Syllabi Are Alive - Check for Updates Regularly

INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING - HU2110.R01
Summer 2008, Room 127 Fischer, MTWR 9:35-10:50am

For a printable version, click here.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

For the next 7 weeks you will be both reader & writer - 2 states inseparable. You will read daily & purposefully, looking to how language is used on the page by those who do it best. You will write daily & purposefully, both informally (by keeping a writer’s journal) & formally (by creating more exacting works in the literary genres of poetry, short fiction, & creative nonfiction). As a writer, you will learn to create little boxes of the world, cabinets of curiosity into which you will place your tarantulas, old newspapers, broken sex toys, jars of pickled mushrooms, sombreros, rolled up tubes of acne cream, tiger lilies, tobacco-stained false teeth, lipstick-stained cigarette butts, crows’ feet, naked Bible salesmen, bloody Band-aids, hairy warts, one-eyed cats & three-legged dogs—details burning angry, mean & bright, writing that offers readers of your creations more than the mere suggestion of reality, but a vision of a world that creates its own.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Anne Lamott, Bird by Bird.
Nattie Goldberg, Writing Down the Bones.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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EXPECTATIONS & GRADING

First, fulfill your responsibilities, seldom early & never late. Attend class & visit office hours, complete all assignments in & out of class on deadline, read, take notes, participate, be engaged & be engaging. Late assignments will not be accepted & no coursework can be made up without written documentation from the Dean of Students Office.

Second, please bear in mind that integrity & ethics are central to any community searching for truth. Anything less than total commitment to integrity & ethics undermines the efforts of the entire community. Every member is responsible. Every
member is culpable. Be kind. Be honest. Be curious. Be adventurous. Work hard. Leave the campground better than you found it. Those who cannot keep the compact will be asked to leave.

Third, in terms of access, Michigan Tech encourages ALL qualified persons to participate in its programs & activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please contact Prof. Seigel as soon as possible &/or visit the Office of Student Affairs or phone 487-2951.

Fourth, concerning grading, students can expect the following:

3 = Very good to excellent. Student exceeded most to all course expectations.
2 = OK. Student met course expectations.
1 = Inferior. Student met few course expectations, but not all.
0 = Failure. Student failed to make deadline and/or met none of the course expectations.

COURSEWORK

Attendance & Participation (25%): Come to class every day, prepared, & take part thoughtfully & conscientiously. Do the readings (you cannot write if you do not read). Do the writing assignments (there are no tricks to becoming a better writer, only writing). Come to class with at least one question every day (it forces you to prepare & participate). Visit office hours (a, I only answer requests for favors in person, never over email; b, it reflects well on you & you will receive a level of attention not afforded in class). Give good workshop (they cannot be made up & mediocre ones receive no credit for the effort). Should you amass more than three unexcused absences I reserve the right to lower your final grade up to & including an F (I won’t need to). All deadlines are final unless accompanied by documentation from the Dean of Students Office.

Writer’s Notebook (15%): You will be assigned both free writing assignments (in class) & writer’s prompts (take home) during every class. Consider these creative calisthenics. You will keep your entries in your writer’s notebook. In addition, you are expected to produce words of your own: rants, raves, ideas, sketches, collage, stories, drawings, lists, poems, manifestoes, newspaper clippings, photographs, ticket stubs, late night ramblings, drunken outbursts, graffiti, letters to the dead, epiphanies, religious conversions, political vomit, cartoons, lyrics, travel logs, whatever. Your notebook fits in your pocket, it travels everywhere you do, it is the place to work out your theory of the whole, your box of the world, a place where you can pile the detritus for later sifting. Your writer’s notebook is a weapon against writer’s block. You will write in it every day, seven days a week. Muses are fickle, inspiration sparse - nurse your process, use your notebook. Expect surprise inspections (note: I do not read your entries but am checking to see that entries are being made).

Poetry (20%): You will write & workshop 5 poems in sequence (meaning the work is somehow related) in whatever form you choose. In addition, you will write a 500-word process introduction (see note below) to be included with the final copy of your poems.
Literary Essay (20%): You will write & workshop a piece of short creative nonfiction—personal essay, memoir, literary journalism, short lyric essay, etc.—1000-word minimum. In addition, you will write a 500-word process introduction (see note below) to be included with the final copy of your essay.

Short Fiction (20%): You will write & workshop a piece of short fiction—1000-word minimum. In addition, you will write a 500-word process introduction to be included with the final copy of your story.

Process Introductions: Along with each of your three genre assignments (poetry, essay, & story), you will produce an accompanying process introduction of 500 words, single-spaced. The process intro is a mini personal essay in which you will explore the where & why of your process & your work. Why did you write what you wrote? Why did you write it in the way you did? What were you trying to accomplish? In what tradition were you working? Who/what/where were your influences? Madness is fine, even encouraged, but method is what keeps you palatable.

Workshops: On workshop days, bring 3 clean, complete drafts of your work with you. You will exchange drafts with partners, then you will read your work out loud. Your workshop partners will take notes as you read, responding to your words as you and they read them. When the reading is done, take a few moments to talk over your responses. Sign each draft you critique, return the drafts to their owners, and turn all your own drafts in with your final copy. Workshops cannot be made up. For further workshop guidance, click here.

COURSE CALENDAR, SUMMER 2008

Week 1
Mon. 06.30: Introduction to the course; Discuss Best American Nonrequired Reading, 2007.
Tue. 07.01: Discuss Best American Nonrequired Reading, 2007.
Thu. 07.03: Literary Nonfiction Workshop.

Week 2
Tue. 07.08: Discuss Best American Nonrequired Reading, 2007.
Thu. 07.10: Literary Nonfiction Workshop.

Week 3
Mon. 07.14: Literary Nonfiction Workshop.
Tue. 07.15: Literary Nonfiction Due; Discuss Best American Short Stories, 2007.
Week 4

Mon. 07.21: Fiction Workshop.

Week 5

Mon. 07.28: Fiction Workshop.
Tue. 07.29: Fiction Workshop.
Wed. 07.30: Fiction Due; Discuss The Best American Poetry, 2007
Thu. 07.31: Discuss The Best American Poetry, 2007

Week 6

Mon. 08.04: Discuss The Best American Poetry, 2007
Tue. 08.05: Poetry Workshop.
Wed. 08.06: Discuss The Best American Poetry, 2007
Thu. 08.07: Discuss The Best American Poetry, 2007

Week 7

Mon. 08.11: Discuss The Best American Poetry, 2007
Tue. 08.12: Poetry Workshop.
Wed. 08.13: Poetry Workshop.
Thu. 08.14: Poetry Due.