ENGLISH 119: Introduction to Creative Writing
Instructor: Miss Emily Cole (Miss Cole)
E-mail: emilyrosecole@siu.edu
Office Phone: 618.453.6819
Office: Faner 2238
Office Hours: M: 9:00 – 10:50a and W: M: 9:00 – 10:50a, 2:00p – 3:00p

English 119: Introduction to Creative Writing

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This is a rigorous course, and I assume you’re taking it because you’d like to become a better writer. I congratulate you! Being a better writer is a noble, if difficult, goal. In order to accomplish this, we will be reading from a variety of texts on the craft of fiction and poetry (these texts are listed below), as well as a selection of works of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction being written by contemporary (or nearly contemporary) authors.

This class is designed to teach you the fundamentals of fiction and poetry through examination and emulation of contemporary creative work. Some of this course will be devoted to the close reading of poetry and fiction, but the primary emphasis of this course is placed on the development of your own craft. After taking this course, you should be able to:

1) Understand and use basic vocabulary related to creative writing.
2) Recognize and be able to manipulate basic tenants of poetry and prose.
3) Thoughtfully and respectfully give and receive honest feedback creative work.
4) Think critically about your own creative work.
5) Revise.

REQUIRED TEXTS


Additional texts will be uploaded to the class blog or distributed in class as needed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Because this is a creative writing course, you will be doing two main actions in this class: reading and writing. These are the two most important ways you can develop yourself as a writer, and we will be doing a lot of each, as well as engaging in a good deal of class discussion about what we’ve read. As such, it is absolutely essential that you complete your reading for every class period.
This class is based on reading, writing, and discussion. Therefore, it is essential that you complete the homework assignments – both read and written – in a timely and thorough manner. Although some class time will be devoted to completing writing exercises, the majority of your development as writers will take place through practice outside of the classroom. Repeated failure to complete readings and homework assignments will result in lowered grade, a conference with the instructor, and, worst of all, a missed opportunity for self-improvement.

- **Participation (In Class) 15%** – Because this class is largely discussion-based, it’s important that all students are engaged in our discussions of class readings. Class participation, therefore, is a big part of your overall course grade.
- **Participation (In Workshop) 30%** – Workshopping (that’s writer-speak for peer feedback) is an important part of the creative writing process. There will be two workshops during the semester, one for fiction and one for poetry. **Attendance is mandatory for workshop sessions!** Your workshop grade will depend on the quality of the written feedback you give your fellow writers. Failure to give written feedback or to attend class on a workshop day will result in a lowered grade.
- **Writing Journal 10%** – Much of the in-class writing you complete will not be formally collected or graded, however, I expect you to keep a writing journal throughout the semester to contain your in-class and out-of-class writings. I will collect this journal at the end of the semester to be graded, but fear not: it’ll be returned to you at the final.
- **Literary Journal Research Project 15%** – Near the end of the semester, we will be completing a project in which you will choose a current, contemporary literary journal to investigate. You’ll write a brief reflective paper about your findings.
- **Final Portfolio 30%** – At the end of the semester, you will be selecting your strongest work of the semester (at least three poems and two fiction assignments) to put together a final portfolio. You will write a brief introduction reflecting on what you learned as a writer, and your grade will be based not only on the quality of your pieces, but on the quality of the revision that you’ve made to each based on workshop comments and instructor feedback.

**Assignment Breakdown Chart:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Total Points (of 1000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Participation</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Participation</td>
<td>Written commentary and verbal feedback</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Journal</td>
<td>Journal to hold in class writing exercises and homework, collected and returned at the end of the semester</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Portfolio</td>
<td>3 - 5 page written reaction to and brief verbal presentation about a literary journal</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Portfolio</td>
<td>Final document containing several of your strongest pieces and a reflective introduction</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CLASS BLOG

All homework assignments and announcements will be posted on the class blog at http://english119sp2016.blogspot.com/. The blog will be updated every day shortly after class and contain a bulleted rundown of everything we covered that day, plus announcements and homework. It is essential that you check the blog at least three times weekly, since many of your homework readings will be linked on the blog, not provided in class or in your texts.

Additionally, all handouts, prompts, and other resources are available for viewing/download on the unit tabs on top of the blog. You always have access to everything you need to complete every assignment, and it’s your responsibility to do so. If you’re absent and want to know what you missed, check the blog. If you plan on being absent, check the blog. CHECK THE BLOG. If you have a specific question about the homework (i.e. you don’t understand a specific aspect of the assignment) or you’re having technical difficulties, please do email me and I’ll respond to you in a timely fashion. If, however, you’re just emailing because you missed class and you want to know what the homework is, I will tell you to check the blog.

ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS POLICIES

I am aware that you are all very busy college students and that your schedules demand a lot from you. However, participation in class discussion, attention to the class lectures, and especially participation in workshop are all integral parts of this course. Being a writer means showing up, and that starts with coming to class. I will therefore strictly enforce the following attendance, tardiness and late work policies:

1) If you are 10 minutes late to class (or leave 10 minutes early) this constitutes an unexcused absence and you will not receive credit for attending, nor for any work completed that day.
2) You may accumulate three unexcused absences (or tardies) for free. Nothing bad will happen. However, at the fourth unexcused absence, your overall grade will drop a half a letter grade. On the fifth, you’ll lose a full letter grade. If you accumulate six or more unexcused absences and tardies, you’ll automatically fail the class.
3) If you miss one of your workshop days, your final grade will be lowered by one letter grade.
4) YOU must keep track of your own absences. I will not notify you if you’re on the brink of failure because of tardiness/unexcused absences, however you may ask me about this at any time. For student privacy reasons, I am not allowed to email you your current number of absences, but we can talk after class or in my office hours.
5) If miss class and cannot provide a valid excuse, you will not earn points for what you miss. Period.

HOWEVER, if you get sick, or you have a very good reason for missing class, such as a university sporting event, wedding, funeral, job interview etc., you can absolutely get the absences excused, although I need to see documentation for this. If you are suffering from a legitimate illness, stay home! Don’t infect your fellow classmates. If, during the course of the semester, some recurring illness or family issue presents itself, please talk to me after class or during my office hours and we’ll discuss options.

A special note about tardiness: Most days, we will begin class with a detail question for attendance and the reading of a poem, or sometimes a brief flash fiction piece. Immediately after, except on rare occasions, I will ask you to write a brief reaction to the piece you just heard. Because this time will be taken with both reading out loud and concentrated writing practice, it is imperative that you are on time. Late entrances may throw people off of their writing. If you are tardy and we are reading and/or writing, please enter quickly and quietly, take out your notebook and free write.
WORKSHOP POLICY

Students will be divided into five workshop groups. The due date to turn in workshop poems will always be due at 11:59 PM two class periods before your workshop, so be prepared ahead of time. Miss Cole will email the week’s workshop stories or poems to everyone. You will then be expected to print out all these materials (including your own) and comment on them for workshop. (Yes, I recognize that that’s a lot of pages. See the printing policy for more on that.) Be aware that workshop materials (i.e. stories or poems) will not be accepted late. If you fail to turn in your workshop materials on time, you forfeit your workshop time and will receive an automatically lowered final grade. Miss Cole will post reminders of workshop due dates in class and on the blog.

In workshop, you are expected to remain professional and courteous to your peers while offering suggestions and critique to better their writing. In order to earn full credit for workshop participation students should arrive with written comments on their peer's work as well as a willingness and ability to discuss the work being reviewed. This commentary should be completed in advance of workshop. We'll discuss workshop policies more specifically the second week of class.

PRINTING POLICY

Although informal exercises will be handwritten in class, you will be expected to print out all of the workshop materials for each workshop, in advance. This means that you will need access to a home printer, or you will need money on your Debit Dawg account for printing. Yes, it’s a lot of pages, especially in the fiction unit, but claiming that you don’t have the funds to print your peers’ workshop materials (or that your printer broke down, couldn’t get to the library printers, etc.) is not an acceptable excuse. You must print and provide written commentary for all of your peers’ workshop materials, or your workshop participation grade will suffer. Drastically.

CELL PHONES AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

I understand that, in today’s world of screens, it’s hard to pay attention for whole fifty minutes of class time. However, in my classroom I expect you to show your respect to me and to your fellow classmates by arriving to class on time and staying off of your cell phone, iPod, laptop, tablet etc. for the duration of class. You are further expected to treat your fellow learners (and myself) with dignity and courtesy at all times, which means not interrupting, teasing, intimidating, or invalidating your classmates in any way. Disagreeing with and debating each other in a reasonable and open-minded way is invited and encouraged, but only if respect and courtesy are present at all times. If you repeatedly or egregiously violate any of these expectations, you will be asked to leave my classroom and required to meet with the Writing Studies Office before you’re allowed to return.

PLAGIARISM

By now you’ve been in college long enough to know that plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of other people’s words and claiming that they're your own. Although we will talk about allusions (i.e. how to reference someone else’s work without actually stealing it), intentional plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. If I suspect you are not handing in your own work, you will be asked to meet with me and with the assistants in the English Office. You will fail the assignment, and repeated plagiarism may result in failure of the class.
A quick note about fanfiction:

Fanfiction is an excellent tool for writers. It allows you to learn and exercise important skills such as characterization, conflict, dialogue, and world-building. However, this class is about creating your own stories, with your own brilliant and original characters, plots, and lessons, so it will not be allowed in this class. If you try to turn in fanfiction for your formal or informal assignments, I will gently remind you that the goal here is to build your own skill set without relying on a world and set of characters created by more experienced writer.

ONE LAST THOUGHT ABOUT GRADING

Creative writing is a very personal endeavor, and, as such, it is difficult to assign an objective value to the progress that you make in this course. However, as your teacher, I’m required to give you a grade. It is very important that you remember that, when I grade your creative work, I am not grading you, I am grading your work. When I give you a writing assignment, I expect you to use the techniques and strategies you learn in this class to make your writing the best it can be. If you earn less than an A in this course (or on your portfolio) it doesn’t make you a bad writer; it just means that you either haven’t turned in your homework, or you haven’t fully learned to use the skills we’ll be talking about in this class. And that’s okay. I promise. Keep reading. Keep writing. Try, try again.

After you’ve read and understood the above, please sign and return the contract on the following page and fill out the student information portion.
CONTRACT OF UNDERSTANDING

I, ___________________________________________, have received a copy of both Miss Cole’s ENGL 102 syllabus addendum and the official ENGL 102 syllabus. I have read both in their entirety. I understand the outlined responsibilities I must undertake to successfully complete ENGL 102. I understand that these policies are subject to change and trust my instructor to inform me of any alterations. I promise to promptly seek help in the event of any misunderstanding. I further promise that I will treat myself, Miss Cole, and my classmates with respect and dignity at all times, even if I disagree with them.

X_____________________________ Date _________

STUDENT INFO

Full name: _________________________________________________________________

Name you’d like to be called in class: _________________________________________

Email address: _____________________________________________________________

Major/area of interest: ______________________________________________________

Interesting fact about you: _________________________________________________

Will any jobs/illnesses/disabilities/other circumstances prevent you from attending class on time or at all? Please explain: