



LONGMEADOW HIGH SCHOOL

95 GRASSY GUTTER ROAD | LONGMEADOW, MA 01106 | P 413-565-4220 | F 413-565-4233

Creative Writing

Jonathan Weil

jweil@longmeadow.k12.ma.us

413-565-4220, ext. 2389

"Don't try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say."

—Barbara Kingsolver

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug."

"Take Chances. Make Mistakes. Get messy."

—Miss Frizzle, "The Magic School Bus"

Course Description

Creative writers understand that the written word provides a powerful way to capture truths about the world. The best creative writing reflects the author's individuality while still managing to connect with readers. (In other words, we write for ourselves, *and* for others. The two aren't mutually exclusive.) In this course, we will study creative writing, focusing on the craft of writing and the many decisions that writers make as they tell stories, reflect deeply, or express their own ideas in powerful ways.

We'll read various models of published creative writing. Since the course is a workshop, these course readings will provide inspiration and guidelines for your own writing. You'll try a variety of approaches and genres, and you'll be expected to make careful decisions about form, structure, and style. You'll write often, both formally and informally, and you'll be expected to share your work with your peers while offering constructive criticism. The goal is to create an open and supportive community while we explore the possibilities of writing together.

Course Objectives

- To come to a deeper understanding about craft—the elements of fiction, poetry, memoir and the essay
- To learn to *read* like a writer, understanding the decisions that other writers make as they craft their work
- To write creatively with clarity and power while developing an individual voice and style, and to learn to make sophisticated decisions as a writer
- To compile a portfolio of individual writing in a variety of forms and genres
- To learn to reflect carefully on your own writing

Required Materials

- A "Writer's Notebook" and pens (not pencils) for writing in it
(Keeping a writing notebook is a great habit for a creative writer, and you should get used to keeping it with you, in case you have an idea, or when inspiration strikes. So choose something you like. If a fancy notebook inspires you, go for it. If you prefer a simple spiral notebook or marble composition book, that's fine too. If giving it a title helps, do it.)
- At least one folder to organize your own writing and relevant class handouts. (You will likely receive a combination of physical and digital resources. Make sure you can access them when necessary.)
- Chromebook (for times that we'll need access to digital resources)

Requirements and Expectations

- **Attendance** – *Be in class on time, every day* that class meets.
- **Preparation** – Come prepared with your notebook and appropriate class readings (which will either be provided as hard copies or available on line). *Be ready to write!*
- **Homework, Written Assignments, & Projects** – *Keep up to date* on assigned writing exercises and course readings, and *turn in major assignments on time*.
- **Reflection on Your Writing** – As a writer, you should be willing to revise and rethink your work. Make a habit of *saving all drafts* of your work for later reflection. NOTE: When working on electronic documents, it's easy to be tempted to simply type over old drafts. *Resist the temptation!*
- **Participation & Collaboration** – *Participate* in class discussions and activities, and respectfully take into consideration the ideas of others in the class. Graciously *give and accept feedback*. *Share* your writing!

My Availability: I'm available to talk one-on-one about your writing, work with you on a draft, explain comments I've made, etc. Ask, and we'll set a time. But don't try to chat with me about your writing 30 seconds before class starts!

Factors in Your Grade:

1. Writing Assignments (drafted, workshopped, and polished!)

This is a writing workshop, so you will do a lot of writing. I expect you to complete all major writing assignments in a timely manner. You are also **required to submit drafts** with your work, so get in the habit of saving them.

- **Major writing that is turned in late will be penalized a half a letter grade, or 5 points per day.** (Ex: from an 85 to an 80, or from a B to a B-)
- **An assignment turned in more than a week late cannot receive a grade higher than an F (50).**
- **An assignment that is *never* turned in will be recorded as a zero.** A better solution if you are having trouble completing an assignment is to talk to me about it (before the due date). Often, a conversation like that can help us avoid a major problem later on.
- **Submission of work:** Make sure you submit work according to any guidelines that I give you. Some work may need to be both as a *hard copy* and *electronically*. **Work that is NOT submitted according to guidelines may not receive credit.**

If you would like help or support with your own creative writing, it is available! Set up a conference with me. Visit the Writing Center. Writing shouldn't always be an isolated activity.

2. Homework/Writing Exercises/Preparedness for class

You should come to class ready to write or discuss writing, complete with any writing materials you need and any class readings we might be discussing. You're expected to participate in regular writing exercises and prompts to help you develop potential material. You must be on time and prepared for **workshop days**, when you'll work on drafts of your writing with peer editors. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will adversely affect your grade.

Absences: If you are absent it is *your* responsibility to make up any work. Before you talk to me, you should always check Google Classroom and talk with a fellow class member to find out what you missed. Important notes:

- In accordance with school policy, you have the same number of days that you were absent to make up work
- If you arrive late or are dismissed early, you are responsible for work due that day. Make necessary arrangements.
- If you know in advance that you'll be absent, you must communicate that and make necessary arrangements with me to complete work.

3. Collaboration, Connection, and Contributions to Class (the 3 C's of Creative Writing)

You'll hear a lot about the importance of staying connected in this class. We're all writers here, and this class, in order to work, needs to feel like a writing community. What are the expectations for a member of this writing community? Here are some things I think are important:

- Take risks – try new things!
- Take part in our discussions about writing in class and during writing workshops.
- Share your work with your fellow writers...
 - ...during writing workshops when you will offer your drafts to other writers for advice and feedback.
 - ...on Reading Days when we'll share and celebrate our writing.
 - ...through other forums (details to come).
- Be supportive of other writers. Show respect, offer encouragement, constructive criticism, and feedback

These are things I'll expect from you to fully participate in our writing community. Understand that your grade isn't just based on your writing, but also on my perception of your willingness to be members of this community.

- 4. **Final Project** Details to come at a later date! For now, just remember this: **save all your work**—drafts, fragments, failed attempts, polished pieces. Don't delete or throw anything away. Keep it accessible and organized so you can find it later!

A Note about Academic Honesty:

A writing community cannot function without trust, and all writers in this class are expected to maintain the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism and any form of academic dishonesty (including the use of AI/large language models) will not be tolerated and will have severe consequences. At the very least, work that is completed in an academically dishonest way will result in a grade of zero for an assignment, a grade of zero for class contribution during that marking period, and a conference with parents. **Don't risk it.**