ENGL 2060: Introduction to Creative Writing
Spring 2020
Section E01

Instructor: Dr. Shannon Finck
Contact: sfinck@westga.edu
Office: TLC 1114-D

Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday,
11AM-12PM; Monday, 2PM-5PM; & by appointment

Course Description
This course serves and an introduction to the art of creative writing—from learning the elements involved in literary production, to gaining the critical skills necessary in assessing works by established authors, to crafting some of your own literary artifacts. Students will study the process of creative writing from a wide range of historical and cultural examples and learn to model their artistic endeavors on the works of publishing practitioners. They will also investigate the convergence of creative personal experience and creativity and the reception of literary arts in the public domain. This semester, the course will be conducted online. For more information on the format of the course and tips for how to succeed in a distanced learning environment generally, please review the document titled, “Understanding Our Course.” This is particularly important if you have never taken a class online before.
In this class, students will learn to:

- Recall, verbally and in writing, the elements involved in literary production;
- Demonstrate assessment of works by established authors;
- Apply models by published writers to inform their own creative writing;
- Discuss creativity and the reception of literary arts in the public domain.

**Required Texts & Other Materials**

All of the required readings—poems, short stories and works of nonfiction, excerpts from longer works, and essays on craft—will be found on Course Den, in the section labeled Required Readings. Readings are organized there, either as PDFs or links to content on the web, according to the order in which they should be read and include all of the bibliographic information you will need to cite them correctly in your reading responses.

Though most of the course will take place online, you are required to attend to one, local creative writing event during the semester. You will find a list of qualifying events in the area and their dates below. Some of these events include author signings, for which I recommend purchasing books.

**Suggested Texts**


Toi Derricotte, *New and Selected Poems* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019)

# Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Thoughtful participation in online class discussions as well as small group workshops, full engagement in online class activities including reading assignments and writing exercises, logging into Course Den at least twice a week to interact with course content and remain updated and active in the course, the timely submission of work, and attending at least one local creative writing event (see list of opportunities below). This grade will be assessed holistically at the end of the semester.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Poems</td>
<td>See assignment sheet for details.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Short Lyric, Graphic, or Narrative Essay</td>
<td>See assignment sheet for details.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Nonfiction)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Short Story (Fiction)</td>
<td>See assignment sheet for details.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Portfolio or Capstone Project</td>
<td>Portfolio demonstrating revisions to one of the major assignments or final creative project of the student’s choice (i.e. a podcast episode, a piece of visual art, a screenplay, a short film) based on one of the major assignments. These will be compiled to produce a class anthology. See assignment sheet for details.</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Writing Assignments, Writer’s Journal &amp;</td>
<td>Weekly Writing includes all of the writing you post in discussions in response to reading assignments. Following the prompts posted to Course Den, students will reread and generate questions or brief reflections on specific aspects of the reading assignments. You will be responsible for demonstrating your knowledge of the reading and for constructing clear, succinct critical questions or observations. Please note that these are not reading responses in the sense that you tell me</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
whether or not you liked the reading or agreed with it. I value your opinions, of course, and you will have opportunities to voice them appropriately, but the point of these short assignments is to practice academic interrogation and craft analysis. Though I will give you minimal feedback on these assignments, you will receive full credit for seriously attempting them.

You should submit your responses by the Wednesday of each week. By the following Sunday, you should comment on at least two other students’ posts. These comments should not be merely evaluative (i.e. “good job” or “I like what you said”) but should, rather, engage with the ideas in the original post.

The Writer’s Journal is mostly for you, and as such, I’m going to look at it and respond from time to time, grading it only for completion. But, it is an indispensable tool for writers, and many good writers keep image/fragment journals. This journal should consist simply of brief descriptions of powerful images you encounter in the world around you as well as words and phrases you encounter or think of that move you, for possible use in later pieces. There is a designated section in Course Den for these entries, but you’re welcome to keep them in a proper journal and submit images of individual entries.

Workshop & Peer Feedback: Because writing is often so a solitary an enterprise, there exists a long tradition of writers sharing their work in progress. Workshops are an invaluable opportunity for you to learn from a reader’s reactions to your writing and to practice your own critical reading skills. Workshops strive not to fix or criticize a text, but rather to consider how certain choices shape the reader’s experience. Above all, it is important to be respectful to others whose work you read and to base your responses to a text in terms of its structure and composition, not your interest in the
writer’s subject matter or your assessment of their talent.

Over the course of the semester, each student will submit work in progress to be discussed in small group workshops. Each group will include about 5 students and every student will need to provide written feedback on every piece submitted within the group. Detailed instructions to be posted in Course Den before each workshop session.

Assessment of Creative Writing
Each of the formal assignments submitted for instructor feedback will be graded in 3 areas:

1. Originality, creativity, and intellectual/emotional depth (40%)
2. Fulfillment of all assignment guidelines and evidence of revision through multiple drafts, building from weekly writing assignments (30%)
3. Form, style, and clarity (30%)

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>In-Class Writing</th>
<th>Out-of-Class Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90 – 100 (Excellent)</td>
<td>$\text{4=95%; 4/3=92%}$</td>
<td>$\text{A+=98%; A=95%; A=92%}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80 – 89 (Good)</td>
<td>$\text{3=88%; 3/2=82%}$</td>
<td>$\text{B+=88%; B=85%; B=82%}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 – 79 (Fair)</td>
<td>$\text{2=78%; 2/1=72%}$</td>
<td>$\text{C+=78%; C=75%; C=72%}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 69 (Poor)</td>
<td>$\text{1=68%; 1/0=62%}$</td>
<td>$\text{D+=68%; D=65%; D=62%}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60 (Failure)</td>
<td>$\text{0=50% or below}$</td>
<td>$\text{F=50% or below}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Etiquette
“Netiquette” is a set of rules for behaving acceptably in an online environment—an online classroom, in this case. In an online learning environment, some of the generally accepted rules for communicating digitally will still apply; however, some will be slightly different from those
with which you might be familiar. The following bullet points cover some basics to communicating in an online classroom:

1. Be sensitive to the fact that you’re interacting with live human beings via this technology, and human beings possess different cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, different abilities, and different political and religious beliefs. It’s okay to have intellectual disagreements or debates related to course content—in fact, it’s encouraged—but failure to do so respectfully will not be tolerated by me or the community. Personal attacks and/or racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, or classist comments carry a one-strike policy here. This isn’t Reddit.

2. Use good taste when composing your responses in discussions with others. Profanity, which I personally enjoy, should be avoided in the context of writing responses and workshop commentary, both because you cannot anticipate the reactions of your peers and because it is wise to use all writing you do in this environment as an opportunity to practice developing a professional communication style. Also consider that slang can be misunderstood or misinterpreted, so be careful with it.

3. Don’t use all capital letters when composing your responses as this is considered shouting on the Internet and is regarded as impolite or aggressive. It can also be stressful on the eye when trying to read your message.

4. Be careful when using acronyms. If you use an acronym it is best to spell out its meaning first, then put the acronym in parentheses afterward, for example: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). After that you can use the acronym freely throughout your message.

5. Use clear and consistent grammar and spelling, and avoid using text-messaging shortcuts. Should you require additional help with this, please visit Purdue’s OWL (link on Course Den under Resources.)

Private Communication
University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student’s responsibility to check this email account. Though I will often communicate with you about course content and assignments using Course Den and welcome you to do the same, please email only from your UWG account to discuss final grades (because FERPA) or with time-sensitive questions or requests, as I am often likely to see this correspondence sooner. Though I will often reply to your emails promptly, please allow 24 hours for a response during the week (48 hours over the weekend) before sending a follow-up email or message and plan accordingly. Remember that email is another opportunity to practice good writing techniques—always include a greeting and a closing with your name. Also, be sure to proofread for clarity, spelling, and grammar. Studies show that well-written, courteous emails are better received and more likely to lead to rapid and favorable replies than those that are hastily written or inappropriate in tone.
Assignments & Submission

Required Reading assignments should be completed on/by the date they are listed in the Course Schedule.

Weekly Writing assignments should be submitted following each reading assignment and will be assessed weekly.

Writer’s Journal exercises and Workshop Feedback will be evaluated at the end of each unit (once for the poetry unit, once for the nonfiction unit, and once again for the fiction unit).

All major, written assignments should be submitted on Course Den in the appropriate Assignment folder or Discussion location by midnight on dates they are due in the Course Schedule. Emailed files will not be accepted, except in the case of verified server failure (i.e. system-wide Course Den maintenance). Major assignments need to be completed in or converted to .DOCX or .PDF formats. I grade in Turnitin, which does not accept other file formats, and so your assignments will not be accepted if they are in another format, like Pages or .TXT, even though these are common file types.

Late work is accepted on a case-by-case basis, but only in extreme circumstances and with proper communication between student and instructor. Please note that this is not an entirely asynchronous online course, so you will not be permitted to submit all of your work at the last minute. Some activities will require collaboration with other students, so you must keep pace with the class.

Preparedness

Learning to take detailed notes and annotate texts is crucial to succeed in most college classes, and this one, though it takes place online, is no exception. You are expected to take notes as you read independently and to structure your responses to texts around those notes, referring to specific ideas and passages from course materials. Though I will not be monitoring this stage in your writing process, it will be apparent from the quality of your work whether you kept good notes on the thoughts and questions you had as you read. I recommend highlighting or underlining ideas and language you find interesting or that seem important to you, concepts you do not understand, vocabulary with which you are unfamiliar and will need to look up, and moments in course readings that demonstrate useful writing skills. Use different colors or symbols to indicate which of these each moment you’ve marked reflects. For this reason, printing the readings from Course Den is recommended, though you can annotate digitally with many document viewers.
Student Support Links

Course Den D2L Home Page
https://westga.view.usg.edu/

24/7/365 D2L Help Center
https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu/

University Bookstore
http://www.bookstore.westga.edu/

Common Language for Course Syllabi
https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php

UWG Cares
http://www.westga.edu/UWGCaress/

Center for Disability
https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php

Student Services
http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php

Center for Academic Success
http://www.westga.edu/cas/

Ingram Library Services
http://www.westga.edu/library/

Proctored Exams
http://uwgonline.westga.edu/exams.php#student

UWG Accessibility Statements for Technology
https://docs.google.com/document/d/16Ri1XgaXiGx28ooOzRvYPraV3Aq3F5ZNJYbVDGVnEA/edit?ts=57b4c82d#heading=h.yrqefffvts1f

University Writing Center
https://www.westga.edu/academics/coah/writing
## Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>What to Read</th>
<th>What to Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, January 6&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, January 8&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>The Course Syllabus and Understanding Our Course documents (in Resources), “Shitty First Drafts” by Anne Lamott (in Required Readings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, January 13&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, January 15&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Poems by Heather Christle and Jospehine Yu (in Required Readings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;strong&gt;Monday, January 20*&lt;/strong&gt;&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, January 22&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Poems by Jericho Brown and Katie Condon (in Required Readings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, January 27&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, January 29&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Poems by Toi Derricotte and Katie Faris (in Required Readings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, February 3&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, February 5&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Selections from Ilya Kaminsky’s <em>Deaf Republic</em> (In Required Readings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, February 10&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, February 12&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Selections from Graham Barnhart’s <em>The War Makes Everyone Lonely</em> (in Required Readings)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *Week 20 is an optional week for students to choose any poem to write about.*

Writer’s Journal Checkpoint
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>7) Nonfiction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, February 17&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, February 19</td>
<td>Excerpt from Tyehimba Jess’ <em>Olio</em> (in Required Readings)</td>
<td>Weekly Writing #5: Jess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9) Nonfiction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, March 2&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, March 4</td>
<td>Excerpt from Michelle McNamara’s <em>I’ll Be Gone in the Dark</em> (in Required Readings)</td>
<td>Workshop 2: Draft of a Lyric, Graphic, or Narrative Essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10) Nonfiction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, March 9&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, March 11</td>
<td>Episodes 1-3 of <em>Serial</em>: Season One (in Required Readings)</td>
<td>Major Assignment: Lyric, Graphic, or Narrative Essay due&lt;br&gt;Writer’s Journal Checkpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11) SPRING BREAK</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, March 16&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, March 18</td>
<td>Spring Break, no reading assignment</td>
<td>Spring Break, no writing assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13) Fiction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, March 30&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, April 1</td>
<td>“The Situation” by Jeff Vandermeer (in Required Readings)</td>
<td>Weekly Writing #8: Vandermeer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14) Fiction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, April 6&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, April 8</td>
<td>Excerpt from Tayari Jones’ <em>An American Marriage</em> (in Required Readings)</td>
<td>Workshop 3: Draft of Short Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15) Fiction</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, April 13&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, April 15</td>
<td>Excerpt from Tayari Jones’ <em>An American Marriage</em> (in Required Readings)</td>
<td>Major Assignment: Short Story Due&lt;br&gt;Writer’s Journal Checkpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16) Review</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, April 20&lt;br&gt;Wednesday, April 22</td>
<td>Revisit a previous reading, for which there was no weekly writing assignment (Jones, McNamara, <em>Serial</em>, Barnhart, or Kaminsky)</td>
<td>Weekly Writing #9: Jones, McNamara, <em>Serial</em>, Barnhart, or Kaminsky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17) Portfolio/Capstone</strong>&lt;br&gt;Monday, April 27</td>
<td>Last week of classes, no reading assignment</td>
<td>Revision Portfolio or Capstone Project Due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creative Writing Events

**Tuesday, January 28, 2020**  
*Heather Christle, poet*  
Joseph W. Jones Room  
311 Woodruff Library  
Emory University  
Atlanta, GA  
6 PM

Reading, signing, and reception.

**Saturday, February 1, 2020**  
*Dr. Daniel Banks, DNAWORKS*  
Townsend Center’s Black Box Theater  
University of West Georgia  
Carrollton, GA  
7 PM

Staged reading of Toni Morrison’s *Dreaming Emmett*.

**Friday, February 7, 2020**  
*Josephine Yu & Tanya Grae (New South)*  
JavaVino  
579 N. Highland Ave.  
Atlanta, GA  
7 PM

Reading and signing.

**Tuesday, February 18, 2020**  
*Katie Condon (poet) & Josh Wilder (playwright)*  
Joseph W. Jones Room  
311 Woodruff Library  
Emory University  
Atlanta, GA  
6:30 PM

Reading, signing, and reception.

**Friday, February 28, 2020**  
*Ilya Kaminsky, Katie Faris, & Greg Emilio (New South)*  
JavaVino
579 N. Highland Ave.
Atlanta, GA
7 PM

Reading and signing.

Tuesday, March 3, 2020
Graham Barnhart (poet)
Kathy Cashen Auditorium
University of West Georgia
Atlanta, GA
6 PM

Reading and signing.

Thursday, March 19, 2020
Jim Grimsley (playwright)
Joseph W. Jones Room
311 Woodruff Library
Emory University
Atlanta, GA
6:30 PM

Reading, signing, and reception.

Thursday, April 9, 2020
Toi Derricotte (poet)
Kathy Cashen Auditorium
University of West Georgia
Atlanta, GA
6 PM

Reading and signing.

Wednesday, April 15, 2020
Tayari Jones (novelist)
Campus Center Ballroom
University of West Georgia
Atlanta, GA
7 PM

Reading and signing.