

# Intro to Creative Writing, English 229

## Spring 2020 ONLINE Sec. 02, 7721

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**Office Hours**  
MW 10-12:30, and by appt.

### Textbooks

Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones*  
30th Anniversary Ed.  
Shambala Publications, 2016



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**Americans with Disabilities Statement/Students with Special Needs** Any students with disabilities or other special needs, who need special accommodations in this course are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor as soon as possible.

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**For important info about our CLASS PHILOSOPHY, click here.**

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## Course Description

*The career of flowers differs from ours only in audibleness. —Dickinson*

Welcome to “the craft of creative writing with an emphasis on exploring multiple genres and developing a strong cultural awareness through readings and discussion.”

### Aims

1. Get pumped about writing.

2. Develop critical and cultural awareness.
3. Become acquainted with nuts-and-bolts skills in creative writing.

We'll read a fair amount in this class: poetry, fiction, an inspirational book by an established author, and electronic texts on craft. Most of the course, however, will be given over to your writing through journaling and weekly work, drafting and critiquing, with the goal of producing a chapbook—a mini book—by the end of the term.

## Types of Feedback

It's important also to note that this is not a writing course where you will be hand-walked through every single detail of everything you write. You will receive three main kinds of feedback:

- Micro- as well as in-depth critiques by your peers and instructor.
- Indirect feedback when we critique just a *selection* (one to three) of student drafts—ones that are representative of the whole class's work. In these cases, you may not necessarily receive direct feedback on your own draft, but you will be able to extrapolate from our discussion of sample pieces.
- Some pieces will receive no feedback. This primarily relates to your independent (nonassigned work), and is about helping you to relax and simply enjoy writing whatever you like. Our aim is not to struggle over “correctness” or “perfection” or “doing it the way the teacher wants it done,” but rather to get plugged in and really enjoy writing. Believe it or not, that is critical to writing well!

## FROM Merriam-Webster: “extrapolate”

### **transitive verb**

1a : to predict by projecting past experience or known data extrapolate public sentiment on one issue from known public reaction on others

b : to project, extend, or expand (known data or experience) into an area not known or experienced so as to arrive at a usually conjectural knowledge of the unknown area extrapolates present trends to construct an image of the future

2 : to infer (values of a variable in an unobserved interval) from values within an already observed interval.

## About the Online Experience

This class is wholly online, which means that it poses all sorts of interesting possibilities as well as potential problems.

1. **In this course, reading all printed communication carefully is *critical*.**

I cannot stress this enough: it is imperative that you pay close attention to all written documents. You must read all that are sent or assigned and read them extra closely. We will be relying very heavily on the printed word.

The course, in other words, will not be “tech-fancy.” We may use video conferencing, e-lectures, and electronic chat apps, but our primary communications will be pretty simple: the wonders of print text!

2. **I can't use body language, physical presence, or eye contact for emphasis and clarity.**

There is something about live, physical communication that helps many learners understand and retain information much better than simply reading print documents. So we will have to be extremely committed to reading carefully—emails, assignments, materials in our Class Library, etc. You cannot simply skim over or skim any documents in this class and expect to do well.

Of course, in many ways this is fabulous. You will get megatons of practice writing and reading in our class!

3. **We will rely enormously on Blackboard (Bb) and email.**

If Bb is unfamiliar to you, you will need to visit ITS on campus for help ASAP, take a short class or tutorial in it, or learn how to use it by some other method.

If you have technical issues with Bb or email at any time, seek out help from ITS right away.

4. **You must be extra responsible and self-motivated.**

Since we don't meet face-to-face and according to a regular days of the week, it can be easy at times to fade out, forget about the class, or mismanage your time. I'll try a few magic tricks to help prevent this, but, ultimately, you need to motivate and discipline yourself.

On the good side, you get to do coursework at your own convenience, night or day! This is obviously terrific if you work, are raising a family, have other pressing duties, or simply love to work independently.

Whether you are doing an Intro to Creative Writing class in a physical classroom or online, you cannot be passive and become a good writer. You have to want it.

## Primary Coursework

Each component of the course is closely tied to every other component. For instance, writing you do in your journal may directly affect a draft you hand in for workshop, which will in turn effect your final chapbook. Each component feeds the other and there is considerable overlap.

The primary components are:

As of Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, you have three items to complete:

A **final exercise** due Wed. April 22<sup>nd</sup> :  
“Looking at Your Flash Fiction and Reviewing Again the Fundamental Elements of Fiction”

A short story (the **fiction project**, due Mon. May 11 (in your chapbook)

Your **chapbook**.

**Exercises, Conversations, Quizzes etc.** 40%

**Workshop:** this experience is not scored, but drafts & critiques receive feedback and a check which will be factored into your final grade subjectively.

**Chapbook** 60%

- 3 Poetry Projects 15%
- 1 Fiction Project 20%
- Independent Writing 20%
- Design & Conventions 5%

**Reflective Letter Extra Credit** 4%

The messy, active

**PROCESS**

Reading, finding inspiration, drafting, soliciting feedback, revising.

The edited and polished final

**PRODUCT**

For more on our primary coursework scroll down a couple pages

NOTE: I think of this class, with its tight enrollment cap, as a chance to work one-on-one frequently with students. In other words, if so motivated, you are free to request additional feedback on your writing beyond what you may get via our usual assignments or course materials. You are free to speak with me any time by email, and YES, we can arrange face-to-face meetings if you live near NDSU.

## Grades

We work with a simple point system in which your aim is to get as close to 100 as possible. The final scale looks like this:

90-100 = A

79-89 = B

68-78 = C

57-67 = D

Please note that a mere two or three points can mean the difference between one full grade and the next. In borderline cases, *if* your performance, participation, and attendance have been excellent, or

if extenuating circumstances have played a role, I will bump you up to the next level.

## Course Policies

### Late Assignments

*Exercises, Finished Versions of Projects, Some Quizzes*

A grace period of ONE WEEK accompanies these assignments. This means that no point penalty will be imposed on work handed in up to a week late. However, you must post your work in a special location of our Bb Drop Box and include a completed Late Form. The only real penalty is that *I get to late work at my own convenience*. I do all other course tasks first, so sometimes it takes a while to get a particular late grade back to you. This can leave you uninformed about your status in the course.

**Ex: if an item is due on Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>, I will accept it up to and including the day of Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>.**

Material handed in beyond a week late will not be accepted unless you have documented evidence of serious hardship, and have kept me informed each step of the way.

*Drafts, Critiques, Conversations, Collaborative Work*

A grace period of just 2 DAYS applies to this work because it is time-sensitive and will impact both your instructor and classmates in negative ways if you are late.

**Ex: if an item is due Feb. 20<sup>th</sup> , I will accept it up to and including the day of Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> .**

For late critiques and anything that involves your classmates: you should give them a copy AND post a copy in our Bb Drop Box. This includes conversations.

Material handed in beyond two days late will not be accepted unless you have documented evidence of serious hardship, and have kept me informed each step of the way.

### Student Conduct and Plagiarism

All interactions in this course including interactions by email, discussion boards, or other online methods will be civil and students will demonstrate respect for one another. Student conduct at NDSU is governed by the Code of Student Behavior. See <http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/studentlife/StudentCode.pdf> for more information.

## University Statement on Academic Honesty

All work in this course must be completed in a manner consistent with NDSU University Senate Policy, Section 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct.

<http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/policy/335.htm>

Copying someone else's work as your own is dishonest and known as plagiarism. **Any and all instances of deliberate, significant plagiarism in English 229 will result in an F for the course and notice to your advisor.** (Significant means two or more whole sentences, copied work-for-word, without crediting the real author, OR a chronic habit of stealing a sentence here and a phrase there, throughout one or more of your assignments, even after being warned)

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## More About Our Primary Coursework



### Exercises, Conversations, Quizzes, Etc. 40%

The typical week will involve a smorgesborg of activities: drafting, workshopping, taking quizzes, completing worksheets, collaborating with your peers, etc. Expect the unexpected on occasion!

This work will total 35% or 35 points out of 100 total. Work which only receives a check is also important, as it will factor into my consideration of your overall participation and seriousness as a student when I go to tally your semester score.



### Workshop (check/no check)

Everyone in the class will submit work for at least one, whole-class “workshop” session. This is a mandatory but friendly, roundtable method to help you progress in your writing. Workshop is an important form of feedback, supplemented by lots of one-on-one peer critiques, general instructor comments on the work of the whole class, and other means.



## **Projects & Chapbook 60%**

**"A tree crying out to be covered with leaves."**

You are aiming in this course to complete a type of mini book called a chapbook: a short, often self-produced collection which in every way resembles any normal book but is simply briefer. Your chapbook will include four mandatory projects and a selection of independent material. Assignments for the projects are designed to give you practice with a variety of skills and imaginative approaches, and a taste of major genres in creative writing.

The independent component is for anything and any genre you'd like to write on your own.

You can find full instructions and criteria in our Bb menu.



## **Reflective Letter Extra Credit 4%**

This will be a detailed reflection on the semester and the evolution of your work, a way of talking with your instructor about what you learned.

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## **General Education Outcomes**

This course has been approved for Category 4, Humanities and Fine Arts, General Education because it 1) "promotes the appreciation of aesthetics and the expression of creativity"; and 2) "systematically explores cultural and intellectual forces shaping events, individual expression, and social values."

The course meets the following General Education Outcomes:

#1: "Communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and formats."

#6: "Integrate knowledge and ideas in a coherent and meaningful manner."