

English 253: Introduction to Creative Writing, Sec. 1 Spring 2020

Dr. Patricia Gott

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Office Hours: M 1:30-2:30, T 1-2 and by appointment

Class emails: Eng. 253.1 (English 253, Section 1)**

Email Policy/Format: You will be using email regularly this semester as it is the best way to reach me and it's a good way to reach classmates. You will be expected to use proper grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation in your emails, in addition to respectful and appropriate language.

Please use your UWSP account for all correspondence related to this class.

****Later in the term, you will be emailing your classmates your written work.****

Course Description:

This course will explore the ways in which language—sharpened, focused, and refined to the quality of art—helps us navigate the breadth and depth of the human condition. Reading and writing intensively, we hope to uncover the strengths and limitations of poetry and fiction. We will critique classic examples of each form, take what we learn, and experiment in our own writing. *****Students will be expected to complete at least one 6-10 page short story, one 1-page voice piece and 8 poems. If time allows, you may be asked to write a short-short in class (a story of about a page).** Roughly half the semester will be devoted to each genre. We will share our work in class and regularly open it up to a peer critique. Students must be willing to test their imaginations and improve their work through revision. By semester's end, you'll be expected to turn in a portfolio of revised work. Despite the size of the class, everyone should expect to be fully engaged with the material and attentive to their classmates: attendance and participation are mandatory.

UWSP Learning Outcomes – Investigation Level-Arts

Students will:

- Describe, analyze or critique creative works utilizing knowledge of relevant aesthetic criteria or stylistic forms.

Do at least ONE of the following

- Identify and explain the relationship between traditions or genres of creative expression and their social, historical or cultural contexts.
- Demonstrate an understanding of creative expression by producing or performing a creative work.

Required Materials:

-One notebook for notes and in class writing assignments. (I also encourage you to journal, doodle or whatever inspires your creativity in your notebook, but NOT on what you hand in.)

-One pocket folder for collection of work and presentation of portfolios at the end of class.

Participation:

This course will involve a blend of lecture, workshop, and discussion. It is important that you come prepared to participate in class activities and complete all the reading. For workshops, this includes reading and marking stories for the workshop sessions. Discussions are particularly important in creative writing classes, and you are expected to offer their opinions as both readers and writers. Good participation involves thoughtful responses to the assigned readings and a willingness to share written work (formal and informal). The participation requirement will not be met if you sit quietly through discussion and workshop and fail to engage with the material. Sometimes, a probing, thought-provoking question can be more useful than an assertion. The essence of discussion is play, trying out new ideas and seeing how they "work." Art is dynamic, not static, and one line of thinking—even if it seems "wrong" or incomplete—will always lead to something new and potentially beautiful. Art without risk is so often mired down in conventionality; thinking without risk (or, put another way, without play) leads to stagnation.

Grading:

Grades will be based on the following:

In Class Written and Verbal Participation:

20%

Major Assignments:

*ONE 6-10 page short story 20%

*8 poems 20%

Portfolio of revised work 40%

100%

*Collected as we go

(The portfolio should include revisions of at least 5 page-long poems, the voice piece, and the short story, for a minimum of at least 12 pages of highly revised work. Please don't hand in more than 20 pages of work in the portfolio).

NOTE: No letter grades will be assigned to any of the stories/poems written during the term; instead, students will receive feedback on drafts of their work, with the expectation that some will be revised and submitted as the final portfolio, which will receive a letter grade and commentary. Later in the term, I will submit a portfolio submission sheet, describing what should be included in the portfolio. **All stories and poems must be completed and handed in by the last week of the class.**

Assignment Format: ALL OUT OF CLASS assignments must be typed on white paper double-spaced, in 12 pt. Times New Roman, or another standard font. Use one-inch margins.

At the top of each assignment you should type:

Your name

(FOR WORKSHOP PORTION) Date your story is to be workshopped

as is harassment of others). This policy also applies for materials submitted for sessions. Students are expected to respond to the writings of others with judiciousness, deliberation, and fairness. However, honesty is expected in all critiques; if a story appears to endorse sexism, homophobia, or intolerance, for example, then readers are responsible for pointing out potentially unsavory aspects of a work. **Finally, we're here to help, not harm one another, and that extends to the work you produce.**

Students with learning differences may want to visit UWSP's Office of Disability Services (6th floor ALB Hall x 3365) to work with that office.

Final words on community & creative writing: Many people think of writing as a solitary activity, and it is. However, no writer exists in isolation. This course is designed to give you the opportunity to produce fiction and poetry in order to share it with a workshop audience. **This course gives you what every writer hopes to have: a readership!** Please remember that this course requires an active participation in a reading and writing community. As a writer, it is your obligation to share only your best work in workshop and to meet your deadlines (particularly in submitting work to the workshop). As a reader and editor, it is your job to "respect the work" being critiqued. This does not mean "being nice"; it means reading a fellow writer's work carefully and attentively: a story deserves more than a quick 5-minute perusal before class. **The phrase "you get what you give" is particularly true in a creative writing class with a workshop component.**

Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work! Write on!

Gott
English 253.1

Spring 2020 Writing Assignment and Reading List (*)

VERY IMPORTANT: Make sure you complete the assigned reading (including your peers' work in the workshop section) for each class period BEFORE you come to class. Also bring the specific text(s) to each class that includes that day's reading. Some readings might also be available for our class on Canvas. Finally, more readings* may be added, so the syllabus is subject to modification.
****In this case, I'll email them to you and pass out a paper copy in class.**

Week One: Jan. 22

Wed. Jan 22: Introduction to the class and one another/First in-class writing assignment
Poems Distributed

Week Two: Jan. 29-31

Mon: Read: Starkey: 18-29; How poetry works---Poetry exercises to begin. Line breaks, etc. Introduction to poetry/RitaDove Spill piece/Poetry You Tubes **Bring in poems distrib. Week 1**

Wed: Read Poems in Starkey: O'Meara, Peacock, Snyder 94, 97, 98
Read also: "The Owl Light: A Poem Series" by Deborah Fass and "Happiness" by Mary Oliver
<https://www.terrain.org/2018/poetry/deborah-fass/>
http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/mary_oliver/poems/15845
****BEFORE CLASS, WRITE A PAGE ABOUT WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT ONE OF THESE POEMS. YOU might also consider POV (point of view), theme, and some literary devices.**

Week Three: Feb. 3-5

Mon: Read Starkey: 30-41 Poetry exercises continued, List poems/**Bring in a poem you're partial to** (search at either poets.org, poemhunter and poetryfoundation.org)/Print it up or write it up

Wed: Read Starkey: 41-53, and poems pages 74-76, 82-84, 88-91 (Addonzio, Alexander, Alexie, Boss, Hahn, Harjo, Kenyon, Kinnell, Komunyakaa)/ ****BEFORE CLASS, WRITE A PAGE ABOUT WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT THE POEM YOU BROUGHT IN ON FEB 3. YOU might also consider POV (point of view), theme, and some literary devices.**

Week Four: Feb. 10-12

Mon: **READ:** Starkey 70-73, 101 (Vando/Shape poem)/"Moon Go Away" Ex. (in class)
PLACES: Bring in a photo or a postcard of a scene to write about/See Starkey, Ali: 75

Wed: **Hand in a poem you've been working on/** **READ:** Read 3 refinery poems by Georgia Pearle, "Open Letter to America" by Ian Ramsey, "I, Too" by Langston Hughes, and "Letter to the Local Police" by June Jordan
<https://www.terrain.org/2018/poetry/georgia-pearle/>
<https://www.terrain.org/2017/poetry/letter-to-america-ramsey/>
<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/i-too>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48760/letter-to-the-local-police>

Week Five: Feb. 17-19

Mon: Description: Showing vs. Telling/**Bring in 2 smallish objects to describe and write about**
(Leave them in your backpack and don't tell your partner(s) about them!

Pass out Microfictions/Read for Wednesday

Wed: Read from MicroFictions: "Cough" 26, "Daydreams," 28, "Your Fears are Justified" 36

****BEFORE CLASS: WHAT STICKS OUT ABOUT THESE STORIES? HOW DOES THE SHORST NATUR OF THEM INFLUENCE HOW WE READ THEM? FINALLY, PICK ONE AND WRITE A PARA. ABOUT IT.**

Character Inventories: Wisconsin Death Trip (or other photo ex) photo exercise in class

Week Six: Feb. 24-26: First drafts of three poems due/Discussion of short shorts/

MicroFictions: "Changing the Channel" 44 , "Chickens" 95/**Start reading Starkey Ch. 2 (104-117)**
For next class

Wed. Read from Starkey: 117-144 (Skim the short stories) **Conflict exercise (in class)**

Week Seven: Mar. 2-4

Mon: **One more poem due**/Introduction to the short story

Raymond Carver's "Popular Mechanics" 168 and John Cheever's "Reunion" 175 (Starkey)

Wed. **Possible Guest Speaker!**/(Edward Hopper Ex?)**Read Aimee Bender's "Loser" Starkey 159 and Heinrich Boll's "Action Will Be Taken"**

<https://anarchistwithoutcontent.wordpress.com/2010/05/02/action-will-be-taken-an-action-packed-story-by-heinrich-boll/>

Week Eight: Mar 9-11

Mon: **Two new poems due**/Short story continued/**Read Bloom's "Hold Tight" and O'Brien's "The Things They Carried" (Canvas)**

Wed. Dialogue exercise

Week Nine: March 16-18: No class—Spring Break. Keep Writing if you can!

Week Ten: March 23-25

Read Tananareve Due stories **TBA (on Canvas)**

Workshops of your poems begins/Order will be determined before this date

Week Eleven: Mar. 30-Apr. 1

Workshop of poems continues/**Read Oates's "Where are You Going, Where Have You Been?"**

PDF available here:

http://www.cusd200.org/cms/lib7/IL01001538/Centricity/Domain/361/oates_going.pdf

Week Twelve: April 6-8 Workshopping continues/Stories to be added (**Starkey: Wolf, "A White Bible" 218**)

Week Thirteen: April 13-15 Workshopping continues

Week Fourteen: April 20-22 Workshopping continues

Week Fifteen: April 27-29 Workshopping continues

Week Sixteen: May 4-6 Workshopping continues

Finals Week: ALL PORTFOLIOS Due Friday, May 15 by 12:30 pm in 318 CCC, my office
**Additional drop off times during finals week will be announced.

Reminder: A class that is this exercise and workshop intensive CANNOT BE RETAUGHT, so make sure to ATTEND REGULARLY to get full credit.