

**English 111, Introduction to Creative Writing, Section
Spring 2014, MWF at 12:30 p.m. to 1:20 p.m. in 119 Armstrong Hall**

Instructor: Jesse Kalvitis

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Office: 309 Colson Hall

Mailbox: Colson Hall main office, 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. weekdays

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., unless otherwise announced.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Everything Ravaged, Everything Burned*; Wells Tower
- *Without A Net: The Female Experience of Growing up Working Class*; Michelle Tea, editor
- *The Triggering Town*;
- Other readings will be made available via email or as in-class handouts. Be prepared to print online readings and bring them to class (using an e-reader or laptop is also fine; see technology note, below). As a class, we will be compiling a list of recommended reading—some works from that list will be used in class as well.

THE BASICS: In this course you will be introduced to three genres of creative writing: fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry. You will read and respond to work by your peers and by published authors, and create and revise work of your own.

OFFICE HOURS & E-MAIL: My office hours are from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. Feel free to stop by if you have any questions, about coursework or more general topics. I will respond to emails within 24 hours during the week. **I do not check my university email on weekends.** If you email me after noon on Friday, you should assume that your message will not be seen until mid-Monday.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- **Attendance: Come to class and to conferences on time, with the necessary materials for each session.** Absences mean you will miss short writing assignments and important in-class activities. This will negatively impact your grade. If you absolutely must miss a class session, notify me in advance, and make arrangements *beforehand* to complete the work that you will miss. If you foresee having to miss class more than once, it may be preferable for you to take Introduction to Creative Writing in a future semester instead.
- **Late work: Don't do it.** Since all major assignments are given weeks in advance, there is no reason to wait until the last minute to save or print your work. As deadlines approach, plan ahead to avoid problems with equipment and to be sure you have access to a computer and printer. Failure to do so is not an acceptable excuse for turning in late work. Though the main assignment for each unit must be turned in electronically, **I do not accept informal writing assignments via email.**
- **Cheating/Plagiarism:** It is assumed that you will turn in original work written specifically in response to the assignments for *this* class. Turning in work that is not your own may result in a failing grade for an assignment, a failing grade for the course, or other penalties that can have negative effects on your permanent record and on your ability to complete your degree program. It's also just tacky, and makes everyone sad.
- **Technology:** You are welcome to bring laptops, tablets, e-readers, etc. for note-taking or for assigned readings. If these devices become a distraction to me or other members of the class you will be asked to put them away. If I see you on your phone in class, I'm much more likely to single you out to answer a question during discussion. If you must take a phone call due to an emergency please quietly excuse yourself from the room. Some class meetings will include in-class writing time: bring an electronic copy of the paper you're working on.
- **Students with Disabilities:** Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate students with disabilities. If

you have documentation of accommodations required from the Office of Disability Services, please bring it to my office during office hours or leave it in my mailbox.

- **Writing Center:** Any student can get free one-on-one help with writing issues through the English department's Writing Center, located in G02 Colson Hall. They get pretty busy, so make an appointment via their website. Bring the assignment you're having trouble with and make sure to prepare specific questions.
- **University Counseling Services:** The Carruth Center provides free resources to help manage stress, improve relationships, make healthy lifestyle choices, and face new challenges and transitions. For more information about their hours, services, and location, see <http://well.wvu.edu/ccpps> or call 304-293-4431.
- **Social Justice Policy:** West Virginia University strives to provide an atmosphere of reasonable, open discourse for all students. I will do my best to make sure that nobody is ever made to feel unsafe in class discussions, but I will not steer us away from uncomfortable, controversial topics if they arise. Please think before you speak, and be respectful of others, including those with different backgrounds and life experiences from yours. If you are racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, etc. on your own time, that's unfortunate. If you let those traits enter into the classroom, that's unacceptable.

A note on sensitive material in creative nonfiction assignments: No topic is forbidden in this course, but do please be aware of your classmates' possible reaction to difficult material. Also, if material included in a nonfiction piece makes me aware of an unprosecuted crime (including but not limited to sexual assault), I am required to report it to the authorities.

Your grade in this course is based on:

Formal Writing (50% of your final grade):

By the end of the semester, each student will have written and revised a portfolio of polished writing. I will comment on each piece during the workshop week, but it will not be graded until the end of the semester, after revision. This portfolio will be made up of:

- A five-page (about 1,500 words) work of original fiction (or two to three flash fiction pieces, each 300 to 700 words, totalling about 1,500 words), due via email in pdf format by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 31st, to be workshopped in class during the week of February 3 through 7.
- A five-page (about 1,500 words) work of original creative nonfiction (or two to three flash nonfiction pieces, each 300 to 700 words, totalling about 1,500 words), due via email in pdf format by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, February 28th, to be workshopped in class during the week of March 3 through 7.
- Three shorter poems or one longer poem, due via email in pdf format by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 4th, to be workshopped in class during the week of April 7 through 11.

Informal Writing (30% of your final grade):

- Your informal writing grade is comprised of 30 short writes and other homework assignments. Some homework assignments will be workshop responses or responses to the readings, but the vast majority will be short creative writing assignments. Each short writing assignment will be graded and returned for inclusion in the final portfolio, but it need not be revised. Additional informal writing assignments will be provided to make up ones missed, but only a few.

Attendance/Participation (20% of your final grade):

- Each class session represents a chance for you to earn attendance points. Do so by coming to class on time, answering the day's attendance question, and participating in class discussion and activities.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Write down all assignment deadlines in a planner, a calendar, or as a reminder in an electronic device. It is your responsibility to know when things are due and to turn them in on time.
- Allow time and funding for printing short assignments, etc. Have a good idea of where and when you can print on campus, but leave yourself extra time to deal with difficulties.
- Hold onto **all of your writing**, as well as handouts and feedback that you receive from me. I may ask for any (or all) of it in your portfolio.
- Check your Mix email often. I will send readings and sometimes assignment sheets to that address. It's also how I will let you know if I need to cancel class.
- Double space the body of all assignments. In a single-spaced header on the first page put your name, my name, the section number or time, the date, and the word count. Also include a running header in the upper right corner that contains your last name and the title (or an abbreviated version) of the piece. Use 12 point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, and page numbers. A page is defined as text reaching the end of a printed piece of paper; when an assignment calls for two pages, one page plus a few lines on the next **is not sufficient**. See the word count guidelines in the formal writing section for assignment-specific requirements.
- Conferences are held in my office, 309 Colson Hall, generally from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sign up sheets will be available during the class session before conferences, if not sooner. A conference meeting counts for attendance points, and often represent **your only chance** to turn in a homework assignment. If you miss the chance to sign up, **do not** email me for an appointment—come to my office at the start of the conference time and wait for an open time slot. If you miss it, you miss it.
- If you have any questions regarding your progress in the course, please email me and/or come see me during office hours. **Do not wait until near midterms or the end of the semester if you are having difficulties.** I'm as busy as you are at those times, and may not be able to give your question the time it needs.
- The schedule of work that makes up the next few pages is subject to change. Each class tends to develop its own particular pace, and the syllabus may be adapted to conform.

SCHEDULE OF WORK:

Unit One: Fiction.

Primary Text: *Everything Ravaged, Everything Burned*

Secondary Texts: To be announced; will be provided via email. Likely authors include Haruki Murakami, Anne Beattie, Breece Pancake, Dagoberto Gilb, and others.

Fiction Piece Due Date: Friday, January 31st, to be workshopped during the week of February 3 – 7.

Weirdly Short Week One:

Wednesday, January 8: In-class writing. Read Wells Tower, “Down Through the Valley” and “Leopard.”

Friday, January 10: Go over syllabus. Discuss readings. What makes good fiction? **Homework:** short writing assignment, more Wells Tower.

Week Two: Fiction, readings and activities.

Monday, January 13: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Wednesday, January 15: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Friday, January 17: Out of class assignment; details to be announced. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Week Three: Fiction, readings and activities.

Monday, January 20: NO CLASS. (MLK Day)

Wednesday, January 22: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Friday, January 24: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Week Four: Fiction, drafting your own work.

Monday, January 27: In-class writing time, discussion. **Homework:** Partial draft of fiction piece.

Wednesday, January 29: In-class writing time, discussion. **Homework:** Further partial draft.

Friday, January 31: In-class writing time, discussion. **Fiction piece due via email** in pdf format by 5:00 p.m. Be sure to check your Mix email; by midnight on Friday you will receive the workshop schedule and documents for the following week.

Week Five: Fiction, peer response and workshop.

Monday, February 3: Workshop time for student writing. Bring two copies of a typed response to each piece on the day's schedule, and be prepared to offer verbal feedback to the author.

Wednesday, February 5: Workshop time for student writing. Bring two copies of a typed response to each piece on the day's schedule, and be prepared to offer verbal feedback to the author.

Friday, February 7: **Homework:** Workshop time for student writing. Bring two copies of a typed response to each piece on the day's schedule, and be prepared to offer verbal feedback to the author.

Unit Two: Creative nonfiction.

Primary Text: *Without A Net*

Secondary Texts: To be announced; will be provided via email. Likely authors include: Jo Ann Beard, Ann Pancake, Kevin Oderman, Janisse Ray, and much, much more. :)

Creative Nonfiction Piece Due Date: Friday, February 28th, to be workshopped during the week of March 3 -7.

Week Six: Creative nonfiction, readings and activities.

Monday, February 10: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Wednesday, February 12: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Friday, February 14: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Week Seven: Creative nonfiction, readings and activities.

Monday, February 17: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Wednesday, February 19: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Friday, February 21: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Week Eight: Creative nonfiction, drafting your own work.

Monday, February 24: Out of class assignment; details to be announced. **Homework:** Partial draft.

Wednesday, February 26: In-class writing time, discussion. **Homework:** Further partial draft.

Friday, February 28: In-class writing time, discussion. **Creative nonfiction piece due via email** in pdf format by 5:00 p.m. Be sure to check your Mix email; by midnight on Friday you will receive the workshop schedule and documents for the following week.

Week Nine: Creative nonfiction, peer response and workshop.

Monday, March 3: Workshop time for student writing. Bring two copies of a typed response to each piece on the day's schedule, and be prepared to offer verbal feedback to the author.

Wednesday, March 5: Workshop time for student writing. Bring two copies of a typed response to each piece on the day's schedule, and be prepared to offer verbal feedback to the author.

Friday, March 7: Workshop time for student writing. Bring two copies of a typed response to each piece on the day's schedule, and be prepared to offer verbal feedback to the author.

March 9 – 16: No class. Spring break!

Unit Three: Poetry

Primary Text: *The Triggering Town*

Secondary Texts: To be announced; will be provided via email.

Poetry Piece Due Date: Friday, April 4th, to be workshopped during the week of April 7 – 11.

Week Ten: Poetry, readings and activities.

Monday, March 17: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Wednesday, March 19: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Friday, March 21: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Week Eleven: Poetry, readings and activities.

Monday, March 24: Out of class assignment; details to be announced.

Wednesday, March 26: Discuss readings. **Homework:** Short writing assignment.

Note: Office hours canceled so I can leave early for a creative writing conference.

Friday, March 28 : Class canceled; I'll be at a conference. **Homework:** To be announced.

Week Twelve: Poetry, drafting your own work.

Monday, March 31: In-class writing time, discussion. **Homework:** Partial draft.

Wednesday, April 2: In-class writing time, discussion. **Homework:** Further partial draft.

Friday, April 4: In-class writing time, discussion. **Poetry piece due via email** in pdf format by 5:00 p.m. Be sure to check your Mix email; by midnight on Friday you will receive the workshop schedule and documents for the following week.

Week Thirteen: Poetry, peer response and workshop.

Monday, April 7: Workshop time for student writing. Bring two copies of a typed response to each piece on the day's schedule, and be prepared to offer verbal feedback to the author.

Wednesday, April 9: Workshop time for student writing. Bring two copies of a typed response to each piece on the day's schedule, and be prepared to offer verbal feedback to the author.

Friday, April 11: Workshop time for student writing. Bring two copies of a typed response to each piece on the day's schedule, and be prepared to offer verbal feedback to the author.

End-of-Semester Revision Time:

Week Fourteen:

Monday, April 14: Readings, activities, discussion. In-class work on revision strategies.

Wednesday, April 16: Out of class assignment; details to be announced.

Friday, April 18th: No class: Easter break.

Week Fifteen:

Monday, April 21: Readings, activities, discussion. In-class work on revision strategies.

Wednesday, April 23: Readings, activities, discussion. In-class work on revision strategies.

Friday, April 25: **Final portfolio is due. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.** I'm not sure what else we're doing on this day. There's a very good chance there will be pizza.