

SYLLABUS HANDOUT

for

WINTER 2006 – 07 QUARTER

**Creative Writing
English 1310 SA**

Janice Vierk, Ph.D.

WELCOME TO METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Metropolitan Community College

Creative Writing/ ENGL 1310 SA

COURSE IDENTIFICATION

Title: Creative Writing
Prefix/Section: ENGL 1310 SA
Credit Hours: 4.5
Begins/Ends: 12/04/06 – 02/26/07
No Class Days: 12/21/06 – 01/02/07 & 01/15/07
Last Day to Withdraw: 02/10/07
Delivery Type: Classroom
Class Location: Sarpy Center Room 115

CONTACTING INFORMATION:

Instructor Name: Janice Vierk, Ph.D.
Office Location: Sarpy Center Room 133
Office Telephone: (402) 537-3823
Home Telephone: (402) 933-6341
Facsimile: (402) 537- 3834
Office Hours: MW 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Email Address: jvierk@mccneb.edu
Academic Program Area: Communications and Humanities
Academic Dean: Susann Suprenant, Ph.D. 457:2484

IMPORTANT DATES:

Metro's Academic Calendar at <http://mccneb.edu/academics/calendar.asp?Theme=2>

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description:

This course is designed for students seeking a safe place to flex their writing muscles, taking risks and trying new things with their writing. We will become a workshop group where the creative writing ideas can be studied, constructively commented on, and given a second, third, etc. opportunity to grow. Be ready for what is coming to you in the way of writing prompts, and what you write from them is yours alone to say.

Course Prerequisites:

ENGL 1010: English Composition I or instructor permission

Course Objectives:

1. To use the five senses for topic ideas and topic enhancers
2. To experiment and play with language
3. To write outside the box of traditional genres
4. To give useful and careful feedback to fellow writers

5. To produce writing that goes no further than the classroom
6. To produce writing that may be submitted to publications
7. To write, to write, to write, to make it a habit you must do out of love of writing and duty to yourself

Required/Supplemental Materials:

There is no text for this class.

Handouts from instructor

Notebook for class and for writing ideas

Computer disk (preferably compatible with Sarpy computers)

Course Structure:

Method of Instruction:

1. Through this workshop I will attempt to stimulate your genius and acquaint you with the approaches others have taken to give verbal shape to their experiences, thoughts, and feelings.
2. I will attempt to help prompt your half-hidden language to speak up through various writing exercises.
3. I will regularly introduce aspects of technique and form for various kinds of writing, such as different styles of poetry, creative essays, script writing, etc.
4. I will read as carefully as I know how each work in process entrusted to me.
5. I will recognize the power inherent in each student/writer's work and provide feedback of how that power might yet be strengthened.

Daily Assignments:

Follow the schedule of assignments given at the end of the syllabus to determine daily assignments. These daily assignments may be subject to change as needs of the class change, so be sure to keep up on this. It is your responsibility to find out what the changes are if any if you have been absent.

In-quarter Packets:

After both the poetry and prose sections of class you will turn in and present orally some of your work. For the poetry section you will chose five poems to polish and turn in, and you will read one aloud in class for the presentation. For the prose section you will turn in at least five pages of polished prose and read a part of it for the oral presentation. The various scripts of the script writing section will automatically be written, revised, and read aloud during that part of the quarter with the final script read in character by the author and other members of class presenting a readers' theatre of sorts.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

It would be extremely artificial and perhaps a little preposterous to assign a numerical or letter grade to "works in progress." However, reading and/or writing assignments will be due for each class per the assignments on the syllabus. These assignments will not be accepted late and will earn a zero for that day's work. No one's grade will be in difficulty as long as the students do their level best to write, to talk about it, and to grow a little **each** class.

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING FINAL COURSE GRADE:

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

A = No late work, no readings unread, no more than two absences, no more than two tardies,

final project completed well
completed with significant effort.

than three B = No more than two classes of late work (zero credit) or readings unread, no more

unexcused absences, no more than three tardies, final project completed with
much effort.

than four C = No more than three classes of late work (zero credit) or readings unread, no more

unexcused absences, no more than four tardies, final project completed with
effort.

than five D = No more than four classes of late work (zero credit) or readings unread, no more

unexcused absences, no more than five tardies, final project done though could
have been more polished.

F = You didn't try or meet minimum requirements (see D grade requirements).

Grade Scale: 90 – 100 = A

80 – 89 = B

70 – 79 = C

60 – 69 = D

Below 59 = F

Make-Up Procedures:

Daily homework cannot be made up. You will receive zero credit on days you are not prepared with your written or read homework.

Late Assignments:

Late daily assignments will not be accepted. You will receive zero credit on days you are not prepared with your written or read homework. **A late final section project will be penalized one letter grade for every day it is late.**

Maintenance of Student Records:

All assignments will be returned in a timely manner. With few exceptions, they will be returned the very next class. If you do not get your final project back on the last day of class, you need to bring a self-addressed, postage-paid, envelope that is large enough to contain your work on the last day of class, and I will post it immediately after I have finished reading it.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS:

Methods of Learning:

1. This is your workshop. Bring yourself on time with all of your channels open – every single, possible class.

2. Read carefully and closely the assigned readings from the text and from handouts, and be ready to talk about these readings when you come to class.
3. Read as much as you can by accomplished writers – even, and maybe especially, by those whose age, race, gender, sexual orientation, politics, values, and beliefs are different than your own.
4. Give and take feedback with humility and enormous respect for the people who have the courage to say/write what they think/feel.
5. We're not here to compete with each other, but to support and urge each other forward.
6. When we are critiquing new work in process, it will be each student's responsibility to bring enough copies of his/her work to distribute to each member of the workshop.
7. These copies, with any added comments, will always be returned to the original writer after group discussion.
8. All work in process must be typed or word-processed and saved onto disk, which you have with you at all times in class.
9. Make sure your name and the date appear in the upper right hand corner of each page.

Service-Learning Component:

This course includes a service-learning component. Participation in the service-learning project (or alternative) is mandatory in order to pass the course.

What is Service Learning?

Service Learning offers a unique opportunity for America's students – from kindergarten to college students – to get involved with their communities in a tangible way by integrating service projects with classroom learning. Service learning engages students in the educational process, using what they will learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems/issues. Students not only learn about democracy and citizenship, they become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform.

Why is Service-Learning Important?

A national study of Learn and Serve America programs suggests that effective service-learning programs strengthen learning, improve grades, increase attendance in school, and develop students' personal and social responsibility.

The opportunity to provide community service for non-profit agencies or businesses is as important today as it has ever been. For some this might mean volunteering at a homeless shelter, a nursing home, a pre-school, a Habitat for Humanity house building, among many other possibilities. Not only does this kind of activity look good on a resume, it also can give the person providing the service a feeling of worth for contributing to the betterment of other people.

Creative Writing Service-Learning Project:

The Creative Writing class has a Service-Learning Component built into the class. We will be working with The After School Program at the LaVista YMCA working with seventh and eighth grade students. We will meet with them on Wednesdays for approximately one and one half hours somewhere in the

time frame of 3:30 – 6:00 p.m. During this time, the Creative Writing students will mentor these students in a variety of writing exercises or activities, primarily poetry writing, sometimes mirroring the ones we have done in class. Ultimately, the students will produce several pieces of writing that have been workshopped or shared with each other and one or more Metro students to polish the writing. Then at the end of the quarter, the After School Program students and Creative Writing students will participate in a poetry or prose reading at the YMCA. This will be held toward the end of the quarter at the YMCA with parents and friends invited to attend and a good possibility of refreshments.

We will discuss specific scheduling issues early in the quarter to help all Creative Writing students have the opportunity to help out with this Service-Learning project. Part of your class grade will be earned by your participation in this project. Any special participation problems that may arise will be worked out with the instructor as soon as possible in the quarter.

Contact Information for Service Learning:

<http://www.mccneb.edu/coopeducation>

Program Coordinator: Maggie Kalkowski
Cooperative Education Coordinator
Metropolitan Community College
Fort Omaha Campus, Building 5
457-2591 mkalkowski@mccneb.edu

YMCA Contacts:

Laurie Nesmith, Program Director
339-9861 X 16 lnesmith@meroyymca.org

Jen Kolman, Teen Director
339-9861 X 23 jkolman@metroymca.org

Attendance Statement:

Attendance is Mandatory. This workshop depends on your regular attendance to realize the objectives. After **two unexcused absences** your grade will be lowered by five points for each absence thereafter. Tardies or being late for class will also affect your grade. (You are tardy if you are one minute late for class.) Five points will be deducted from your grade for every three tardies. If you have six tardies, ten points will be deducted, etc. After three unexcused absences in a row, and if I have not heard from you, you will receive an Instructor Withdrawal (IW) to protect you from receiving a grade of F.

Academic Honesty Statement:

Students are reminded that materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection. Additional information about copyright is provided on the library webpage at <http://www.mccneb.edu/library>, by your instructor, or by the College's Copyright Officer. In response to incidents of student dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.), the College imposes specific actions that may include receiving a failing grade on a test, failure in the course, suspension from the

College, or dismissal from the College. The disciplinary procedures are available in the Counseling/Advising Centers. **Also, your instructor has access to and may use if deemed necessary a tool called Turn-it-in.com to determine if any student work has been plagiarized.**

Harassment:

No types of harassment based on gender, religion, race or ethnicity, nationality, age, or sexual orientation will be tolerated in this class, following the College policy.

Cell Phones:

Because cell phones are becoming more and more distracting in the classroom, please have cell phones turned off completely while you are in class. If you make a call before or after class or at break time, do so in the hallway or outside since other students and the instructor are likely to be present and don't need to hear the conversation. If, for a very important reason discussed previously with the instructor, you need to have your cell phone on in class, have it on vibrate, and if it's an emergency and the phone needs to be answered immediately, leave the room as quietly as possible. Oh yeah, no text messaging either during class even if this is a writing class.

LEARNING SUPPORT

Metro's Learning, Math, and Writing Centers can help you achieve educational success. The staff in these centers provide drop-in assistance with basic math, reading, writing, and computer skills. We offer a friendly, supportive learning environment. Self-paced computer-assisted instructional support in reading, vocabulary, typing, English as a Second Language, and online course orientation is also available.

Detailed information about these services is in the Student Handbook, College Catalog, and online. Links to these resources are located at <http://www.mccneb.edu/academics/catalog.asp>.

COLLEGE POLICIES

College policies, such as student rights and responsibilities, academic standards, plagiarism, and etc. are outlined in the College Catalog and Student Handbook. This information can be accessed via the online catalog at <http://www.mccneb.edu/academics/catalog.asp>.

STUDENT WITHDRAWAL:

If you cannot attend and complete this course, you should officially withdraw by calling Central Registration, 457-5231. Failure to officially withdraw will result in either an instructor withdraw (IW) or failing (F) grade. The last date to withdraw is identified on the second page of this syllabus handout.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT:

The college has a standard code of conduct that involves consequences for specific academic and non-academic behavior that may result in a failing grade, probation, or suspension from the college. More complete information about the code of conduct is located in the Student Services portion of the online catalog at the following cite: <http://www.mccneb.edu/catalog/studentinformation.asp>.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

If you have a disability that may substantially limit your ability to participate in this class, please contact a Vocational Special Needs Counselor, located in the Student Services Office on each

campus. Metropolitan Community College will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with documented qualifying disabilities. However, it is the student's responsibility to request accommodations. For further information, please contact the Student Services Office at your campus.

INTRODUCTORY POEM AND QUOTES ABOUT WRITING

Invention by Billy Collins

Tonight the moon is a cracker,
with a bite out of it
floating in the night,

and in a week or so
according to the calendar
it will probably look

like a silver football,
and nine, maybe ten days ago
it reminded me of a thin bright claw.

But eventually –
by the end of the month
I reckon –

— It will waste away
to nothing,
nothing but stars in the sky,

and I will have a few nights
to myself,
a little time to rest my jittery pen.

Quotes about Writing:

“As a writer, be a wallflower and be proud of it.” Mary Pipher

“If a writer stops observing, he's finished.” John Hemingway

“Experience is communicated by small details intimately observed.” John Hemingway

“[The] race in writing is not to the swift, but to the original.” Zinsser

“All good writing begins in the body.” Hilda Raz

“A writer is someone on whom nothing is lost.” Henry James

— “The fastest way to write is to pretend you have all of the time in the world.” Phillip Gerard

— ‘A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult than for others.’ Thomas Mann

“A little too abstract, a little too wise,/ It is time for us to kiss the Earth again
It is time to let leaves rain from the skies/ and let the rich life run to the roots again.” Robinson Jeffers

Paper Heading:

Chris Creative

Descriptive Poem Assignment

First Draft

Dec. 6, 2006

Title (not in quotes) Centered on page

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS:

For daily written assignments type and double space except for your poetry, which is your choice, all homework and have copies for everyone in class unless otherwise stated below. Important: Each day of class you need to have a fresh, new metaphor written to share orally with the class. Keep these metaphors together for the duration of the quarter because we may use them for other in-class or out-of-class assignments.

— **The Service-Learning Component schedule will be available after the first or second class meeting.**

12/04 Introduction to the class and to each other. Discuss metaphors and similes. Read and discuss in class “Invention” by Billy Collins and “I Am From” by Mary Pipher.

Assign: Metaphor (designated as M from here on out), your own “I Am From” poem (with copies for everyone and this is always a given unless otherwise directed, so this is the last time you will see this directive in the syllabus).

Poetry Exploration:

12/06 M. Read and discuss your “I Am From” poems. Discuss five senses/description poems. Read and discuss “Noon Prayer” by Janice Vierk.

Assign: M and write your own five senses/description poem using all five senses at least once each.

12/11 M. Read and discuss your five senses/description poems. Read and discuss images, image poems, similes, and metaphors: “The Geese” by Galway Kinnell, and “Pajamas” by Sharon Olds.

— **Assign:** M and write your own image poem using metaphors and similes.

12/13 M. Read and discuss your image poems. Read and discuss extended metaphor/simile poems. "March Orrery" by Richard Kenney, "Southbound on the Freeway" by May Swenson, "The Toaster" by William Jay Smith, "Steam Shovel" by Charles Malam, "On Watching the Construction of a Skyscraper" by Burton Raffel, and "Apartment House" by Gerald Raftery.

Assign: M and write your own extended metaphor/simile poem.

12/18 M. Read and discuss your extended metaphor/simile poems. Read and discuss location poems: "Abandoned Farmhouse" by Ted Koozer, "Gallery of Rivers" by Bruce Bond, and "Working the Face" by Jay Parini..

Assign: M and write your own location poem.

12/20 M. Read and discuss your location poems. Discuss description of person, memory, ideas. Read and discuss description poems: "Godmothers" by Geraldine Connolly, "Anorexia" by Alice Jones, "Coal Train" by Jay Parini, and "Sexual Terrorist" by Mary B. Campbell.

Assign: M and write your own description of person, memory, or idea poem. Also put together your Poetry Packet of at least five poems. Be prepared to read the description poem and one other from the packet out loud. The packet will contain poems from class.

01/03 M. Read and discuss your description of person, memory, or idea poem. Present Poetry Packet of at least five poems. Read one of the poems from your packet aloud. Turn in packet.

Assign: M Write a short essay in response to a favorite or least favorite holiday/custom of your family. (**Short essay = two pages and essays need to be typed and double spaced.**)

Prose Exploration:

01/08 M. Read in-class essay "Another Sandhills Summer" by Jan Vierk. Discuss personal place, object, and emotional response for essay writing. Discuss creative nonfiction. Work on assigned holiday/custom essay and shorten it by half while in class.

Assign: M. Type up revised/shortened quote essay. Write another essay (approximately two plus pages long) using the information from the class exercise about personal place, object, emotional response.

01/10 M. Read and discuss quote essays. Read and discuss personal, etc. essays. Discuss important/influential people in our lives.

Assign: M. Read "My Father" by Joan Baez. Write an essay (approximately two plus pages long) about an important/Influential person in your life.

01/15 **No Class – Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration**

01/17 M. Discuss "My Father" by Joan Baez. Read and discuss essays about an important/influential person in your life. Discuss writing from the perspective of time.

Assign: M. Read "On Going Home" by Joan Didion. Write a personal essay (approximately two plus pages long) from the perspective of time.

01/22 M. Discuss "On Going Home" by Joan Didion. Read and discuss your personal essay from the perspective of time. Discuss personal causal issues.

Assign: M. Read "What She's Saying Now" by Lee K. Abbott. Write a short fiction story on a subject of your choosing (approximately two plus pages long).

01/24 M. Discuss "What She's Saying Now" by Lee K. Abbott. Read and discuss your short fiction story on a subject of your choosing.

Assign: M. Prepare your prose packet, including at least three of your pieces of prose writing and be prepared to read a paragraph or two from one of the pieces in class. Also, be prepared to discuss your thoughts on the various kinds of prose writing done in this section of class (What did you like/dislike/learn from and why, etc.)

01/29 M. Present prose packet of at least three essays (fiction and/or nonfiction). Be prepared to read one or two paragraphs from one essay and discuss your thoughts on the various kinds of prose writing you have done in this section of class. Discuss script writing.

Assign: M. Read the script "Tender Off" by Wendy Wasserstein. Take a play script from classroom library (check it out by listing which script you have chosen by your name so instructor can keep track of the scripts). Read all or parts of it and write down what observations you have made in looking at and reading a play script versus poetry and prose.

Script Writing Exploration:

01/31 M. Discuss observations you made comparing play scripts with poetry and prose. (Return script and scratch your name off of the check out list.) Discuss the 2007 Edward Albee Great Plains Theatre Conference (May 25 – June 2). Discuss the script "Tender Off" by Wendy Wasserstein. Discuss character sketches and monologues. Do hat exercise creating a character sketch leading to a monologue.

Assign: Read monologues assigned (TBA). Write a monologue based on the character you created in class: three paragraph minimum.

02/05 Read and discuss your monologues based on character created in class. Discuss assigned monologues.

Assign: M. Read or study "The Problem" by A.R. Gurney, Jr. and write a script about conflict **between two people** who may or may not know each other initially of at least twenty to thirty plus lines of dialogue.

02/07 M. Discuss "The Problem" by A.R. Gurney, Jr. Read with a classmate your script about conflict between two people. Discuss student scripts. Discuss script using three characters. If time, begin reading and discussing "Trotsky's Bar Mitzvah" by Max Apple.

Assign: M. If necessary, finish reading "Trotsky's Bar Mitzvah" by Max Apple. Write your own script **using three characters only** of approximately twenty or thirty plus lines of dialogue.

02/12 M. Discuss "Trotsky's Bar Mitzvah" by Max Apple. Read with two other classmates your three-person script. Discuss student scripts. Discuss differences between play scripts and movie scripts by comparing them. Discuss readers' theatre format.

Assign: M. For your script-writing final write a script incorporating three or four characters, which you will perform with your classmates for the final presentation over scripts on the last two classes of the quarter. The script needs to be thirty to forty plus lines long. Come to class prepared with copies for your cast members only, not for the whole class as in the past. **Bring a list of all of your metaphors with you.**

02/14 M. Have full listing of your metaphors from the entire quarter with you. Study your metaphors to comment on and find two previous ones you like and be prepared to read them and comment on them orally in class. Plus other metaphor-related activities. Get into your script groups and read each person's script out loud at least once through and make comments for revisions, etc. Keep in mind your group will be performing the script as readers' theatre.

Assign: M. Revise and polish your script and have copies for your cast members only and one for the instructor. Be prepared to practice for your readers' theatre presentation. Have metaphor-incorporated and inspired monologue ready to read to class.

02/19 Read metaphor-incorporated and inspired monologue to class. Practice readers' theatre presentation with actors, having incorporated needed changes.

02/21 & 02/26 Perform scripts in readers' theatre. Discuss results. Discuss submitting scripts to Edward Albee Theatre Conference and attending the conference May 25 – June 2.