ENGL 4381: Flash Fiction and Prose Poems  
MTWRF 9 am – noon. Academic 015  
Laurence Musgrove  Imusgrove@angelo.edu  
Office hours: by appointment  Office: Academic 010

4381 Special Topics – (3-0). Selected topics in English. (May be repeated once for credit when topic varies.)

Topic for this Course – Flash Fiction and Prose Poems. This course will survey two genres of brevity - flash fiction and prose poems. Students will read and analyze selections, and they will compose their own examples to better understand the genre conventions required of brief narratives and of poems written without the expected line breaks, but containing the characteristics of poetry.

Learning Goals
Upon completing this course, students should be able to
1. reflect upon and develop their reading expectations and practices,
2. identify and explain the conventional narrative elements of flash fiction,
3. identify and explain the conventional poetics of prose poems,
4. perform literary analysis of flash fiction and prose poems,
5. compose examples of flash fiction and prose poems.

Text
•  Brevity: A Flash Fiction Handbook, David Galef

List of Required Assignments with Grade Value
1. Initial Reflection (5%)  6. Final Reflection (10%)
2. Analysis Diagnostic (0%)  7. Final Analysis (10%)
3. Midterm Reflection (10%)  8. Submission to Class Publication and Flash Fiction Journal/Contest (5%)
4. Midterm Analysis (10%)  
5. Daily Exercises (50%)  

SOME OTHER ISSUES

Absences – Given the brief and compressed nature of this class, each three-hour class meeting will include three 50-minute class periods. Being absent for six class periods will result in failure. Late work will not be accepted under any circumstances. All assignments must be submitted to receive a passing grade. No incompletes will be given.

Personal Emergencies – Given my experience, I know that sometimes things fall apart. If you encounter a personal tragedy or some emotional distress that causes you to miss classes, get in touch with me as soon as you can. I don’t need all of the details, but at least I’ll know you haven’t dropped the class or been eaten by a bear.

Academic Honesty - All work composed for this class must be written exclusively for this class and be your original work. You may of course receive assistance on your writing, but submitting someone else’s work as your own or failing to acknowledge sources appropriately will be grounds for plagiarism. Violations of academic honesty and plagiarism will result in immediate failure of this class. You are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is available on the web at http://www.angelo.edu/forms/pdf/Honor_Code.pdf.

Special Requirements: Persons with disabilities who may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office in order to request such accommodations prior to any being implemented. You are encouraged to make this request early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made. For more information, see https://www.angelo.edu/services/disability-services/

Student Absence for Observance of Religious Holy Days
If you intend to be absent from class to observe a religious holy day, you should make that intention known in writing to me prior to the absence.
Initial Reflection

Your purpose in this assignment is to describe the degree to which you feel confident in your abilities to read, understand, appreciate, and analyze literature in all genres.

You will author a sufficiently focused, organized, developed, correct, and stylistically appropriate brief composition in the form of a multi-paragraph essay between 500 and 600 words from a third-person narrative perspective for an audience of your classmates and professor.

This essay should have an original title, use MLA document formatting, and a chronological sense of a beginning, middle, and end.

In other words, you will tell a brief story of yourself as a reader and the experiences that have led to your overall confidence in literary study.

However, because you will tell it from a third-person perspective, you will be writing about yourself from a more objective point-of-view, referring to yourself by name and related third-person-singular pronouns, such as he or she, him and her.
Midterm Reflection

Your purpose in this assignment is to describe the degree to which you feel confident in your abilities to read, understand, appreciate, and analyze flash fiction.

You will author a sufficiently focused, organized, developed, correct, and stylistically appropriate brief composition in the form of a multi-paragraph essay between 900 and 1000 words from a third-person narrative perspective for an audience of your classmates and professor.

This essay should have an original title, use MLA document formatting, and a chronological sense of a beginning, middle, and end.

In other words, you will tell a brief story of yourself as a reader so far this term recounting what you learned about (1) the special genre requirements of flash fiction and (2) the specific experiences in (a) reading and (b) writing flash fiction that have led to your overall confidence in literary study of flash fiction.

However, because you will tell it from a third-person perspective, you will be writing about yourself from a more objective point-of-view, referring to yourself by name and related third-person-singular pronouns, such as he or she, him and her.
Final Reflection

Your **purpose** in this assignment is to describe the degree to which you feel upon completing this class confident in your abilities to read, understand, appreciate, and analyze flash fiction and prose poems.

You will **author** a sufficiently focused, organized, developed, correct, and stylistically appropriate brief composition in the **form** of a multi-paragraph essay between 900 and 1000 words from a **third-person narrative perspective** for an **audience** of your classmates and professor.

This essay should have an original title, use MLA document formatting, and a chronological sense of a beginning, middle, and end.

In other words, you will tell a brief story of yourself as a reader is the second half of this term recounting what you learned about (1) the **special genre requirements of (a) flash fiction and (b) prose poems** and (2) the **specific experiences in (a) reading and (b) writing flash fiction and prose poems** that have led to your overall confidence in literary study of flash fiction and prose poems.

However, because you will tell it from a third-person perspective, you will be writing about yourself from a more objective point-of-view, referring to yourself by name and related third-person-singular pronouns, such as he or she, him and her.
Creating Titles

1. Copy out of your draft a sentence that could serve as a title.
2. Write a title that is a question beginning with What, Who, When, or Where. (Where Do Titles Come From?)
3. Write a title that is a question beginning with How or Why. (Why Are Titles Necessary?)
4. Write a title that is a question beginning with Is/Are, Do/Does, or Will. (Are Some Titles Better Than Others?)
5. Pick out of the draft some concrete image – something the reader can hear, see, taste, smell, or feel – to use as a title.
6. Pick another concrete image out of the draft. Look for an image that is a bit unusual or surprising.
7. Writing a title that begins with an –ing verb (Creating a Good Title).
8. Writing a title beginning with On (On Creating Good Titles).
9. Write a title that is a lie about the draft. (You probably won’t use this one, but it might stimulate your thinking.)
10. Write a one-word title – the most obvious one possible.
11. Write a less obvious one-word title.
12. Think of a familiar saying, or the title of a book, song, or movie, that might fit your draft.
13. Take the title you just wrote and twist it by changing a word or creating a pun on it.
14. Find two titles you’ve written so far that you might use together in a double title. Join them together with a colon.

from “Twenty Titles for the Writer” by Richard Leahy, College Composition and Communication, Vol. 43, No. 4, December 1992
### Essay Evaluation Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 10    | an excellent essay | - a clear aim, a strong introduction, and a thoughtful conclusion  
- strong supporting details  
- logically developed and very well organized  
- a tone appropriate to the aim of the essay  
- stylistic maturity and confident facility with language as demonstrated by sentence variety and appropriate word choice  
- virtually free of surface and usage errors |
| 8     | a good essay | - a clear aim and a strong introduction and conclusion  
- good supporting details  
- logically developed and well organized  
- a tone appropriate to the aim of the essay  
- lacks the stylistic maturity and facility with language of an A essay  
- largely free of surface and usage errors |
| 6     | an acceptable essay | - a clear aim, an introduction, and a conclusion  
- adequate supporting details  
- competence in logical development and organization, although it may exhibit occasional organizational and developmental weakness  
- a tone appropriate to the aim of the essay  
- basic competence in sentence variety and word choice  
- a pattern of surface and usage errors |
| 4     | a poor essay | - lack of a clear aim, focus, or conclusion  
- lack of sufficient support  
- supporting details may be trivial, inappropriate, logically flawed  
- flaws in organization/development  
- inappropriate tone  
- stylistic flaws characterized by lack of sentence variety and by evidence of limited vocabulary  
- frequent usage or surface errors |
| 2     | an unacceptable essay | - focus may be too general or too specific  
- lack of support  
- lack of organization  
- inappropriate tone  
- serious stylistic flaws  
- serious usage or surface errors |
| 0     | No evaluation | Essays receiving no grade will  
- fail to address the topic or assignment,  
- fail to fulfill other requirements of the assignment,  
- show evidence of plagiarism,  
- or fail to be accompanied by previous drafts. |
### Grade Equivalencies for Flash Fiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Story Quality</th>
<th>Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5 | an excellent story | - Very creative title related to the story’s significance or theme  
- Excellent use of vivid description and analogy to describe scene, action, and character  
- Excellent use of dialogue to convey character and emotion  
- Consistent pattern of narrative perspective  
- Dramatic tension is effectively described and developed  
- No usage or spelling errors  
- Effective use of concision and meets word count |
| 4 | a good story | - Creative title related to the story’s significance or theme  
- Good use of description and analogy to describe scene, action, and character  
- Good use of dialogue to convey character and emotion  
- Consistent pattern of narrative perspective  
- Dramatic tension is effectively described and developed  
- A stray typo in usage or spelling  
- Use of concision evident and meets word count |
| 3 | an acceptable story | - Title related to the story’s significance or theme  
- Responds to the assignment with interest  
- Good use of dialogue to convey character and emotion  
- Consistent pattern of narrative perspective, but narrative may tend to tell and explain events rather than show characters in action  
- Description, characterization, and action may be clichéd  
- More than one usage or spelling error  
- Fails to list or meet word count |
| 2 | a poor story | - Indifferent or perfunctory title or response to the assignment  
- Dialogue fails to convey character and emotion  
- Inconsistent pattern of narrative perspective, and narrative tends to tell and explain events rather than show characters in action  
- Description, characterization, and action may be clichéd  
- More than one usage or spelling error reveals failure to proofread and edit carefully  
- Fails to list or meet word count |
| 1 | an unacceptable story | - Indifferent or perfunctory title and response to the assignment  
- Little or no evidence of dialogue to convey character and emotion  
- No pattern of narrative perspective  
- Description, characterization, and action obviously clichéd  
- More than one usage or spelling error  
- Story is not typed  
- Fails to list or meet word count |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>an excellent poem</td>
<td>• Very creative title related to the poem’s emotional significance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Very creative response to the assignment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Excellent use of setting, imagery, and rhythm to convey emotion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal considerations contribute to expression in creative ways (rhythm, internal rhyme, word choice, assonance, consonance, figurative language, syntax, punctuation)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Excellent use of poetic analogy (such as simile and metaphor)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• No usage or spelling errors</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Meets word limit</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>a good poem</td>
<td>• Creative title related to the poem’s emotional significance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Creative response to the assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Good use of setting, imagery, and rhythm to convey emotion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal considerations support expression in interesting ways (rhythm, internal rhyme, word choice, assonance, consonance, figurative language, syntax, punctuation)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Good use of poetic analogy (such as simile and metaphor)</td>
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<td>• One stray typo in usage or spelling</td>
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<td>• Meets word limit</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>an acceptable poem</td>
<td>• Title related to the poem’s emotional significance</td>
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<td>• Responds to the assignment with interest</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Evidence of setting, imagery, and rhythm to convey emotion, but tends toward abstraction rather than portraying experience</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Formal considerations may support expression in some way (rhythm, word choice, assonance, consonance, figurative language, syntax, punctuation)</td>
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<td>• Poetic analogy (such as simile and metaphor) may be present, but tends toward cliché</td>
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<td>• More than one usage or spelling error</td>
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<td>• May not meet word limit</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>a poor poem</td>
<td>• Indifferent or perfunctory response to the assignment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Little evidence of setting, imagery, and rhythm to indicate emotion</td>
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<td>• Structure fails to supports expression (rhythm, word choice, assonance, consonance, figurative language, syntax, punctuation)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Analogy is absent or clichéd</td>
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<td>• More than one usage or spelling error</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Does not meet word limit</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>an unacceptable poem</td>
<td>• Indifferent or perfunctory response to the assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• No evidence of setting, imagery, and rhythm to indicate emotion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• No evidence of poetic structure (line length/break, stanza form/break, rhythm, rhyme, word choice, assonance, consonance, figurative language, punctuation)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Analogy is absent or clichéd</td>
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<td>• More than one usage or spelling error</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Poem is not typed</td>
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<td>• Does not meet word limit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Tentative Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>First Period 9-9:50</th>
<th>Second Period 10-10:50</th>
<th>Third Period 11-11:50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, May 13</td>
<td>A Short Introduction</td>
<td>Initial Reflection</td>
<td>Analysis Diagnostic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 14</td>
<td>Vignettes</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 300-500 words</td>
<td>Readings and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 15</td>
<td>Character Sketches</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 300-500 words</td>
<td>Readings and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, May 16</td>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 400-600 words</td>
<td>Readings and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, May 17</td>
<td>Diary Entries</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 400-600 words</td>
<td>Readings and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, May 20</td>
<td>Lists</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 500-700 words</td>
<td>Readings and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 21</td>
<td>Fables</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 500-700 words</td>
<td>Readings and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 22</td>
<td>Midterm Analysis</td>
<td>Midterm Analysis</td>
<td>Midterm Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, May 23</td>
<td>Prose Poems</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 200-300 words</td>
<td>Readings and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, May 24</td>
<td>Prose Poems</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 300-400 words</td>
<td>Readings and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, May 27</td>
<td>No Class</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 300-500 words</td>
<td>No Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, May 28</td>
<td>Intermission/Revision</td>
<td>Intermission/Revision</td>
<td>Intermission/Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, May 29</td>
<td>Surrealism</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 300-500 words</td>
<td>Readings and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, May 30</td>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Daily Practice, 300-500 words</td>
<td>Readings and Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, May 31</td>
<td>Final Analysis</td>
<td>Final Analysis</td>
<td>Final Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic Performance Agreement

English 4381
Musgrove

In order to make the requirements of this class and your responsibilities as a student as clear as possible, I've created this document titled “Academic Performance Agreement.” Please read this information carefully because it outlines the kinds of behaviors, study habits, and attitudes necessary for success in this class, as well as in the University writing community at large. If you agree to the terms and conditions set forth below, please sign your name on one of the two copies I've provided you. By signing and returning this agreement to me, you commit yourself to the standards of conduct and academic performance listed below.

1. I understand that attendance is a requirement of the class and that 6 class period absences of any sort will result in automatic failure. I also understand that if I miss class that I should contact another student to discover what I've missed.
2. If I miss more than one class in sequence, I will contact the professor to let him know the reasons for my absences.
3. I understand that arriving late to class is inappropriate because it disrupts the class. I understand that the instructor will shut the door to the classroom when the class starts and that I will not attempt to enter the class after the door has been closed.
4. I understand that cell phones must be turned off before entering class. I understand if my cell phone rings during class I will be asked to leave the class.
5. I understand that this class has substantial reading and writing requirements. These requirements will demand that I manage my time carefully and schedule at least 6 hours of study time per week or 2 hours of study time for every one hour of scheduled class time.
6. I understand that I should be prepared each day to bring the text under discussion with me to class.
7. I understand that I should be prepared each day to share my responses to the reading assignments in class.
8. I understand that I will be required to contribute to class discussions and small group work in class. In other words, I will be required to speak in class, share my ideas, and respect the ideas of others.
9. I understand that any writing I submit must be my own and written exclusively for this class.
10. I understand that when I use the ideas of others in my writing that I must let my readers know whose ideas are whose and where I found them. I understand that plagiarism (or the failure to acknowledge the ideas of others appropriately) is a form of academic dishonesty and will result in failure.
11. I understand that I will benefit from discussing my ideas and writing with my family, friends, and other students. I also understand that I can get help with my ideas and writing in the Writing Center. However, I also understand that I should never claim someone else’s ideas or writing as my own.
12. I understand that I must adhere to the due dates for all writing assignments because late work will not be accepted or penalized, at the discretion of the instructor.
13. I understand that I should think of writing as a complex process of planning, drafting, revising, editing, and presentation. Consequently, I understand that I should schedule time to complete each of these tasks before submitting my work.
14. I understand that I can make an appointment with my instructor to talk about any aspect of the class, including course assignments, my writing, the required reading, extended absences or comments and grades on my writing.

I intend to fulfill the requirements for a ________ grade in this class.
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English 4381
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I intend to fulfill the requirements for a ________ grade in this class.

Student Signature _______________________________________ Date _________________________