

Creative Writing I (EN 240)

Course Syllabus

Fall and Spring Semesters, 2016-2017

Instructor: Emma Richardson <erichardson@themsms.org>

Classroom: Hooper 107

Office: Hooper 108

Phone: 662/329-7360, ext. 8507 (office)

Office Hours: Office Hours: MWF 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
T 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. Th 8:00 – 11:00 a.m.
2:00 – 3:00 p.m. 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Tutorial: Monday 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Length of Course: One year. (The class meets 1½ hours a week on Tuesdays or Thursdays for ½ unit English elective credit.)

Objective: The purpose of the course is to explore and practice composition techniques to produce a variety of forms, to establish and maintain a voice appropriate for those forms, and to edit works appropriately for print and electronic publication.

Specifically, students will

- Write poetry in a variety of poetic forms:
 - Lyric
 - Narrative
 - Visual/concrete
- Write creative non-fiction:
 - Descriptive essays
 - Narrative essays
 - Memoir/“self writing”
- Write short fiction
- Compile and produce a literary magazine for publication (print and electronic)
- Satisfy the protocols for manuscript submissions
- Participate in local, state, regional, and national writing competitions

Chronology of Presentations

Students will explore the concept of “things” and “thoughts” as a necessary component for all effective writing; explore the techniques and forms of poetic and prose writing by examining works by established poets, fiction writers, and essayists; practice the processes of composition; and participate in the class’s “writing community” by offering responses to classmates’ writing and receiving comments to their own works.

First Quarter: The student will explore the concept of "things" and "thoughts" as a necessary component for all effective writing; explore the techniques and forms of poetic and prose writing by examining works by established poets, fiction writers, and essayists; and practice the processes of composition.

Week 1 Lists; "found" poems; abstractions-rendered-concrete poems

Week 2 Creating specific images

Week 3 "Then" poems

Week 4 The sound of silence; sounds

Week 5 People

Week 6 More people; personae

Week 7 Personal descriptive and/or narrative essays:
Determining subject matter
Creating the effective "hook"

Week 8 Writing the personal descriptive or narrative essay

Week 9 Presenting the portfolio (must contain 3 revised and edited poems from Weeks 1-6; 2 additional poems [from student prompts]; and a "reflection" (Due September 27, 2016)

Second Quarter: The student will continue to practice techniques that make for effective poems and for non-fiction essays; explore modes for writing narrative poetry and concrete/visual poetry; understand methods of short fiction composition by examining the works of established writers; and practice writing the elements of short fiction.

Week 1 Telling a story in poetry

Week 2 Creating concrete/visual poems

Week 3 Exploring and practicing the elements of scene

Week 4 Continuing the practice of the elements of scene

Week 5 Creating character(s) and conflict(s)
Practicing effective dialogue

- Week 6** Writing the short story (instructor prompt)
- Week 7** Continuing the short story
- Week 8** Continuing the short story
- Week 9** Presenting the portfolio (must contain a revised and edited descriptive or narrative essay, a revised and edited short story, and a “reflection”) (Due December 6, 2016)

Third Quarter: The student will continue to practice writing the elements of poetry, non-fiction, and short fiction; write short stories with increasing sophistication of technique; prepare manuscripts for submission to writing competitions; and begin the two-quarter process of producing a literary magazine for publication.

- Week 1** Continuing the short story
- Week 2** Continuing the short story
- Week 3** Preparing manuscripts for submission
- Week 4** Preparing manuscripts for submission
Literary magazine: Conducting poetry/short story contests
- Week 5** Preparing manuscripts for submission
Literary magazine: Conducting art/photography contests
- Week 6** Literary magazine: Discussing magazine design
- Week 7** Literary magazine: Discussing magazine layout
- Week 8** Literary magazine: Choosing manuscripts
- Week 9** Literary magazine: Choosing manuscripts

Fourth Quarter: The student will develop a major project in creative writing and continue to assist in producing a literary magazine for publication.

- Week 1** Choosing an independent project:
1. Collection of poetry (minimum of 15 "new" poems)
 2. Collection of short stories (minimum of 3 "new" stories; minimum length: 15 pages) (cont. next page)

3. A novella (minimum length: 15 pages)
4. Collection of other creative prose (autobiography, satire, essays, "feature stories"; minimum length: 15 pages)
5. A combination of genres

Week 2	Independent project Literary magazine: Editing copy
Week 3	Independent project Literary magazine: Editing copy
Week 4	Independent project Literary magazine: Collecting contributors' notes
Week 5	Independent project Literary magazine: Proofreading
Week 6	Independent project Literary magazine: Proofreading
Week 7	Independent project Literary magazine: Proofreading
Week 8	Independent project
Week 9	Due May 9, 2017: Presenting the independent project

Assessment

Each assignment is graded on a 100-point scale. The portfolio presented at the end of the first two quarters counts 25% of the quarter grade for each of those quarters. 100% of the third quarter grade is from weekly writing assignments. The independent project for the fourth quarter counts 100% of that quarter's grade.

The semester grade will be determined by averaging the two quarter grades for that semester. The yearly grade will be determined by averaging the two semester grades.

Portfolios and independent projects are presented in lieu of semester exams.

Due Dates and Late Work

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due. Students should have work printed *before* the beginning of the class period. Being late to class in order to finish printing an assignment will result in a tardy to class.

Late work—except for an excused absence—is accepted at the discretion of the instructor; the maximum credit for late work is usually 50%. Students who have excused absences from class should follow the guidelines for submitting makeup work as prescribed in the

2016-2017 MSMS Student Handbook. Specifically for this class, if students know ahead of time that they will miss class, they should complete the weekly writing assignment and turn it in to the instructor *before* the missed class day *or* send it to class by another student.

EDITORIAL POSITIONS

Editors and assistant editors will be needed for the print publication of *Southern Voices* (2017) and are designated by the instructor in late September. Students who wish to be considered for editorial positions should email Mrs. Richardson by September 20, 2016, stating the position they are interested in and giving a brief description of suitability for that leadership role.

WRITING COMPETITIONS

Students will submit poetry, fiction, and non-fiction essay manuscripts to a number of competitions, which usually include (but are not limited to) the following:

Deadlines

October: The Eudora Welty Ephemera Prize for High School Creative Writing (Founded in 2014 by the English Department of Mississippi University for Women, the prize is named in honor of MUW alumna Eudora Welty and gives cash awards to four or five students; recipients are invited to the Eudora Welty Writers' Symposium and give a brief reading from their works to the Symposium audience of writers and scholars.)

December: The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards (Founded in 1923, The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards competition is the oldest and most prestigious national writing competition for high school students in the United States. The competition has given early recognition to writers and artists who include Truman Capote, Joyce Carol Oates, Bernard Malamud, and Richard Avedon.)

Students entering this competition must register online with The Alliance for Young Artists and Writers after October 1st but before November 5th. Follow guidelines for applying/registering are given on the website listed below:

<http://www.artandwriting.org/>

February *Southern Voices* (Our "in-house" MSMS literary competition garners manuscripts for May publication in *Southern Voices*; place-winning entries are automatically published in *SV*.)

March: **The Jack H. White Literary Competition (Established in 1998 by the University Honors Council of Mississippi State University in honor of the Director of the MSU Honors Program, the competition allows just two entries per school; awardees are recognized at the annual Honors College Awards Program at MSU.)**

April: **The Eudora Welty Awards in Creative Writing (Co-sponsored by the English Department and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, the competition allows just one entry per category per school; awardees are recognized at the opening session of the annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference at Ole Miss.)**

SPECIAL MSMS AWARDS FOR CREATIVE WRITING

- * The Chris Read Award for Fiction is given to the student whose short story is awarded “First Place” in the “in-house” *Southern Voices* writing contest. The recipient receives a certificate at the Honors Convocation/Awards Day held in May and has his/her name engraved on a permanent plaque (kept in the trophy case in Hooper lobby). If the recipient is a senior, he/she is also recognized at the Senior Celebration Dinner the evening before graduation. In addition, the award-winning story is recognized in *Southern Voices* as receiving the “Chris Read Award for Fiction.” (The award was instituted in 1994 by classmates of Chris Read, a member of the MSMS Class of 1991, whose fiction writing showed exceptional promise; Chris Read was killed in a car accident in 1993.)**

- * The Abernethy Award for Excellence in Creative Writing, first awarded in 1998, is given to the senior Creative Writing student whose portfolio of selected works is selected by a writing judge not associated with MSMS. Students who wish to compete for this award must present a portfolio of writing to the Creative Writing teacher to give to the judge by an announced date in late spring. The recipient receives a cash award, has his/her name engraved on a permanent plaque (kept in the trophy case in the lobby of Hooper), receives a personal plaque, and is recognized at the Honors Convocation in May and the Senior Celebration Dinner the evening before graduation.**

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to be academically honest. That means the work you do should be your own work. By all means study together, discuss reading assignments together, and even discuss “strategies” for approaching written assignments together if you need to. But when it comes time to committing something to paper, do not consult another student’s work. Do not allow another student to read any of your written assignments before you hand them in. If another student’s paper reflects your own work, your own work will be called into question. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

True confession: I have a near-photographic memory for “words on the page.” I’ll explain this in class.

Read the section on “Academic Honesty” in the MSMS 2016-2017 *Student Handbook*. Also, read Section R-4, “Integrating Sources, Avoiding Plagiarism,” on pages 97-108 of *The Little Seagull Handbook* (2nd ed.).

If you have any questions regarding plagiarism or “academic honesty,” you need to ask them by the end of the first week of class. Consequences for academic dishonesty at MSMS are prescribed in the Discipline Section of the MSMS 2016-2017 *Student Handbook*.

My high school English teacher used to say that using as many as *three words* in the same order from another person’s work without sufficient attribution and documentation constitutes plagiarism. That is a good thing to keep in mind. Additionally, you must provide a reference for *any idea* you borrow from a source. If you consult *any* reference “help” in order to write papers (from The Internet or other sources), you need to acknowledge that reference as you would in a research paper. This includes—among others—*Cliff’s Notes*, *Spark Notes*, and *Wikipedia* (N.B. these sources are not considered valid references by many academic institutions. Consult *The Little Seagull Handbook* for appropriate MLA documentation style.)

A word to the wise: The technology that makes it easy for dishonest students to find papers/information in cyberspace that they pass off as their own work *also makes it easy* for someone grading papers to locate the sources.

(Syllabus distributed to students on 9 August 2016.)

“Protocols” for Handing in Work

- 1. Use an MLA heading; the font size should be “12 pt.” and the font Times New Roman. The document must be printed in Microsoft Word.**

**Sample MLA heading:
(top, left margin; double-spaced)**

**Sally Johnson
Mrs. E. Richardson
Creative Writing I
16 August 2016**

(For the date, always use the class date that the piece of writing is due, not the date on which you might have written the piece.)

- 2. Follow the MLA requirements for pagination. Place your last name, a space, and the page numeral in the upper right-hand corner.**
- 3. Double space lines of poetry if the poem is short.
For longer poems, single space the lines.
If the poem is divided into stanzas, single space to separate lines, and double space to separate into stanzas.

Center the poem in the middle of the paper (but do not center individual lines; rather, “justify” lines on the left margin).**
- 4. Double space all prose works.**
- 5. Always spell check.**