

# WRI 2020 – Intro to Creative Writing

## Fall Semester 2021

### Course Policies

Section 1 (TR 9:30AM-10:45AM, BAC 156)  
3 Units / LJWL Department

**Professor:** *Robbie Maakestad*  
**Office:** *Bond Academic Center, 119*  
**Office Hours:** *[By appointment:  
T/TH 11-12PM and 3-4PM]*

**LJWL Office:** *Bond Academic Center*  
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#### 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 – 100 points (Grade to be kept only if your final project is NOT fiction) + 50 points Critical Analysis
  - Creative Nonfiction Project – 100 points (Grade to be kept only if your final project is NOT nonfiction) + 50 points Critical Analysis
  - Poetry Project – 100 points (Grade to be kept only if your final project is NOT poetry) + 50 points Critical Analysis
  - Lit. Journal Presentation and Paper – 100 points (50 points per component)
  - Craft Moves – 190 points (10 points per day)
  - General Participation – 10 points
  - Workshops and Critique Letters – 105 points (Workshops and Critique Letters = 15 points/day)
  - Radical Revision Final Project – 100 points (these 100 points also replace one provisional creative project grade as noted above); 50 points Critical Analysis
- TOTAL = 1000 points**

## REQUIRED TEXTS

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

All other course readings will be posted to Canvas—you will need to print these out and bring them with you to class the day they are assigned so that you can access the documents in class during discussion. You are expected to annotate the printed readings before coming to class because reading and annotating is the primary way to improve your own writing.

Please bring a notebook and writing utensil to each class to take notes, as well as the assigned essays that will be discussed for that class period.

## 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, CRAFT MOVES, & PARTICIPATION

In order to learn most affectively and get as much as you can out of this course, in addition to your participation grade, I expect regular attendance. Let me know if you do have to miss a class, and we can work something out. **Attendance is required for workshops and presentation days. Absences on such days will hurt your workshop and presentation participation grade.** Missed in-class work may not be made up. It is also your responsibility to get workshop drafts to and from those in your group.

Craft moves are worth 190 points, and should be turned in each class period when readings have been assigned. For every class period, each student will be responsible for writing up, turning in, and sharing 5 craft moves that they noted from that class period's readings (at least one per essay that we read throughout the semester). A craft move is any writing decision that the writer has made within their essay that we can learn from or analyze. Students should regularly share these craft moves during discussions in order to get the points allotted for that class period. Missed craft moves due to an absence cannot be made up.

For the 10 points of your participation grade, you'll earn a 7 if you're doing the basics of engaging with the class and participating in discussion; you'll earn a 7+ if I see you regularly leaping in and making strong contributions; you'll earn a 6 or lower if you are frequently late, unprepared, inattentive, disruptive, or do not regularly participate in discussion. Missing workshop critiques or absences on workshop days will result in a deduction from your participation grade for each component missed.

## WORKSHOP

Workshop participation and attendance is mandatory and is worth 15 points per class period. 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. See above for workshop grade specifics.

## **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, in addition to being turned in on Canvas.

## **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.

## **[ONLY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJORS]**

At least one of your creative projects this semester needs to connect topically to environmental concerns.

## **PREPARATION**

You will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss readings, share your work, share your craft moves, 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 14, 10:30am-1:00pm**. 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](mailto: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 and Intro to Creative Nonfiction (CNF)/Voice in CNF**  
08/31 –    **No Class. Monday classes on Tuesday.**
- 09/02 –    In Class: Syllabus; Art and Craft. 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
- Week 2    **Voice in CNF; Point of View/I & Eye/Researched CNF**  
09/07 –    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*]:  
“Track Changes in English” – Kenneth Lee
- 09/09 –    In Class: Point of View/I & Eye  
Readings Due:  
“Me vs. Animals” – Benjamin Percy, pgs. 112-117  
[*Canvas*]:  
“The Wishbone” – Harrison Scott Key
- Week 3    **Personal Essays, Image in CNF, and Researched Essays**  
09/14 –    In Class: Researched Essays  
Readings Due:  
[*Canvas*]:  
“Jumbo II” – Elena Passarello  
“An Indian in Yoga Class” – Rajpreet Heir
- 09/16 –    In Class: Personal Essays; Discuss Workshop Procedure  
Readings Due:  
“Do He Have Your Number, Mr. Jeffrey?” – Gayle Pemberton, pgs. 237-  
245  
“The Female Body” – Margaret Atwood, pgs. 245-247  
[*Canvas*]:

“A Scientific Analysis of Disney Movie Sidekicks Through The Lens Of Hip Hop” – Hanif Abdurraqib

Week 4 **Image and Structure in CNF**

09/21 – 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

**Group A Nonfiction Drafts Due**

09/23 – In Class: **Liesel Hamilton visit**, Structure in CNF

Readings Due:

[Canvas]:

“Time and Distance Overcome” – Eula Biss

“Capturing Dementia’s Voice: Postwar Memories Under Siege” – Liesel Hamilton

**Group B Nonfiction Drafts Due**

Week 5 **Workshop**

09/28 – **Workshop Group A—Attendance Required**

**Group A Critique Letters Due**

09/30 – **Group B Workshop—Attendance Required**

**Group B Critique Letters Due**

Week 6 **Intro to Fiction and Character in Fiction**

10/05 – In Class: **Eddie Matthews visit**, Introduction to Fiction; Project 2 Overview

Readings Due:

“Fiction” pgs. 259-270

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

[Canvas]:

“Night After Night” – Eddie Matthews

**Project 1—Creative Nonfiction Due**

10/07 – In Class: Character in Fiction

Readings Due:

“Character” pgs. 94-109

[Canvas]:

“Hills Like White Elephants” – Ernest Hemingway

“I Help You” – Vonetta Young

Week 7 **Voice and Setting in Fiction**

10/12 – **\*\*\*Today’s class is in Latter Hall 101\*\*\***

In Class: **Breeann Kirby visit:** Fictional Setting

Readings Due:

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

From today’s reading, instead of craft moves, record 10 takeaways on paper from today’s reading and bring them to class.

10/14 – In Class: Voice in Fiction

Readings Due:

“Voice” pgs. 47-61 (review)

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

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

[*Canvas*]:

“Tepeyac” – Sandra Cisneros

**Attend POETRY DAY afternoon session, 3-4pm, and evening session 7-8pm.**

Week 8 **Story and Image in Fiction**

10/19 – In Class: Story in Fiction

Readings Due:

“Story” pgs. 166-175

“The Werewolf” – Angela Carter, pgs. 153-154

“Bigfoot Stole My Wife” – Ron Carlson, pgs. 290-294

[*Canvas*]:

“Daddy” – Aaron Housholder

**Group A Fiction Workshop Drafts Due**

10/21 – 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 B Fiction Workshop Drafts Due**

Week 9 **Fiction Workshop**

10/26 – **Workshop Group A—Attendance Required**

**Group A Critique Letters Due**

10/28 – **Group B Workshop—Attendance Required**

**Group B Critique Letters Due**

Week 10 **Introduction to Poetry and Setting and Story in Poetry**

11/02 – In class: **Katie Manning visit** and Introduction to Poetry

Readings Due:

“Poetry” pgs. 297-317

Assorted poems and Poetry Format – pgs. 318-326

## **Project 2—Fiction Due**

11/04 – 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

### **Week 11 Voice and Character in Poetry**

11/09 – In Class: Voice in Poetry  
“Voice” pgs. 47-61 (review—come to class with questions)  
Assorted poems – pgs. 85-88

11/11 – In Class: Character in Poetry; discuss readings; discuss Lit Journal Report  
“Character” pgs. 94-109  
Assorted poems – pgs. 127-130

### **Group A Poetry Workshop Drafts Due**

### **Week 12 Poetry and Workshop**

11/16 – Read Assorted Poems on Canvas  
**Group B Poetry Workshop Drafts Due**

11/18 – **Poetry Workshop Group A—Attendance Required**  
**Critique Letters Due for Group A**  
**Group C Poetry Workshop Drafts Due**

### **Week 13 Workshop**

11/23 – **Poetry Workshop Group B—Attendance Required**  
**Critique Letters Due for Group B**

11/25 – **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**

### **Week 14 Workshop and Presentations**

11/30 – **Poetry Workshop Group C—Attendance Required**  
**Critique Letters Due for Group C**  
**Project 3—Poetry Due (if you will revise the Poetry Project for the Final Revision/Expansion Project)**

12/02 – **Lit. Journal Presentations—Attendance Required**  
Readings due:  
“Development and Revision” pgs. 195-218  
In Class: Revision and Expansion, discuss the Final Revision Project

### **Week 15 Presentations and Submitting to Literary Journals**

12/07 – **Lit. Journal Presentations—Attendance Required**

**Project 3—Poetry Due (if you will revise the Nonfiction or Fiction Project for the Final Revision/Expansion Project)**

12/09 – **Lit. Journal Presentations—Attendance Required**  
In Class: Submitting to Lit Journals  
**Lit. Journal Report Due**

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

12/14 – **FINAL EXAM PERIOD: 10:30am-1:00pm: Reading from Final Revision Project**  
**Project 4—Radical Revision Project Due**

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

\*\* All reading assignments must be read for the day that they appear on the syllabus.