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English 245: Introduction to Creative Writing

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Bernays, Anne and Pamela Painter, *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers*, 3rd ed. New York: Longman, 2009. ISBN: **978-0205616886**

Guppy, Stephen. *Writing and Workshopping Poetry: A Constructive Introduction*. Ontario: Broadview Press. ISBN: 978-1-55481-308-7

Please visit this site to read contemporary, published poems and essays on the craft:

www.poems.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed for students who are interested in learning the basics of reading and writing poetry and fiction, either short stories or novels. Students will be expected to read assigned poems and stories, as well as craft chapters in the texts, and submit weekly creative or critical assignments. In lieu of a final exam, students will submit a final portfolio consisting of their revised original poetry and fiction, preceded by a self-reflexive personal introduction to the work.

All writers must develop reading skills. In addition to creative work, all students are required to do critical work. Each student may choose to write the short explications of poetry and fiction (see schedule below). Students may opt, as their critical work (instead of writing explications), to work as junior interns, according to their interests, with the editors of the Mary Baldwin online literary/arts journal, *Outrageous Fortune*. These tasks can include critiquing poems, stories, and essays submitted for publication, assistance with social media outreach, and/or assistance with literary web management. This work will be done either by email or in direct consultation with the editor-in-chief.

ENG 245 counts as an elective course for the English Major and the English Minor. It is the introductory course for the Creative Writing minor.

COURSE POLICIES:

English 245 is heavily devoted to student interaction: writing, reading each other's work, talking about writing problems and pleasures, discussing technique, and airing opinions about contemporary writing. Participation in the weekly writing and critique is therefore mandatory; the more voices each writer has each week, the more chances everyone has for improvement.

Every student is required to take an active part in discussions. This means having the writing assignment (textbook in hand) and appropriate writing materials (pen/pencil and paper; laptop; tablet—no phones!) as you work and being ready and willing to discuss *in a civil and professional way* the work of others in the course; the main point of group work is to improve work-in-progress. We will all produce trite phrases, sloppy lines, whole pages that have to be

thrown away. This course is designed to allow us to help each other locate the junk in our writing, and then get rid of it. Weekly writing assignments are graded on a four-point scale, and students must post assignments every week to keep participation grades up.

Document Format: Both midterm and final portfolios must be submitted in Word to the Assignments site. Please double space, number pages of, and title portfolios. Students are responsible for keeping a copy. Submission documents must be Word documents or they will not be considered “turned in.”

If you have difficulties loading your work or receive an “error” message, please try a different browser and/or a different computer before you contact me.

Late Work: Any late portfolios will be penalized a letter grade for every day that they are late. Discussion Board postings will be due by the week, with deadlines of Sundays at midnight. DB postings that are late will have one point deducted for each calendar day past the due date.

Revision. Creative writing requires a great deal of revision. Revisions for this course need to demonstrate a substantial rethinking and reworking of the original work—including additional attention to the text(s) being addressed. The extent and success of the revision will help determine the work’s final grade.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism, submitting someone else’s ideas or words as though they were one’s own, is an honors violation at Mary Baldwin University. (See the *Student Handbook*.) To avoid even accidental plagiarism in this course, please adhere to the following guidelines and/or consult the instructor with your questions if you are ever in doubt.

You will also find substantial help with proper quotation and MLA citation form (as well as punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph development, etc.) online at the OWL (online writing lab) at Purdue: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu> (select Non-Purdue Instructors & Students and select General Academic Writing or MLA Formatting & Style Guide).

Evaluation of Grade:

Assigned weekly writing exercises/participation	40%
Midterm Portfolio	20%
Final Portfolio (to include all work from the semester)	40%

Note: If you fail to turn in your midterm or final portfolio, you will automatically receive a grade of “F” for this course.

Schedule of Assignments

Having Your Textbook in the Required Format is Mandatory

Please note that the weeks run from Monday morning to the following Sunday at midnight (when postings and assignments will be due)

Week 1 (January 11-17):

Introductions to each other and the course

First Poem: Describe a person, place, or thing without naming it: first drafting!

READ: Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 4 of Guppy, which we will use for the first half of the semester

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: your first poem

Week 2 (January 18-24):

Second Poem: Draft a poem of at least three stanzas in meter; stanzas must be at least four lines each in length, but they do not need to rhyme.

READ: Chapter 8, Chapter 9, and Chapter 14

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: your second poem

Week 3 (January 25-31):

Reading like a Writer: draft a Writer's Explication of one poem, to be chosen from the poems in Chapters 1, 4, 8, or 9 in Guppy (please note that there are guidelines for explications on Canvas)

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: your explication: please be sure that you do not simply copy the thoughts from the textbook for your explication!

Week 4 (February 1-7):

Third Poem: Draft a poem about a conflict between two people. Use dialogue.

READ: Chapter 3 and Chapter 6

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: your third poem

Week 5 (February 8-14):

Reading like a Writer: Draft your second Writer's Explication of a poem chosen from Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, or 9 (don't write on the same poem you chose for your first explication!)

READ: Chapter 5

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: your second explication

Week 6 (February 15-21):

Fourth Poem: Draft a poem with a governing (or controlling) metaphor

REVIEW: page 79 for governing metaphors

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: your poem with a governing metaphor

Week 7 (February 22-28):

Fifth Poem: Draft a poem in which sound devices dominate: do NOT use onomatopoeia

READ: Chapter 7

MID-TERM PORTFOLIOS DUE SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, at MIDNIGHT on
ASSIGNMENTS:

Include your five revised poems, your explications, and a 150-word informal introduction in which you discuss your revisions

Week 8 (March 1-7):

Beginning Fiction: Draft 500-750 words of dialogue that includes at least three speakers, none of which can be mistaken for the author.

READ: All of Part I: “Beginnings” (pp. 5-30) in Bernays and Painter, which we will use for the remainder of the semester

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: Your dialogue exercise

Week 9 (March 8-14):

Drafting: exercises 19 and 24 (you may use the same writing for these if you want to!)

READ: Part 2: Characterization

READ: “The New Year,” “Cathedral,” “Shiloh,” and “Brownies”

Drafting: Reading Like a Writer: Fiction. Write a 500-word explication of one of the stories for this week

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: revised exercises 19 and 24; explication of a story

Week 10 (March 15-21):

Drafting: A scene that takes place within an hour. You may use either a third- or first-person narrator. Use a limited number of characters and no more than two settings. (You may use your three-character dialogue for this story if you choose.)

READ: Part Six in your textbook (all of it)

READ: "White Angel"

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: revised hour-long scenes

Week 11 (March 22-28):

Drafting: A complete story (or novel chapter) using your scene from week 10. This story/chapter should be at least 1500 words.

READ: "My Mother's Gifts" and "Eleven"

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: your revised complete story/chapter

Week 12 (March 29-April 4):

Drafting: exercise 87 or 89

READ: Part Eleven, pages 223-225

Drafting: Reading Like a Writer: Fiction. Write a 500-word explication of one of the stories from Week 11

POST on Discussion Board by Sunday at midnight: Exercise 87 or 89; explication of a story

Week 13 (April 5-11):

Read: PART TWELVE

Week 14 (April 12-18): Please note that this is finals week and the DB will be closed!

DUE ON ASSIGNMENTS BY SUNDAY, APRIL 18, at MIDNIGHT: FINAL PORTFOLIO, INCLUDING YOUR FINISHED, REVISED POEMS AND STORIES/CHAPTERS, YOUR EXPLICATIONS, AND A 250-WORD INFORMAL INTRODUCTION IN WHICH YOU DISCUSS YOUR WORK AND YOUR GOALS AS A WRITER.