

# English 111

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Emily Moore, ENGL 111, Spring 2004, Introduction to Creative Writing

Emily Moore, Instructor

Office Hours: MW 11:00-12:30 Stansbury 438

Spring2004 MWF 12:30-1:20

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## English 111: Introduction to Creative Writing

### Course Goals:

English 111 introduces students to three genres of creative writing: creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry. Our goal is not to produce masterworks in these genres (though they're always welcome), but to experiment with language, to sample published writing, and to identify some elements of "good" writing that we want to incorporate into our own. Classes will center on writing exercises (to generate ideas and experiments with language), on reading assignments (to find models or ant-models for our own work), and on workshops (to give and receive suggestions for our work). Writing well means reading widely: be prepared not only to write a lot but to read a lot as well. Your primary goal this semester should be to expand your knowledge of the possibilities of creative language. Tug words in new directions. Frame your subject in ways we rarely see.

### Required Texts:

Burroway, Janet. *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft*. New York: Longman Publishers, 2003.

Bishop, Wendy. *Thirteen Ways of Looking for a Poem*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 2000.

Your journal. (See below.)

Xeroxed handouts. I will provide copies of other assignments; you will also be required to make copies of your writing (for workshops) and of hand-outs (for presentations).

### Course Components:

PARTICIPATION (35% of final grade)

- In-class & Workshop (15%)

Creative writing demands immersion: in writing, in reading, in working thoroughly through the craft. Participation is therefore essential. I expect you to be present and prepared in class; six or more absences will result in a failing grade. You must also be prepared for workshops, which means having copies of your work ready to distribute to your group, and being ready to read and discuss your peers' writing. Keep in mind that as your classmates take the time to read and critique your work, you should do the same for them. Also, you must be willing to speak up during class and workshop sessions. Repeated failure to do so will lower your participation grade.

•Author Presentation (10%)

Once during the semester you will be asked to give a brief (five-minute) presentation on one of the writers we're reading. This will require a small amount of research, but it needn't be more than a basic introduction to the writer's work. Prepare a small hand-out for the class that includes a short biography, a bibliography of the author's other work, and a brief commentary on the writer's contributions to his or her craft (what he or she is known for stylistically, what critics say about him or her, what you admire personally about the writing). You must be in class on the day of your author presentation; no make-ups.

•Public Readings (10%)

Morgantown is home to a unique writing community, of which you are now a part. I ask that you participate in this community by attending two readings, one sponsored by the university, the other in the community. University readings are listed on the syllabus; you can plan for one that works in your schedule. For community readings, consider the open mic night at the Blue Moose Cafe, 7:30pm on the first Monday of every month. Sometimes there are poetry slams at 123 Pleasant Street, or readings at the Tea Garden; we'll keep our ears open and announce events as they arise. You could also organize your own reading, inviting writers from the community and/or from the other section of English 111 to share their writing. (Talk to me if a group of you are interested.) Whichever two readings you decide to attend, for each one type a single, double-spaced page that reflects on the experience: who spoke, who attended, what you admired (quote a good line), what you didn't admire, and why. Turn your reflection into me at the next class meeting.

JOURNAL ENTRIES (35% of final grade)

Because this class emphasizes experimentation with and commitment to writing, you will keep a writing journal. Your journal can be any kind of notebook, spiral or otherwise. Use it to jot down images, conversations you hear on the PRT, characters you meet at the grocery store--anything. Your journal should be your primary writing companion this semester: carry with you, write in it a little every day. You will also use your journal in class to record free-writes, notes, and exercises, and to record your responses to reading assignments. Basically, it's the place you use to write everything for this class.

I will spot-check your journals throughout the semester to make sure you are using them, but I will never read their entirety. The journal is your own writing space. Every Friday (see syllabus), you will choose a small section of your journal to share with me.

Journal entries should be two pages typed, double-spaced: one page of creative writing (which could include anything you've written in your journal—exercises, the beginnings of your larger pieces, or notes you make outside of class) and one page of reading response to the week's assignments (we'll talk more about this later). I will evaluate your journal entries on a <+, <, or 4- basis, depending on their creativity, their commitment to trying class concepts, and their thoroughness in responding to readings. Keep up with these journal entries; they're a big part of your grade, and a budding place for many ideas. Note that I do not accept late entries.

#### FINAL PORTFOLIO (30% of final grade)

This semester you will be responsible for writing five poems, two short stories (at least five pages each), and two pieces of creative non-fiction (at least five pages each). Your drafts will be workshopped in class, and you will receive comments on them from your peers and from me. Using these suggestions, you will revise these pieces for your final portfolio, a collection of your writing which you will submit at the end of the semester for a grade. I will evaluate your final portfolio in terms of its creativity, its use of class concepts, and its commitment to revision.

As you write your assignments, please keep in mind the following:

- Avoid writing that is merely about break-ups or unrequited love.
- Avoid sheer shock-value writing (tirades, gratuitous gore).
- Genre fiction (fantasy, sci-fi) will not be accepted for graded work in this class.
- Don't forsake regular punctuation and capitalization unless you have a very good reason.

#### **A Note on Grades:**

English 111 is not an "easy A." I emphasize this point now so that you can evaluate whether this course is for you. This will be an intensive sixteen weeks of reading, writing, and reflecting. It will be fun, inspiring, I think, but only if you put forth an effort. I expect a good deal of commitment from you, and a willingness to dive into your writing whether or not every piece is "successful." "A" students consistently push themselves beyond their limitations. They complete ~md strive for their best on every assignment, and their portfolio represents the strongest writing they can produce. "B" students complete all assignments, but they do not necessarily take risks with their writing, or put in the effort to fully revise. "C" students have missing assignments. "D" and "F" students have too many missing assignments.

For the record: Six or more absences will result in a failing grade.

I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE WORK.

## SYLLABUS

(subject to change as needed)

## INGREDIENTS

### Week 1

M 1/12 Introductions.

W 1/14 Ingredients: Concrete Details.

F 1/16 Ingredients: Image.

### Week 2

M 1/19 No Class: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

W 1/21 Ingredients: Similes & Metaphors. Assign Author Presentations.

F 1/23 Ingredients: Voice. First Journal Entry Due.

## CREATIVE NONFICTION

### Week 3

M 1/26 What is creative nonfiction?

W 1/28 Personal Experience Enlarged: The Big Picture.

F 1/30 Ruminations: Knives & Sighs. Journals Due.

### Week 4

M 2/2 Family Revealed.

W 2/4 Aunt Bea. Or Lightbulb Revelations.

F 2/6 Draft of First Nonfiction Piece Due. No Journals.

### Week 5

M 2/9 Postcard Memoirs.

W 2/11 Form.

Th 2/12 \*Reading by James Harrns, Professor of English at WVIJ and author of *Freeways and Acqueducts* (poems). 7:30pm, Gold Ballroom, Mountainlair

F 2/13 Postmarks, Postscripts: et cetera. Journals Due.

### Week 6

M 2/16 Draft of Second Nonfiction Piece Due, with copies. Mock workshop.

W 2/18 Workshop.

F 2/20 Workshop. Journals.

S 2/21 \*Twelfth Annual Literature Symposium for Undergraduates, 10am-4pm, Mountainlair

## F I C T I O N

### Week 7

M 2/23 Fiction vs. Nonfiction: Taking Out the Telling.

W 2/25 Desire. Foiled Desire.

F 2/27 Plot: Conflict and Resolution. Journals.

### Week 8

M 3/1 She wanted

W 3/3 He wanted

F 3/5 More Character. Draft of First Fiction Piece Due. No Journals.

### Week 9

M 3/8 Eavesdropping: DiaJogue.

W 3/10 Setting.

F 3/12 Journals.

### Week 10 Spring Break

### Week 11

M 3/22 Draft of Second Fiction Piece Due, with copies. Mock Workshop.

W 3/24 Workshop.

\*Reading by English Faculty Members Gail Galloway Adams (author of the collection of short stories, *The Purchase of Order*) and Kevin Oderman (author of the creative nonfiction collection, *The Way Things Fit Together*). 7:30pm, Robinson Reading Room, Wise Library

F 3/26 Workshop. Journals.

\*Deadline for English Department Writing Contests.

## P O E T R Y

Week 12

M 3/29 Poetry: Paring Down to Language.

W 3/31 Forms. Framing the Line.

F 4/2 Sound. Journals Due.

Week 13

M 4/5 List Poems.

W 4/7 Found Poems.

F 4/9 Three Poems Due. No Journals.

Week 14

M 4/12 Brag Poems. Hushed Poems. Poems with Refrains.

W 4/14 Two Poems Due, copies of one. Workshop.

F 4/16 Workshop. No Journals.

Week 15

M 4/19 Workshop. Sign up for Conferences. Last Journal Entry Due: Reflections.

W 4/21 No class—Conferences.

T 4/22 \*Reading by Terrance Hayes, Poet and Assistant Prof. at Carnegie Mellon University, author of Hip Logic. 7:30pm Gold Ballroom, Mountainlair

F 4/23 No class—Conferences.

FINAL PORTFOLIO

Week 16

M 4/26 Final Portfolios: Binding the Book.

W 4/28 Evaluations. Salutations.

T 4/29 \*Readings by graduating MFA students in creative writing. 7:30pm Rhododendron Room, Mountainlair

F 4/30 Wrap Up.

Final Portfolios Due Monday 5/3 by noon.