

**English 105: Creative Writing for Non-Majors**  
Fall 2018 Section Syllabus

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2-2:50 and by appointment  
Section 32855  
Friday: 2:00-4:20 THH 109

“The reading and writing of fiction both requires and instills empathy—the insertion of oneself into the life of another. Great fiction can speak to something within us, some previously unarticulated thought or reflection that, once recognized, we never want to be without again.”

- Julie Schumacher.

### **About the Course**

Reading can be a great source of comfort—not just because it allows for escapism—but because it offers us recognition. We read the work of others and think, yes, I have felt that too, that loneliness and joy and anxiety and confusion and fear. When we read, what once seemed meaningless gains meaning, and we remember that we are not alone. In this class, you will not only read, but write too.

We will primarily write fiction in the form of short stories. Depending on how the class goes (and what everyone is interested in), I’m open to other genres too. This is a survey of creative writing, after all, and genres are fluid. Make no bones about it—this is a writing workshop! You will be writing a lot! I want this class to be valuable to you, and I want you to feel comfortable experimenting with forms and voices and styles you haven’t tried before. Remember that this is an introductory class and you don’t need to be an expert—all I ask is that you work hard and do your best. Be fearless!

I will be giving you readings throughout the semester, but this is subject to change based on the class. For me, every group of students is a different, living organism, and I like to be capable of flexibility. With that said, it’s very important that you keep up with the reading, not just your peers’ work, but assigned readings from me, too.

### **Specific requirements:**

- **Portfolio:** By the end of the semester, you will have produced a portfolio of writing. This portfolio will form the primary basis for your grade. Your portfolio will include at least one revised piece. You will get a separate handout about this as we move closer to the end of the semester.

- . **Attendance:** This is a small workshop class. As a consequence, your presence is essential—physically, mentally, and in conversation. To be clear: your presence is MANDATORY. More than one unexcused absence will reduce your grade. Four or more is grounds for dismissal or failure. Chronic late arrivals will be recorded as an absence. **Two late arrivals will be counted as ONE ABSENCE.** If an emergency comes up and you cannot be in class, please discuss this with me beforehand.
- . **Class Participation** is critical to student grades. You will be actively engaging in discussion about your peers' work, as well as the readings assigned. When I ask for a critique, write it and turn it in on time!
- . **Presentation:** Each student will lead a class discussion about a piece of writing he or she particularly enjoyed.
- . **Class Discussion/Workshop:** During workshop sessions, you should be prepared to offer vocal comments on your peers' work. **I also expect you to write one page of THOUGHTFUL comments on each piece of your peers' writing. In addition, you should also make hand-annotations on these pieces. You will submit the page of comments both to the student-author and to me. You must also print the pieces you receive from your classmates.**
- . **Deadlines:** Because this is a workshop-style class, you will need to submit your exercises, stories and essays to your classmates two days before the class. **If your work is a day late, it will drop by half a grade. If it is two days late, it will drop by an entire grade. If it does not arrive in time for the workshop, it will drop by a grade and a half.** PLEASE don't make it necessary for me to lower grades in this way. If you're having a problem with deadlines, please discuss this with me and we will try to work something out. (Please make an appointment to discuss this with me if my office hours are in conflict with your class schedule.) We must have work to critique in a workshop class.
- **TO BE CLEAR:** You will be expected to email your short stories and your exercises to me and to your classmates by six p.m. **TWO DAYS BEFORE THE CLASS MEETS.** Because you are in my Friday section, you will email your material by 6 p.m. on Wednesday night. Penalties for lateness are described above.
- **Flexibility:** From time to time, visitors—agents, editors or other writers—may visit this class. If this happens, students may have to deviate from the syllabus. *We may also change the reading assignments if a distinguished visitor is available to come to class.* The distinguished visitor's schedule will take precedence—just as it would in real life.

### **Grade breakdown:**

Your grade in the course is based on a holistic assessment of your work, effort, and the participation in the class. The approximate breakdown of grades is such: Final portfolio - 30%, class participation, preparation, and presentation - 50%, workshop responses - 20%.

**Academic Conduct:** Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university, or in this classroom. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

**Support Systems:** A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.