Creative Writing

“In writing classes, if nowhere else, it is entirely permissible to spend large chunks of your time off in your own little dreamworld”

– Stephen King, *On Writing*

Dr. Joshua Myers Fall 2024

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**Office Hours:** **M** 11-12 **&** 3-4; **W** 11-12; **TH** 8-10 **&** 1-4; **F** 8-9 **&** 11-12.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

*“Students in this one semester class write poetry, short stories, plays, and creative non-fiction with opportunities for oral participation. The concept of manipulation of language to convey ideas, feelings, moods, and visual images is the basis of the course. The students become familiar with the standard literary elements through the reading and study of published prose and poetry and are taught to use those elements in their own writing. They learn strategies for evaluating their own writing and the writing of others. Students who are interested in an audience for their creative work and suggestions for improvement and development of their literary styles are encouraged to sign up for this course.”* – Indiana Academy Course Catalog

Moreover, this course is intended to help students transition from thinking of creative writing as just a hobby or entertainment to instead fully understanding the cultural and societal importance of writing in the hopes that they will better value, and may decide to pursue, creative endeavors beyond the classroom. Students will, through exciting exercises and activities that guide and intrigue, have opportunities to write in a variety of forms so that they develop a familiarity with each, ultimately discovering the writing that is best suited to their individual strengths and goals.

LEARNING OUTCOMES & GOALS

* Have students compose unique, creative works across genres and styles.
* Guide students through processes of peer review, workshopping, revision, and editing.
* Enhance students’ critical thinking abilities through careful reading and thoughtful analysis.
* Introduce students to the basics of the publishing industry and a diverse variety of writing careers.
* Prepare materials for future writing development.

REQUIRED TEXTS & SUPPLIES

* *Three Genres: The Writing of Poetry, Fiction, and Drama by Stephen Minot*
* Occasional short readings will be provided to students by the instructor.
* Notebook and a writing implement (pencil, pen, etc.)

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Participation 10%

(graded monthly, see next page for specifics)

In-Class Activities & Writings/Reading Quizzes 15%

(several – agglomerate score)

Poetry/Lyricism Portfolio 20%

(folder of three lyrical compositions)

Prose – Fiction Portfolio 20%

(folder of three stories – realistic, genre, experimental)

Drama/Screenplay 25%

(one dramatic writing)

Final Publication Portfolio 10%

(containing bio, cover letter, and revised piece)

**Grade Scale:** A (95-100%); A – (90-94%); B+ (87-89%); B (83-86%); B – (80-82%); C+ (77-79%); C (73-76%); C – (70-72%); D (69% and below)

* **Assignment sheets with specific graded instructions and requirements for each project will be made available at the appropriate time during the semester.**
* **You will have plenty of time to complete all assignments and plenty of opportunity to receive assistance from me. Thus, there are no re-writes/revisions of an assignment *after* the grade for that assignment is returned to you – no exceptions!**
* **You can always talk to me about your individual work and progress throughout the semester, so please do not hesitate to reach out. However, if you are having difficulty with any aspect of the assignment then you must please reach out BEFORE you submit the project for a grade (not after).**

EXTENSIONS & LATE WORK POLICY

* **I don’t grant extensions, but I will always except late work with an accompanying loss of points. The amount of missed points ultimately depends on the circumstances AND how late the assignment is. In those situations, I will give the student notification of a specific timetable via email.**
* **If** I decide to extend a deadline, I will make that extension available to the entire class. I do not grant requests for individual extensions.
* **Getting sick or missing class when something is due is NOT a valid excuse for being unable to submit an assignment that you’ve had weeks to complete.**

The *only* exceptions to any aspects of the above policy are cases that have been appropriately documented with the Academy (for example, a family emergency or a severe illness of which the administration has been made aware).

PARTICIPATION GRADING POLICY

In an attempt to be considerate of all personality types – those who feel comfortable talking and those who do not – the following is how I will grade your monthly participation:

* **If you actively participate by contributing to discussion (i.e. you talk):** then you are NOT required to take notes when I tell the class to write something down (though, certainly, I *strongly* recommend and encourage that all students always take notes).
* **If you do not actively contribute to discussion (i.e. you are quiet/shy/not a talker**): then you ARE required to take notes, especially when I tell the class to write something down. ALSO: to compensate for your not talking, you should be visibly attentive with your body language to show that you are actively paying attention (nodding your head, smiling, generally showing that you are aware of what is happening in class).
* Workshopping and peer review are vital to the process of creative writing and, by extension, are therefore key to your success in this class. All students should, as part of their participation grade, be prepared to have their work read by their peers, to read the work of their peers, and to give productive and respective feedback.

**ANY of the following behaviors will result in a loss of participation points for EVERY student (no matter which group, talker or non-talker, that you fall into):**

* Unauthorized use of electronic devices, laptops, or phones. ESPECIALLY blatant phone usage during class, such as texting when you are supposed to be listening – see more about this in the official Indiana Academy Electronic Devices Policy, included later in this syllabus.
* Sleeping/nodding off/laying with your head down, etc.
* Not bringing required copies of rough drafts for workshops
* General refusal to participate (not taking notes, not working with groupmates, ignoring me when I speak to you, etc.)
* General disrespectful attitudes or behavioral problems (note: any such instances will also be documented with Ms. Schultz and, in such an event, she will likely require that you meet with her and other administration).
* More than 2 **un**excused absences during the month. If you’re not in class, you cannot participate.

**Each time you engage in any of the above behaviors, you lose ten points from your monthly participation grade.**

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

* **texting once = – 10**
* **sleeping once = – 10**
* **one day when you refused completely to engage = – 10**
* **3 unexcused absences (1 unexcused absence more than the 2 I permit) = -10**

**EQUALS: a monthly participation grade of 60/100.**

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE POLICY

It is the policy of the Indiana Academy that any absence from class is unexcused, except for illness, death in the family, college or school-related activities, and extenuating circumstances. When a student is absent from a class, the instructor reports the student absence to the Faculty Attendance Coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs. Unless the absence is excused by a school official, it is considered unexcused. The decision as to whether an absence is excused is not determined by the instructor. Four or more unexcused absences in any particular class a student takes will lead to academic and residential consequences to be determined by the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Residential Life that may include detention, residential groundings, parent/principal conference, among others.

MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENT POLICY FOR THIS COURSE

* Makeup work for excused absences that have been documented with the academy are always permitted. The student must talk to the instructor upon their return to receive instructions regarding the make-up process and the schedule of due dates.
* If the absence was unexcused, I still permit a make-up for material missed that day, but I do so with the following strict guidelines:
  + **That the make-up assignment and/or scheduling of a make-up quiz be completed no later than one week from the student’s return.**
  + **Failure to submit any make-up assignment or to complete any make up of missed material within the one-week deadline (one week from the student’s return to class) will result in a zero on the assignment – no excuses!**
* Again, as stated earlier in the grading policy, **there are no re-writes/revisions of an assignment *after* the grade for that assignment is returned to you – no exceptions!**

ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY:

Pursuant to Indiana Code 20-26-5-40.7, The Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities prohibits student use of wireless communication devices for non-instructional purposes in the classroom. As such, any and all portable wireless devices, that have the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties, must only be used for academic purposes directly tied to the classroom activity or related educational task. Exceptions to this wireless device policy are eligible through academic accommodations, individualized education programs, or with instructor approval permitting the use of a wireless device for justification related to health, safety, and/or well-being. The improper use of a wireless device in an active classroom setting is subject to disciplinary action including but not limited to; a verbal warning, temporary seizure of said device by a school official, an unexcused absence for the class in question, written communication to parent/guardian, among other elevated consequences for repeated improper use.

**For this course, specifically, all electronic devices are prohibited unless I have told you in-class that you can use them. You will take your notes with pen and paper – not electronic pad and stylus – and laptop use, phone use, earbuds, etc. are not permitted unless you have academic learning accommodations or except on days when I have specifically told you that you are permitted to use such devices** (for example, if we are having an in-class writing workshop). Non-permitted use of these devices will lower your monthly participation grade, as discussed previously in the participation policy.

E-MAIL POLICY

--- I check my e-mail regularly and often and so should you.

--- My response may not be instantaneous since, like you, I have a life outside of this classroom and other classes. I will always reply as soon as possible, so please be patient.

--- Please feel free to e-mail me anytime, but if you e-mail me after 6 p.m. you probably will not get a response until the next morning.

--- **Considering all of the above, you will ALWAYS get a response within 24 hours. If a full 24 hours go by, and you do not receive an emailed reply from me, then you should resend your e-mail because I did not receive it.** THUS, please be aware that email mishaps are not acceptable excuses for missed work.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

You are responsible for the integrity of your work, and you must produce work that is

academically honest. This means that all your coursework must be your own and must be created specifically for this course. Failing to maintain the integrity of your work can have serious consequences. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the following: submitting someone else’s paper, including papers you obtain online, as your own writing; and, attempting to take credit for someone else’s (or an AI’s) words or ideas without properly citing them. **If you are even remotely uncertain about whether or not any part of your work is academically honest, please contact me for assistance before you submit your work for grading.** Also, please refer to the student handbook for additional information, especially the quoted portions below:

* *Plagiarism: representing as one’s own work any material obtained on the Internet (such as term papers, articles, etc.). When Internet sources are used in student work, the author, publisher and website must be identified. (See policy on Academic Dishonesty in the student handbook.)*
* *Students are prohibited from using any electronic device to capture, record, and/or transmit test, quiz, exam, or other class information or any other information in a manner constituting fraud, theft, cheating, or academic dishonesty and students are prohibited from using electronic devices to receive such information.*
* *Plagiarism or violations of procedures prescribed to protect the integrity of an assignment, such as: a. Submitting an assignment purporting to be one’s original work, which has been wholly or partially created by another person; b. Presenting as one’s own work ideas, representations, or words of another person without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources; c. Submitting as new work, without the faculty member’s prior consent or knowledge, one’s own work which has been previously presented for another class elsewhere; d. Knowingly permitting one’s work to be submitted by another person as if it were the submitter’s original work; e. Cooperation with another person in academic dishonesty, either directly or indirectly, as an intermediary agent or broker; f. Knowingly destroying or altering another’s work, whether in written or digital form, computer files, artwork, or other format; g. Aiding, abetting, or attempting to commit an act or action that constitutes academic dishonesty.*

AI POLICY:  
 From the Humanities Division of the Academy (History, Languages, English):

* *“The Humanities Division recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) provides some exciting new tools for academic work. However, AI also poses significant dangers for academic integrity. Passing off as your own any research, words, or ideas which you did not create is plagiarism. That is always the case whether the source is print, internet content, or generated by AI. It is vital to read the policies your individual humanities instructors have regarding AI, and ask them any questions you may have about the use of AI in their course.”*
  + **On that note, here is my AI policy specifically for this class: it is not permitted. The whole point of creative writing is for you, yourself, to create. Any usage of AI will result in an academic integrity violation.**

To limit your temptation to use AI, much of our writings, especially the smaller one, will be handwritten and composed gradually during classes. These new technologies, alas, seem to require that teachers monitor student work more in order to assess learning.

WRITING & CONTENT POLICY

Writing can be, and often is, a deeply personal process that calls on our most intense experiences. Writing can also be experimental, broadening ourselves through acts of imagination. In this course, I want you to have as much creative freedom as possible, reaching both deep within yourself and wide into the world – because a world where all of our stories are the same would be bland and bleak and, ultimately, counterintuitive to acts of creativity, art, and humanity.

However, writing is not an action that takes place in a void; discourse influences and affects others, and language is one of the most pervasive ways that power is extended and expressed. In other words, writing is an act that should be accompanied by empathy and responsibility. In this course we will aspire to ethical literary production. This means being mindful of reiterating harmful language and malign tropes, as well as showing humility regarding the limitations of our own experience and expression.

**Most importantly, this means being considerate of your classmates when you share your work.** If you have concerns about the sensitivity of the topics you’re writing about, or the situations you're representing, please reach out to me. I promise to be understanding and compassionate and to help you navigate the responsibility of creative freedom. To that end, **please provide content warnings for your material before sharing it with your classmates;** you can never know what effect your words will have, so let’s work to keep each other safe. It’s only when we feel safe and respected, after all, that we can take the important risks necessary to produce art.

RESPECTFUL EXPRESSION POLICY

* Opinions, discussions, and different interpretations are the bedrock of academic study; however, **please participate in a manner that respects the viewpoints of everyone in the class.** i.e., no dismissiveness, name-calling, bullying, or general meanness.
* **Please exercise discretion in what you share in this class**, both in class discussions and in your writing. Stories need to have conflict, but language, by its very nature, can be misunderstood. **Instructors are responsible for reporting any evidence of abuse, neglect, or a student’s possible intent to harm themselves or to harm others**. In creative writing, especially, certain topics can sometimes be tricky to navigate, so **please reach out to me if you ever have any doubts, concerns, or questions about what you want to express.**
* **PLEASE recognize that all feedback you receive from me in this class, including graded comments, is constructive**.
  + I genuinely want to assist your academic progress and professional growth by helping you become better writers and stronger critical thinkers!
  + However, this means that I must hold you accountable to both course requirements and the standards of higher education. Just like learning an instrument, playing a sport, or any other life achievement, you cannot improve unless you confront your mistakes and learn how to fix them.
  + **Additionally, all creative works contain degrees of subjectivity, but this does NOT mean that “anything can mean anything” or that you can “write whatever and however you want and still achieve a good grade.”** Instead, there are artistic conventions and techniques that guide and shape the writing process until the completion of the final product. Your ability to understand, incorporate, and build on the writing lessons we learn will be critiqued – always for the purposes of helping you grow as a writer and to help you produce stronger work.

**Behavioral Norms:** Alongside steady attendance, students are expected to maintain consistent healthy habits of decorum, respect, and kindness towards their classmates, instructors, and teaching assistants. When students fail to meet these classroom behavioral standards and academic habits, it is the expectation faculty engage appropriately to bring quick and immediate resolution. When students consistently fail to meet these behavioral standards and academic habits in the classroom, an administrative consequence ladder will be adopted, and recorded, in an attempt to administratively address, engage, and rectify ongoing challenges.

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE STATEMENT

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge. As a reflection of Ball State’s commitment to respect, civil discourse, and the Beneficence Pledge, Inclusive Excellence at the Indiana Academy emerges as one of the priorities of our living and learning community. We strive to exist together respectfully and compassionately, creating an environment where every member can thrive. Unfortunately, there might be occasions when something occurs that disrupts our progress toward meeting these objectives. In this case, we encourage any member of the Academy community to file a Campus Climate Report (CCR) <https://bsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6mbRbL5acAntUTI>.  All reports will be taken seriously, and appropriate responses will be carried out by Academy administration.

DISABILITY SERVICES

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at **765-285-5293** or [**dsd@bsu.edu**](mailto:dsd@bsu.edu)