English 218R

Introduction to Creative Writing

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“When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young.”

― [Maya Angelou](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/3503.Maya_Angelou)

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

― [Maya Angelou](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/3503.Maya_Angelou)

**Required Texts:**

*The Mindful Writer* by Dinty W. Moore

Supplemental Readings available online and through Learning Suite

**Other required Materials for this course:**

* something to write with in class, such as a notebook or laptop
* access to a printer for printing papers, additional course readings, and the multimodal assignment.
* A positive attitude and a willingness to work.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Everything we do this semester is designed to help you learn to **read, write,** and **live** like writers.

To **read** like a writer, you will

* read for quantity and quality, and appreciate the creative power of immersing yourself in great literature.
* read creatively, discovering how to dissect a story, poem, or essay in order to improve your own craft.
* read critically, and see that by helping others with their writing you actually help yourself.

To **write** like a writer, you will

* learn the tools of creative writing and apply them in variety of short forms.
* identify your own writing process and how to maximize your creativity by honoring that process.
* boldly and humbly write what is most important to you.
* use revision to move from private to public writing, and learn the motivating influence of an audience.

To **live** like a writer, you will learn

* to observe the world, and take notes.
* to benefit from participation in a writing community by sharing your work with others.
* to constantly improve your craft, to try new things, and to celebrate literary writing by attending readings and other literary events.

**ASSESSMENT MEASURES (200 points possible)**

**Read Like a Writer**

1. **Outside Reading (5):** Read 600 pages of independent literary reading, divided evenly between fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Students will keep track of and report outside reading in their final portfolio.
2. **Memorize a poem (5):** Memorize one poem of ten lines or longer and recite it for the class.
3. **Workshop critiques (20):** Respond critically to workshop drafts of classmates’ manuscripts, giving marginal as well as summary feedback.
4. **Literary Response (5):** You will be asked to submit a literary selection to the class, one example of what you believe is “good” writing. You will lead a discussion on the piece, analyzing it with your peers. Be prepared to defend your choice!

**Write like a Writer**

1. **Writing Journal (10):** Keep a journal of in-class exercises, take-home writing activities, and weekly reading responses.
2. **Formal Writing Assignments (10 x 5pts = 50 pts):**
   1. 4 poems (Formal, Repetition, Question Poem, Poetry Project)
   2. Autobiography
   3. Collage/lyric Essay
   4. Place Essay
   5. Experiential Essay
   6. Object story
   7. Fractured Fairy Tale
   8. Triangle story
   9. Idling
   10. Flash Fiction
3. **Genre Analysis (10):** At the end of each genre unit, you will write a short essay (500-750 words) describing the defining characteristics of each genre.
4. **Workshop draft of “best piece” (5):** select one formal creative assignment to revise. You will meet with me to discuss it, and then submit it for workshop with the entire class.
5. **Portfolio (50):** Compile a final portfolio that includes formal writing drafts, major revisions (the revision of your workshop piece, and one more revision in each of the other two genres), and 3 reflective essays (one for each revision). Include:
   1. Copy of Exercise Journal
   2. Workshop draft of “best piece”
   3. Revision of “best piece” based on workshop comments
   4. 1 additional poem; development, and revision
   5. 1 additional prose; development, and revision
   6. Brief, substantive statement on mindful writing (500 words)
   7. Copy of your tweets for the semester
   8. Rough draft copy of each of the major assignments
   9. summary of your outside reading; Title, Author, page count, summary

**Live Like a Writer**

1. **Daily Class Participation (10):** attend class each day, complete reading assignments, participate actively in class discussions, writing exercises, etc.
2. **Instructor Conferences (10):** Meet with me at least twice during the semester to discuss your work. Once during the first few weeks of the semester, and once to discuss your workshop revisions.
3. **Literary Events (15):** attend 3 literary events on campus or in the community. Submit a 250 word substantive response to the events.
4. **Twitter (5 pts):** Students will keep a twitter account and “tweet” at least twice a week. Tweet content should be based on class and outside reading assignments or class discussions. Tweet should contain the hashtag #byucw

**A NOTE ON ASSESSMENT**

I am less interested in what talent you bring to class the first day than in what you do with your writing once you start working. Your job this semester is to live, write, and read like a writer, and you will be graded on your efforts and your successful application of writerly principles. A so-called "bad writer" can do well in this class if they do the work. No one can pass this class if they don't. There will be a total of 200 points for the semester. 94% will be the cut off for an A, 90% for A-, 87% for B+, and so on.

**HOW I WILL EVALUATE YOUR CREATIVE WORK?**

You will receive credit based on your diligence in applying the principles and practices that we learn in class.

✓**+**for an on-time, complete manuscript that demonstrates a serious attempt to use of the elements of creative writing (imagery, figurative language, form, allusion, symbol, conflict, rising action, climax, character development, theme, scene, setting, voice, etc).

✓ for an on-time manuscript missing some major elements of creative writing (no conflict, no climax, no character development in a story, failure to avoid clichés and abstractions in a poem, no reflection in an essay etc…)

✓ - for a manuscript that is late, and complete, or on time, but incomplete.

**HOW WILL I EVALUATE YOUR REVISIONS?**

You will receive credit based on your diligence in aggressively revising your work.

✓**+**for significant revision that demonstrates your willingness to process feedback and make both major and minor changes. These may be large structural changes, adjustments in focus, point of view, plot, character, and other elements of fiction.

✓for some revision that demonstrates your willingness to process feedback and make minor changes. These may include basic structural changes, plot clarifications, or character development improvements, etc.

✓-for minor revisions that question your willingness to process feedback. These may include minor syntactic and grammatical corrections, despite the need for more significant changes.

**How will I evaluate your other work?**

Your critical work (workshop critiques, reading responses, revision process reflection, literary event report, MSF presentation) will be graded using the following system:

✓**+**for substantive, articulate, critical discussions that demonstrate significant thought, effort, and rhetorical skill.

✓for substantive, critical discussions that demonstrate some thought and effort.

✓- for discussion that demonstrates perfunctory thought and effort.

**The following assignments will be graded on percentage completed**: Outside reading, writing journal, instructor conferences, literary events.

You class participation and your workshop participation will be assessed using a personal evaluation and a peer evaluation respectively.

**Google Drive:** To make collaboration and access easier we will use Google Drive for our peer review and for turning in major papers. Please get a google account before the semester starts. I will create a shared folder for the class, and then each student can create folders and documents within the class folder to produce an online portfolio of your work. For each major writing task you will create a google document. This will facilitate instructor comments as well as peer review and pre workshop comments. You will also include reflective writing in these folders. The final portfolio will also be created in these folders. At the start of the semester I will have you sign a FERPA release that lets us comment on your writing in Google Drive. However, to respect your privacy, my comments and final grades will be given to you in hard copy in class, or through Learning Suite.

**Late Writing:** Writing assignments are due at the beginning of class on their due dates unless otherwise specified. Each day a major paper is late your score will drop 10%. An absence is no excuse for late work. Although due dates are somewhat arbitrary they are a part of life. If you write every day you will stay on track for all due dates. I do not accept informal assignments late.

**Final Exam:**

**Our final exam will be**

The exam is mandatory. Please do not purchase plane tickets home, or plan on leaving for any reason before this date. If there is a conflict let me know as soon as possible.

**Course Policies:**

**Attendance Policy**

You are allowed two “free” absences. Use them well (or don’t use them at all). After that each unexcused absence will lower your overall grade by 1/2 a letter grade. Your contribution is important to our class, and it is important to attend. Use your absences wisely. That being said, if you have an emergency, let me know. I am reasonable. If you need to be excused from class, contact me at least 24 hours before the intended class date.

**Important Things to Keep in Mind**

* Computer issues are not an excuse for late work. Save your work in at least three different places (consider using an online service like google drive or dropbox that can be accessed from multiple computers) and in three different formats.
* If you need to be excused from class, contact me at least 24 hours before the intended class date.
* You are responsible for checking the schedule on Learning Suite to know what reading assignments and other assignments are due. I do not always have time to remind you of everything. Please be responsible. Ignorance is not an excuse for a missing assignment.

**Classroom Behavior**

* No distracting food is allowed whilst the class is in session (Eat your fruit snacks and granola bars quietly). Beverages are ok.
* The use of any electronic device for recreational purposes is prohibited in class. If student uses either cell phone, laptop, or other electronic media (i.e. ipod, ipad) instructor reserves the right to require that the student leave the classroom In that event, the student is automatically considered absent, thus his/her assignment is considered not turned in for that class period.
* If your cell phone goes off in class, I will make you answer it and tell the caller (it’s always your mother) that you are in the middle of class, that everyone is listening to you right now, and that you will have to call them back. So, please turn off your phone.

**Email Correspondence**

Email is the best way to get in touch with me during non class hours. If you need to contact me you can do so at [spottedpen@gmail.com](mailto:spottedpen@gmail.com).

* Email will be read between the hours of 8 am – 5 pm from Monday to Friday. Please allow at least 24 hours for a response (although it is usually much sooner).
* I will respond to email sent over the weekend **at my earliest convenience**.
* I expect students to use professional language and tone in all communications with me, including in emails (netiquette).

**Visiting During Office Hours**

Students with questions or concerns are encouraged to come see me in my office during the hours listed above. If you are unable to come during those hours, you may set up an appointment with me via email or brief after-class conversation. Please notify me ASAP if you are unable to keep your appointment.

**Useful Websites:**

**Honor Code**

In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university’s expectation that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

**Preventing Sexual Discrimination or Harassment**

Sexual discrimination or harassment (including student-to-student harassment) is prohibited both by the law and by Brigham Young University policy. If you feel you are being subjected to sexual discrimination or harassment, please bring your concerns to the professor. Alternatively, you may lodge a complaint with the Equal Employment Office (D-240C ASB) or with the Honor Code Office (4440).

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this course, please contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (1520 WSC). This office can evaluate your disability and assist the professor in arranging for reasonable accommodations.

**Plagiarism**

Intentional plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft that violates widely recognized principles of academic integrity as well as the Honor Code. Such plagiarism may subject the student to appropriate disciplinary action administered through the university Honor Code Office, in addition to academic sanctions that may be applied by an instructor. Inadvertent plagiarism, whereas not in violation of the Honor Code, is nevertheless a form of intellectual carelessness that is unacceptable in the academic community. Plagiarism of any kind is completely contrary to the established practices of higher education, where all members of the university are expected to acknowledge the original intellectual work of others that is included in one's own work. In some cases, plagiarism may also involve violations of copyright law.

**Schedule:** We will make adjustments to the schedule as needed. Stay tuned, and check the Content page under Learning Suite frequently.

**ENGLISH 218R WRITING ASSIGNMENTS-**

These are the formal writing assignments for the semester. There will be other, informal writing prompts almost every day. After all, can it really be called a writing class if we do not actually write?

**Poetry:**

“Let [this] be the [literature] we search for: worn with the hand's obligations, as by acids, steeped in

sweat and in smoke, smelling of lilies and urine, spattered diversely by the trades that we love by, inside

the law or beyond it. A [literature] impure as the clothing we wear, or our bodies, soup-stained, soiled

with our shameful behavior, our wrinkles and vigils and dreams, observations and prophecies,

declarations of loathing and love, idylls and beasts, the shocks of encounter, political loyalties, denials

and doubts, affirmation and taxes.” (Pablo Neruda)

1. Repetitions. Write a poem of 20-30 lines that overtly utilizes repetition of one sort or another. Each sentence should be as concrete as you can make it. The poem ought to develop an emotional arc from beginning to end—leave you in a different place from where you begin—but not rely heavily on narrative. The repetition should help hold the poem together, while allowing you to experiment with language and poetic flights. Read the following examples: “Did I Miss Anything” by Tom Wayman (13), “Smoking” by Elton Glaser (71), “Hate Poem” by Julie Sheehan (127), “The Dead” by Susan Mitchell(140).

2. Question poem (at least 20 lines). Read several question poems, including Neruda’s “The Book of Questions, III,” “Carrying on Like a Crow,” “Some Questions You Might Ask,” “The Summer Day” (133),” and “A Wreath to the Fish” (102). Now write a poem that both observes the natural world and asks questions about those observations. These should be questions that rely on imagery and metaphor, questions that do more than elicit a simple yes or no answer. Let the questions gradually reveal something paradoxical or unexpected about the world that surrounds us.

3. Jim Simmerman’s “Twenty Little Poetry Projects.” See attachment.

4. In addition you will also complete a formal poem assignment. Some forms include the sonnet, the pantoum, the villanelle, the haiku, ect. We will be discussing these more in class.

**Creative NonFiction:**

“It's not all bad. Heightened self-consciousness, apartness, an inability to join in, physical shame and self-loathing—they are not all bad. Those devils have been my angels. Without them I would never have disappeared into language, literature, the mind, laughter and all the mad intensities that made and unmade me.”

― [Stephen Fry](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/10917.Stephen_Fry), [*Moab Is My Washpot*](http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/2951429)

5. Autobiography, with Five Objects. I’ve borrowed this assignment from Steve Tuttle: “Select five disconnected (physical) objects from your life. Write a brief paragraph for each, making no (special) effort to draw relationships between the disparate parts. Use the names of the objects as headings, but do not name the objects in the body of each section (50-100 words per object).” Avoid all electronic devices, especially cell phones, I-pods, lap tops, etc. and any objects that are predictable or cutesy, including but not limited to stuffed animals. Favor objects with implied stories or emotional conflict of one sort or another.

6. Collage/Lyric: One of the most important developments in the essay in the last twenty years is the popularity of collage. Sometimes called a segmented or fragmented essay, this piece should be at least 1000 words long and consist of at least seven sections. While this piece should satisfy in the same way that a traditional essay does, it should rely more on juxtaposition and intuition than straight logic or narrative. I’d recommend that you read the following pieces before throwing yourself into the task: “The Weight of a Bird” by Micole Walker, “Autopsy Report” by Lia Purpera,“Space Oddity” by Ellena Passarella, and “Son of Mr. Green Jeans” by Dinty Moore.

7. Travel Essay, or Place Essay: Write an essay about a place where you felt a certain dislocation—whether personal, spiritual, cultural or otherwise. It could be a foreign country, a place you visited as a child, an unfamiliar street, even a room in a house. Your main task is to evoke this place through particulars. Help us smell, see, touch, taste, and hear this place. Let particulars wash over us in such a way that we feel the narrator’s fear, curiosity, disorientation or ambivalence. The essay should leave us in a place very different from where we began. For inspiration, you might read the following essays: “Jump” by Lia Purpura, “Stairs” by Amy Leach, “The Future will Have to Wait” by Michael Chabon, “Once More to the Lake” by E.B. White.

8. Experiential Essay: During the first part of the semester participate in an activity outside of your comfort zone. Go to a monster truck rally, or ComicCon, or the State Fair. Go to a religious festival outside of your own religious traditions, or go square dancing. Shape an essay that addresses the emotional impact of your experience, connecting it to previous life experiences.

9. Defense of Idling

Jerome K. Jerome wrote, "It is impossible to enjoy idling thoroughly unless one has plenty of work to do. There is no fun in doing nothing when you have nothing to do. Wasting time is merely an occupation then, and a most exhausting one. Idleness, like kisses, to be sweet must be stolen." Your assignment is to spend a few hours this week engaged in idling instead of

working. Put off schoolwork or other obligations and do something that you love. Take a long walk, lie in a hammock, read a book not required for class, listen to your favorite podcast––it doesn't matter what you do, only that you are engaged in this activity while setting aside work. Then write a 1-2 page defense of your idleness, in which you will reflect on the experience while defending and celebrating idle behavior.

**Fiction:**

“Fantasy is escapist, and that is its glory. If a soldier is imprisoned by the enemy, don't we consider it his duty to escape?. . .If we value the freedom of mind and soul, if we're partisans of liberty, then it's our plain duty to escape, and to take as many people with us as we can!”

― [J.R.R. Tolkien](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/656983.J_R_R_Tolkien)

10. Write an object story (500-1000 words). Before tackling this one, read Michael Oppenheimer’s “The Paring Knife,” Tim O’Brien’s “Stockings,” and Lydia Davis’s “The Sock.” Note how all three stories use an everyday object to emblematize a relationship. Avoid sentimental objects such as jewelry, a bouquet, a stuffed animal, a baseball mitt, or a fishing rod inherited from Grandpa. Nor should the object be used as a nostalgia trigger for the protagonist to think about or recount a story in the past. Be sure that the significance of the object changes between the beginning of the story and the end.

11. Write a triangle story (at least 1500 words). Take the three-part movement of Leslie Norris’s “Blackberries” as a model. His story first focuses on the protagonist with his mother at a barbershop and haberdashery, then shifts to the young man and his father eating dinner then picking blackberries in the country, then ends with the mother and father back at home bickering, with the young boy silently watching. Let your story follow a similar pattern of three scenes: the narrator and A, the narrator and B, A & B with narrator observing but not playing a central role.

12. Fractured Fairy Tale

Your task, simply put, is to take a traditional fairy tale and rewrite it. As you rewrite your tale, however, you must "make it new." You have a few options: Write the tale from a different perspective, from the Prince's perspective instead of Cinderella's, for example; complicate the characters so they are not wholly good or evil; change the outcome; in short, your tale must be recognizable as a rewrite of a traditional tale, but you must approach it from a different angle. (2-3 p.)

13. Flash Fiction. Write a short, short story (750 words or less). Before you start you may want to read a selection of flash fiction pieces, including “Jumper Down” by Don Shea, “Barbie Birthday” by Alison Townsend, “The Kettle” by Eva Marie Ginsburg, and “Accident” by Dave Eggars.