

WRITING FICTION & POETRY WORKSHOP

ENGL2660-100 (Spring 2014)

Tuesdays/Thursdays 8:00-9:40 p.m. (Brown Hall 3045)

Instructor: Michael Marberry

Email: [INSERT]

Office: Sprau Tower 714

Office Hours: TR 10:00-11:30 a.m. (appt.)

Required Texts & Materials:

- One poetry collection for review and annotation assignment (see list).
- One fiction collection for review and annotation assignment (see list).
- Various handouts and readings provided on eLearning.
- Notebook for note-taking and in-class writing assignments.
- Folder for final portfolio revision and reflection assignment.
- Money for printing readings/poems for class discussion.

Course Goals:

(1) To familiarize oneself with emblematic poetry and fiction texts; (2) To emphasize student work with respect to established tools and techniques; (3) To practice writing original poetry and fiction; (4) To respond thoughtfully, respectfully, and critically to peer work; (5) To develop a productive process for assessing and revising one's own poetry and fiction.

Course Description:

Writing Fiction/Poetry (ENGL2660) is an intro-level creative-writing class designed to aid students in broadening their knowledge of exposure to fiction and poetry, while providing a unique space for peer feedback and critique. Students will produce original creative work in response to various class writing activities and weekly writing prompts designed to incorporate elements of class discussion and to challenge the writer's own conventions and habits. Students will be assigned other projects that will further encourage an exploration into what fiction and poetry are today and what they have to offer. Students will be expected to read and write a significant amount of material in this class.

Course Requirements:

During this semester, you will complete several major writing assignments designed to build on each other intellectually, conceptually, and creatively. Regular in-class assignments will help you practice the skills that you learn. Readings and writing prompts will correspond with class discussions, while other projects will push you to read, research, and think critically about writing outside of class.

Assignment:	Due Date:	Percent:
Participation & Daily Work	Throughout Semester	15%
Weekly Reading Quizzes	Throughout Semester	15%
Workshop Submissions	Throughout Semester	15%
Workshop Comments	Throughout Semester	15%
Public Reading Response	Throughout Semester	10%
Poetry Collection Review/Annotation	Thursday, February 27 (by 8:00 a.m.)	10%
Fiction Collection Review/Annotation	Thursday, April 10 (by 8:00 a.m.)	10%
Final Revised Portfolio & Reflection	Exam Week	10%

Grade Scale:

Standard Percentage Value:	Standard GPA Value:
A = 93-100 B/A = 88-92	A = 4.0 B/A = 3.5
B = 83-87 C/B = 78-82	B = 3.0 C/B = 2.5
C = 73-77 D/C = 68-72	C = 2.0 D/C = 1.5
D = 60-67 E = 0-59	D = 1.0 E = 0

Late Assignment Policy:

Work must be completed and submitted on time. Because of the importance of class discussions and workshop consistency, the daily work, weekly quizzes, and workshop submissions/comments **cannot** be made-up or submitted late – even in the event of an excused absence.

Late submissions of a project (e.g. the reading response or the collection reviews) will result in the deduction of one full-letter grade for each day past due (e.g. B to C). These project grades will not be affected if the late submission is the result of an excused absence. Students who know that they will miss class when a major project is due must contact the instructor (in advance) to arrange for the late submission of the assignment.

Attendance & Tardiness Policy:

Attendance is important to the success of this class and to your development as a writer. As such, you are expected to attend class regularly (and on time) and participate fully. For this course, you are allowed to accumulate two (2) **unexcused** absences. However, each **unexcused** absence after two (2) will result in *the lowering of your final grade by one-half of a letter grade (e.g. B to CB)*. Accumulating five (5) **unexcused** absences will automatically result in failure of the course.

Absences may be **excused** if it would be “fair” and “reasonable” to do so. Examples of **excused** absences include participation in WMU athletic events, religious holidays, family emergencies, and extreme illness. If you must miss class for one of those reasons, notify me as soon as possible.

Tardiness is disruptive to the focused class environment, prevents full participation, and impairs the assimilation of class information. Any in-class work missed due to tardiness cannot be made-up. If you are habitually late to class, your grade will definitely suffer.

Class Cancellation & Late Instructor Instructions:

In the unlikely event of class cancellation, I will contact the class via email beforehand. If, for some unknown reason, I am late to class and haven't notified anyone via email about my tardiness or class cancellation, please wait 15 minutes. If I still have not shown up or emailed the class by that point, please send someone to or call the English Office (Sprau Tower 6th Floor, 269-387-2572) to let them know that I am missing from class unexpectedly.

WMU eLearning:

For this class, we'll be using eLearning as a hub for class readings, handouts, assignments, prompts, workshop submissions, etc. Please let me know if you have problems finding or accessing eLearning and I'll gladly help you.

WMU Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free consultation service for all WMU students, where experienced writing consultants help writers of all levels and abilities with any writing assignment. Both appointments and drop-in sessions are available. The Writing Center is located in 1343 Ellsworth Hall. For more information, visit the Writing Center website: www.wmich.edu/writingcenter

Academic Misconduct, Plagiarism, & Classroom Conduct:

Western Michigan University's Office of Student Conduct lists the following values as those which every student, instructor, and staff-member should strive for: academic honesty, integrity, fairness, trustworthiness, personal responsibility, respect for others, and ethical conduct. These values foster, promote, and protect the core mission of the university. In the classroom, academic misconduct is any activity that tends to compromise the university's academic integrity or subvert the educational process. Forms of academic misconduct include cheating, fabrication, falsification, forgery, multiple submission, complicity, computer misuse, and plagiarism.

Western Michigan University defines plagiarism as the act of intentionally, knowingly, or carelessly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e. without proper acknowledgement of the source). Multiple submitting is the submission of substantial portions of the same work (including reports) for credit more than once without authorization from instructors of all classes in which the student submits the work. These are serious academic offenses and are counterproductive to a workshop in which the inherent goal is for students to produce new, original creative work. More information about academic misconduct can be found here: <http://www.wmich.edu/conduct/index.html>.

Aside from academic honesty, individuals are expected to behave respectfully toward others and avoid disruptive and obstructive behaviors. Such negative behavior includes (but is not limited to): physical abuse, verbal abuse, verbal and written threats, stalking, intimidation, harassment, hazing, possession of controlled substances, possession of alcoholic beverages, irresponsible computer use, cell phone use (including texting), etc. If there is an emergency situation that requires you to text during class, please let me know beforehand.

One of the best things about college life is that it brings together people with an array of different personal/cultural beliefs and experiences. Because of this, for our class to be successful, a certain level of trust, decorum, and respect must exist among all participants. Such empathy is especially important in a workshop, where we will sometimes be reading, writing, and discussing potentially sensitive materials. Any act that compromises, endangers, or disrespects either the instructor or your peers will absolutely not be tolerated.

Student Disabilities:

Western Michigan University provides academic assistance for Students with Disabilities, including the technical, academic, and emotional support necessary to achieve academic and personal success. Course-related assistance and academic accommodations are provided to eligible students who have documented disabilities. Services may include advocacy, reader services, interpreters, alternate exam administration, and note takers. Adaptive equipment is also available. The link for web information regarding services can be found at: <http://www.dsr.wmich.edu/>. Students are also encouraged to contact one of the following offices:

- **Disabled Student Resources and Services (DSRS)**, 269-387-2116, serves students who have documented physical and psychiatric disabilities, as well as students with documented learning disabilities and related emotional issues.
- **Office of Services for Students with Learning Disabilities (OSSLD)**, 269-387-4411, serves students who have documented learning disabilities and related emotional issues.
- **Office of Institutional Equity (OIE)**, 269-387-8880, acts affirmatively on the behalf of qualified persons who have disability related compliance issues in accordance with Federal and State guidelines and regulations.

Counseling Services:

Students face many challenges in a myriad of personal and professional contexts. Western Michigan University is fully committed to providing its students with avenues for identifying and addressing any emotional, physical, and/or psychological difficulties that arise – including relationship conflict, stress and anxiety, grief or loss, social and peer pressure, sexual identity questions, trauma and post-traumatic stress, adjusting to college life, feelings of depression, body image or eating disorders, etc. If any of these difficulties occur during the semester, I encourage you to contact Counseling Services by visiting the Sindecuse Health Center or by making an appointment (269-387-1850). Discussions with Counseling Services are confidential.

Schedule for Public Readings:

You are required to attend one of the following readings during the semester and compose a short reflection on that reading. The assignment sheet is on eLearning.

Public Reading Schedule (Pick 1):		
Date:	Readers:	Location:
Thurs, 1/16 @ 8:00 p.m.	Mary Szybist	KBAC
Sat, 1/18 @ 7:00 p.m.	Emilia Philips & Roger Reeves	Little Theatre
Thurs, 1/30 @ 8:00 p.m.	Nelly Reifler	KBAC
Fri, 3/14 @ 8:00 p.m.	Rachel Kushner	Bernhard 157-159
Sat, 3/8 @ 7:00 p.m.	Brian Russell & Tarfia Faizullah	KIA
Fri, 3/21 @ 8:00 p.m.	Cullen Burns, Lisa Lenzo, & Mitch Vermeesch	Bernhard 208-210
Thurs, 3/27 @ 8:00 p.m.	Katie Peterson & Kirstin Scott	Bernhard 208-210
Sat, 4/12 @ 7:00 p.m.	Joanne Diaz & Dan Albergotti	KBAC

Poetry Collections:

One goal of this course is for students to engage with contemporary writing. For this course, you'll need to purchase, read, review, and annotate one of the following poetry and fiction collections.

Poetry (Pick 1):	Fiction (Pick 1):
<i>Rookery</i> by Traci Brimhall <i>Slow Lightning</i> by Eduardo Corral <i>King Me</i> by Roger Reeves <i>Predatory</i> by Glenn Shaheen <i>Litany for the City</i> by Ryan Teitman	<i>Drown</i> by Junot Diaz <i>Before You Suffocate Your Own Fool Self</i> by Danielle Evans <i>Unclean Jobs for Women and Girls</i> by Alyssa Nutting <i>Everyone Here Has a Gun</i> by Lucas Southworth <i>Battleborn</i> by Claire Vaye Watkins

A Final Prohibition & Disclaimer:

The prohibition: Do **not** write about folks in workshop or school violence. Let's all be friends!

The disclaimer: We're all adults, reading about adult issues written by other adults who sometimes use adult language and adult imagery to explore very complex adult themes. Let's all be adults!

Course Schedule

* This course schedule is subject to revision at my discretion.

** Be ready to read, to write, to think, and to talk each day in class.

*** Bring the relevant readings/poems with you to class each day.

Week:	Date/Topic:	Reading Due:	Workshop Due:	Projects Due:
1	Tues, 1/7 - No Class! (Polar Vortex)			
	Thurs, 1/9 - Syllabus Review - Projects Review - Icebreakers			
2	Tues, 1/14 - What's Poetry? - Favorite Poems			- AMS Form due - Favorite poem due (with paragraph)
	Thurs, 1/16 - Workshop Process - Mock-Workshop			
3	Tues, 1/21 - Concrete vs. Abstract	- Packet A		- Response due (Szybist) - Response due (Phillips & Reeves)
	Thurs, 1/23 - Concrete vs. Abstract II		- Poem 1 due (Fri)	
4	Tues, 1/28 - Literal & Figurative	- Packet B		
	Thurs, 1/30 - Workshop		- Comments 1 due - Poem 2 due (Fri)	
5	Tues, 2/4 - Line & Stanza	- Packet C		- Response due (Reifler)
	Thurs, 2/6 - Workshop		- Comments 2 due - Poem 3 due (Fri)	
6	Tues, 2/11 - Diction	- Packet D		
	Thurs, 2/13 - Workshop		- Comments 3 due - Poem 4 due (Fri)	
7	Tues, 2/18 - Sound & Meter	- Packet E		- Response due (Kushner)
	Thurs, 2/20 - Workshop		- Comments 4 due - Poem 5 due (Fri)	
8	Tues, 2/25 - Other Poetic Forms	- Packet F		
	Thurs, 2/27 - Workshop		- Comments 5 due	- Poetry Review and Annotation due
9	Tues, 3/4 - No Class! (Spring Break)			

	Thurs, 3/6 - No Class! (Spring Break)			
10	Tues, 3/11 - What's Fiction? - Favorite Fiction			- Favorite story due (with paragraph) - Response due (Russell & Faizullah)
	Thurs, 3/13 - Literary vs. Genre - Workshop Process	- Packet G		
11	Tues, 3/18 - Character & Dialogue	- Packet H		
	Thurs, 3/20 - TBD		- Prose 1 due (Fri)	
12	Tues, 3/25 - Plot & Conflict	- Packet I		- Response due (Alum Reading)
	Thurs, 3/27 - Workshop		- Comments 1 due - Prose 2 due (Fri)	
13	Tues, 4/1 - Point-of-View & Style	- Packet J		- Response due (Peterson & Scott)
	Thurs, 4/3 - Workshop		- Comments 2 due - Prose 3 due (Fri)	
14	Tues, 4/8 - Form & Revision	- Packet K		
	Thurs, 4/10 - Workshop		- Comments 3 due - Prose 4 due (Fri)	- Fiction Review and Annotation due
15	Tues, 4/15 - Course Review - Course Evaluations			- Response due (Diaz & Albergotti)
	Thurs, 4/17 - Last Day! - Workshop		- Comments 4 due	- Final Portfolio due
16	Exam Week - No Class!			

Reading Attendance & Response

DUE: Throughout Semester (paper copy)

There are lots of great things about contemporary writing communities. But one of the best and most intriguing aspects is the public reading. Indeed, a great deal of creative writing is meant to be read aloud, and hearing a story/poem can often unlock layers of meaning and enjoyment that might have previously gone unnoticed. As a result, readings often provide viewers with a unique look into the inner-life of a work of art (and an artist). For this assignment, you must complete these tasks:

1. Attend ONE of the readings listed in the ENGL2660 syllabus. There are several excellent readings to choose from. Regardless of which one you attend, make sure to follow the basic niceties of reading: Don't be late, Don't be disruptive (i.e. don't text!), Don't fall asleep. Basically, be cool and try to enjoy what the reading has to offer. After all, no two readings are exactly the same.

2. Write a 2-3 page reflection of your experience at the reading. You can reflect on a number of things: a particular story/poem that stood out to you (and why), the reader's style/tone during their reading, things that you thought were strange/interesting/maddening/amazing/etc. Think of this as simply a chance to debrief your brain following the reading – i.e. a chance to process and put your thoughts and impressions about the reading down on paper.

*Remember: Whichever reading you attend, the review is due the following Monday by 8:00 a.m.
Your reading response will not be accepted after that in any form.*

Reading: Don't be a jerk by being disruptive during the reading. Arrive early, be respectful to the reader, and try to appreciate what the reading/reader has to offer. And no texting during the reading!!!

Remember: If you can't attend one of the readings for a legitimate reason, you need to notify me immediately so that we can make other arrangements for this assignment. Don't wait until the last minute!

Format:

- 2-3 pages (typed, double-spaced, standard font, MLA-style)

Collection Review & Annotation

Poetry Collection Review & Annotation DUE: Thursday, February 27th by 8:00 a.m. (paper copy)

Prose Collection Review & Annotation DUE: Thursday, April 10th by 8:00 a.m. (paper copy)

A crucial aspect of any writer's life is *reading*. In fact, the best writers are often voracious readers. For our ENGL2660 course, you will be writing your own poetry and fiction; but you will also need to spend time reading and engaging with other, notable contemporary writers. Doing so will help you learn from the current literary landscape, as well as expose you to the possibilities and potential in creative writing. For this assignment, you must complete these tasks:

1. Purchase and read ONE of the poetry collections and ONE of the short-story collections that I have listed in our course syllabus. I have given you 5 poetry collections and 5 fiction collections to choose from. This list contains writers that represent a wide range of perspectives in terms of age, gender, race, sexual-orientation, writing style, subject-matter, etc. I am confident that one of these collections (both in poetry and in fiction) will interest you in some way. Whichever collections you choose is up to you; however, for this assignment, you should select collections that you have not read before in their entirety.

2. Write a 2-3 page book review for each of your chosen collections. For this review, you can focus on specific poems/stories that interested you, any overarching themes that you noticed, any techniques that surprised you, etc. Assume that you are writing this review for someone who hasn't read this collection. How would you describe the tenor/style of this writer? Where do you see this particular writer or book working within the larger creative history/tradition? Would you suggest this collection to someone else (and why)? As you are writing this for an academic course, your tone should be *professional* and *critical*.

3. Annotate ONE poem and ONE short-story from your chosen collections. For this part of the assignment, you will select a single piece from each collection to workshop, as you might do for one of your classmates' poems/stories. You might choose a piece that is representative of the entire collection or you might choose your favorite piece from the collection or you might choose a piece that confused or surprised you in some way, etc. As you annotate, consider not only *what* the piece says but also *how* the piece says it – focusing on those writer techniques/tools that we've discussed in class. Again, your tone for the annotation should be appropriate for an academic assignment and a workshop type project. Be *smart*. Be *thorough*. Be *substantive*.

Remember: I encourage you to read an excerpt or description of each collection to discover which one might be a good fit for you and your interests. Samples of these writers' works can be found online.

Remember: Reviews are a genre of writing and often operate under certain conventions. As such, it may be helpful to read a few reviews before you attempt to write your own review.

Remember: For these assignments, you're submitting two documents (the review and the annotation).

Format:

- Review = 2-3 pages each (typed, double-spaced, standard font, MLA-style)
- Annotation = 1 poem and 1 short-story (written comments on photo-copy of piece)

Final Portfolio (Revisions & Reflection)

DUE: Thursday, April 17th by 8:00 a.m. (paper copy, in portfolio folder)

Throughout this semester, you have written at least six poems and two short fictions. That's quite an accomplishment! However, writing doesn't just end with the first draft. Rather, as you've heard before, writing is a type of *process* in which things are constantly being re-examined, re-formulated, and refined. This is especially true of creative writing – an art that often requires both a linguistic and cognitive-emotional precision that is difficult for anyone (even experienced writers) to achieve on the first attempt. With that in mind, you must complete the following:

1. Write a 2-3 page reflection of your experiences in ENGL2660. Think of this as a type of self-evaluation (as a thinker/writer/reader). You might think about those writing techniques, tools, modes, considerations, etc. that have been most helpful to your evolution as a writer. You might focus on those issues with which you still struggle. You might discuss any particular exercise or any particular reading that you found to be particularly beneficial and/or challenging. Etc. Basically, there are many things that you could write about, but this reflection should be an opportunity for you to explore some aspect of your experience in this course.

2. Revise and resubmit four (4) pieces that you wrote in ENGL2660. Some of your revisions will likely consist of modifying only a few specific lines, images, or aspects of the piece. Some will likely require a drastic re-imagining of the entire piece. Whichever pieces you choose to revise is up to you; however, your revisions should be *significant* and *substantial* in some way. The comments that you've received (from me and your classmates) will be invaluable in this regard. Your three revisions must include at least one piece in each genre (e.g. 2 poems and 2 prose, 3 poems and 1 prose, etc.).

Remember: Include your reflection and your three revised pieces in the same folder. Your reflection should appear first in your portfolio, followed by your revisions. There's no need to re-submit the original versions of the pieces, as they will already be posted on our eLearning page.

Remember: In these revisions, you do not have to adhere to the original writing prompts – that is, you don't have to use the key-words or include the particular types of speech, you don't have to adhere to the length requirements for the prompt, etc. etc. etc.

Format:

- Reflection = 2-3 pages (typed, double-spaced, standard font, MLA-style)
- Revisions = at least 4 pages (typed, standard font, new page for each piece)