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## English 111

### Document Actions



### Gail Galloway Adams, ENGL 111, Fall 2003

Gail Galloway Adams

Office: 434 Stansbury; 293-3107 xt 434; 292-2540 (h)

e-mail: [gadams.wvu.edu](mailto:gadams.wvu.edu)

Office Hours: TIFri 2-4 or by appt. Wed 4-5; Th by appt.

MWF 12:30-1:20 120 Armstrong

*What is this writing life?* Annie Dillard

This course is an introduction to the worlds of creative writing. It will begin with observation journal exercises and progress from there to the specific genres: Poetry, creative non-fiction, and fiction. There will be separate units of study for each genre. CW 111 will provide the foundation for a student to go forward in creative writing in his/her chosen area or revealed strength.

## Required texts:

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*What If? Exercises for Fiction Writers* (ecis. Painter & Bernays); *In Short Creative Nonfiction* (ed J. Kitchen); *The Practice of Poetry* (Behn & Twichell).

Recommended: M. Malone, ed. *Crafting the Very Short Story*. Also please buy an observation notebook/journal size and a three ring binder or some way to organize all your work.

"Those who write do have a trick. They lean on the process of writing the way an unsteady person leans on a cane"—Bonnie J. Friedman

### August

**M 18** Introduction to the course. Syllabus handout.

**W 20** Introduction continued. In-class writing. Examination of how to read a story/keep a journal/develop a story time-line.

**F 22** Keeping a journal section in *What if?* Small group work on in-class exercise.

**M 25** First short essay 2-4 pp due on yourself as a creative person. Will read in class.

**W 27** Read selections from *In Short*. Reading response in either journal and/or typed as separate document. Will discuss. Journal entry on sense of sight.

**F 29** Work with time-Line memory tied into/*In Short* readings.

### September

**M 1** Labor Day Recess

**W 3** Journal entry on sense of smell. Read selections from *In Short*. Responses to reading.

**F 5** Share ideas for first personal essay—creative nonfiction piece. Will we decide to use a common theme?

**M 8** First drafts in on essay—typed/doubled spaced/clean presentation. Will work with small groups.

**W 10** Continue critique on essays in groups.

**F 12** Read selections from *In Short* and read Gryphon" in *What If?*

**M 15** All bring in short piece on a teacher.

**W 17** Journal entry on hearing/sounds. Read selections from *In Short*.

**Thursday September 18:** first reading in the WVU series: Michael Tidwell, author of *I, the Mountains Of Heaven*. Remember you are required to attend two readings during the semester. This would be a good way to start. Tidwell is a creative nonfiction writer.

**F 19** Will begin to move into poetry using the prose poem. In class writing and handouts.

**M 22** All will bring in a piece that Could be discussed as poem/prose poem/short story. Will discuss in groups.

**W 24** Group work on pieces continue.

**F 26** No class on this day. Conference on Appalachian arts & letters at Ohio University with Jayne Ann Phillips. Let me know if you are interested in attending. Eberly undergrad enrichment scholarship

funds are available. Read in *The Practice of Poetry* and choose one exercise/one poem and bring in the result on Monday.

**M 29** All will bring in work from POP—copies to share in small groups. Sign-up for conference schedule for mid-terms. For conference also bring in piece on sense of touch.

## **October**

**W 1** Mid-term week. Conferences scheduled for this day. Bring in your work to date.

**F 3** Mid-term. Conferences scheduled for this day

**M 6** Journal observations due on sense of taste. Discussion on using senses in poems.

\*Yom Kippur—day of special observation.\*

**W 8** Continue with exercises in POP.

**F 10** Read *In Short* and *POP*. Modeling in class. Handout of Zafris work.

**M 13** Discuss Zafris story/chapter excerpt. **Remember:** Reading by Sturm Writer in Residence Nancy Zafris on this night. You are required to attend two readings during the term.

**W 15** Discussion of Zafris' reading. Continue with poetry exercises.

**F 17** Turn in responses on NZ's reading/and or handout story. Memorizing a poem—all together now and then on your own.

**M 20** Can we recall the poem? The process of selection.

**W 22** Poetry continued.

**F 24** Poetry exercises continued.

**M 27** Reading in *What if?, Pop, In Short*. We'll look for instances of when a work is hybrid and when elements are included.

**W 29** Possible guest lecturer/poet for this class. Read in *POP*.

**F 31** Handout of stories by Sara Pritchard, WVU alum and author of *Crackpots*. It is possible that she'll visit our class on this day or Monday 3.

## **November**

**M 3** Possible guest lecturer Sara Pritchard. Will discuss her stories and examine short short pieces.

**W 5** Fiction exercise from *What If?* Will use visuals in class.

**Remember** on this night Sara Pritchard will read as part of the WVU series.

**F 7** Will submit story ideas for first short short story and share rough draft notes/title.

**M 10** First short story due. Bring in copies for small group work. All will read first page to class

**W 12** Group sessions of first short stories continue.

**F 14** Discussion of ways to expand each story with emphasis on the elements of fiction

**W 12** Group sessions of first short stories continue.

**F 14** Discussion of ways to expand each story with emphasis on the elements of fiction and their inclusion. Readings continue in *What*

*If?*

**M 17** Discussion of story craft. In-class exercise with prompts.

Journal observations also continue.

**W 19** *What If?* Reading continues. Revised drafts can be brought in. Discussion of portfolios.

**F 21** In-class exercise. Everyone bring a piece (can be from your journal and/or written especially for this assignment) and read it to the class. Think myth/fairy tale/otherworldly.

**Thanksgiving Recess.** Rest, read, revise and write. Also observe what might make a good story/poem/personal essay. Come back with a food sense memory and/or family story. Good place to extend taste observation.

## **December**

**M 1** Share Thanksgiving observations and journal entries. Discuss overview essay that will preface portfolio.

**W 3** Open class—no formal assignment. I'll be in the classroom available for conference if you want to ask about your portfolio's organization.

**F 5** Last Class. Portfolios due and celebration of the end of the term and any December graduates! If you are unable to complete your portfolio by this time, please come to class anyway. The absolute deadline for acceptance of the portfolios is Monday December 8 at 4:00. **None** will be accepted after this time.

This should be such a wonderful class since we'll get to work with all the genres of writing. From time to time, I hope to have visitors

come in to talk with you about the process of writing. Some of our MFA students might be invited to come in and work with you on specific exercises in their realm of expertise. There will be lots of reading and lots of writing and it is hoped lots of inspiration from one another. We are learning a craft, we are exploring an art. Many will be talented and we'll feel grateful for that and applaud that gift; others will be diligent and determined, and that's the other half of the equation. You have to love to read in order to be able to write well and again, I hope that the reading will inspire you. You'll learn to read your own work effectively in front of an audience, you'll learn how to be a good reader and a better critic. By the end of the term, perhaps you'll know which direction in writing you want to pursue or what genre has captured your heart. I hope to help you do this as I guide you to see the world intently. Grading necessarily carries with it subjectivity—it is creative writing—and in developing your own aesthetic you'll come to understand this distinction. Attendance is very important especially during group sessions—if you miss, all your peers suffer. After three absences your grade will be affected. See me early if problems arise. Something can always be worked out. Approximate breakdown: journal and reading observations 25%; attendance at readings and responses 10%; class attendance & participation 25%; final portfolio With journal/reading responses and observations/one clean & revised creative nonfiction essay/four-six revised poems/one short short story (1-3pp) and one short story 5-6+ 65%. This class will be a great experience for us all since I love to teach creative writing as

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