

ENG 150-B: Introduction to Creative Writing

T/TH 2:30-3:50 pm, Olin 211

Professor: Juan Martinez

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Office hours: Olin 237, 2:30-3:30 pm M/W

Required Texts

- LaPlante, Alice. *The Making of a Story* (LaPlante)
- Boisseau, Michelle, Hadara Bar-Nadav, and Robert Wallace. *Writing Poems* 8th edition (Boisseau)

Suggested Texts

- Kiteley, Brian. *The Three AM Epiphany: Uncommon Writing Exercises*
- Lewis, Wyndham D.B. and Charles Lee (Eds.). *The Stuffed Owl: An Anthology of Bad Verse*
- Prose, Francine. *Reading Like a Writer* (Prose)
- Strand, Mark and Eavan Boland (Eds.) *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms* (MP)

Sites

- <http://cleo.whitman.edu> (We'll be using CLEO for our Wiki)
- <http://www.fulmerford.com/search/label/ENGL150B> (Nearly everything else other than the Wiki will be available through here)

What We're Doing

This course will allow you to explore how creative writing works. We'll be looking at, discussing, writing about, commenting on, and researching the elements of fiction, creative non-fiction, and poetry, but mostly what we'll be doing is writing buckets, so we'll be reading mostly to steal: we'll figure out what works and we'll use it for our own material. We'll be engaged in the reading of a fairly massive how-to book on the craft of fiction, plus a book on why writers read so much, and we'll also be reading a wide and varied array of short stories, essays, and poems. Again, though, this work is geared to do one simple thing: to find out what means and modes of expression you best respond to, and to figure out ways to approach this question: *Given all the other potentially more awesome forms of entertainment out there, what is the role of sitting around scribbling things and reading other people's scribbles? Why do it?*

Why We're Doing It

This course is designed to give you the vocabulary, background, and confidence to articulate your feelings and thoughts about the three major genres of creative writing. The goal is to expand your creative toolbox. I want you to find the best ways that let you tell the stories you want to tell, express whatever you want to express, whatever these may be, to find the right words for the images and experiences you may want to share. While the focus is on the art and

craft and the elements of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, attention to this matter seems to resonate well beyond the immediate, localized purview of personal expression: we are drawn to all of it -- drawn to narrative, drawn to the lyric and the poetic, drawn to stories -- because the genre gives us access to a range of critical thinking and writing skills useful elsewhere in our lives. So we're doing this because it makes us better people -- or at least better-equipped people.

How We're Doing It

This course requires a great deal of reading, writing, and discussion. See below.

Overview: We will be doing a good deal of writing and an even greater deal of reading. Writers come from everywhere, have very little in common, but there is on thing they do share—and this is invariable and constant and well worth noting: all writers *read*. They read all the time. They read everything. They are voracious, omnivorous, and wide-ranging.

1) We will be reading a number of stories, essays and poems, and we'll be reading mostly for what we can steal.

2) We'll also be reading on the craft of fiction and the craft of poetry.

3) Writing -- like tennis, like that dancing game for the Kinect -- is an activity that benefits from constant practice, so we'll be doing insane amounts of exercises -- some in-class, some outside of class. These sketches may or may not blossom to full stories or poems, but odds are that they will. You will have the chance to develop a combination of a few of these for our workshops.

3a) Every week, you'll take your in-class exercises and post them in the online space provided, and you'll have a chance to see what your peers have posted as well. These posts will serve as a kind of ongoing, ad-hoc writer's notebook, which you'll be able to use as potential sources of story and poem material. These will be due every Thursday before midnight.

4) All of you will have the chance to have your stories workshopped. These stories should be all new for this class. We'll be having a few large-scale workshops but we'll also be mostly doing a great number of smaller-scale workshops. And you'll have lots of feedback from me as well, in whatever form you choose: I'll be happy to meet with you one on one during office hours, and I'll be happy to give you my thoughts on what you're doing via e-mail.

5) You need to read your classmates' stories at least twice, and to comment on it in two ways: mark up your copy of the story and print a one-page critique. Turn in one copy to the author and one to me. This critique is due on the day of the workshop.

If you come to all the classes, do the assigned work (1-5), and participate in workshop and class discussions, you will pass. If you don't, you will fail.

The Stories and poems: You are writing new work for this class. The stories and poems should spring from your mind, and you should not -- in any way, shape, or form -- recycle material, whether it's your own or someone else's. You will find a repetition of this warning in the **Plagiarism** section. All work should be original. It should not be taken from anyone else's ideas, including songs, other short stories, movies, TV shows, or anywhere else. You're the writer. Write.

The stories can be 5-25 pages in length.

You'll be generating a lot of work as you go along, so don't panic -- you'll have plenty of material to be workshopped. Double-space your work and use Times New Roman. Proofread carefully, then proofread again; stories with grammatical, typographical, or syntactical issues will not be accepted. Staple your work. Provide copies on the Thursday prior to your workshop. The number of copies will depend on whether you're doing a full-size or a small-group workshop: 15 for full size, 4 for the small groups. The top left-hand corner of the first page should bear this information:

(Your Name)

Introduction to Creative Writing: Fiction/Nonfiction/Poetry

ENG 150:B

Professor Juan Martinez

(date of your workshop)

Attendance: Each student's presence in the classroom is extremely important. Students are expected to intellectually interact with the instructor and fellow classmates. If you miss class for any reason, you are still responsible for the material.

Late Arrivals/Early Departures: Arrange your schedule so that you can arrive on time and stay for the entire class period. Repeated late arrivals or early departures are unacceptable.

Evaluation

You will be evaluated on the following three areas:

Portfolio of Your Work (Exercises, Drafts, and Stories): 45%

Portfolio of Your Feedback: 45%

Online Exercise Portfolio: 10%

The goal is to have each of these evaluation methods reinforce your learning -- the exercises will help generate material, and since they'll connect to the readings it will also help all of us keep on track with them, the readings will inform the feedback you provide your peers, and all of it will be good fodder for your fiction and your poetry.

Plagiarism: All material for this class should be your own. If it isn't, you will fail the course. Do not copy and paste outside material -- all ideas not your own should be attributed to their owners. All phrases and sentences not your own should be attributed to their original owners

and enclosed in quotation marks.

Calendar ([Also available online in various formats, including XML & iCal, on Google Docs](#))

Week One

T 1/17 INTRO: Kafka, "Before the Law" ([Online](#) / [Welles narrates!](#))

TH 1/19 Saunders: [Sea Oak](#) and [Commcomm](#)

Week Two

T 1/24 LaPlante Chs 1 & 2

TH 1/26 Story due!

Week Three

T 1/31 Boisseau Chps 1 & 2 / Workshops

TH 2/2 Poems due! Check out a book from the library that has never been checked out before!

Week Four

T 2/7 NO CLASS

TH 2/9 LaPlante Chps 3 & 4 / Workshops / Story due! ([Click on link for special constraints/challenges for this week](#))

Week Five

T 2/14 Boisseau Chps 3 & 4 / Workshops

TH 2/16 Poems due!

Week Six

T 2/21 LaPlante Chaps 5 & 6 / Workshops

TH 2/23 Story due!

Week Seven

T 2/28 Boisseau Chps 5 & 6 / Workshops

TH 3/1 Poems due!

Week Eight

T 3/6 LaPlante Chps 7 & 8 / Workshops

TH 3/8 Story due!

Weeks Nine & Ten

NO CLASS

Week Eleven

T 3/27 LaPlante Chps 9 & 10 / Workshops
TH 3/29 Story due!

Week Twelve

T 4/3 Boisseau Chps 7 & 8 / Workshops
TH 4/5 Poems due!

Week Thirteen

T 4/10 NO CLASS / Workshops
TH 4/12 LaPlante Chps 11 & 12

Week Fourteen

T 4/17 Boisseau Chps 9 & 10 / Workshops
TH 4/19 Revisions due!

Week Fifteen

T 4/24 LaPlante Chps 13 & 14 / Workshops
TH 4/26 Story due!

Week Sixteen

T 5/1 Boisseau Chp 11 / Workshops
TH 5/3 Poem due!

Week Seventeen

T 5/8 On the writing life
TH 5/10 Portfolio due

Remember that a copy of this syllabus is always available online via our course site:

<http://www.fulmerford.com/search/label/ENGL150B>