



**ENGL 2307-102CL**  
**Intro. to Creative Writing**  
**Spring 2023**  
**TTH 8-9:20 a.m., LRC 257**

**Instructor Information:** Dr. Brian Anderson  
Email: banderson@com.edu  
Telephone: 409-933-8186 (office)

**Student hours and location** (office hours): M-TH 9:30-11:30 a.m., LRC Suite B  
Other times and virtual meetings by appointment.

**Required Textbook:** There is no required textbook. Required and supplemental readings will be supplied by the instructor.

**Course Description:** Practical experience in the techniques of imaginative writing. May include fiction, nonfiction, poetry, screenwriting, or drama. (From Texas ACGM/Catalog.)

Prerequisite: ENGL 1301 with a grade of "C" or better

**Course Requirements:**

To achieve a desirable grade in this course, it is most important that you come to each and every class on time (respect the time of the class), participate fully, submit all exercises and assignments, and treat each other fairly and respectfully. There will also be readings that you are expected to complete, and much of the reading and writing will be done outside of class per the standard model for higher education.

**Exercises**

Exercises may be assigned at any time. These exercises will be done in class or may be assigned for you to do on your own.

## **Workshop Assignments**

Every student will write a non-fiction piece (essay), short story (or fictional piece of some kind), and poem for the class's and instructor's formal consideration. These will all be workshopped with the class before final submission to the instructor.

Workshopping is a way of getting feedback on a work without having to wait until the writer has had enough time and distance to see the work objectively. It is a kind of shortcut, and it can be immensely useful as well as interesting. Students will need to bring in enough copies (for the entire class) of their individual poems and stories to class on the day they are to be read in workshop. (If you need help making copies, please bring your workshop piece to my office, during office hours or at least a half-hour before class.) A workshop schedule will be distributed separately. Workshop pieces should grow out of your most recent writing efforts and should not be something you wrote, say, in junior high school. However, a workshop piece can be something that you started before this semester but that you still consider to be in progress and that you have revised recently. The idea is that we will help you to shape the piece. Your workshop pieces may evolve from exercises while fulfilling both requirements.

This semester, we will also discuss the history of the workshop in creative writing classes as well as its pros and cons.

## **Journal**

Journals will include some free-form topics and some prompts, designed to get you started but which you may also take loosely. Journal writing is designed to help jump-start your own writing in other areas. The idea is to record ideas and observations, and to reflect on your own writing and the world around you. Journal entries should run about a page (250 words or more). The final journal, along with a final reflective piece on your writing, will be submitted at the end of the semester. Separate instructions for the journal will be distributed.

## **Terms Quiz**

Toward the end of the semester, we will have a quiz over terms and concepts learned this semester. We will keep a running list of terms and definitions and flesh this out as the semester progresses. The terms quiz will help us to focus on some of the academic and theoretical ideas behind the craft of creative writing (important given our context in a higher-education setting) while also helping us to learn some interesting knowledge and precise words that can be useful in discussing creative writing.

### **Author or Special Topics Presentation**

All students will be expected to research and give a short presentation (3-5 minutes) about a contemporary author who interests you. If you do not have a favorite living or recently deceased author, this can be an author that interests you for other reasons. You may also present on another aspect of writing in society, as I will explain in class. I will distribute a list of recommended authors/topics as well as some additional guidance on this assignment. Every student must present on a different author/topic.

We will schedule these throughout class sessions later in the semester, so we're not all doing them at the same time. I will distribute a schedule later.

### **Participation/Professionalism**

This part of your grade involves attendance and meaningful participation in exercise and workshop activities. Obviously, your participation grade might also be negatively impacted by any behaviors that are distracting or disruptive. (This includes excessive cell phone use, etc. There are many ways to not be present in class.) Common courtesy, respect, and professional behavior are expected and appreciated. On the other hand, we want this to grow to be a community of writers, so I also expect you to loosen up a bit and to speak your mind on relevant matters related to language, writing, and life as it relates to the existence of the artist.

### **Poetry Month**

I may be asking members of this class to help with activities related to National Poetry Month in April. This will mostly be done for extra credit but may also help your participation grade. I want it to be enjoyable and meaningful for the class – not just another extra-credit assignment. Activities may include setting up and evaluating the “Poetry Wall” or helping with the International Poetry reading. We can also talk about other possible activities, like organizing a student poetry slam or a “sidewalk poet” event.

### **COM Symposium**

For a few years now, the Creative Writing class has been participating in a creative-reading panel at the COM Symposium in April. We will be doing this again this semester. Your participation in the reading is voluntary but strongly encouraged. I will have you craft a couple of pieces that may be connected to this year's theme. You are also free, of course, to submit an abstract for a longer or more complex personal piece or analysis on an individual basis. See the COM website for more information on the symposium.

## Extra Credit

Besides the symposium and poetry month activities as noted above, extra credit may be offered for attending certain presentations, lectures, plays, and other performances outside of class. These will be announced as the opportunities arise. Extra credit may also be given for completing the bonus discussions and other class activities as announced. Some extra-credit opportunities (for help with a particular task, for instance) may be offered on a first-come basis. Additionally, I will usually award extra-credit points (1-3 points) to any student who brings an error in classroom instructions or documents (including typos) to my attention. Individual extra credit will *not* be offered as a way of remediating grade deficiencies at the end of the semester.

## Determination of Course Grade (Point Distribution):

Journal	100 points
Short Presentation	50 points
Exercises	100 points
Workshop Pieces	300 points
Terminology Quiz	50 points
Participation/Professionalism	100 points
<b>Total:</b>	<b>700 points</b>

**Grading scale:** Grading scale: 630-700 = A  
560-629 = B  
490-559 = C  
420-489 = D  
419 and below = F

**Notes:** There may be some adjustment of point distributions, values, or assignments as needed to correct for errors or changes in assignments/schedules. Any extra-credit points will be added as raw points.

**Online Grade Book:** Running point totals and current grades will be posted on Brightspace (D2L). Remember that the online grade display may be incomplete at any given time and is simply for your convenience (not a substitute for the instructor's official records). Certain assignment points, like extra credit, may not be posted until the end of the semester. You are responsible for keeping track of your progress in the class. Your final grades will be made available through WebAdvisor at the end of the semester.

## **Late Work, Make-Up, and Extra-Credit Policies**

**Late Work/Make-up Policy:** Students are expected to turn work in on time. If a student cannot attend class for some reason, he or she should make other arrangements to turn in assignments on time. (This is not allowed for days you're supposed to have a piece workshoped; we won't workshop without you being there.) Late work (such as journals) will only be accepted for a valid reason and will be penalized 20% per business day. Normally, in-class assignments cannot be made up, since they are partly designed to encourage your attendance and active learning. Make-up exams/quizzes will only be given with prior permission of the instructor, and documentation may be required for emergencies or school-related absence if a student requests a make-up. Please plan accordingly and contact me ahead of time if you know you have a situation.

**Extra Credit:** See above.

**Attendance Policy:** Regular attendance is expected and counts toward the student's professionalism grade. If you cannot attend class because of some emergency, you should call or email me as soon as possible before class (this does not excuse the absence; it just lets me know you will be missing). You should also arrange to obtain any missed notes or instructions from another student or from me during office hours, and you should seek out available online materials.

Please note that I do not normally drop students based on lack of attendance, although this is done automatically for those who do not attend class or participate before Census Day. After that time, students are responsible for withdrawing themselves and for managing their own schedule and how they might be affected by the six-drop rule. See institutional withdrawal policy below.

Attendance is also critical in creating and maintaining the right atmosphere and sense of connectedness for a community of writers and especially for doing workshop-style critiques in the creative-writing classroom.

**Communicating with your instructor:** ALL electronic communication with the instructor must be through your COM email. Due to FERPA restrictions, faculty cannot share any information about performance in the class through other electronic means. (Communication for this class may also take place through the LMS messaging tool.)

## **Student Learner Outcomes and Core Objectives**

Student Learner Outcome	Maps to Core Objective	Assessed via this Assignment
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1. To learn established techniques in crafting short stories and poetry.		
2. To hone writing skills using a variety of exercises, open-ended assignments, and journal writing.	Personal Responsibility	
3. To gain an understanding of creative writing theory, including terms, poetic forms, poetic elements, story genre, plotting, and character development.		<b>Terms Quiz</b>
4. To gain an appreciation of the importance of revision in the creative writing process.		
5. To critique the creative prose and poetry of others and to learn to offer and receive constructive criticism in a collaborative workshop environment	Critical Thinking	
6. To evaluate and analyze the elements of successful fiction and poetry.		
7. To reflect on the purposes of ethical responsibilities of creative writing in society.	Social Responsibility	

## Other Objectives

1. To foster attitudes and practices conducive to creative thought and imaginative self-expression. To learn to see and live like artists. To see the value in this.
2. To explore other forms of creative writing, including creative nonfiction, drama, and prose poetry. To consider how technology and other forces have changed the writing process and the literary marketplace.
3. To build on previously learned composition skills, focusing on considerations of diction, coherence, consistency of style, and mechanics. To reflect on the differences between creative writing and other forms of writing aimed more at clear communication.
4. To reinforce attitudes toward writing as a process, emphasizing that a creative work is never truly finished.
5. To distinguish and evaluate academic and popular standards for “literature” and to understand the purposes and conventions of genre.
6. To reflect on the possibilities for creative writing as a tool for personal growth.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Any incident of academic policy will be dealt with in accordance with college policy and the Student Handbook. Academic dishonesty – such as cheating on exams -- is an extremely serious offense and will result in a **grade of zero** on that exam, and the student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for the appropriate disciplinary action.

*Plagiarism:* Plagiarism is using someone else’s words or ideas and claiming them as your own. Plagiarism is a very serious offense. Plagiarism includes paraphrasing someone else’s words without giving proper citation, copying directly from a website and pasting it into your paper, or using someone else’s words without quotation marks. Any assignment containing any plagiarized material will receive a **grade of zero** and the student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for the appropriate disciplinary action and remediation.

The plagiarism and academic-dishonesty policy applies to all written work submitted for this class, including tests, journals, quizzes, online forums, and essays. If you use anything from another source, you must document properly using MLA standards. Making up quotes or falsifying information will also be construed as academic dishonesty. Reusing your own assignments from an earlier class or this class (except for your own discussion posts) is also not allowed; please ask me if you need guidance on this.

Please note that not all papers or work will necessarily be checked for plagiarism; the decision to check a particular assignment for possible plagiarism is made based on my professional judgment and expertise, in part garnered from years of grading student work.

**Student Concerns:** If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of this course, please contact me using the contact information previously provided. If, after discussing your concern with me, you continue to have questions, please contact Dean of Academic Programs Dr. Rocky Barney at [rbarney@com.edu](mailto:rbarney@com.edu) or 409-933-8727.

### **Special Course Policies and Procedures:**

1. Community of Writers guidelines: We are trying to foster the right environment and vibe for a community of writers in a relatively short amount of time. This means building a sense of trust and mutual respect that will allow for an honest and respectful exchange of ideas and the enhancement of personal craft and creative inspiration. The following behaviors and attitudes are important for building a community of writers: (a) being here and being on time – attendance at all class sessions and workshops; (b) being attentive to the writer or ideas being discussed or to anyone who is speaking – and not other distractions outside of class or, say, on the phone; (c) being respectful by avoiding demeaning language and stereotyping of groups; (d) being respectful by avoiding dismissing a writer’s work based on aspects of identity (ethnicity, gender, etc.); (e) similarly, avoiding dismissing feedback based on aspects of identity (“you don’t see what I mean because you don’t have any kids”); (f) learning and using the preferred names of workshop participants; (g) working toward using sensitive and helpful language when offering constructing criticism, but also being honest in offering feedback; (h) avoiding language generally accepted as offensive or non-inclusive (in discussion; different rules apply to writing things like dialogue or other aspects of creative work) and also keeping an open mind and being respectful of less widely accepted but ongoing challenges to language norms. We may add to this list in class with ideas of your own, but the spirit of the guidelines boils down to “don’t be a jerk” and “don’t let down your class.”
2. Caveat on Plagiarism for Creative Writing: Many first-time novelists have found their careers ruined after bits and pieces of their novels have been revealed to have been plagiarized, so it’s important to emphasize the danger of this temptation. Plagiarism is plagiarism, and working in the creative realm does not excuse one of responsibility, even though the context does change the expectations a bit.

As we will discover this semester, however, there is a difference between plagiarizing and learning to write through imitation of famous authors. Many budding fiction writers copy Hemingway’s style, for instance. This does not mean they are guilty of plagiarizing Hemingway, unless they steal his story or words. Also, accepted literary devices such as allusion, homage, and parody would not be considered plagiarism. Reworking older, public-domain works (like *Pride and Prejudice*) into new, obviously comic forms (*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*) or writing sequels of older works (*Finn*, a dark sequel to *Huckleberry Finn*) also allows for some creative leeway. In a broader sense, also, all



creative work is influenced by everything that came before it. As writers, we are aware that completely new ideas and original plots are somewhat rare, and we know that we are working within story-telling and literary traditions that stretch back thousands of years. We will treat this potential problem as an area for open discussion and learning. We will also be discussing, at some point, the difference between plagiarism and copyright violation.

Also, because this is a workshop class at least grounded in the idea that process is valued, I understand as an instructor that you will be building on your own previous work, in this class and before, so we will not have the usual prohibitions against “self-plagiarism.” However, generally speaking, the work you produce for this class should be new work, unless you have an ongoing writing project on the side that you’d like feedback on.

3. Content in college-level creative writing: As a college-level class for adult-age learners at a public, secular institution of public learning, we will not have formal limitations on content or language. We are interested in fostering a free marketplace of ideas and vibrant creative expression. This also aligns, hopefully, with our ideals and constitutional protections related to freedom of speech and the life of the artist. Although there are limits even to the near-absolute ideals of freedom of speech, we will discuss some of those possible limitations and ethical dimensions (your responsibilities as a writer) as part of the class and in a broader academic context. Naturally, in the workshop environment in particular, your classmates are also free to express objections to aspects of expression, and you as a writer are free to counter those objections. All of this should be done with professionalism and respect, assuming the good intentions of all those involved. (The instructor/workshop facilitator is responsible for deciding when intentions do not seem honest or when some other intervention might be warranted; this includes my legal responsibilities as an instructor and mandated reporter for certain types of crimes or violations involving students. I will speak more on this topic in class.)
4. Please note that you do not have permission to record (audio or video) this class. This is especially important for protecting the sanctity of the creative writing classroom. You may take pictures of slides, but this is generally a terrible way to take notes and remember ideas. If you feel you need to record as a substitute for taking notes, please discuss with me.
5. **Caveat on Grading.** The instructor reserves the right to make subjective decisions on student grades and assessment based on his own expertise and judgment in the subject matter. The instructor also reserves the right to assign a final grade based on a student’s overall mastery of the material and improvement over the course of the semester.

6. **Syllabus Changes.** The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus and/or schedule as needed. Readings may also be added, but no major assignments will be added unless needed due to a weather emergency or other outside circumstances. You will be duly notified of any such changes.
7. **Brightspace (D2L).** Even though this is not an online course, some assignments and learning materials may be released through the online learning management system (Brightspace). Information and resources will also be made available there. Let me know if you need assistance.
8. **Classroom Conduct Policy:** College of the Mainland requires that students enrolled at COM be familiar with the Standards of Student Conduct, which can be found in the on-line [Student Handbook](#) (and in college policy). Any breaches of the Code of Conduct will result in a referral to the Office for Student Conduct and may result in dismissal from this class or from campus.

In addition to explicitly stated policies, the instructor expects that students will observe rules of common courtesy and conduct themselves in a way that is befitting of college students and conducive to creating a serious and professional learning environment.

All policies and procedures are designed to encourage fairness, facilitate professional interaction, and improve student success. I have put these policies and procedures into place over the years because I have seen what works and what does not work.

Please also note that this document does not cover every eventuality or possible circumstance in a class. Just because something is not covered here doesn't mean it is or is not "allowed." In addition to college policies and procedures, we also follow the common rules of society and many other unwritten rules specific to our educational situation. Please talk to me if you have any questions or doubts about anything.

## COURSE CALENDAR

### **General Course Outline, Major Due Dates, and Schedule of Reading Assignments**

**Note:** *Journal assignments, exercises, quizzes, readings, and other minor assignments will be announced in class.* Due dates for some assignments may vary depending on the week and other aspects of the class schedule.

Schedule subject to change as needed; we may also be hosting some guest speakers/readers.

Class assignments, emphasis, and exercises may also shift based on the unique nature of this semester's community of writers and its interests.

**1/16 – MLK Day (College Closed)**

1/17 – Course introduction

1/19 Course Introduction and Syllabus  
Classmate Introductions and Discussion of Self-Identity

1/24 General Creative Exercises and the Creative Mind

1/26 Short writing: *This I Believe* or *What I've Learned*

1/31 Introduction to Poetry  
Poetry Vs. Prose  
What is Poetry?  
Imagery and Rhythm/Sound and Sense  
Workshop poem assigned.  
Poets we will read may include Theodore Roethke, Charles Bukowski, Maya Angelou, Shel Silverstein, Dylan Thomas, and others. We will endeavor especially to read modern poets and discuss recent "trends" and why that matters.

2/2 Poet vs. persona; the nature of the poetic attitude; poets as the legislators of the world (Shelley).  
Free Verse, Poetic Forms, related concepts  
Inspiration and writing from memory  
Photo poem

2/7 Poetry Revision  
Poetic Exercises: Cut-ups and White-Outs

2/9 Formal Poetry

2/14 Poetry scansion  
Introduction to Workshopping

2/16 Rap and song lyrics as poetry

2/21 Group work on poems

- 2/23 Poetry Workshop #1
- 2/28 Poetry Workshop #2
- 3/2 Begin Creative Nonfiction; Definitions and Problems
- 3/7 Importance of nonfiction as a creative form.  
Creative Nonfiction formal assignment.
- 3/9 Exploring the self and finding ideas. "Essays" versus other forms.
- 3/13-19 College Closed (Spring Break)**
- 3/21 Digressions, footnotes, and writing "sideways" in nonfiction.
- 3/23 Using photographs and non-traditional methods in creative nonfiction. A look at the graphic memoir.
- 3/28 Creative nonfiction workshop #1.
- 3/30 Creative nonfiction workshop #2.
- 4/4 Break from the main genres: Screenwriting and playwriting.
- 4/6 Introduction to fiction.  
Forms: Short Story vs. Novel, Genres of Fiction  
Fiction writers studied may include Donald Barthelme, John Updike, Raymond Carver, Joyce Carol Oates, Flannery O'Connor, Tim O'Brien, and others.
- 4/7-4/9 College Closed (Spring Holiday)
- 4/11 What is character?  
Workshop fiction assignment
- 4/13 Setting and Atmosphere  
A word about genres
- 4/18 Story vs. Plot
- 4/20 Building a scene/conflict

- 4/25 More on character
- 4/27 Fiction Workshop #1
- 5/2 Writing the final reflective piece/poetics statement.
- 5/4 Writing an author bio.  
**Terms Quiz**
- 5/9 Marketing and publishing.  
**Final Journals Due**
- 5/11 Last day of class; end-of-tour reception.
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## **Institutional Policies and Guidelines**

**Grade Appeal Process:** Concerns about the accuracy of grades should first be discussed with the instructor. A request for a change of grade is a formal request and must be made within six months of the grade assignment. Directions for filing an appeal can be found in the student handbook [Student Handbook 2022-2023 v4.pdf \(com.edu\)](#). *An appeal will not be considered because of general dissatisfaction with a grade, penalty, or outcome of a course. Disagreement with the instructor's professional judgment of the quality of the student's work and performance is also not an admissible basis for a grade appeal.*

**Academic Success & Support Services:** College of the Mainland is committed to providing students the necessary support and tools for success in their college careers. Support is offered through our Tutoring Services, Library, Counseling, and through Student Services. Please discuss any concerns with your faculty or an advisor.

**ADA Statement:** Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to contact Kimberly Lachney at 409-933-8919 or [klachney@com.edu](mailto:klachney@com.edu). The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities is located in the Student Success Center.

**Textbook Purchasing Statement:** A student attending College of the Mainland is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from the college-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.

**Withdrawal Policy:** Students may withdraw from this course for any reason prior to the last eligible day for a "W" grade. Before withdrawing students should speak with the instructor and consult an advisor. Students are permitted to withdraw only six times during their college career by state law. The last date to withdraw from the 1<sup>st</sup> 8-week session is March 1. The last date to

withdraw from the 16-week session is April 24. The last date to withdraw for the 2<sup>nd</sup> 8-week session is May 3.

**FN Grading:** The FN grade is issued in cases of *failure due to a lack of attendance*, as determined by the instructor. The FN grade may be issued for cases in which the student ceases or fails to attend class, submit assignments, or participate in required capacities, and for which the student has failed to withdraw. The issuing of the FN grade is at the discretion of the instructor. The last date of attendance should be documented for submission of an FN grade.

**Early Alert Program:** The Student Success Center at College of the Mainland has implemented an Early Alert Program because student success and retention are very important to us. I have been asked to refer students to the program throughout the semester if they are having difficulty completing assignments or have poor attendance. If you are referred to the Early Alert Program you will be contacted by someone in the Student Success Center who will schedule a meeting with you to see what assistance they can offer in order for you to meet your academic goals.

**Resources to Help with Stress:**

If you are experiencing stress or anxiety about your daily living needs including food, housing or just feel you could benefit from free resources to help you through a difficult time, please click here <https://www.com.edu/community-resource-center/>. College of the Mainland has partnered with free community resources to help you stay on track with your schoolwork, by addressing life issues that get in the way of doing your best in school. All services are private and confidential. You may also contact the Dean of Students office at [deanofstudents@com.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@com.edu) or [communityresources@com.edu](mailto:communityresources@com.edu).