

ENGL 2250-091: Introduction to Creative Writing

Instructor: Amy Sailer
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Office Hours: Mondays 12:00 – 1:00
Mountain Time and by appointment

Required Materials

All readings are available electronically on Canvas.

Course Description

English 2500 is an introductory course focused on reading and writing poetry and prose. As a workshop, this course focuses on the creation and revision of your own original work. We will discuss readings as writers, rather than literary scholars, our attention on the mechanics of literature more than the interpretation of literature. This class is built on the belief that, regardless of ability level or professional goals, creative writing enriches our lives. Use this course to experiment, play, and take risks, drawing on our readings for inspiration and challenge.

Course Outcomes and Objectives

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Learn fundamental concepts and terminology to fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction
- Analyze literature as creative writers
- Experiment with various technical elements of poetry and prose
- Develop and revise three submissions of original creative work in three genres

Course Expectations

Reading Discussions (35%)

Bottom Line: Two reading posts every week (250 – 350 words)

On Mondays and Tuesdays, we'll hold class via discussion board on the published pieces we read that week. (The first week of class is the exception, when discussion is due on Friday.) You should submit **two posts** for every discussion board. It would be great if you could post at least once on Monday and once on Tuesday so that the posts don't bunch up on Tuesday night. That said, if you know you'll be busy, you can post ahead of time. Unfortunately, I can't accept late submissions, since this is serving as attendance.

I'll always begin the discussion with a question about a certain element of craft, but please feel free to open other conversations. The point is to read as creative writers, observing, even stealing, techniques that you can adapt to your own work. The posts don't have to be hugely formal, but they should be substantial, about 250 – 350 words in length, that make claims, pull in quotations from the texts, and cite those quotations with in-text parentheticals. Please read and respond to each other!

Writing Exercises (35%)

Bottom Line: One creative prompt every week (1 – 2 pages)

On Fridays, by midnight, you'll submit a one- to two-page creative exercise that uses the literary strategy we've discussed that week. These exercises are low-stakes places where you can experiment

with ideas and styles. Hopefully, one of the exercises sparks your interest, so you can develop and revise it for your final project. In other words, this isn't the place for "finished" work—it's the time to take risks and write ambitious work! Be sure to respond to the prompt to receive full credit.

Final Projects (30%)

Bottom Line: 1) One five- to ten-page short story, 2) one poem, and 3) one five- to ten-page creative essay, all original to this class

You will produce three "final projects," one for each unit: a five- to ten-page short story, a poem, and a five- to ten-page creative essay. Final projects are due on the Friday at the end of each unit. I hope that you will choose one of your exercises to revise and develop for your final projects. That said, if none of your exercises interest you, or you have a different idea for a story, poem, or essay you want to develop, you can turn in new work. All work should be original to this class.

Grading Scale

A 94-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	E <60
A- 90-94	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Course Policies

Late Policy: The discussion boards are serving in place of class attendance, so I'm holding firmly to the discussion deadlines. If you can't post twice for every board, you can still earn partial credit for one post. Feel free to post ahead of time, if you anticipate a scheduling conflict.

We have more flexibility for the creative exercises and final projects. I'm happy to provide an extension of one or two days on exercises if you don't think you can make a deadline. Please email me ahead of time, so we can work something out to keep you on track.

Artificial Intelligence: While some writers are collaborating with language models for experimental projects, one of the objectives of this course is to practice fundamental concepts to express yourself in poetry and prose. Even writing a failed poem or story is great practice. Through that practice you can "warm up," just like musical scales help musicians warm up their muscles. Even if you can only devote an hour or two to your writing for the week, take that hour, and turn in an under-polished draft, rather than use language models. This course is a chance to write about yourself!

University Policies

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities.

All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access (CDA). CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. Prior notice is appreciated. To read the full accommodations policy for the University of Utah, please see Section Q of the Instruction & Evaluation regulations.

In compliance with ADA requirements, some students may need to record course content. Any recordings of course content are for personal use only, should not be shared, and should never be made publicly available. In addition, recordings must be destroyed at the conclusion of the course.

If you will need accommodations in this class, or for more information about what support they provide, contact:

Center for Disability & Access
801-581-5020
disability.utah.edu
65 Student Services Building
201 S 1460 E
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Safety at the U: The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more safety information and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, contact:

Campus Police & Department of Public Safety
801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)
dps.utah.edu
1735 E. S. Campus Dr.
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Addressing Sexual Misconduct: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status, or genetic information.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to university officials:

Title IX Coordinator & Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action
801-581-8365
oeo.utah.edu
135 Park Building
201 Presidents' Cir.
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Office of the Dean of Students
801-581-7066
deanofstudents.utah.edu

270 Union Building
200 S. Central Campus Dr.
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

To file a police report, contact:

Campus Police & Department of Public Safety
801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)
dps.utah.edu
1735 E. S. Campus Dr.
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

If you do not feel comfortable reporting to authorities, the U's Victim-Survivor Advocates provide free, confidential, and trauma-informed support services to students, faculty, and staff who have experienced interpersonal violence.

To privately explore options and resources available to you with an advocate, contact:

Center for Campus Wellness
801-581-7776
wellness.utah.edu
350 Student Services Building
201 S. 1460 E.
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Academic Misconduct: It is expected that students comply with University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: Policy 6-410: Student Academic Performance, Academic Conduct, and Professional and Ethical Conduct.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an individual assignment, and/or failure in the course. Academic misconduct, according to the University of Utah Student Code:

“...Includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information...It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct.”

For details on plagiarism and other important course conduct issues, see the U's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Preliminary Course Schedule

Unit 1: Fiction		
Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 1: Plot	George Saunders's story "Civilwarland in Bad Decline" and his essay "Rise, Baby, Rise!"	
Week 2: Dialogue	Flannery O'Connor's story "Good Country People"	Dialogue Prompt (due 1/17)
Week 3: Point of View	Shirley Jackson's story "The Lottery"	Third-person-objective POV Prompt (due 1/24)
Week 4: Point of View	Ayse Papatya Buçak's story "The History of Girls" and the excerpt from Justin Torres's novella <i>We The Animals</i>	First-person-plural POV Prompt (due 1/31)
Week 5: Pacing and Scale	Tobias Wolff's story "Bullet in the Brain," Dan O'Brien's story "Crossing Spider Creek," Jenny Hollowell's story "A History of Everything, Including You," and Steven Church's essay "Lag Time"	"Exploded Moment" / "Compressed Eon" Prompt (due 2/7)
Week 6: Fiction Final		Final 5 - 15 page short story (due 2/14)
Unit 2: Poetry		
Week 7: Figurative Language	Poems by Paisley Rekdal, William Shakespeare, Corey Van Landingham, and Corey Marks	Metaphor Prompt (2/21)
Week 8: Lines and Line Breaks	Poems by Robert Frost, Robert Hayden, and Robert Hass	Meter/Syllabics Prompt (due 2/28)
Week 9: Negative Capability	Poems by Rainer Maria Rilke, Larry Levis, Emily Pittinos, and Chengru He	Negative Capability Prompt (due 3/7)
Week 10: Pattern and Variation	Poems by Samyak Shertok, David Wojahn, Emilia Phillips, and Brigit Pegeen Kelly	Pattern and Variation Prompt (due 3/21)
Week 11: Poetry Final		Final Poem (due 3/28)
Unit 3: Creative Nonfiction		
Week 12: Truth in Language	Carolyn Forché's poem "The Colonel" and Annie Dillard's essay "Total Eclipse"	Lyricism Prompt (due 4/4)
Week 13: Truth in Memory	Maxine Hong Kingston's essay "No Name Woman" and Susan Griffin's essay "Red Shoes"	Perhapsing Prompt (due 4/11)
Week 14: Truth in Expertise	Hanif Abdurraqib's essay "On Summer Crushing"	Expertise Prompt (due 4/18)
Week 15: Final Nonfiction		Final 5 - 15 page essay (due 4/25)