

**Intro to Creative Writing**  
English 223.016 | Fall 2014  
Monday & Wednesday: 1-2:30 PM  
2475 Mason Hall

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3023D Tisch Hall  
Wednesday 2:30-4:30  
and by appointment

**Overview**

"What implications are present in these details?"

This question will guide the reading, writing, and investigation required for this section of English 223. Intended to serve as an introduction to the writing of poetry and short fiction, this section will examine a range of styles and writers as starting place for our conversations about the principles of good writing. While both fiction and poetry will be addressed, this section will place an emphasis on the work of established and emerging contemporary poets. It will also acquaint you with the workshop experience.

Our section will be grounded by these principles:

1. Expert writers must also be expert readers.
2. Creative writers must strive to be more self-aware and capable of giving and receiving constructive criticism.
3. Creative writing is more than simply descriptive or imaginative writing.

During the academic term, you will be asked to: complete weekly reading assignments; participate in discussions on assigned reading; complete creative writing assignments to be workshopped by your classmates; carefully and generously read and critique the work of your peers; and attend readings by published writers. By the end of the term you will have completed a short portfolio of revised work in both genres.

Whether you currently consider yourself a writer or not, for the purposes of this course I will ask you to think of yourself as a writer throughout the term, with the goal of engaging in critical discussion and producing new work.

**Grading**

*"I gave As to people who loved poetry; Bs to people who loved themselves; Cs to people who didn't love anything."* --James Merrill, poet

Ideally, this would not be a class where the students should worry most about grades, but, sadly, they must be given. If you stick with the program—which won't always be easy—you will not get a bad grade.

A breakdown of how grades will be calculated is as follows:

Daily Participation (discussion, workshop).....	<b>10%</b>
Writing Assignments.....	<b>20%</b>
Written Critiques.....	<b>10%</b>
Poetry/Fiction Reading Reviews.....	<b>10%</b>
Final Portfolio.....	<b>50%</b>

As you can see, most of your final grade will be dependent on the creative work submitted, with emphasis on a final portfolio. I will outline the specific requirements for the final portfolio later in the semester, but generally you can expect to include the following: a selection of your own poems; at least one short story written by you; documentation of revisions on a portion of your work; a self-reflection letter

In terms of daily work, an original poem or short story will be due each week. Generally, these will be guided by prompts that I assign to you. Some examples will include: landscape poems, persona poems, and imitations of the contemporary poets that we will read for class. Our readings for class discussion will come from a combination of handouts that I will provide in class and four books of poetry that we will read together. Those books—all of which should be available at the usual on-line sources—are:

[\*The End of the West\*](#) by Michael Dickman

[\*Crush\*](#) by Richard Siken

[\*A Hunger\*](#) by Lucie Brock-Broido

[\*Phantom Noise\*](#) by Brian Turner

When purchasing your books, please consider a really terrific local option, [Literati bookstore](#), which is [close to campus](#) and allows online ordering as well.

Toward the end of the term (and in your final portfolio) I will also require revisions of recent work. When these are due, please turn in originals along with the revisions so I can see how and why you made changes.

Finally, this course is designed to encourage you to be generally involved in the literary life. As such, two short papers on visiting poets or fiction writers will be required. These papers should be not less than two pages in length, and should try to focus on one read work, either by closely examining that work, by placing it within the context of the poet's work or reading, or by contrasting it with other work.

Zell Visiting Writers Series schedule:

<http://wwwprod.lsa.umich.edu/writers/readingsevents>

Webster Reading Series (2<sup>nd</sup> year MFA candidates) schedule:

<http://wwwprod.lsa.umich.edu/writers/readingsevents/websterseries>

Edwards Reading Series (1<sup>st</sup> year MFA candidates) schedule:

<http://wwwprod.lsa.umich.edu/writers/readingsevents/edwardsseries>

### **Attendance**

More than two absences will lower your grade a half mark per absence. Example: If you had an A in the course, it drops to an A- at your third absence, then to a B+ at your fourth, etc. Late entrances disrupt the class. Please be on time; more than three late marks will constitute an absence. Missing a mandatory conference will also count as an absence.

If there is a medical or family emergency, or you are involved in any university-sponsored event and you expect to miss class days, please talk with me at the beginning of the course about which days you'll have to miss. Those absences will be excused, but again, please talk with me in advance. You are expected to keep pace with the course work and meet all deadlines unless we've previously discussed a change.

### **Late Work Policy**

Late assignments will not be accepted unless there have been extenuating medical and family circumstances or we have met and discussed a different arrangement. Let me know, if you can, at least a week before the assignment is due and we can arrange an extension due the week after the original due date.

### **Workshop Policies**

Over the course of the semester, there will be workshops wherein the class will critically engage with their peers' work. Generally, the work of a small group will be the subject of discussion. The workshop is a forum for praise, questions, and suggestions for improvement during the revision process. The first time you're workshoped is always nerve-wracking but remember it's all about the writing and not the writer.

In addition to writing your impressions on the poems, over the course of the semester you will be required to turn in a one-page, double-spaced, typed response to each of your peers being workshoped. Bring in two copies of these: one for the writer and one for me. This response is a chance to more fully flesh out your comments. Remember that I will be grading these responses, so don't shortchange these papers.

### **Use of Technology Policy**

Due to the potential distractions of cellphones and laptops, I will require that phones be turned off (at the very least put on silent) and I will not allow laptops used during class. If you need to use a laptop or other technologies of any kind, let me know and we'll make arrangements.

### **Plagiarism Policy**

The University of Michigan defines plagiarism as, "Submitting a piece of work (for example, an essay, research paper, work of art, assignment, laboratory report) which in part or in whole is not entirely the student's own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source." Plagiarism is when you knowingly (or unknowingly) submit someone else's ideas or words as your own. Please review the "Memo to all students taking courses in the English Department" from the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. You can find it at:

<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/advising/plagNote.asp>

If you commit an act of academic dishonesty in this course either by plagiarizing someone's work or by allowing your own work to be misused by another, you will fail the assignment and will almost definitely fail the entire course. In addition, I will report the incident to both the English Department and the LS&A Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. Please note that if you submit work already completed for one course as original work for another course, you are violating university policies and will fail the assignment and likely the course.

### **Information about Sweetland Center for Writing**

The Sweetland Center for Writing is located at 1310 North Quad, and is a wonderful resource for undergraduate writers of all levels. I encourage you to take advantage of their services. The Sweetland Center offers one-on-one, half-hour conferences to all University of Michigan undergraduates, and you are eligible for one appointment a week. For more information, or to schedule an appointment online, visit <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/>

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know. I can modify some aspects of the assignments, in-class activities, and teaching methods to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. I will treat any information that you provide as private and confidential.

## Religious Observances

If a class session or due date conflicts with your religious holidays, please notify me so that we can make alternative arrangements. In most cases, I will ask you to turn in your assignment ahead of your scheduled absence. In accordance with U-M policy on Religious/Academic conflicts, your absence will not affect your grade in the course.

## Tentative Course Schedule

- September 3:** Introductions  
Syllabus Review  
Receive Poetry Packet 1.
- September 8:** Packet 1 read for class.
- September 10:** Dickman read through pg. 22  
In-class work: Sentence Combining
- September 15:** *Dickman imitation poem due.*  
Dickman read through pg. 56  
Poem Workshop: Group 1
- September 17:** Dickman read completely.  
Poem Workshop: Group 2  
Receive Poetry Packet 2.
- September 22:** *Arboretum poem due.*  
Packet 2 read for class.  
Poem Workshop: Group 3
- September 24:** Siken read through Part I.  
Poem Workshop: Group 4
- September 29:** *Siken imitation poem due.*  
Siken read through Part II.  
Poem Workshop: Group 1
- October 1:** Siken read completely.  
Receive Poetry Packet 3.  
Poem Workshop: Group 2
- October 6:** *Poem due.*  
Packet 3 read for class.  
Poem Workshop: Group 3

- October 8:** Brock-Broido read through Part One.  
Poem Workshop: Group 4
- October 13:** **NO CLASS—Fall Break**
- October 15:** NO CLASS—INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES  
*First reading review due.*
- October 20:** *Brock-Broido imitation poem due*  
Brock-Broido read completely.  
Receive Poetry Packet 4.
- October 22:** Packet 4 read for class.  
In-class visit: UMMA
- October 27:** *Ekphrastic Poem Due.*  
Turner read through pg. 18.  
Poem Workshop: Group 1—bring written critiques
- October 29:** Turner read through pg. 35.  
Poem Workshop: Group 2—bring written critiques
- November 3:** *Turner imitation poem due*  
Turner read through pg. 67.  
Poem Workshop: Group 3—bring written critiques
- November 5:** Turner read completely.  
Poem Workshop: Group 4—bring written critiques
- November 10:** Fiction: Guest Presenter  
Fiction handout 1 read for class.
- November 12:** *Story 1 due.*  
Story Workshop: Group 1  
Fiction handout 2 read for class.
- November 17:** Story Workshop: Group 2  
Fiction handout 3 read for class.
- November 19:** *Story 2 due.*  
Fiction handout 4 read for class.  
Story Workshop: Group 3
- November 24:** Fiction handout 5 read for class.

Story Workshop: Group 4

**November 26: NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Recess**

**December 1:** NO CLASS—INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES

**December 3:** *Revision of a previous assignment due.*  
Revision Workshop: Group 1 & 2

**December 8:** *Second reading review due.*  
Revision Workshop: Group 3 & 4

**December 10: Final Class & Celebration!**

***Final portfolios due by 5 p.m., Monday, December 15.***