie and Russell's collections and bring a top five for each. Be ready to defend your choices.

Wednesday, August 22 Introduction to Writer's Notebooks. Classic literature. Vote for stories and let's talk about beginnings.

Friday, August 24 Fiction Handout. Style Presentation Introduction and Sign-ups (Note: Imitation exercise #1 for fiction due on the day of your Style Presentation) Read: Alexie "This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona." Study: Fiction Handout

Monday, August 27. Read: Alexie " \_\_\_\_\_ " Study: Fiction Handout

Wednesday, August 29 Read: Alexie " \_\_\_\_\_ " Study: Fiction Handout

Friday, August 31 Fiction Handout Quiz. Style Presentations: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
Read: Alexie " \_\_\_\_\_ " and " \_\_\_\_\_ "

Monday, September 3 No Class. Enjoy and have an unlaborious day!

Wednesday, September 5 Style Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_ Read: Alexie " \_\_\_\_\_ "

Friday, September 7 Style Presentations: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
Read: Russell "St Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves" and " \_\_\_\_\_ "

Monday, September 10 No Class due to conferences.

Wednesday, September 12 Read: Russell " \_\_\_\_\_ "

Friday, September 14 Style Presentations: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
Read: Russell " \_\_\_\_\_ " Write: Workshop story

Monday, September 17 Read: Russell " \_\_\_\_\_ " Write: Workshop story

Wednesday, September 19 Style Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_ Read: Russell " \_\_\_\_\_ " Write: Workshop story

Friday, September 21 Workshop story due in class. Introduction to Critique and assign partners. Style Presentations: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Read: Partner's Workshop story Write: Critique for partner

Monday, September 24 Discuss stories with workshop partner Write: Revise Workshop story

Wednesday, September 26 Poetry Handout. Introduction to Poetry Recitation. Poetry Recitation Sign-ups (Note: Imitation exercise #2 for poetry due on the day of your Poetry Recitation) Due today: Story Study: Poetry Handout

Friday, September 28 Read: Addonizio approx. pp 1- 20 Study: Poetry Handout

Monday, October 1 Read: Addonizio approx. pp 21-40 Study: Poetry Handout

Wednesday, October 3 Poetry Handout Quiz. Read: Addonizio approx. pp 41-60

Friday, October 5 Read: Addonizio approx. pp 61-80

Monday, October 8 Read: Addonizio approx. pp 80-end

Wednesday, October 10 Cumulative Addonizio Discussion. Read: Hayes approx. pp 1- 20

Friday, October 12 No Class due to Conferences

Monday, October 15 Poetry Recitations: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Read: Hayes approx. pp 21-40

Wednesday, October 17 Poetry Recitations: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Read: Hayes approx. pp 41-60

Friday, October 19 Poetry Recitations: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Read: Hayes approx. pp 61- 80

Monday, October 22 Poetry Recitations: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Read: Hayes approx. pp 81-100 Write: Workshop poem

Wednesday, October 24 Poetry Recitations: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Read: Hayes approx. pp 101-end Write: Workshop poem

Friday, October 26 Cumulative Hayes Discussion Write: Workshop poem

Monday, October 29 Workshop poem due in class. Assign Critique partners. Read: Partner's Workshop poem Write: Critique for partner

Wednesday, October 31 Poem Critiques. Write: Revise Workshop poem

Friday, November 2 Introduction to creative nonfiction. Due today: Poem Read: Thomas approx. pp 1-45

Monday, November 5 Read: Thomas approx. pp 46-79

Wednesday, November 7 Read: Thomas approx. pp 80-112

Friday, November 9 Read: Thomas approx. pp 113-160

Monday, November 12 Read: Thomas approx. pp 161-end

Wednesday, November 14 Cumulative Thomas Discussion Read: CNF PDF #1 Write: Imitation exercise #3 and Workshop essay

Friday, November 16 No Class due to Conferences Read: CNF PDF #1 Write: Imitation exercise #3 and Workshop essay

Monday, November 19 - Friday, November 23 Thanksgiving Break. No Class Read: CNF PDF #1 Write: Imitation exercise #3 and Workshop essay

Monday, November 26 Assign Critique partners. Due Today: Imitation exercise #3 and Workshop essay Read: Partner's Workshop essay Write: Critique for partner

Wednesday, November 28 Essay Critiques Write: Revise Workshop Essay

Friday, November 30 Portfolio Introduction Due Today: Essay Read: CNF PDF #2 Write: Portfolio and Preface

Monday, December 3 Introduction to Workshop Write: Portfolio and Preface

Wednesday, December 5 Write: Portfolio and Preface

Friday, December 7 Due Today: Portfolio and Preface

\*Portfolios Returned During Final Exam Time Slot: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14 (3PM-5PM)

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### Student Agreement

(Please read the following agreement and return to me.)

I have thoroughly read the syllabus and the schedule of work. I understand what is expected of me regarding the course work, policies, and procedures.

Student Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

