

Intro to Creative Writing, English 229

Fall 20 HYBRID/HyFlex, Sec. 2 4294

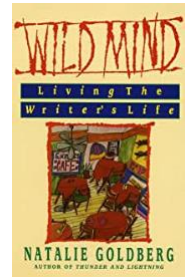
Instructor: Cindy Nichols

Office: Minard Hall 316F (I will not be available in my physical office until further notice.)

Office Hours in Collaborate “Course Room”: TTH 12:30-2:00 & by appt.

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Phone: 218-236-8233 (I much prefer EMAIL)



Textbooks

Goldberg, *Wild Mind*, Bantom, 1990

Boisseau, *Writing Poems*, Pearson, 2012, 8th ed,

Burroway, *Writing Fiction*, Pearson, 2015, 9th ed.

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.” This course will help you to experience writing as an inspired process, to develop critical awareness, and to acquaint you with fundamental skills in creative writing. We'll read a number of poets and fiction writers, complete a variety of exercises and writing prompts, and of course write our own poetry and fiction.

We will also engage in at least some theorizing and philosophical reflection. That is, we will sample and test the great variety of aesthetic views in the literary arts, including the ever-difficult question of what makes good poems and stories. No one person's view or opinion is considered perfect, definitive, or completely “correct”—including the instructor's—and all views are welcome. We do, however, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of different outlooks and you will be expected to present reasoned arguments for your own views. Mass-market writing, formula work, and fan fiction are not encouraged, unless you are willing to really excel at the formulas or even break them.

Most of the course, however, will be given over to students' own writing through journaling and weekly work, drafting and workshopping, with the goal of producing a chapbook—a short book—by the end of the term.

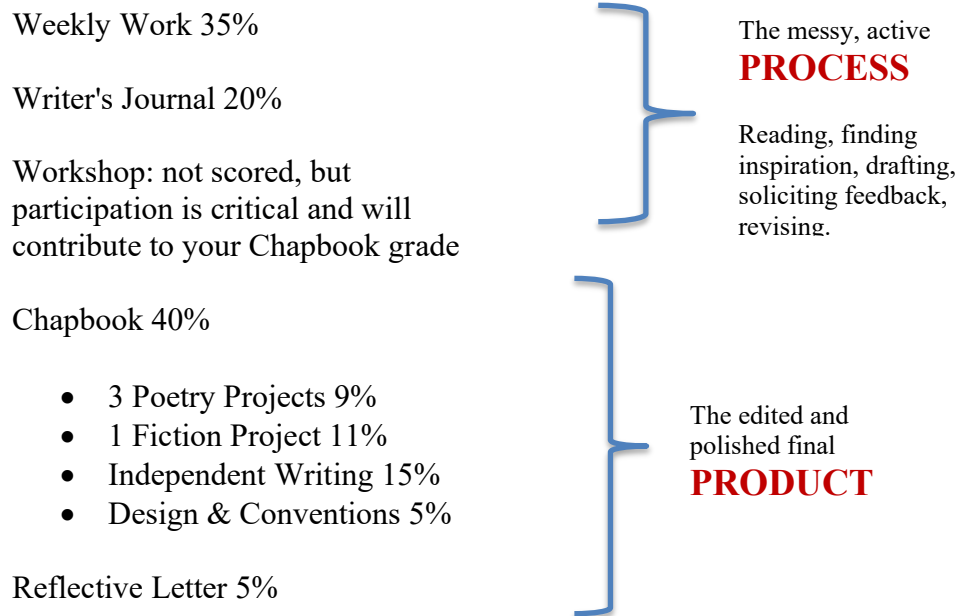
It's important also to note that this is not a writing course where you will be hand-walked through every detail of everything you write. You will receive feedback in a variety of ways. Some pieces will receive brief comments, and some pieces very intensive and close scrutiny. Some pieces will receive no direct feedback, because you will be expected to generalize and apply class discussion and lecture to your work, and because our purpose 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.

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:



NOTE: I think of this class, with its tight enrollment cap, as a chance to work one-on-one frequently with the instructor. In other words, if so motivated, you are free to request additional feedback on your writing beyond what you may get in the classroom or even from the many course materials. You are free to speak with me any time after class or by email to arrange meetings.

That said, this is also a class that requires a high level of engagement, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE IT IS A HYBRID COURSE, and we will not meet face-to-face every Tues. and Thurs. of the semester. This means that you MUST take the initiative and actively work to apply lectures, discussions, readings, and critiques to your work. You need to take specific suggestions and approaches and actually apply them to specific items you are working on. We don't do "paint-by-numbers" creative writing in this class, where I walk you through every detail of your writing.

You cannot be passive and become a good writer. You have to want it.



Key Terms for This Kind of Wonky Semester

- *real-time* = When an event or function is processed live and instantaneously, it is said to occur in real-time (Techterms.com). To say that “we will meet in real time” means that we will meet together at the same time, either physically (in the same space) or remotely (by video conference or phone).
- *synchronous* = another way of saying “in real time.”
- *asynchronous* = NOT in real-time. You are communicating back and forth with someone, but you each speak or write at different times. Discussion Board in Bb (Blackboard), for example, is for asynchronous discussion: you make a comment and someone responds at a later point.
- *ftf* = face-to-face; we can see or hear each other in real-time.
- *ftf remote* = communicating in real time via a video conference app, such as Collaborate Ultra in Blackboard.
- *ftf physical* = communicating in real time in a physical space such as our classroom.
- *hybrid/HyFlex course* = a course that is a combination of synchronous and asynchronous, ftf physical and ftf electronic.

The Hybrid/HyFlex Course

This class is partially synchronous (ftf remote and ftf physical), and partially asynchronous. which 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.

2. **I won't see you as much as I would in a wholly physical, ftf class. I can't use body language, physical presence, or eye contact for emphasis and clarity as often.**

There is something about live, physical communication that helps many learners understand and retain information much better than watching a screen, even a live one, or 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 gloss 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, take a short class 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 ftf as often as a traditional class, 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 a lot of your 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.

Coursework



Weekly Work 35%

Weekly Work may include drafts, workshop critiques, reading quizzes, worksheets, brief writings, exercises, small group collaborations, and any number of sometimes impromptu activities. Expect the unexpected. Each Weekly Work assignment will generally be worth just a few points each. Be aware, however, that we are only working with a 100-pt. scale, so two points can be the difference between one semester grade and another. (See "Grades" below.)

Weekly Work which only receives a check are also important, as they factor into my consideration of your overall participation and seriousness as a student when I go to tally your semester score.



Writer's Journal 20%

Throughout the semester you will maintain a daily journal—a personal creative space—for drafts, notes, musings, and general shenanigans. This will be an electronic collection handed in once or twice for scoring partway through the semester, and again at the end. It represents a key part of the creative process and is evaluated based on energetic and *authentic* engagement and effort. You can find full instructions and criteria in our Bb menu.



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 40%

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

You are aiming in this course to complete a type of book called a chapbook: a short, often self-produced collection of work which in nearly every way resembles any normal book. Your chapbook will include four mandatory projects and a selection of independent poems. Assignments for the projects are designed to give you practice with a variety of skills and imaginative approaches, and a taste of major modes in poetry. The independent component is for any kind of poetry you'd like to write on your own.

3 Assigned Poetry Projects = 9 pts

1 Assigned Fiction Project = 11 pts.

Independent work = 15 pts.

Visual design and presentation = 5 pts.

The Chapbook must contain work which has been conscientiously revised with the help of workshop and instructor feedback.

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



Reflective Letter 5%

This letter will be a reflection on your writing, addressed to your instructor, as it has progressed over the semester. See assignment for full details.

IMPORTANT

Because of time constraints, it is not possible for me to offer specific feedback on everything you write. It is important, then, that you extrapolate from our lectures, Power Point presentations, readings, and discussions and *actively apply what you learn to your own work*. This cannot be stressed enough.

In many ways, it is actually not desirable that I provide detailed feedback on everything you do. In my experience, this encourages students to be excessively and minutely anxious about their writing rather than engaged and inspired.

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.

Class Philosophy

It's IMPORTANT that you know: this class may not be as structured as some of your other classes are. We do indeed have a structure—institutional aims, fundamental requirements, a general schedule, etc.—but the *specifics* are flexible throughout the term, based on class interests and needs.

You might say that this course itself models the creative process in important ways: it allows for some degree of randomness, free-association, unstructured ferment, shifts in direction, PLAY, and the seizing of accidents. But, just as with your poetry, we work toward shaping what we generate, often even as we generate it, and our aim is a polished, identifiable product. In the case of a university course, that product is a successful overall learning experience in the form of concrete, assessable materials. Just like your finished poems, however, that product will ideally be one that retains the freshness of discovery.

So: expect a flexible structure, occasional shifts in direction, “soft” kinds of learning, and what may look like, on occasion, aimlessness. I assure you, it will never ultimately be aimless.

And what looks like aimlessness may in fact be some of the most vital learning you will ever do in school. An idea that emerges in discussion, say, on a given day, and that seems inconsequential or random at the moment, may occur to you weeks, months, even years later when it suddenly clicks. Some learning takes place, you could say, in our bodies, or in our unconscious minds, where it has to gestate before finally surfacing with great clarity and relevance.

If you find any of this dubious, consider how a child learns to speak. No one lectures a child on how to speak; no one gives exams and grades (I hope) in teaching their kid to talk. But somehow a child learns what words are, and how they work in sequences. They learn that, in English, verbs come after and adjectives come before nouns; that verbs change according to number and time; that tone is a huge element of what one “means” when they talk. They learn, in other words, the whole vastly complex project of human speech, and all without grades! Without a syllabus! It comes through play, delight, fearlessness, humor, practice, modeling, curiosity, desire, social interaction, and intuitive, even physical engagement.

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 Work

Each assignment will have its own deadline policies. See specific instructions for details.

Missed Meetings

If you miss a scheduled ftf meeting, you may be able to re-schedule if you contact the instructor in advance. If you miss a remote class meeting, you should be able to access a recording. Details are forthcoming.

Digging Class

A key word in this class is curiosity. One of the WORST things you can do is tell me that SOMETHING BORED YOU. All coursework will require active thinking and engagement. If you are energetically reflecting, imagining, questioning, and struggling when you read course materials or complete course work, YOU WILL NEVER BE BORED. Admissions of boredom are embarrassing, because they reveal that you yourself are a boring person who is too unimaginative or passive to make things interesting.

If you do not UNDERSTAND something, do not become frustrated, angry, or defeated. REJOICE! :D You are in exactly the right place to begin learning. When confused or otherwise stumped, ask questions. Be willing to be dumb. Dig. Explore. LOOK THINGS UP. Engage others. Contact your instructor. And, yes, even RE-READ assignments!

Class participation does not simply mean perfect attendance. Becoming better writer requires critical thinking, dialogue, and practice. This is a workshop course, which requires your active input and involvement.

A Note to English Majors

During their senior year, English majors generally enroll in the English Capstone course (Engl 467), during which they assemble a portfolio containing representative written work from NDSU English courses. The English Department evaluates these portfolios to assess its undergraduate programs, analyzing how student work meets departmental outcomes. In order to facilitate the preparation of senior portfolios, English majors are encouraged to save copies of their written work (in electronic and hard copy) each semester.

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.

Student Conduct

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 plagiarism. Any and all instances of deliberate, significant plagiarism in English 323 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.)

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."