English 233: Introduction to Creative Writing

"We tell ourselves stories in order to live."
– Joan Didion, "The White Album"

"There is a necessary element of rebellion in the writer that leads her to question received ideas yet possess a secret reverence for the smallest things..."
– Sandra Doller, "A Po Pedagogy"

Course Description: How does a piece of creative writing work? What does it do and how? We'll grapple with these questions by considering specific elements of craft (for example: image, plot, character, setting, rhythm, structure, etc). We'll also think about creativity and art at large: What is art? Why do humans make art? ENG 233 is a college-level introduction to creative writing. The first half of the semester we will focus on fiction (short stories and flash fiction), while the second half will be dedicated to poetry. Expect to read and write a lot, and share your creative writing with your classmates, who will offer you thoughtful verbal and written feedback. We'll work together to build a supportive writing community in our class and grow creatively.

Prerequisites: Students enrolled in this course need to have earned a grade of C or better in English 102 or have received a score of 4 on the EPT. If you have not met these requirements, please see me.

Required Texts and Materials: There are no textbooks in our course. I will provide all readings electronically as PDFs on D2L or as handouts in class. You will need a journal or notebook for in-class writing, a stapler, and approximately $60 for printing/copying costs.

Workshop and the Class Community: Think of our classroom as an artist's studio. We will write and rewrite, collaborate, discuss, and build. Much of our time and energy in this course will be spent reading and discussing each other's creative work. During workshop, we will offer mature, direct, and constructive feedback. In workshop, we'll discuss the writing, not the writer. We will workshop in both small and large groups. Students are responsible for providing copies of their work to the entire class by posting the creative piece on the D2L discussion board at least one week before their designated workshop date. Because of the size of this class, we will be unable to reschedule workshops, so you must attend class the day your writing is being workshopped. If you do not attend your workshop or fail to submit your creative piece in time for your designated workshop, it will result in the lowering of your final course grade by a full letter grade. Please note that this can cause you to fail the course (for example, if you earn an "D" in the course but miss your short story workshop, your final course grade will be an "F").

Attendance and Tardy Policy: I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. There are no excused or unexcused absences. If you miss more than 4 classes (two weeks of class), you will automatically fail the course (resulting in a final course grade of "F"). It is your responsibility to keep track of the number of classes that you miss. Please save your 4 absences
for unforeseen emergencies. During the semester we will have one-on-one conferences in which you meet with me individually. Missing a conference counts as two (2) absences. Please note that if you miss class the day your writing is being workshopped, it will result in the lowering of your final course grade by a full letter grade.

You are tardy if you enter the class after 9:30AM. You are expected to attend each class in its entirety. If you are more than 20 minutes tardy or must leave 20 minutes prior to the end of class, you will be counted absent. Each recorded tardy will equal half of an absence; every 2 tardies will equal one absence. So being tardy 10 times will equal 5 absences, which will cause you to automatically fail the course. In either case of absence or tardiness, it is your responsibility to obtain notes and assignments from a fellow student or on D2L.

**Late Work Policy:** I do not accept late work. Any assignments that aren't submitted by the due date and time will receive no credit and significantly lower your final course grade. If you fail to submit more than 4 assignments on time, your final course grade will be lowered by a full letter grade. You must submit your final portfolio on time in order to pass the course.

**Grading Scale:**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>90-92</td>
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<td>87-89</td>
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<td>83-86</td>
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<td>60-62</td>
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**Grade Evaluation:**

1.) In-class Assignments, Participation, and Preparation: 25%
2.) Writing Assignments, Workshop Pieces, and Community Reading Review: 25%
3.) Peer Feedback and Workshop Engagement: 25%
4.) Final Portfolio: 25%

1.) **In-class Assignments, Participation, and Preparation:** This includes any writing exercises and activities we do in the classroom. You'll keep a journal where you'll write during class and record interesting things you observe or find outside of class (conversations, images, words, ideas, tweets, quotes, pictures, postcards, slips of paper, ticket stubs, whatever). Occasionally, I'll ask you to share notes or ideas from this journal in class, so bring it with you each day. Failure to do so will result in a reduction of your final course grade. Bring this journal with you when you have conferences with me so that I may check on your progress.

Participation and preparation is what you do to get ready for class and how you engage while in the classroom. You are expected to come to class on time and stay for the entire time. For each class period, complete all writing and reading assignments before you arrive, type feedback for your classmates, print all readings, assignments, and pieces being workshopped, etc. Try not to sit there in awkward silence – take part in the conversation! But note that there are other ways to participate besides discussion (listening actively, in-class exercises, revision, peer feedback, conferences, coming to my office hours, etc).

Once or twice in the semester, I will cancel class and require each student to meet with me individually in my office to discuss your writing and progress in the course. You are required to attend these conference(s) for full participation credit. **Missing a conference counts as 2 absences.** Bring your writers' journal with you when you have conferences with me so that I may check on your progress.
2.) Writing Assignments, Workshop Pieces, and Community Reading Review: This part of your grade includes all writing assignments done for homework or outside of the classroom. There will be something due most class periods. All homework and major writing assignments must be submitted to the dropbox on D2L an hour before class (by 8:30AM on the due date), unless otherwise specified. Creative pieces are due on the Discussions Area on D2L at least a week in advance of your workshop. I will not accept assignments via email or in hard copy, unless I specify otherwise. See each type of assignment below:

- **Writing Assignments:** Sometimes I will assign reading response questions, writing prompts or exercises, and/or mini-essays for you complete at home and turn in before class. Some creative writing prompts or exercises may turn into creative pieces that you submit to workshop, so take them seriously but feel free to experiment!

- **Workshop Pieces:** These are the heart of the course. During the semester, you will complete, workshop, and revise one complete short story (8-10 pages in length), one work of flash fiction (up to 750 words), and 3-6 poems. Save all drafts of what you write because you'll need these for your portfolio.

- **Community Reading Review:** Once during the semester you are required to attend a poetry or prose reading at UWM or in the larger Milwaukee community (Woodland Pattern, Boswell Books, etc). I will announce these events before they occur and post guidelines on D2L (under Content) for this assignment. **Extra Credit:** You can receive one extra credit point (1% added to your final course grade) in extra credit for every additional poetry or prose reading you attend (you can do this up to 5 times for 5% total added to your final grade). Please submit a 250-word analysis of each reading to be considered for extra credit. I reserve the right to refuse extra credit for analyses that are inadequate or incomplete.

*A note on grading and assignments:* I will post a handout/guidelines for each assignment on D2L well in advance of the due date. While not all of these assignments will have grades or comments, completion of each will affect your final course grade. I will give you written feedback on all of your workshop pieces and verbal feedback during our conferences. Your writing assignments, community reading review, and final portfolio will be graded. At the end of the semester, all of your work will be assessed holistically based on my comments, grades received, and your revision and development.

3.) Peer Feedback and Workshop Engagement: Before each workshop, each writer will provide everyone with a copy of their workshop piece by posting it on the D2L Discussions Area (not the dropbox - please note the difference!) and then each student will type a feedback letter of at least 250 words to each writer in that workshop. Detailed workshop guidelines are on D2L>Content>Workshop Guidelines. We'll work together to make workshop discussion as constructive and thorough as possible. Remember, feedback (verbal and written) is 25% of your final course grade and very important to your fellow writers.

4.) Final Portfolio: This will consist of the creative work you've revised over the semester, and will be due in December. Your portfolio will contain one polished, complete short story, a revised piece of flash fiction, and 3 revised poems, and a personal essay on your development as a writer and your revision process (I will give more guidelines on this later in the semester). This portfolio will receive a letter grade and a number assessment (see General Education Requirement)
Statement below). Remember, not everything you write will go to workshop or go in your portfolio, but I will give you feedback on as much of your writing as possible.

General Education Requirement Statement: This course meets GER Arts requirements as outlined in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Faculty Document No. 1382 ("GER Composite Document"), Section 4.1b. As a GER Arts course, this course addresses “a branch of learning focusing on the conscious use of skill and creative imagination in the production of artistic objects or performances that stress values that stand outside conventional ideas of utility.” To satisfy the GER Distribution Requirements for the Arts a course must: “1) demonstrate comprehension of historical, philosophical, theoretical, or aesthetic perspectives commonly used in the understanding of a specific art; and either 2) apply knowledge of artistic principles, conventions, methods, and practices through the creation or production of works of art; or 3) compare and contrast the expressive and formal features of different artistic media and/or cultural traditions; this may be accomplished through an analytic study or as part of an original artistic work.” English 233 will satisfy criteria 1) and 2).

English 233 will focus on two of the five Shared Learning Goals the University of Wisconsin System has identified for its GER courses—Critical and Creative Thinking, and Effective Communication Skills—in pursuit of the following learning outcomes which the department and creative writing program have identified: **students will be able to produce an original creative work that reflects thoughtful, informed engagement with its literary genre.** Students’ achievement of this outcome will be assessed through review of their final portfolio. In addition to the letter grade that will contribute to the student’s final grade in the course, each portfolio will also be assessed using the following scale:

1 = work is cliché or not original and does not reflect thoughtful, informed engagement with its literary genre;

2 = work is not original, but attempts, unsuccessfully, thoughtful, informed engagement with its literary genre;

3 = work is a mixture of cliché and original work, and attempts, with mixed success, thoughtful, informed engagement with its literary genre;

4 = work is largely original and largely successful at thoughtful, informed engagement with its literary genre;

5 = work is highly original and highly successful at thoughtful, informed engagement with its literary genre.

While numeric scores will not be used to calculate student grades, they will be averaged and used to determine how well 233 has met its objectives and learning outcome goals, and what, if anything, needs to be altered when the course is next offered.

Submitted Work Guidelines: Unless I specify otherwise, all writing should be typed, double-spaced (unless it is poetry), one-inch margins, 12 point legible font, and stapled (if hardcopy), etc. Your name, workshop date, and title must be typed on the top of the first page, with page numbers in the top right hand corner after your last name (i.e.: Scarano 1).

Technology Policies, Email, and D2L: You will need computer and Internet access for our course. This syllabus and many other important class documents, readings, and assignments
will be uploaded onto D2L. Print readings and creative pieces for every class period. Check your university email and D2L daily (every 24 hours) and respond to my email request within 24 hours. All email communication with me should be professional and appropriate in tone and content. You must submit each homework/writing assignment on D2L at least 1 hour before the class start time (by 8:30AM) and bring a hardcopy of the assignment with you to class.

Use of electronic devices, music players/headphones, and cell phones will not be allowed in our class. Laptops will only be allowed if I give permission because we are freewriting or researching in class. Cell phones will be turned off or kept on silent mode in our class. Do not text in class. If I see your cell phone on your desk or in your hands, you will lose participation credit for that day. If you must answer a phone call in the case of an emergency, please let me know about the situation before class starts and then step out of class to take the call. If you have a special case or circumstance for needing technology in the classroom, please come and speak to me as soon as possible.

**Academic Honesty:** This is UWM's policy on academic misconduct: "UWM expects each student to be honest in academic performance. Failure to do so may result in discipline under rules published by the Board of Regents (UWS 14). The most common forms of academic dishonesty are cheating and plagiarism. [...] If a student is charged with academic misconduct, there are specific procedures, including the right of appeal, which must be followed by UWM. Sanctions imposed by the university in response to academic misconduct range from reprimands to expulsion." Make sure all your work and writing is your own.

**Accessibility Resource Center:** If you have a health condition or disability that may affect your ability to meet any of the requirements of the course, I am more than willing to work with you. But you need to bring a “VISA” (Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations) form that has been completed by an ARC counselor to me within the first week of class. With the ARC, we will then establish a plan that allows you to successfully meet the goals of the course. The ARC is in room 116 of Mitchell Hall and can be reached at 414-229-3800. Students with conditions that are not documented by the ARC at the beginning of the semester will not receive exceptions to course policies, so it is important that you visit the center as soon as possible.

**Tentative Course Calendar**

*Please note that this calendar is an overview for the first unit of the course. I will provide the calendar for the next unit to you at a later date. I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as needed, and will update you on any edits/additions in a timely manner.*

**Week 1: Introductions**

**Week 2: Characterization, POV, and Dialogue**

**Week 3: Plot and Tension**

**Week 4: Objects, Images, and World Building**

**Week 5: Structure and Experimentation**

**Week 6: Short Story Workshops Begin**
**Syllabus Addendum:**

**Policy Links**

1. *Students with disabilities.* Notice to these students should appear prominently in the syllabus so that special accommodations are provided in a timely manner.  
   [http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACtr.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACtr.pdf)

2. *Religious observances.* Accommodations for absences due to religious observance should be noted.  
   [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm)

3. *Students called to active military duty.* Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty should be noted.  
   Students: [http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm)  
   Employees: [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S40.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S40.htm)

   (Editorially Revised, 3/25/09)

4. *Incompletes.* A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work.  
   [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S31.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S31.pdf)

5. *Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment).* Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff.  
   [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S47.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S47.pdf)

6. *Academic misconduct.* Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University.  
   [http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm)

7. *Complaint procedures.* Students may direct complaints to the head of the academic unit or department in which the complaint occurs. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the head of the department or academic unit in which the complaint occurred or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy.  
   [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S49.7.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S49.7.htm)

8. *Grade appeal procedures.* A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School.  
   [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S28.htm](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S28.htm)

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1 Supplement to UWM FACULTY DOCUMENT NO. 1895, October 21, 1993; Revised March 16, 2006; Revised January 24, 2008; Editorially Revised, 8/26/11.
9. Other  The final exam requirement, the final exam date requirement, etc.  [http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm]

Syllabus Addendum:
Credit Hours

The university has asked departments to break down for students how much time they will spend working on various aspects of their classes.

As the UW System assumes “that study leading to one semester credit represents an investment of time by the average student of not fewer than 48 hours” (UWS ACPS 4), a 3-credit course such as this one will require a minimum of 144 (3 x 48) hours of your time. You may find it necessary to spend additional time on a course; the numbers below only indicate that the course will not require any less of your time.

If this is a traditional, or face-to-face course, you will spend a minimum of
- 37.5 hours in the classroom
- 75 hours preparing for class, which may include reading, note taking, completing minor exercises and assignments, and discussing course topics with classmates and the instructor in structured settings
- 31.5 hours preparing for and writing major papers and/or exams.

If this is an online course, you will spend a minimum of
- 37.5 hours reviewing instructional materials prepared by your instructor and placed online
- 75 hours preparing for class, which may include reading, note taking, completing minor exercises and assignments, and discussing course topics with classmates and the instructor in structured settings
- 31.5 hours preparing for and writing major papers and/or exams.

If this is a hybrid course, you will spend a minimum of
- 18.75 hours in the classroom
- 18.75 hours reviewing instructional materials prepared by your instructor and placed online
- 75 hours preparing for class, which may include reading, note taking, completing minor exercises and assignments, and discussing course topics with classmates and the instructor in structured settings
- 31.5 hours preparing for and writing major papers and/or exams.

Notes
- The breakdown above is for a standard 15-week semester. In a 16-week semester, the numbers breakdown above changes as follows. Traditional: 40 hours in classroom, 80 for preparation, 24 for papers and exams; online: 40 hours of online instruction, 80 for preparation, 24 for papers and exams; hybrid: 20 hours in classroom, 20 for online instruction, 80 hours for preparation, 24 for papers and exams. Again, these are minimums.
- UWM Credit Hour Policy, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Faculty Document No. 2838, can be found at [https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/faculty/2838_Credit_Hour_Policy.pdf].
• UWS ACPS 4, the University Of Wisconsin System Policy On Academic Year Definition And Assorted Derivatives, can be found at http://www.uwsa.edu/acps/acps4.pdf.