

University of Pennsylvania
Creative Writing: English 010-303
Course Syllabus
Spring Semester 2014
Classroom: Fisher-Bennett 25
Wednesday, 2-5 PM

Instructor: Lynn Levin

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Office Hours: 11:45-1:45 PM Wed., or by appointment. Phone conferences also available.

Overview of the course and its goals

This workshop-style class is an introduction to the pleasures of the writing process. You will benefit from in-depth readings and constructive critical support in a class that fosters a community of writers. We will spend half the semester writing fiction and the other half writing poems. Some of each meeting will be devoted to discussing fiction or poems from our texts. We will look at literature as writers rather than scholars. From time to time, we will do some in-class writing. Growing, experimenting, and revising are key. Class participation and attendance are vital.

-You will develop a working knowledge of the basic elements of the craft of fiction: character, plot, point-of-view, dialogue, and style

-You will explore and practice a variety of approaches to the craft of poetry including narrative, lyric, free verse, and formalist poetry

- For homework, you will complete brief writing assignments (known as “one-pointers”) designed to help you shape and generate work.

- For the fiction portion of the class, you will turn in one short story of approximately 7-8 double-spaced pages.

- For the poetry portion of the class, you will turn in 5-6 pages of poetry. A page with 12 lines of poetry can count as one page of poetry; a page with 32 lines of poetry can count as one page of poetry. A page of poetry does not mean the entire page has to be covered.

- For workshop, you will print out and annotate your classmates’ fiction and poetry, and you will post 2-3 sentences of commentary on each story or poem as a thread in the discussion board.

Extra credit: You may attend a fiction or poetry event at Kelly Writers House or other venue and write a response to it of about 300 words. This is due by April 30 during our

final class meeting or before; submit in the body of an e-mail or in hard copy (not as an attached file).

Details and due dates are found in this syllabus and on Canvas (for the one-pointers and discussions). This syllabus is a basic course guideline. I may make some adjustments to it as the semester progresses.

Assigned Texts

The texts of the short stories are available through Canvas. I will also e-mail you additional documents for fiction and poetry.

You are required to bring to class the assigned texts and the printed-out annotated student workshop work. No sharing of texts in class. If you do not have the texts in class, I will ask you to retrieve them from your living quarters or ask you to go to the bookstore to buy the text. This will then affect your attendance.

All poetry books are available at Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34th Street.

Using Canvas

We will be using Canvas <https://canvas.upenn.edu>. You will submit your fiction and poetry for workshop through the discussion board application, and you will comment on classmates' work with discussion board threads. You will submit your weekly writing exercises (the one-pointers) through the assignments application.

**YOU MUST PASTE YOUR WORK INTO THE TEXT BOXES ON CANVAS.
I WILL NOT READ ATTACHMENTS.**

To do every day: Work on your creative writing – even if it's only a paragraph or a few lines of poetry.

I will post weekly class assignments and student writer names for workshop on Canvas.

The one-pointers: to do on Friday by 11:59 pm (or before): In the Assignments section provided, each student MUST paste-in (not attach) his or her creative writing exercise. I will provide prompts. Sometimes these prompts are directly related to the readings, sometimes not.

For example: You will post your "\$2 story" no later than 11:59 pm on Friday, Jan. 24, 2014.

These weekly assignments are "graded" on a one-point (submitted) or no-point (not submitted or submitted late) basis. Three of these mini-assignments are worth two points, but all the rest are worth one point. I will not read late assignments. If you send the assignment as an attached file, your work will be considered "not submitted," so please

remember to paste in the work or type it directly into the box. Please follow the simple guidelines. In the event that your work is late or submitted incorrectly (for example, as an attachment), you will not get credit and I will not read your work. On the other hand, you will have benefitted as a writer by doing the exercise. So you gain creatively in that way.

The workshopping: to do on Sunday by 9 pm (or before) if you are being workshopped at the next class meeting: In the Discussion Board provided, post your fiction or poems by 9 pm on Sunday. Being late will negatively affect your grade, and it will hamper our ability to comment on your work. No excuses. As with the one-pointers, you must paste your fiction or poetry into the box provided. If you wish, you may also attach a file.

For example: If you are being workshopped on Wednesday, Jan. 29, you should post your work by Sunday, Jan. 26 by 9 pm (or before).

For fiction, please post 2-7 double-spaced pages. No worries if you only come up with two pages. But if you are on a roll, go ahead and submit up to 7 pages. For poetry, submit 1-4 pages of poetry.

Annotations and commentary threads: You must print out and annotate your classmates' workshop submissions, and you will hand each student your signed annotations (mark-ups) in class. In addition, you will post 2 or 3 sentences of commentary about each submission as a discussion board thread.

Due date for threads: 2 pm on the day the material is workshopped in class.

Be sure to keep my mark-ups of your workshop drafts as you will submit these with your final fiction or poetry.

Weekly Schedule

Week One

January 22, 2014

Introduction to class. Introduction to fiction and character creation. Please come to class having read Gish Jen's "Who's Irish." It is available through Canvas. We will do some in-class writing. Post your one-pointer.

For fiction workshop, submit 2-7 double-spaced pages of fiction.

Week Two

January 29, 2014

Plot and pacing. Joyce Carol Oates's "Mastiff," and post your two-pointer. Brief discussion of places to submit your fiction and poetry. I will send you a special handout about this. Fiction workshop: 3 people.

Week Three

February 5, 2014

Point of view and voice. Sherman Alexie's "Happy Trails," and post your one-pointer. Fiction workshop: 3 people. Sign up for conferences.

Week Four

February 12, 2014

Dialogue. Read Tobias Wolff's "Hunters in the Snow," and post your one-pointer. You will find the story here <http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/huntsnow.html>. Fiction workshop: 3 people.

Week Five

February 19, 2014

Ending a story and aspects of theme. Read Lorrie Moore's "Paper Losses," and post your one-pointer. Fiction workshop: 3 people.

Week Six

February 26, 2014

Interiority, character's self-presentation, aspects of style. Read Mary Gordon's "The Other Woman," and post your one-pointer. Fiction workshop 3 people.

Week Seven

March 5, 2014

Due in class: Your finished fiction. Include my mark-up of your earlier draft with your finished story. Introduction to poetry. Come to class having read Mary Oliver's *Dog Songs*. You must bring the Oliver book and Fox and Levin's *Poems for the Writing: Prompts for Poets (PFTW)* to class. If you do not have these two books with you, you will be asked to walk over to the Penn Book Center to purchase them during class, and you will then be counted late for class. We will work with a variety of poetry prompts including the get-to-know-you cinquain, the unanswerable letter (including a handout of a poem by Chase that I will give you in class), the Fibonacci poem, and possibly others. Post your first poetry one-pointer: the unanswerable letter poem. We'll do some in-class writing and sharing. No student workshopping today.

Week Eight

March 12, 2014

SPRING BREAK. NO CLASS. No one pointer. People being workshopped on March 19 will need to post their poems by Sunday, March 16 by 9 pm.

Week Nine

March 19, 2014

Finish reading Mary Oliver. Bring both the Oliver and *PFTW* to class. Imagery in poetry. In-class writing: the paracausithyron and creating metaphors and similes. (I will also bring in some handouts of classical paracausithyra.) Post your one-pointer: a rules poem. Poetry workshop: 3 people.

Week Ten

March 26, 2014

VERY SPECIAL GUEST: PROFESSOR GREGORY DJANIKIAN will be with us during the last hour of class. COME TO CLASS HAVING READ *DEAR GRAVITY*, and, of course, bring Djanikian's book to class. Post your one-pointer: swipe a line, find a title. Poetry workshop: 3 people.

Week Eleven

April 2, 2014

Read, print out, and bring to class the electronic handouts "Prosody and Rhyme" and "Sonnet Selections." Also bring *PFTW*. I will e-mail you the handouts. Post your two-pointer: 14-line spirit of names or pseudonymous poem. Poetry workshop: 3 people.

Week Twelve

April 9, 2014

Continue discussion of sonnet selections. Bring handout and *PFTW*. Post your two-pointer: a sonnet with a lagniappe. Possible in-class writing. Discussion of the *ars poetica*. Poetry workshop: 3 people.

Week Thirteen

April 16, 2014

Come to class having read Jerry Mirskin's *Crepuscular Non Driveway*, and bring the book to class. No one-pointer this Friday because it is Easter weekend. Poetry workshop: 3 people.

Week Fourteen

April 23, 2014

We will have a round-robin poetry workshop in which each student gets workshopped again. I will make a discussion board for this, and everyone will post a poem. No commentary threads needed, just post your poem as a thread. One-pointer due: narrative poem after Mirskin.

Week Fifteen/last class meeting

April 30, 2014

VERY SPECIAL EVENT: OUR CLASS WILL GIVE A READING AT KELLY WRITERS HOUSE. Our class will meet at 2 pm in the Arts Cafe in Kelly Writers House where we will give our class poetry reading. Be sure to invite your friends. It is a special privilege to read at Kelly Writers House. We'll have a class party after our reading. Due in class today in hard copy, your portfolio of 5-6 pages of poetry with a one paragraph *ars poetica*. Include my mark-ups of your earlier drafts with your finished poems. Optional: your extra credit is due in class today.

How to collect your graded poems: you may pick up your work at 3808 Walnut at a date to be determined. I will e-mail you to let you know the date. I will be happy to mail you your final poems as long as you provide me with a SASE with sufficient postage.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required in this course. Course absences should be reported through the Course Absence Report system. Students are permitted to miss class for legitimate medical reasons only (sickness on the day of class). Excessive or unexplained absences will result in a reduction in your course participation grade. There are no “excused absences,” and if you miss class, you are responsible for making up any work and for knowing the material covered.

The purpose of the Course Absence Report system is to facilitate communication between instructors and students when a student misses class. The system allows students to inform instructors about absences. If the absence is more than two class meetings, you should contact your home school advising office for assistance and to discuss the academic implications of a longer absence.

You can submit a Course Absence Report by logging on to Penn InTouch and choosing the “Course Absence Report” option from the menu on the left.

To show respect and maintain a spirit of sharing and collegiality, it is vital that you come to class on time and stay for the whole class. Tardiness and leaving early for any reason will also negatively affect your grade. Three tardies or early departures count as an unexcused absence.

Computer Issues

Please take precautions against computer problems. It’s a good idea to e-mail yourself your work in progress or print out your work in progress.

I do not accept attached files. On Canvas, paste your work into the text box provided. If you are e-mailing me for a conference, paste work into the body of the e-mail.

Grading

I will be looking for participation, improvement, revision, and experimentation. I expect your work to be polished in terms of the conventions of good English style.

Your poetry and fiction.....	70
Your one-pointers.....	15
Your class participation, attendance, written commentaries.....	15
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Total	100 points
Extra credit: response to a Kelly Writers House reading.....	3 points