

WRI 2020 – Intro to Creative Writing

Fall Semester 2019

Course Policies

Section 1 (TR 9:30AM-10:45AM, BAC 151)
3 Units / LJWL Department

Professor: *Robbie Maakestad* **LJWL Office:** *Bond Academic Center*
Office: *Bond Academic Center, 119* **Phone:** 619-849-2437
Office Hours: *[M-F 8-9AM, 3-4PM]* **E-Mail:** rmaakest@pointloma.edu
Or by appointment

PLNU MISSION

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course serves as a general introduction and overview of creative writing.

In order to create an introduction to the craft, terminology, and techniques of creative writing, we will pursue these learning goals:

1. Further our knowledge of both the craft and art of creative writing.
2. Gain an understanding of and learn to apply general writing craft elements such as point of view, voice, story arc, dialogue, description, and scene/summary.
3. Grow in our knowledge of genre: creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry.
4. Endeavor to explain how written work affects both readers and writers. By studying literature as a writer – considering it as a craft as well as an art – we will come to a better understanding of what goes into creation of that literature.
5. Work together in small-group workshops, and individually after those workshops, in order to explore and practice the discipline of revision.

Together, these learning goals allow us to see writing as a process of art, craft, and discipline, which will benefit not just our ability to write creatively in this course, but also our ability to meet the creative and critical demands required of us in the future.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Each of you will be responsible for preliminary drafts of writing assignments, written critiques of classmates' work, various reading and writing exercises that will aid our understanding of the discipline and craft of creative writing, and four finished writing projects (along with four critical analyses): a submission in each of the three genres (fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry) and one final revision project (your choice). Class time will be divided accordingly: lecture and discussion, small group discussion, in-class writing, and small group and whole-class workshops.

Major assignments:

- Fiction Project – 150 points; 50 points Critical Analysis (Grade to be kept only if your final project is NOT fiction)
- Creative Nonfiction Project – 150 points; 50 points Critical Analysis (Grade to be kept only if your final project is NOT creative nonfiction)
- Poetry Project – 150 points; 50 points Critical Analysis (Grade to be kept only if your final project is NOT poetry)
- Lit. Journal Presentation – 50 points
- General Participation – 45 points
- Workshops and Critique Letters – 105 points (Workshops and Critique Letters = 15 points/day)
- Final Expansion Project – 150 points; 50 points Critical Analysis (plus another 200 points as this grade replaces one provisional grade as noted above)

TOTAL = 1000 points

REQUIRED TEXTS

Burroway, Janet. *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft*. 4th ed. Boston: Longman, 2014. ISBN: 9780134053240.

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

RESPECT

Respect for other students and your instructor in our classroom is essential to a healthy classroom dynamic. We may discuss ideas and concepts that challenge your current thinking, so we all must respect one another and be open to new ideas. Show courtesy to other students and your instructor.

CANVAS

Throughout this course, students will be required to utilize Canvas to receive course grades and access any changes to the *Course Schedule* throughout the semester. If the *Course Schedule* is updated, students will be notified well in advance, but will need to download the updated schedule which the instructor will post on Canvas.

PLNU EMAIL

Students must regularly check their PLNU email account for updates on assignments and scheduling.

TECHNOLOGY

You will be expected to refrain from using cell phones or other communication devices in the classroom. Use of iPads and laptops should be limited to times when I ask you to pull out your computers for in class use and in-class writing. Even if it seems that it isn't "bothering anyone," checking your e-mail, your Facebook, or surfing the web during class is rude to your instructor and fellow classmates and will count against your participation grade. I expect you to be an engaged member of the class.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Attendance is expected, though I believe it is your responsibility to take ownership for investing in your own education and development as a writer, so I will not be keeping attendance. If you miss a class, you should obtain assignments or any updated schedule/assignment information from a classmate in order to be prepared for the next meeting. **I do, however, require attendance for workshops and presentation days. Absences on such days will hurt your workshop participation grade.** Missed in-class work may not be made up. In order to learn most affectively and get as much as you can out of this course, in addition to your participation grade, I'd recommend regular attendance. Let me know if you do have to miss a class, and we can work something out. It is also your responsibility to get workshop drafts to and from those in your group.

For the 45 points of your participation grade, you'll earn a 35 if you're doing the basics of engaging with the class and participating in discussion; you'll earn a 35+ if I see you regularly leaping in and making strong contributions; you'll earn a 34 or lower if you are frequently late, unprepared, inattentive, disruptive, or do not regularly participate in discussion.

WORKSHOP

Workshop participation and attendance is mandatory. Throughout the semester we will be reading and critiquing one another's essays in small groups and as a whole class. You will turn in a typed copy of your critique to me, as well as to the member of your group who is being workshopped (this will affect your participation/workshop grades). Workshop is not a time to disparage or rudely comment on the work of others. Written critiques balance positive and critical comments, though criticism should certainly be constructive and focused on the writing, not on the writer or the writer's ability. If there are problems with feedback you receive, do not hesitate to contact me. Workshop should be a safe space where we work together to better one another's writing; thus, the amount of effort you put into commenting on the work of others should be just as much as you put into producing your own work.

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS

All **major assignments** must be printed out and turned in hard-copy during the class period on the day they are due.

SUBJECT MATTER

This course will ask you to write whatever you want to write about, but do recognize that there is a line between what is appropriate and not appropriate in a classroom setting, especially with regard to what is being shared with your classmates, who may not share your values. I respect

your privacy and truly believe that this class should allow you creative freedom, so all I will ask is that you use common sense with regard to what is/is not appropriate to write in an academic setting. If you are unsure/nervous or have a hunch that something might be questionable, PLEASE discuss your ideas with me in advance of bringing them to workshop.

PREPARATION

You will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss readings, share your work, and comment on other students' work. Being prepared for each class is vital in creating a classroom that is conducive to learning—take notes on the assigned readings as this allows you to remember the material more fully. Back up your written work as you're responsible for turning work in on the due dates. You are also expected to regularly check your PLNU email for updates to the schedule and assignments.

GRADING RATIONALE

Creative writing is both an art and a craft. While it is debated by many whether art can be graded, craft can be evaluated. In particular I will look for:

- Adherence to and mastery of CNF conventions
- Structure and form as they pertain to CNF subgenre and subject
- Masterful use of narrative voice and point of view
- Engaging employment of language
- Excellence of writing mechanics
- Improvement through revision
- Creativity and innovation within genre conventions

While the above concerns creative work produced in this course, each creative assignment also requires a Critical Analysis component in which you as the artist will critique the decisions that went into your own work, and connect craft decisions you made with those used by the writers of our course readings. These Critical Analyses will be graded not as creative work, but upon the clarity and thoughtfulness of the analysis you craft.

DUE DATES

Assigned work will have a due date and you will be expected to meet this requirement. Missed in-class work may not be made up unless you have an excused absence. I will accept the major projects one class period late, but your paper will be penalized one letter grade (A → B as maximum grade). Major projects turned in after that point will receive a score of 0. You must turn in all four major projects to pass this course. Failure to do so will result in a grade of F.

FINAL EXAMINATION POLICY

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination **on its scheduled day**. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. No requests for early examinations or alternative days will be approved.

For this course, the final will be an in-class reading from your final project during the final exam. Our scheduled final exam time is **Tuesday, December 17, 1:30-4:00 pm**. Since the final is a class activity, it cannot be rescheduled, so make sure that you will be able to attend.

LETTER GRADE GUIDELINES

		920 - 1000 points	A	900 - 919 points	A-
880 - 899 points	B+	820 - 879 points	B	800 - 819 points	B-
780 - 799 points	C+	720 - 779 points	C	700 - 719 points	C-
680 - 699 points	D+	620 - 679 points	D	600 - 619 points	D-

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

PLNU COPYRIGHT POLICY

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

If you have a diagnosed disability, please contact PLNU's Disability Resource Center (DRC) to demonstrate need and to register for accommodation by phone at 619-849-2486 or by e-mail at DRC@pointloma.edu. See [Disability Resource Center](#) for additional information.

PERSONAL NEEDS

Counseling is available in the Wellness Center for undergraduate students at PLNU. They are open Monday through Friday during the academic school year to offer morning, afternoon, and evening appointments. Please call (619) 849-2574 to schedule a counseling appointment.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 Course Introduction

09/05 – In Class: Syllabus; Art and Craft.

Week 2 Intro to Creative Nonfiction (CNF)/Voice in CNF

09/10 – In Class: Fundamentals of Creative Writing Overview

Readings Due:

“Creative Nonfiction” pgs. 225-236

“The Book of My Life” – Alexander Hemon, pgs. 109-111

[*Canvas*]:

“Tigers” – Eliot Weinberger

09/12 – In Class: Voice in Creative Nonfiction; Project 1 Overview; Lit Journal Project Overview

Readings Due:

“Voice” pgs. 47-61

“Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self” – Alice Walker, pgs. 62-67

[*Canvas*]:

“What to do with My Body in the Event I Die in a Mass Shooting” – Tom McAllister

Week 3 Point of View/I & Eye/Researched CNF

09/17 – In Class: Point of View/I & Eye

Readings Due:

“Do He Have Your Number, Mr. Jeffrey?” – Gayle Pemberton, pgs. 237-245

“The Female Body” – Margaret Atwood, pgs. 245-247

“Margot’s Diary” – S.L. Wisenberg, pgs. 247-251

[*Canvas*]:

“Field Guide to Resisting Temptation” – Sarah Wells

09/19 – In Class: Researched Essays

Readings Due:

[*Canvas*]:

“Jumbo II” – Elena Passarello

Week 4 Personal Essays and Image in CNF

09/24 – In Class: Personal Essays; Discuss Workshop Procedure

Readings Due:

“Me vs. Animals” – Benjamin Percy, pgs. 112-117

[*Canvas*]:

“The Wishbone” – Harrison Scott Key

09/26 – In Class: Concrete vs. Abstract Images, and Elane Johnson

Readings Due:

“Image” pgs. 15-27
“Heaven and Earth in Jest” – Annie Dillard, pgs. 28-29
“Standing By” – David Sedaris, pgs. 29-33
“At the Dam” – Joan Didion, pgs. 148-150

Week 5 **Structure in CNF & Workshop**

10/01 – In Class: Structure in CNF

Readings Due:

[*Canvas*]:

“Time and Distance Overcome” – Eula Biss

“How to Skin a Fish” – Chelsea Biondolillo

Group A Nonfiction Drafts Due

10/03 – **Workshop Group A**

Group A Critique Letters Due

Group B Nonfiction Drafts Due

Week 6 **Workshop and Intro to Fiction**

10/08 – **Group B Workshop**

Group B Critique Letters Due

10/10 – In Class: Introduction to Fiction; Project 2 Overview

Readings Due:

“Fiction” pgs. 259-270

“The Story” – Amy Bloom, pgs. 270-279

Project 1—Creative Nonfiction Due

Week 7 **Character & Voice in Fiction**

10/15 – In Class: Character in Fiction

Readings Due:

“Character” pgs. 94-109

“Incarnations of Burned Children” – David Foster Wallace, pgs. 179-181

[*Canvas*]:

“Hills Like White Elephants” – Ernest Hemingway

10/17 – In Class: Voice in Fiction

Readings Due:

“Voice” pgs. 47-61 (review)

“Victory Lap” – George Saunders, pgs. 69-82

“The Book of Sand” – Jorge Luis Borges, pgs. 82-85

“The School” – Donald Barthelme, pgs. 150-153

Week 8 **Setting & Story in Fiction**

10/22 – In Class: Breeann Kirby: Fictional Setting

Readings Due:

[*Canvas*] “Fictional Setting,” excerpt from Burroway’s *Writing Fiction*

From today's reading, record 10 takeaways on paper from today's reading. See instructions on Canvas.

- 10/24 – In Class: Story in Fiction
Readings Due:
“Story” pgs. 166-175
“The Werewolf” – Angela Carter, pgs. 153-154
“One of Us Is Hidden Away” – Scott Blackwood, pgs. 181-186
“Bigfoot Stole My Wife” – Ron Carlson, pgs. 290-294

Week 9 Image in Fiction & Workshop

- 10/29 – In Class: Image in Fiction
Readings Due:
“Image” pgs. 15-27 (review)
“Bullet in the Brain” – Tobias Woolf, pgs. 34-37
“Girl” – Jamaica Kincaid, pgs. 38-39
Group A Fiction Workshop Drafts Due

- 10/31 – **Workshop Group A**
Group A Critique Letters Due
Group B Fiction Workshop Drafts Due

Week 10 Fiction Workshop & Introduction to Poetry

- 11/05 – **Group B Workshop**
Group B Critique Letters Due
- 11/07 – In class: Katie Manning and Introduction to Poetry
Readings Due:
“Poetry” pgs. 297-317
Assorted poems and Poetry Format – pgs. 318-326
Project 2—Fiction Due

Week 11 Setting & Story & Voice in Poetry

- 11/12 – In Class: Setting & Story in poetry; discuss readings
Readings Due:
“Setting” pgs. 135-148
Assorted poems – pgs. 154-157
“Story” pgs. 166-175 (review—come to class with questions)
Assorted poems – pgs. 187-189
- 11/14 – In Class: Voice in Poetry
“Voice” pgs. 47-61 (review—come to class with questions)
Assorted poems – pgs. 85-88

Week 12 Character in Poetry, Submitting Work to Lit Journals, & Revision

- 11/19 – In Class: Character in Poetry; discuss readings

“Character” pgs. 94-109
Assorted poems – pgs. 127-130

11/21 – In Class: Submitting to Lit Journals, Revision and Expansion, discuss the Final Revision Project, discuss Lit Journal Report
Readings due:
“Development and Revision” pgs. 195-218
Group 1 Poetry Workshop Drafts Due

Week 13 **Workshop and Thanksgiving Break**

11/26 – *Poetry Workshop Group 1*
Critique Letters Due for Group 1
Group 2 Poetry Workshop Drafts Due

11/28 – **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week 14 **Workshop**

12/03 – *Poetry Workshop Group 2*
Critique Letters Due for Group 2
Group 3 Poetry Workshop Drafts Due

12/05 – *Poetry Workshop Group 3*
Critique Letters Due for Group 2
Project 3—Poetry Due (if you will revise the Poetry Project for the Final Revision/Expansion Project)

Week 15 **Lit. Journal Presentations**

12/10 – *Lit. Journal Presentations*
Project 3—Poetry Due (if you will revise the Nonfiction or Fiction Project for the Final Revision/Expansion Project)

12/12 – *Lit. Journal Presentations*
Lit. Journal Report Due

Week 16 **Final: Reading from Final Revision Project**

Tuesday, December 17, 10:30 AM—1:00 PM, Larry Finger LJWL Lounge

Project 4—Revision/Expansion Due

** This schedule is subject to change at my discretion. I'll let you know with plenty of time if changes are made.