



ENG 489: English Writing Capstone
Section 20197 - Spring 2015
7-10 p.m. Monday

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Office hours:
M: 6-7 p.m.; T TH: 1-4 &
by appt.

Required texts:

- Barrett, Andrea. *Ship Fever*.
- King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*
- Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*
- Parsley, Jamie. *Fargo 1957: An Elegy*

Course description:

This course is designed, as its name says, as a capstone. In architecture, the capstone is the final stone placed at the pinnacle of an arch. It is the piece whose weight and placement holds the arch together. This is a lofty analogy for a writing course. We'll try our best to live up to it.

The theme for the course is research in creative writing; we will explore how writers bring depth, context, credibility and texture to their work through research.

This capstone is comprised of two types of building blocks. The first is a solid portfolio of creative work; each you should leave this class with a portfolio containing your best, most polished work—stories, poems or essays that are ready to be published or sent to graduate-program selection committees. The second material is an intellectual or scholarly understanding of your genre. This will be contained in a roughly 2,500-3,000-word essay, in which you discuss some specific aspect of creative writing.

In addition to these writing tasks, we will also discuss practical, career-related considerations. We'll talk about how you can continue or create a writing life after you graduate, and we will attend a career open house, designed specifically for English majors.

Course goals:

1. Write and revise several works of creative writing.
2. Explore a specific area of writing or the writer's life, and present your exploration in a long, scholarly essay.
3. Consider yourself among community of writers, and put yourself into conversation with them.
4. Read and discuss a broad selection of texts discussing the writing profession.
5. Prepare yourself for a career in writing or the writing industry.

Expectations and grading:

Creative work: I will grade your creative work using a portfolio system. You will turn in a single final portfolio at the end of the semester. For prose writers, the portfolio will contain at least two stories or essays, with a combined length of at least 25 pages. For poets, the portfolio will contain four poems. Student portfolios must also include the workshop drafts that I will have returned to you with my comments. All work must be new; that is, it cannot have been previously workshopped in other classes.

Because the course will emphasize how creative writers use research, at least half of your creative work should reflect research. We will discuss this expectation thoroughly in class.

Scholarly essay: Your 12-15-page scholarly essay should discuss some aspect of the craft or act of writing. You may choose to focus on an individual writer. It should be informed by the texts on writing and the writing life that we will read this semester, by your own reading throughout your life, and by your own work and habits. I will hand out a more specific assignment sheet for this later in the semester.

Reading responses: I will assign reading responses to several of the assigned readings. In some cases I will use a prompt; in other cases, you will respond by articulating, as specifically as possible, what the piece taught you about the craft of writing. Each student must also attend and respond to one creative reading. Responses should address the material read, as well as your personal experience as audience member. Responses should be typed, single-spaced, one full page.

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Participation: In addition to your writing, you will earn a participation grade. I will consider your comments about student work in workshops, and about the required readings. Your comments should reflect your careful reading of the work and your rigorous, intelligent consideration of its strengths and weaknesses. I will take note of your contributions to class discussions and watch how well you follow the ground rules for in-class critiquing. During workshop sessions, you will be expected to criticize as well as praise, but the criticism must have as its goal the betterment of the piece of writing being discussed.

Grading Breakdown:

Portfolios	50%
Scholarly Paper	30 (25 for paper, 5 for presentation)
Reading responses	10
Participation	10
TOTAL	100

Attendance and course policies:

This course demands that students approach it as serious writers, as seniors, and as professional writers. It is, in part, a workshop. Throughout the semester we will critique students' writings in class. You will—or you should—benefit from the feedback you receive from others. Please show them the same courtesy. Attend class. Remember that missing one class equals a full week of classes. I will offer ONE “free” absence. After that, your grade will drop half a letter grade per absence. I will excuse Concordia sanctioned events in which you are an active participant, but you must not let your absence inconvenience the class or me. If you have an emergency that prevents you from attending class talk with me as soon as possible.

Punctuality: Coming to class late is disruptive. Be here on time.

Shut off your phones and try to resist the temptation to check them during breaks. Our conversation about writing should continue during breaks. Be in the moment.

Academic and Personal Integrity: All students are expected to make a personal pledge to uphold Concordia's and general professional standards on academic honesty and integrity. Know what plagiarism is and avoid it at all costs. All cases of cheating and plagiarism will result in a grade of F for the course and will be reported to the Academic Affairs.

Required formatting:

- Reading responses should be one page—no more, no less, single-spaced.
- All work should have at the top left, in a block; your name, class name, and the date. Number your pages.
- Use a serif, 12-point font. Poetry should be single spaced, and fiction should be double spaced with roughly one-inch margins. Short stories should be at least six pages long. When you submit a piece for workshop, you'll need to provide a copy for each student in class the week before your piece is due.

Semester schedule:

I reserve the right to adjust this calendar to suit the changing needs of the class.

WEEK 1 (1/16) — Introduction, syllabus, workshop signups, discuss Andrea Barrett stories

WEEK 2 (1/23) — Hand out creative work DISCUSS: Andrea Barrett stories
Reader response

WEEK 3 (1/30) — Workshop Round 1 (5 students)

WEEK 4 (2/6) — Workshop Round 1 (4 students) DISCUSS: King's *On Writing*
Reader response

WEEK 5 (2/13) — Workshop Round 1 (4 students) DISCUSS: King's *On Writing*
Reader response

WEEK 6 (2/20) — Workshop Round 2 (5 students) DISCUSS Reading TBA

(2/27): "Spring" break

WEEK 7 (3/5) —DISCUSS: Parsley's *Fargo 1957*; meet with other section and Jamie Parsley
Workshop Round 2 (2 students)
Reader response

WEEK 8(3/12) — English Futures Forum and Career Center visit
Workshop Round 2 (2 students)

WEEK 9 (3/19) — Workshop Round 2 (4 students) DISCUSS Reading TBA

WEEK 10 (3/26) —Revision Workshop (5 students) DISCUSS Selections from Mitchell's *Up in the Old Hotel*

WEEK 11 (4/2) — Revision Workshop (4 students) DISCUSS: Selections from Mitchell's *Up in the Old Hotel*

Reader response

WEEK 12(4/16) — Revision Workshop (4 students) DISCUSS: Readings TBA

WEEK 13 (4/23) — PAPER PRESENTATIONS (7 students)

WEEK 14 (4/30) – PAPER PRESENTATIONS (6 students)
(final exam scheduled)

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