

Course Syllabus

School Name: The Greenville Fine Arts Center

Course Name: Creative Writing I, II and II Honors, III (Honors), IV Honors

Instructor: Bateman

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Class Time/Room Number 9:15-11:05, 1:15-3:05 221A

Credit Units: 2

Required Texts:

Available in Creative Writing Library (assorted anthologies and literary reviews/publications, including THE NEW YORKER, THE GEORGIA REVIEW, THE KENYON REVIEW, THE OHIO REVIEW, THE WRITER'S CHRONICLE, LITERARY CAVALCADE, BEST AMERICAN POEMS, BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES, THE PUSHCART ANTHOLOGY, etc.)

Course Description:

Though the word "literature" is a noun, we experience it more as *event* than as *object*, since it is made up of ongoing conversations, irresolvable arguments, and the impassioned questionings/meditations of writers as they address themselves, the world, and each other. Our work is to participate in those conversations and questionings; thus, we will be constantly reading and writing so that our contribution can become increasingly knowledgeable and nuanced.

In the poetry unit (the first grading period), students will attain growing proficiency in the understanding and use of poetic devices such as trope, lineation, syntax, etc. In the fiction unit (the second grading period), we will work with various techniques to help students watch and listen to their characters taking shape through their life choices, both catastrophic and microcosmic; it is from these choices that plot arises. In the rhetorical writing unit (third grading period), we will be working with various kinds of essays as well as with issues of voice, audience, and tone. Each student will also sign up to teach the class a lesson based on a selected piece of literature: this assignment includes giving the class a test and a lecture, leading the class in a discussion, and providing a writing exercise. During the fourth nine weeks, we will be doing mixed and cross-genre work and putting together the final manuscript (portfolio), which will involve issues of selection, editing, and formatting. We will also be preparing for and presenting public readings for the community, which will involve many performance issues such as carriage, diction, voice projection, etc. At the end of each semester, all students will give an oral report on the life and work of a significant author. Preparation for the report may include personal interviews with the designated author.

Most importantly, however, all throughout the year, we will focus on writing from a genuine sense of discovery. In CWI, students will develop a basic repertoire of literary terms and techniques in the context of the best contemporary writing available. In CWII and III, we will expand that repertoire, and move toward greater depth, experimenting with more complex and sophisticated structures. CWII and III Honors students and CWIV students also serve as class leaders and consultants for first year students.

***Because the class is conducted according to the Socratic method, with a high level of student responsibility and student-led direction, daily course content will probably vary from the schedule provided at the beginning of each nine weeks. CWIV will be primarily concerned with in-depth study of the art of the personal essay. Because we will be working with writing issues, problems, challenges, and opportunities **as they arise from the students' actual work**, which is itself necessarily unpredictable and fresh every day, there will be **much daily significant interplay and overflow between levels**—for instance, a CWIII Honors student may suddenly re-vision an assignment that he or she has already completed in CWI, and want to approach it again on an entirely new level, working parallel with, though at a more advanced level than, the CWI students, and then presenting the work to them as an example. Or, on the other hand, a CWI student may experience a sudden cognitive and imaginative leap, and be ready to skip several levels for one or more assignments, working independently or with CWIII students on a project. Frequently, new material comes in from current literary magazines or from the teacher's own work, or from the work of contemporary writers with whom the teacher is in contact, and this may displace the scheduled assignment as it seems appropriate to the writing issues at hand, taking into account the varying proficiency levels of the students in each class. Two students may be working on the same assignment at different levels of complexity, with each student putting his or her own structural and imaginative "spin" on the assignment. Also, frequently, the teacher will see that a particular student is moving in a direction which indicates that he or she is ready for a completely individualized reading or writing assignment. **Any teacher and class working primarily with the imagination must be prepared to turn on a dime in order to facilitate the idiosyncratic developmental pattern which is the primary mode of creative writers.** The small class size and the high proficiency level of the students upon entering their second year makes it possible for the timing and pace of instruction to be tailor-made rather than prescheduled.

Objectives: Through a variety of techniques, both assigned and arrived at through individual and group brainstorming, students will expand their capacity to take risks with voice, tone, and syntax, thus extending their experience of the discovery process necessary to all creative expression and outstanding writing. Students are required to establish and develop metacognitive skills, so that as well as being able to identify and analyze the elements of their own thinking process on a basic level, they can also work with transforming and contradicting them in both prose and poetry through use of the classic rhetorical modes. Along with deepening their comprehension of and proficiency with literary terms and techniques, they will become conversant with major literary movements and elements of aesthetic ideology. Students will become proficient in editorial work, demonstrating in group and individual student-teacher sessions their

ability to critique both peer and professional writing regarding issues of clarity, cohesiveness, authority, originality, structure, and movement. **As the individual students become ready**, they are led through information about the major movements in contemporary Modernist and Post-Modernist writing, such as the Beats, the Confessional Poets, the Minimalists, the Imagists, Language Poets, etc. Students will become proficient at performing their work at community functions, developing sophistication with timing, emphasis, phrasing, and articulation.

Course Requirements:

A. Attendance and Tardy Policy:

Refer to Fine Arts Center Handbook

B. Classroom Rules/Expectations:

Students are required to bring to class their journals, pens, and the reading material for the day. Students are expected to be courteous in sharing classroom computer time and other common resources such as reference texts. Students must maintain a high level of professionalism in presenting and critiquing one another's work. Students are to refrain from eating and drinking in the classroom, and must know that they are responsible for any damage to computers that may occur from breaking this rule. At all showcases and performance events (both on and off campus), students will dress appropriately, arrive on time, give full attention to the performing artist(s), and refrain from such behaviors as dozing, eating, drinking, chewing gum, sitting in a lounging position, and talking, whispering, or giggling.

C. Supplies Necessary for Course:

Notebook for journal; black or blue pens. No writing by pencil in journals, no white or silver ink on black pages, etc.

Single-sided double-density computer disks (we have Dell PC's).

Manila folders for interim portfolios, binder for final portfolio.

Most texts will be supplied by instructor.

All students must be at least minimally proficient at keyboarding.

Contest fees will be announced as the deadlines approach throughout the year.

Assessment Information and Grading Scale:

Student performance is graded using the mandated South Carolina state grading scale.
First and third nine weeks: Quizzes 20 %; Portfolio 20 %; Reading Report 20 %; Journal 20 %; Participation 20 %

Second and fourth nine weeks: Quizzes 25 %; Portfolio 25 %; Journal 25 %; Participation 25 %

20% of semester grade is based on semester report.

Major Assignments and Projects Required:

Interim assignments include daily exercises; more formally composed weekly poems, stories, and essays; quarterly process portfolios, including extensive revisions of the daily and weekly assignments; daily journal segments with a total of at least 70 pieces each quarter; quizzes on reading material; workshop presentations; reading critiques and research reports at the end of each quarter and, more formally, at the end of each semester. All independent reading selections must be checked with the teacher first. No literary works about cyber-vampires or true romance, etc. are allowed in the context of this class. Culminating assignments include the production of an on-line literary magazine and extensive individual portfolios of the students' revised, arranged, and formatted work. As each student becomes ready, he/she is expected to do the editing and formatting work required for entry into the following regional and national high school literary contests: National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, Scholastic Art and Writing, *Southern Voices*, *A Near Miss*, the Nancy Thorpe Poetry Contest, and others. When possible, students are expected to attend local off-campus literary events as announced, such as the Emrys Foundation Reading Series on the last Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

Tentative Course Outline/Deadlines:

Formal writing assignments are due each Wednesday (day of the week may occasionally vary due to competing school or district schedules/events) for the first seven of the nine weeks. A week of individual student-teacher conferences prepares the student to turn in the quarterly portfolio and the journal the week before grades are due. (Conferences include both revision consultation and oral presentation of reading materials with which student has been engaged during the nine weeks.) At each semester's end, every student will present to the class an oral report on a particular author (biographical and critical/analytical discussion).

Description of Students in Class:

Students from a wide variety of backgrounds come to the Fine Arts Center for half of their school day from all fourteen district high schools, private and charter schools, and home schools. Several tuition-paying students from outside Greenville County are also enrolled. The majority of students are in grades 10-12, and each was selected for participation on the basis of academic transcripts, a teacher recommendation, and an audition/interview with FAC faculty. The FAC does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, ethnic heritage, or socioeconomic background.

Plan for Routine Communication with Parents:

- ~ quarterly Fine Arts Center newsletter is mailed to all parents
- ~ parents are contacted promptly in the event of academic or disciplinary problems
- ~ a log of parent calls is maintained in teacher's office
- ~ report cards are sent four times a year
- ~ progress reports (when necessary or advisable) are sent mid-quarter, and must be signed and returned.
- ~ attendance is monitored in accordance with state policies
- ~ students who do not complete weekly assignments are given a verbal warning; if work does not improve, parents are notified and a conference may be arranged