

CREATIVE WRITING PEDAGOGY: Fall 2014

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appt.; also available by Blackboard IM

Course Description:

Creative Writing Pedagogy as a discipline has been debated for years, but has only gained traction as an area of research and praxis in the last 10-15 years, with a particular proliferation in the past 5 years. In keeping with best practices held by this discipline, this creative writing pedagogy course will teach students multiple approaches to design, teach, and manage a creative writing workshop, and will empower you to select an approach which enables you to teach to your strengths, skills that will make you more confident and successful teachers, and more marketable as you apply for teaching jobs.

Course Objectives:

In this course, students will have the opportunity to review the major literature on creative writing pedagogy; review the main craft elements typically covered in an introductory creative writing class; do workshop simulations to explore how creative writing workshops work; invent, exchange, and try out poetry- and fiction-writing exercises to see what might work in your own classes; discuss various methods for grading creative writing; read and report to your classmates on the strengths and weaknesses of the various available creative writing textbooks, so that you may assess what texts might be useful as you plan your own classes; write teaching philosophy statements; and write and workshop a syllabus for a creative writing class of your own. Students will leave the course with a packet that collects your classmates' compiled exercises, textbook reviews, teaching philosophy statements, and syllabi to use as a resource.

Required Text:

Can It Really Be Taught?: Resisting Lore in Creative Writing Pedagogy. Ed. Kelly Ritter and Stephanie

Vanderslice. (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2007)

Handouts (course handouts also available on Blackboard; classmates' work)

Grade Breakdown:

Participation: 20%

Teaching Philosophy: 20% (10% each draft)

Writing Exercises: 20% (10% each)

Textbook Review & Presentation: 10%

Syllabus: 30% (15% syllabus; 15% rationale)

Disabilities:

Students with disabilities of any kind should contact the Disability Support Services office in McCannell Hall, 777-3425, and let me know as soon as possible what accommodation you need.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Intro to class, History of CW in Academy, Intro to Teaching Philosophy assignment
Homework: refine Teaching Philosophy statement; read *CIRBT* Intro., Chs. 2&7, and

- Donnelly (handout)
- Week 2: Discussion of Teaching Philosophy statements, discussion of issues related to CW pedagogy choices – what has value & needs to be taught?
Homework: *CIRBT* Chs. 3&8, and Black, Brophy, and Vanderslice on workshops (handouts)
- Week 3: Workshopping the workshop
- Week 4: Teaching poetry – concepts, issues, things to consider. Poetry exercise (ekphrasis).
Homework: write poem from exercise & bring copies to class.
- Week 5: Workshop simulation. Discuss workshop model, how to manage workshop.
- Week 6: Teaching fiction – concepts, issues, things to consider. Fiction exercise (p.o.v.).
Homework: write fiction from exercise & bring copies to class.
- Week 7: Workshop simulation. Discuss workshop model, how to manage workshop.
Homework: write your own fiction and poetry exercises to bring to class.
- Week 8: Discuss exercises.
Homework: choose one each of classmates' exercises to write; bring to next class & be prepared to discuss.
- Week 9: Discussion of classmates' exercises – what was intent, and how did it work out? Hand out textbooks to be reviewed.
- Week 10: Including other genres and hybrids in the class: creative nonfiction, prose poetry, flash fiction, etc.
Homework: prepare textbook review and presentation.
- Week 11: Textbook presentations.
Homework: *CIRBT* Chs. 5&6, excerpts from Amato & Fleischer (handout)
- Week 12: Discussion of syllabus assignment and related issues (e.g. grading, balance of reading/workshop, full-class or small-group workshops, etc.).
Homework: work on syllabus project; *CIRBT* Ch. 4
- Week 13: Teaching CW in other venues (grade schools, community, prison, online); **part of class time will be spent in the CILT Center.**
Homework: finish syllabus project; *CIRBT* Ch. 1 & “After Words,” Day, Leahy, and Vanderslice “Where Are We Going Next?” (handout)
- Week 14: **No class.** Syllabus project due: copies of syllabus to classmates; syllabus and rationale to Heidi
- Week 15: Issues facing CW and CW pedagogy. Workshop/Presentations on classmates' syllabi.
Homework: write revised Teaching Philosophy statement, and bring copies to class.
- Week 16: Teaching Philosophy – second draft due. Discussion. Resource packets distributed.

Teaching Philosophy (20%: 10% each draft)

Write a 500-word statement that describes your teaching philosophy. Why do you believe the teaching of creative writing belongs in a university setting? What skills, goals, or practices do you want students to acquire and achieve? What, to you as a potential teacher, would define a successful class? Include a verbal thumbnail sketch of how your ideal class would be organized – what are the main class activities you want the class to engage in?

Students will write one draft of a teaching philosophy statement at the beginning of the semester; these statements will be revised at the end of the semester, with copies distributed to the class.

Writing Exercises (10% each exercise)

Each student will invent two intro-level exercises: one poetry and one fiction exercise. Exercises may contain an in-class component – if so, please explain – but the exercise should consist of a writing assignment or challenge that could be completed in one or two evenings as part of homework. These exercises will be copied and distributed to give everyone ideas for future workshops. Your exercises will also be “test-driven” by your classmates, and we will discuss how well they worked and/or how they might be fine-tuned.

Textbook Review & Presentation (10%)

There are so many books which purport to help writers, and it can be overwhelming to wade through all of them to decide what’s useful – let’s divide that labor. Each student will write a two-page single-spaced review of a book geared to creative writers (some will be all-genre, some poetry, and some fiction), describing the strengths and weaknesses of that book, including how well the book gets its central concepts across. Then, in an approximately 10-minute presentation, you will report on your findings to the class. The reviews will be copied and distributed to the class to give everyone ideas for potential texts for future syllabi.

Syllabus Assignment (30%: 15% each for syllabus and rationale)

Each student will write a syllabus for an intro-level creative writing class. This syllabus can be for a traditional class (in-person or online), or for a class in a nontraditional setting (public school, community center, prison), but it should contain at least 10 and no more than 15 weeks of material (meeting 1-3 times per week). Interdisciplinary approaches (using creative writing in combination with other disciplines) are welcome. We will discuss these syllabi in class, and copies will be distributed to the class. You will also write a rationale (5-7pp.) explaining how you’ve framed this course and why.

CW Syllabus Assignment – Detailed Rubric

For your final project, you will be designing a syllabus for a 10-15-week-long intro-level creative writing course, accompanied by a written rationale (5-7pp.) for your course. This syllabus can be for a traditional class, or for a class in a nontraditional setting (public school, community center, prison), but it should contain at least 10 and no more than 15 weeks of material, meeting 1-3 times per week. Interdisciplinary approaches are welcome. We will discuss these syllabi in class, and copies will be distributed to the class. All students should follow these general guidelines:

- Your syllabus should break down readings and assignments by week (e.g. “Week 1,” “Week 2,” etc.), but need not subdivide the weeks into 1-, 2-, or 3-day meetings.
- Your syllabus should contain the title of the course with you listed as the instructor, and the following headings: Course Description, Course Objectives, Assigned Texts, Grading (if applicable), Weekly Schedule. “Course Description” should be a paragraph introducing the course to students; “Course Objectives” should be a paragraph or list of the goals you have for the class and student learning. “Assigned Texts” is the list of books you’ll be using; you may

also include “various handouts” on this list. “Grading” is a breakdown of the grade into percentages or points – for example, but not limited to, participation, written assignments, workshop comments, portfolios, etc. You may need a separate description for the parameters of any assignments (format, page count, expectations, etc.)

- Your accompanying rationale (5-7pp.) should make the argument for why you've designed the class the way you have. Some questions you might consider: What genres will you be covering, and why? What readings have you selected and why? What assignments are you giving and why? How do they help reinforce your goals for the course? What kind of a balance will you strike between readings/discussions and workshop? How will you conduct workshop – full class, small groups, or a mix? Will you require individual conferences? Will you require revision as part of the course? Why or why not? How will you handle grading (if applicable)? How does the weekly schedule take us through the course – how do the various readings and assignments build on each other, and what do they add up to?

Your project will be evaluated for the following qualities:

- Clarity of your syllabus: is it clear what you will cover in this course, and what your goals are? are weekly readings and assignments clear and easy to follow? is it clear how you're breaking down grades (if applicable)? The imagined audience for the syllabus is intro-level writers who may or may not be English majors (or even college students); I will be evaluating clarity from their point of view.
- Appropriateness of material: given how you've framed the course, are the readings and assignments you've given appropriate?
- Rationale for course: did you convince me that the way you're framing the course teaches something of value about how to produce and discuss creative writing? And based on that, have you convinced me that the syllabus you've designed will fulfill your goals for the course?