

English 2341: Forms of Literature  
TuTh 9:30-10:45 | Academic Building 013  
Spring 2022



Consider the act of creative writing as one of building “imaginary gardens with real toads in them,” a line penned by the poet Marianne Moore.

**Instructor :** Dr. Rebecca Bernard (she/her/hers)

**Email:** rebecca.bernard@angelo.edu

**Phone:** 325-486-6142

**Office Location:** Academic Building 039C

**Office Hours:** MW: 1-3; T/R: 11-12; 2-4; or by appointment

(If these times do not work with your schedule, we can schedule an appointment on a day and at a time convenient for both of us.)

#### COURSE GOALS & DESCRIPTION:

This course serves as an introduction to the world of creative writing in the genres of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. Through discussion and workshop, we will study the modes and techniques of each respective genre. The primary goal for this course is that you will gain an understanding of the ways in which writers explore and articulate their experiences of the larger world, not only through studying the range of technical and expressive possibilities available in creative writing, but also by putting those techniques to use as you craft and revise your own pieces.

#### COURSE PHILOSOPHY & OVERARCHING QUESTIONS:

How is creative writing different from other kinds of writing that we do in the University? How is it similar? What is a poem? What makes nonfiction different from fiction? What are the traits and characteristics of great, engaging nonfiction/poetry/fiction? What do we learn about ourselves and the art form as we actively participate in it? Why do we write creatively—what does a deeper engagement with words require of us and, in turn, give back to us? What we can learn from published authors and poets?

#### REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS:

- There is no textbook for this class.
- Writing journal/notebook & writing utensils
- An ASU email account & access to Blackboard
- Course readings: I will provide you with these in hard copy or on Blackboard

#### COURSE EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Over the course of the semester you will be graded on the following assignments/tasks:

Item	Points
Poem	10
Fiction Story	10
Nonfiction Essay	10
Written Responses to Peer Work	20
Creative Exercises	10
Discussion Posts	20
In-Person Reading Response	5
Portfolio Revision	15

<i>Course Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>A</b>	90-100%
<b>B</b>	80-89%
<b>C</b>	70-79%
<b>D</b>	60-69%
<b>F</b>	59% and below

### **Creative Work**

In this class, you will write one poem, one fiction story, and one nonfiction essay. These will often be expansions of our shorter exercises. We will be working in the ‘flash’ form for the essays and stories, meaning they will be shorter in length, 750-1500 words. You will receive detailed instructions prior to each due date. Work will be graded on completion. I am giving you the opportunity to workshop in each genre because we can learn not only from the published works we read, but equally from experimentation and through trial and error. In writing, we learn by doing. Workshop allows us to see what’s working in our writing, and what needs additional time and revision. By discussing work with the class, we will begin to practice applying our discussions of craft to works in progress.

In each of the three units of this course, we will discuss at length what makes a “successful” poem, story, or essay. We will read diversely in each genre and look at essays that speak to each genre’s unique elements of craft.

We will sign up for workshop times toward the beginning of each unit. You will be responsible for providing copies of your poems. You must post your stories and essays on Blackboard by the listed date and time so that I may make copies for the class and distribute them beforehand. Your peers will then have time to read your piece and make written comments.

### **Written Responses to Peer Work**

You are asked to read each of your peers’ creative works at least **twice** and then submit a typed, considered letter of feedback for each workshopped work. Length requirement is **150-200 words** minimum. We will discuss the content of these letters, but in general, you should use this as a chance to do three things: highlight one thing you liked, offer a one-sentence statement of what you believe the piece was getting at, and highlight the most important issues the writer should address in revision. These issues might be questions you had, or confusions within the piece. (For the poetry unit, you may handwrite your note, legibly, on the poem itself, along with any line notes you might have). Taking each other’s work seriously is the bedrock of this class. **Do not critique one another’s grammar.**

Many or most of you will be beginning writers and may feel uncomfortable critiquing the work of others at first. But even the most inexperienced writer can be instrumental in providing feedback—we are all readers, we have all read at least some nonfiction, poetry, or fiction, and more importantly, we are all human beings with the ability to be moved, irritated, confused, delighted, and stunned. Your emotional and intellectual responses as people are valuable. We'll discuss the workshop setting in more detail during the semester.

**In-Class Participation & Discussion Posts:** In our course, participation is crucial to both class discussion and workshop. To this end, prior to each non-workshop class, you will address a question related to the assigned readings on an online discussion board in Canvas. We will use these comments to help generate our in-class discussions of the materials. Posts will be short, **100-200 words in length**. There aren't wrong answers for your posts, but I want you thinking, and I want you reading closely.

A good discussion, like a good workshop, isn't dominated by a few voices, but is an egalitarian conversation where everyone's voice matters equally. Respect goes without saying, both of one another's work, but also of the published works we read for class.

### **Creative Exercises**

For each unit, you will complete a number of short experiments, practicing the craft rules we discuss, and playing around with each genre. These are low stakes opportunities to experiment with the ideas we discuss in the craft essays and the published works we read. Each week, you'll have the chance to share your work in small groups, to prepare for the experience of workshop. Exercises will include activities like playing with images and line breaks, inventing characters, or taking a lived experience and translating it among the genres. I encourage you to transform these exercises into your 'workshop' pieces. All work will be graded on completion. This writing space is a way for you to explore your own creative inclinations, to brainstorm creative works and to develop potential starts for longer works. Many writers keep small notebooks to record their passing observations and ideas, and so I encourage you to keep a notebook throughout the semester that reflects your singular view of the world.

**In-Person Reading Response:** On March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, ASU hosts the annual Elmer Kelton Writer's Conference. During this event, there's a key-note speaker (this year poet, Naomi Shihab Nye) and there will be readings from eighteen other contemporary writers. In lieu of class on Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, I ask that you attend a reading of your choice. I will give you the schedule ahead of time, and you may attend the reading that best fits your schedule. You will then write a short, creative or critical response to any aspect of the reading that you attended. What does it mean to watch contemporary writers share their work? Were you inspired? Your response can take any form.

### **Final Portfolio**

As your final grade in this class, you will submit a portfolio comprised of significant revisions of one genre of work you turned in for a grade during the year. The revisions should take into account both the critiques and workshop discussions of your classmates and my written and verbal comments, though keeping in mind that ultimately the piece is your work. You will also include a one-page, double-spaced explanation of your revision choices. This should be holistic rather than a line for line account. Finally, I would like one expansion based off of an in-class writing prompt. This could be a poem, a piece of flash writing, whatever you choose, but something that you decided to continue working on after the in-class writing ended.

## GENERAL POLICIES FOR STUDENTS:

**Absence & Tardiness Policy:** Given the discussion-based focus of our course, attendance is crucial to success. I will keep track of attendance each class and missing more than three classes will begin to impact your grade. There is a clear connection between students attending class and doing well on assignments, so please make it your aim to be present. Life happens, I understand this, so keeping me aware of anything that might get in the way of your attendance or timely completion of assignments will help me help you. Three tardies counts as an absence. Consider attending class as a job, you want to be prepared and on time.

**Class Behavior and Etiquette:** I expect everyone to be respectful of one another's work and time. Sharing one's work is an exercise in trust, and we will act accordingly, both by reading each work carefully and by treating one another with dignity and respect. Defensiveness, close-mindedness, bigotry of any kind, and rudeness will not be tolerated. Listen to one another. We have all had different life experiences and we come from different backgrounds, therefore, even though you might believe your experiences are universal, they are in fact your experiences. We learn by listening critically, and believing other's stories of their lives. In this class, we value empathy, the ability to understand and value/share the feelings of another.

**Makeup/Late Assignment Policy:** The main issue with late work is that I don't want anyone to fall behind, and I want you to be able to participate fully in the class discussions and in-class writing time. Consistent late work will affect your grade. If you're absent, check Blackboard. I post everything to Blackboard prior to the start of class, so there's never a reason not to know what took place during a session you missed. Most importantly, I'm a resource for you, so don't be shy about reaching out if you need more time or if something has come up in your life outside class.

**Electronics:** Please keep cellphones on silent and laptops closed during class time. This is a class focused around our ability to share ideas and work with one another and electronics will only impede said interaction. If you must, for some reason, have an electronic device, please make special provisions with me beforehand. If you need to have your cellphone on for emergency purposes, please keep it on vibrate and let me know if there are extenuating circumstances.

**Email:** Please check your ASU email regularly. This is how I will communicate with you. Please always email me from your school email and not your personal email. This is important for FERPA considerations. Please also check Blackboard frequently. If you ever miss class, check Blackboard to see what we covered and what you might have missed.

**Software:** You will submit all homework and writing assignment responses through Blackboard. All assignments must be submitted in Microsoft Word format. You cannot upload links to Google Docs within Blackboard. As an ASU student, you have **free access** to [Office 365](#), which includes MS Word. Visit the Office 365 website and log in with your ASU email and password. You can download the software onto your computer or compose and save writing within the site's cloud-based storage. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to download some reading assignments and other course materials. Likewise, I encourage each of you to get in the habit of using One Drive (through Outlook) or GoogleDocs or DropBox, or any file sharing service so all your materials are available to you anywhere (helpful for our lab work days).

**Technical Support:** If you are having technical issues with Blackboard, contact technical support one of the following ways: 325-942-2911 or toll free at 1-866-942-2911

Any course content-related questions should be directed toward me.

**Office Hours:** I want to talk to you about your writing. Please, don't be shy and feel free to make an appointment to discuss your work with me at any point in the semester. If my scheduled hours don't work, please email me and we can set up a time to meet.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**Title IX:** The University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other types of Sexual Misconduct. Sexual Misconduct is a broad term encompassing all forms of gender-based harassment or discrimination including: sexual assault, sex-based discrimination, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, public indecency, interpersonal violence (domestic violence and/or dating violence), and stalking. As a faculty member, I am a Responsible Employee, meaning I am obligated by law and ASU policy to report any allegations I am notified of to the Office of Title IX Compliance.

Students are encouraged to report any incidents of sexual misconduct directly to ASU's Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator:

Michelle Miller, J.D.  
Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator  
Mayer Administration Building, Room 210  
325-486-6357  
michelle.miller@angelo.edu

You may also file a report online 24/7 at [www.angelo.edu/incident-form](http://www.angelo.edu/incident-form).

If you wish to speak to someone about an incident in confidence, you may contact the University Health Clinic and Counseling Center at 325-942-2173 or the ASU Crisis Helpline at 325-486-6345.

For more information about Title IX in general, you may visit [www.angelo.edu/title-ix](http://www.angelo.edu/title-ix).

**Accommodation Statement:** If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class or complete course requirements, contact the Student Affairs Office as soon as possible at 325-942-2047 or [studentservices@angelo.edu](mailto:studentservices@angelo.edu). It is located in the Houston Harte University Center, Suite 112. To receive any academic accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with Student Affairs. Student Affairs works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission.

**Plagiarism Policy:** Plagiarism is a type of academic dishonesty. It occurs when writers deliberately use another person's language, ideas, or materials and present them as their own without properly acknowledging the source.

### *Types of Plagiarism*

Plagiarism can include any of the following:

- Failing to quote material taken from another source,
- Failing to cite material taken from another source,
- Submitting writing that was written by another person **or for another class** (even if it was for a 1301 course you took and dropped), and
- Submitting writing that was substantially edited by another person.

### *Procedures for Handling Plagiarism Cases*

If an instructor thinks a student may have plagiarized, they will follow these steps:

- Meet privately with the student to discuss the assignment in question and the evidence of plagiarism,
- Identify the appropriate consequence, and
- File a report with the Office of Student Services.

### *Possible Consequences*

The instructor and the English Department Chair decide the academic consequence to be imposed, depending on the seriousness of the violation. Sanctions include the following:

- Adequately redo or revise the assignment in question,
- Fail the assignment in question,
- Fail the class, or
- Be subject to more severe sanctions imposed by the Dean of Students.

All students suspected of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Services, who maintains a file of past plagiarism cases. The [ASU Student Handbook](#) further elaborates ASU's Academic Integrity policy.

**Observances of Religious Holidays:** A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within what the instructor deems a reasonable time after the absence.

**Writing Center Information:** The Writing Center is an academic support service available to all ASU students. Peer tutors help experienced and inexperienced writers with all steps of the writing process: locating an angle, writing a thesis, organizing ideas, developing paragraphs, locating grammar and punctuation errors, documenting sources, etc.; however, tutors **do not edit or proofread papers**. To learn more about their services, visit the Writing Center's [website](#).

## CLASS SCHEDULE

(Subject to change)

(The reading indicated is what is due that day and what we will be discussing in class. Links to the readings will be posted on Canvas or copies will be distributed in class)

\*On Workshop days, I will alternate between bringing in an additional poem/flash prose piece or a short writing exercise.

Week	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Assignments Due
Week 1	Tuesday Jan. 18	Syllabus & Introductions: Why Write?	“Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid; “Self-portrait on Pop Rocks” by Sarah Carson; It Happens Like This” by James Tate	
	Thursday Jan. 20	Point of View aka Look Who’s Talking	“Jesus Saves” by Rion Amilcar Scott; “Woman Hollering Creek” by Sandra Cisneros;	
Week 2	Tuesday Jan. 25	Character AKA The Good, the Bad, Ideally some Ugly	“Butter” by Eve Gleichman; “The Red Convertible” by Louise Erdrich	
	Thursday Jan. 27	Scene and Description aka Show Versus Tell	“Pet Milk” by Stuart Dybek; “Mami’s Gone, Let’s Ditch the Babysitter” by Aureleo Sans	
Week 3	Tuesday Feb. 1	Plot aka What Happens	“Brownies” by ZZ Packer	
	Thursday Feb. 3	Dialogue aka He/She/They Said	“What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” by Raymond Carver	Stories Due by Monday, Feb. 7 <sup>th</sup> by end of day through Blackboard
Week 4	Tuesday Feb. 8	Playing with Genre aka Everyone’s a Merman	“Haunt” by Carmen Maria Machado; “What’s Expected of Us” by Ted Chiang; TBD story	
	Thursday Feb. 10	Fiction Workshop 1	Student Stories	
Week 5	Tuesday Feb. 15	Fiction Workshop 2	Student Stories	

	Thursday Feb. 17	Fiction Workshop 3	Student Stories	
Week 6	Tuesday Feb. 22	What is a poem? Concrete/Abstract Language	Matthew Zapruder, “Understanding Poetry is More Straightforward Than You Think”; James Wright, “A Blessing”; Brigid Pegeen Kelly, “Song”; Kim Addonizio, “To the Woman Crying Uncontrollably in the Next Stall”	
	Thursday Feb. 24	Imagery	Rebecca Hazelton, “Learning About Figurative Language”; Ezra Pound, “In A Station of the Metro”; Ada Limón, “How to Triumph Like a Girl”; Danez Smith, “juxtaposing the black boy & the bullet”; “Ink” by Melissa Cundieff	
Week 7	Tuesday March 1	Voice	Richard Hugo, “Writing off the Subject”; Audre Lord, “Hanging Fire”; Dorianne Laux, “Facts About the Moon”; Terrance Hayes, “sonnet for my past and future assassin”	
	Thursday March 3	WRITER’S CONFERENCE	Attend a Reading!	
Week 8	Tuesday March 8	Line Breaks	Dana Gioia, “13 Ways to Think About the Poetic Line”; Eduardo C. Corral, “Border Patrol Agent”; Kevin Young, “Song of Smoke”; “You Can Take Off Your Sweater, I’ve Made	In-Person Reading Response Due

			Today Warm” by Paige Lewis	
	Thursday March 10	Form	Phillip Larkin, “This Be the Verse”; Cortney Lamar Charleston, “Doppelgangbanger”; Don Patterson, “The Lie”; Sara Borjas, “Lies I tell”	Workshop 1 poems due by Thursday, March 17 <sup>th</sup> via Blackboard
Week 9	Tuesday March 15	SPRING BREAK		
	Thursday March 17	SPRING BREAK		Workshop 2 poems due by Monday, March 21 <sup>st</sup> via blackboard
Week 10	Tuesday March 22	Poetry Workshop Group 1	Student Poems	
	Thursday March 24	AWP Conference		
Week 11	Tuesday March 29	Poetry Workshop Group 2	Student Poems	
	Thursday March 31	Persona & Character	Phillip Lopate, “On the Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character”; Jaquira Díaz, “Girl Hood: On (Not) Finding Yourself in Books”; “The Men from Town” by Ryan Van Meter; “Beach City” by Jaquira Díaz	
Week 12	Tuesday April 5	How to Tell a True Story	“A Letter to Eric” by Jessica Hendry Nelson; “Running into My Dead Mother at 7-Eleven” by Jill Talbot	
	Thursday April 7	Detail & Scene	“Bear Fragments” by Christine Bly; “Notes on a Native Son” by James Baldwin	
Week 13	Tuesday April 12	Form & Fragmentation	Lori Jakiela, “Holy”; Sean Thomas Dougherty, “Toledo, Ohio 1977”; “Son of Mr. Green Jeans” by Dinty W. Moore;	Workshop Essays due by Wednesday, April 13 <sup>th</sup> by end of day via Blackboard

			“Post-Mortem” by Traci Brimhall	
	Thursday April 14	Research & Truth	“A Plumb, Falling” by LaTanya McQueen; B. J. Hollars, “Death by Refrigerator”	
Week 14	Tuesday April 19	CNF Workshop 1	Student Essays	
	Thursday April 21	CNF Workshop 2	Student Essays	
Week 15	Tuesday April 26	CNF Workshop 3	Student Essays	
	Thursday April 28	Revision Workshop	TBD	
Week 16	Tuesday May 3	Farewells & Wordplay	TBD	
	Thursday May 5			Final Portfolio Due through Canvas on Monday, May 9 <sup>th</sup> by end of day via Blackboard

\*Final Exam (not observed) Scheduled Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup> from 8:00AM-10:00AM