

Introduction to Creative Writing

Hartwick College
ENGL 213-6
(3 Credits; EL; GEO 2)
Spring 2022

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MWF 1:25 – 2:20 p.m., Clark 251

Office Hours: MW 2:30 – 3:30 p.m.,
TuTh 1:30 – 3:00 p.m., and *by appointment*

Required Texts

Hayes, Terrance. *Hip Logic*. Penguin, 2002.

Koch, Kenneth. *Making Your Own Days: The Pleasures of Reading and Writing Poetry*.
Touchstone, 1999.

Additional texts to be covered can be found on the calendar below. These will be available on D2L under “Content” and then the “Readings” folder. See endnotes for bibliographic citations.

Required Software

Microsoft Office. Students are required to use Microsoft Word for this class. Go to <https://portal.office.com>, log in using your Hartwick credentials (email and password), and install the full version of MS Office. The program is free for Hartwick students.

Recommended Materials

I recommend acquiring a folder dedicated exclusively to this course. Students may also want to set aside roughly ten dollars for printing costs if they go beyond their allotted quota.

Prerequisites

The successful completion of ENGL 110 College Writing is highly recommended.

Note on Class Meetings

Per Hartwick College’s current policies, participants will wear face coverings in the classroom; this policy may be revised when appropriate. See below for further policies.

Catalog Description

The course will approach reading as a way to develop the imagination of the writer of both poetry and short fiction. Students will read widely in both genres, write poems and short stories in response to weekly readings, and participate in workshop discussions of their writing. The class will also consider relations between poetry and fiction, in terms of both their historical development and contemporary practice. Several short analytical essays on the assigned readings as well as students’ original poetry and fiction will be expected. (EL; GEO 2)

Course Description and Purpose

Introduction to Creative Writing is a primer for the exploration of some of the basic elements of creative writing. Designed for both interested general education students and students studying creative writing, we will read the work of published poets and short story writers and students will compose poems and stories of their own. Course readings will prepare students to analyze and assess other students' work in a weekly workshop and to evaluate their own compositions. In our discussions, we will primarily focus on *craft*, on learning the “nuts and bolts” of writing, the techniques and strategies that will allow students to improve their work. Writing is an art and, like any art, its successful practice requires a working knowledge of its tools and conventions along with a will to create, explore, and experiment. So, we will pay careful attention to the effective use of image, metaphor, line-break, and sound in poetry, and scene, conflict, plot, character, dialogue, and setting in fiction. I fully expect that we will also have some fun.

How This Course Works

The main concern of this class is *your* writing, and it is divided into two units: poetry and fiction. During the first half of the course, you will be expected to write a poem every week; during the second half, you will turn in a work of flash fiction and two short stories.

Each week, we will discuss and you will write a response to the assigned reading, you will prepare for and comment upon student writing, and we will discuss student work in a writing workshop (each student will be workshopped at least twice during the semester). Within the next two weeks, I will hand out and post to D2L a workshop schedule with primary reader assignments. Primary readers are principally responsible for responding to their assigned writer's work during workshop and in writing. Each student will also be expected to write brief comments on their peers' work and return those comments to the writer.

In workshops, the writer and their primary reader will read the work aloud, followed by a group discussion. During workshop, the writer will remain silent until the end, at which time they will be able to ask questions (note: not provide explanations). Though we will be forthright in our criticism, workshop participants should strive to be respectful, generous, and constructive.

Learning Outcomes

In addition to the basic skills of literary analysis, students in this course will: 1) identify conventional creative writing techniques; 2) read as writers and use this knowledge to more successfully write and discuss works of creative writing; and 3) produce works of creative writing that demonstrate an understanding of literary and formal conventions while also articulating a personal artistic vision (GEO 2).

Other Course Requirements and Assignments

Texts—Becoming a strong, careful reader is essential for developing as a writer, so students will be required to have read and be prepared to discuss the assigned texts for each class meeting, including the writing of your peers. Students must also bring the texts to class: this includes bringing the assigned book, *printouts* of the .pdfs from D2L, and copies of your peers' work. Additional readings for the course (see below) can be found under the “Content” then the “Readings” section of D2L. Please do not let the nature of this class fool you, as students sometimes assume that little reading is involved in a creative writing course. On the contrary, this course asks students to read quite a bit and *very* carefully. Our meetings and discussions will depend upon the intelligent and frequent involvement of each member of this class, and this

involvement is simply not possible if students do not come to class prepared. All students *must* obtain the edition of the texts specified above. Unless a student makes an individual arrangement with me, electronic versions of the texts are not permitted; please *print out* all readings from D2L and student work, and bring those printouts to class. Students should expect to read between 35 and 100 pages per week.

Individual Writing Assignments—Throughout the semester, you will be asked to complete individual writing assignments. These assignments will be graded and returned to you with my comments after each of your workshops and at the end of a unit; every poem or story assignment can also be revised for a new grade that will replace the original in a midterm and final portfolio. For reasons of logistics, poems will not be accepted late; stories will only be accepted late if a student asks for an extension *prior* to its due date. The due dates are below. The assignments will follow. All individual writing assignments must be turned in as *hard copies* to me *and* to every member of the class; they must also be uploaded to D2L as .doc or .docx files (that is, as MS Word files), that way, if you have to miss class, you will still receive credit for turning in your assignment on time and your work will be available digitally to your peers so they can print it out on their own. There will be links under “Discussions” on D2L to electronically upload your work.

D2L Uploads—Save all files in the following format: Last Name, First Name--Poem # or Short Story #. For example: Fest, Bradley--Poem 4.

Revisions: At midterm and during finals week, I will accept a small portfolio of revisions. The new grade for each revised piece will replace the original. (Only poems and stories turned in on time and that received an initial grade will be eligible for a new grade.) Turning in revisions is optional.

Reading Responses—Students will compose reading responses that they will post to D2L under “Assignments” (see the calendar below for due dates). I will grade responses (out of 10), post scores to D2L, and drop the two lowest grades. Reading responses will not be accepted late. See “Reading Response Assignment” for more specific details.

Responding to Your Peers’ Work—All members of the course will be responsible for writing marginal comments on their peers’ work and must write a brief paragraph (minimum three sentences) about 1) what they thought the writing to be workshopped for that day was doing well and 2) their thoughts on how to improve that writing. Make sure to read and comment on your peers’ work prior to coming to class. You will return your comments to the writer after their workshop.

In addition to comments on your peers’ work, each member of this class will be a primary reader for another member of the class. Primary readers should write notes and comments on each piece of writing from this student, along with writing a 1–2-page reflection on that student’s writing each time they are workshopped. These responses will be collected for credit. Please consult the handout, “Primary Reader Assignment,” to be handed out next week, for further details.

Participation—As we will read texts critically and discuss each other’s work in this class, student participation is crucial to our work. Though I will occasionally lecture, the class is a collective inquiry into the subject matter and class time will primarily consist of discussions that privilege students’ thinking, reading, and writing. As such, the course requires the input of all its participants and your attendance is a necessity. *More than four absences will negatively affect your grade, in which case you may want to consider withdrawing from the course and taking it again under better circumstances. Students who are marked absent for more than eight total classes will automatically fail the course.*

That said, I understand that it is possible that a student may miss significant class time due to illness, a positive COVID-19 test, or other unforeseen circumstances. In such cases, as with cases of serious illness or other unforeseen events prior to the appearance of COVID-19, it is each individual student’s responsibility to communicate with me regarding any issues they might have attending or doing the work of the course. If students communicate with me about legitimate issues that may cause them to miss class time, I will do my best to work with them to make sure that they are given the opportunity to succeed.

Flexibility and Course Modality

As there is again a large amount of uncertainty heading into this semester, and I can foresee any number of challenging circumstances that you or I might face, I reserve the right to be flexible in my policies concerning late work, attendance (as immediately above), and other policies (though students should not expect such flexibility without communicating with me). This course will be delivered exclusively via in-person, face-to-face instruction, and there is currently no option to attend class remotely. If the College’s policies change or circumstances necessitate a shift in the modality of the course (to online, hybrid, etc.), changes in the course and its policies may be necessary. Let me assure you of two things. First, I will be sure to notify you of any changes to the class or the syllabus in a timely fashion. Second, I am willing to work with you and to be understanding regarding whatever may come up in your life as long as you are in communication with me regarding your attendance and your work in the course.

Grading

Participation: 20%

Primary Reader Responses: 5%

Reading Responses: 10%

Poems 1–5: 30% (6% each)

Flash Fiction: 5%

Shorty Story 1: 10%

Short Story 2: 20%

Classroom Etiquette

There continue to be many complex issues facing our community this semester. To make life a little easier for everyone and to create a solid logistical foundation that will ensure a positive learning environment for each participant, students should adhere to the following guidelines for classroom etiquette. Failure to do so may result in being marked absent or in penalties applied to a student's participation grade.

Texts—Students who do not have their text in class, *including their peers' writing for workshop*, will be marked absent (whether I draw attention to it or not).

Lateness—I give crucial information and reminders about the course at the beginning of class, so being late is not only disruptive but means that students may miss information that is important to their success. Students who are frequently more than five minutes late will be marked absent.

Notes—Students should take notes during class meetings and should have the materials to do so. During my sixteen years of teaching in higher education, I have found that, unsurprisingly, students who take notes in class perform better than students who do not.

Laptops, Phones, Tablets—Anyone observed using their mobile phone or another digital device during class, whether I draw attention to it or not, will be marked absent for the day.¹ Phones will not be tolerated in this class, and the use of laptops or tablets in this course will not be permitted unless individual arrangements are made with the instructor.

Leaving Class—Ideally, students will not have to leave class. But students should feel free to get up without my permission as long as they do so unobtrusively. If individual students make a habit of leaving, however, I will have a conversation about disrupting class. If a student continues leaving frequently after this conversation, they will be marked absent each time they leave, regardless of circumstance. If a student has any issue that would cause them to need to get up frequently, please talk with me in the first weeks of class or at any time during the semester.

Preparation—A key part of this class will involve reading the work of your peers. If it is clear that a student is not prepared, has not done the assigned reading, *or has not read and commented their peers' work*, they will be marked absent.

Participation—Students should be prepared to participate throughout the class. I frequently call on students even if they have not raised their hand.

Respect—Sharing your work with others can be a bit intimidating, so I urge all class members to be generous, respectful, constructive, and kind to your peers when critiquing their work.

¹ On how students more fully retain information if notes are taken by hand rather than on a computer, see Meyer, Robinson. "To Remember a Lecture Better, Take Notes by Hand." *Atlantic*, 1 May 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>.

FlightPath

The Hartwick Flightpath is a student-centered program that is flexible and adaptable to support your pathway to graduation and to prepare you for what lies ahead. By the time you graduate from Hartwick, you will have a suite of skills and experiences that tie together the breadth of your Hartwick education and highlights your accomplishments. This course supports the development of student educational outcomes in the following way(s): it fulfills FlightPath General Education Outcome 2, is the gateway course for the Creative Writing Major, and is a possible elective in the English Major (this course also fulfills the Liberal Arts in Practice requirement for Experiential Learning for junior and senior students). (Note: this course does *not* fulfill either the WD or WL3 requirements.)

College COVID-19 Policy

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, circumstances may necessitate adjustments to instruction, such as shifts in mode of instruction (to remote or hybrid), classroom capacity limits, or indoor mask requirements. Updates will be provided on the College website (<https://www.hartwick.edu/about-us/covid-19-updates/>). Instructors will communicate with students about any specific adjustments that are being made to their courses, such as modality of instruction, expectations for participation, and any changes to assigned work; students should check their Hartwick email accounts frequently for information from their instructors.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. It will result in a zero for the assignment and a formal charge will be filed with the Office of Academic Affairs. Plagiarism could also result in more serious action, including a student failing the class and being suspended from the College. *Plagiarism includes: lack of proper citations when quoting from someone else's work, representing someone else's work as your own, and knowingly allowing one's work to be submitted by someone else.* Violations of Hartwick's Academic Honesty policy are not limited to plagiarism, so students should familiarize themselves with it at: <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/academic-affairs/academic-policies/>.

Academic Adjustments and/or Modifications

Students must present me with an updated Academic Plan Letter for the Spring 2022 semester in order to be eligible for academic adjustments. Hartwick College is committed to upholding and maintaining all aspects of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If a student with a disability wishes to request academic adjustments, they should contact Lara Sanford, Director of AccessAbility Services, at sanfordl@hartwick.edu or AccessAbilityServices@hartwick.edu. AccessAbility Services is located on the fifth floor of Yager Library in the Center for Student Success. Any information regarding a student's disability will remain confidential. Requests for academic adjustments should be made as early as possible. Please reach out to the instructor with any other concerns you might have about the course, including accessing course texts.

The Writing Center

Located in Clark Hall 230, the Writing Center offers events, courses, and one-on-one tutorials for students. Tutors can help you with your writing for classes or any writing project, and can teach you strategies for organizing, editing, and revising your writing. You can meet with a tutor once or regularly over the course of the semester; the Writing Center will also respond to queries via email. In some cases, I may send you to the Writing Center for help on a particular problem; otherwise, you can seek assistance on your own. Their services are free. You can browse the services at <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/writing-center/>, or make an appointment by emailing wcenter@hartwick.edu or calling (607) 431-4910.

E-mail Communication Policy

Each student is issued a college email address (username@hartwick.edu) upon admittance. This email address may be used by the college for official communication with students. I will also communicate with students via their hartwick.edu address. Students are expected to regularly read email sent to this account. Failure to read and react to communications from either the College or from me in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. If email is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to communications sent to their Hartwick email address.

Health and Success

Success in this course depends heavily on your personal health and wellbeing. Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the

classroom. Your other instructors and I strongly encourage you to reframe challenges as an unavoidable pathway to success. Reflect on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the term, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to reach out to me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in this course as soon as it occurs and before it becomes unmanageable. In addition to your academic advisor, I strongly encourage you to contact the other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you. The Counseling Center is available to help with these issues and may be reached by calling (607) 431-4420 or emailing counselingcenter@hartwick.edu. Counseling services are *free of charge* and confidential. Fifty-Fifty, a peer counseling service, is also available if you are more comfortable talking with a fellow student who has been trained to offer information and support in a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere. To reach Fifty-Fifty, call (607) 431-5050 or email fiftyfifty@hartwick.edu.

Sexual Misconduct and Title IX Reporting

Hartwick College is committed to equal opportunity and providing a safe community free from all forms of sexual misconduct including sexual-/gender-based harassment, discrimination, dating or domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and sexual assault. If you wish to make an official report to the College or have questions about the College policy and procedures regarding sexual misconduct, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, Michael Arno, at titleix@hartwick.edu or (607) 431-4293. Online reporting and policy information is available at <http://www.hartwick.edu/titleix>. If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, please contact one of the following resources: Perrella Wellness Center, Health or Counseling: (607) 431-4120; or Opportunities for Otsego's Violence Intervention Program: (607) 432-4855. All other employees of the College are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator so that support and resources can be provided for all parties.

Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion, or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Calendar²

- 2.7 Syllabus
- 2.9 **Poem 1 Due**
Introductions
Ice-Breaking Activity
Emily Dickinson, “I would not paint—a picture—” (pp. 210–11 in Kenneth Koch, *Making Your Own Days* [hereafter *MYOD*])
- 2.11 **Reading Response 1 Due**
Kenneth Koch, *Making Your Own Days* (pp. 13–26)
- 2.14 **Reading Response 2 Due**
Kenneth Koch, *Making Your Own Days* (pp. 27–49)
- 2.16 **Poem 2 Due**
Arthur Rimbaud, “Dawn” (pp. 213–14 in *MYOD*)
Marianne Moore, “To a Steam Roller” (p. 256 in *MYOD*)
Elizabeth Bishop, “Arrival at Santos” (pp. 286–87 in *MYOD*)
Wallace Stevens, “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” (pp. 229–31 in *MYOD*)
- 2.18 Kenneth Koch, *Making Your Own Days* (pp. 51–77)
Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The Windhover” (p. 212 in *MYOD*)
William Carlos Williams, “The Locust Tree in Flower” (pp. 247–48 in *MYOD*)
Laura Riding, “You or You” (p. 276 in *MYOD*)
Langston Hughes, from *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (pp. 277–78 in *MYOD*)
- 2.21 **Reading Response 3 Due**
Kenneth Koch, *Making Your Own Days* (pp. 81–125)
Walt Whitman, from “Song of Myself” (pp. 204–5 in *MYOD*)
Allen Ginsberg, “A Supermarket in California” (pp. 293–94 in *MYOD*)
Frank O’Hara, “Meditations in an Emergency” and “A True Account of Talking to the Sun at Fire Island” (pp. 295–99 in *MYOD*)
Rainer Maria Rilke, from *Duino Elegies*, “The First Elegy” (pp. 222–25 in *MYOD*)
- 2.23 **Poem 3 Due**
Workshop
- 2.25 Workshop
- 2.28 **Reading Response 4 Due**
Terrance Hayes, *Hip Logic* (pp. 1–24)
- 3.2 **Poem 4 Due**
Workshop
- 3.4 Workshop
- 3.7 **Reading Response 5 Due**
Terrance Hayes, *Hip Logic* (pp. 27–57)

² This calendar is subject to change and additional readings or handouts may be assigned when appropriate. For ease with citation, bibliographic endnotes to the readings available on D2L (anything with an endnote rather than page numbers) have been provided below in MLA style.

- 3.9 **Poem 5 Due**
Workshop
- 3.11 Workshop
- 3.14 Terrance Hayes, *Hip Logic* (pp. 61–90)
- 3.16 Workshop
- 3.18 Workshop
- 3.21 **2nd Primary Reader Responses Due for Poetry**
Workshop
- 3.23 Introduction to fiction (in class)
- 3.25 **Midterm Portfolio: Poetry Revisions Due**
Ernest Hemingway, “A Very Short Story”¹
George Saunders, “Sticks”²
Alison Townsend, “The Barbie Birthday”³
Michael Augustin, “The Handbag”⁴
- 3.28 No Class, Spring Break
- 3.30 No Class, Spring Break
- 4.1 No Class, Spring Break
- 4.4 **Reading Response 6 Due**
David Foster Wallace, “Incarnations of Burned Children”⁵
Deb Olin Unferth, “Likable”⁶
Lucy Corin, “Miracles”⁷
Hugh Behm-Steinberg, “Taylor Swift”⁸
- 4.6 **Flash Fiction Due**
flash fiction continued (bring both flash fiction reading packets to class)
- 4.8 Denis Johnson, “Car Crash While Hitchhiking”⁹
- 4.11 **Reading Response 7 Due**
Denis Johnson, “Emergency”¹⁰
- 4.13 **Short Story 1 Due**
Denis Johnson, “Emergency” (continued)
- 4.15 Workshop
- 4.18 **Reading Response 8 Due**
Jhumpa Lahiri, “A Temporary Matter”¹¹
- 4.20 Jhumpa Lahiri “Interpreter of Maladies”¹²
- 4.22 Workshop
- 4.25 **Reading Response 9 Due**
George Saunders, “Escape from Spiderhead”¹³
- 4.27 Workshop
- 4.29 **Short Story 2 Due**
Workshop

- 5.2 **Reading Response 10 Due**
George Saunders, “Semplica Girl Diaries”¹⁴
(or Workshop: TBD)
- 5.4 Workshop
- 5.6 No Class, Student Showcase

- 5.9 **2nd Primary Reader Responses Due for Fiction**
Workshop
- 5.11 Workshop
- 5.13 Workshop

- 5.19 **4:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.**
Final Portfolio: Fiction Revisions Due
Class Wrap-Up: Group Reading
(More Info TBD)

Endnotes

- ¹ Hemingway, Ernest. “A Very Short Story.” *In Our Time*, Scribner, 1996, pp. 65–66.
- ² Saunders, George. “Sticks.” *Tenth of December*, Random House, 2013, pp. 29–30.
- ³ Townsend, Alison. “The Barbie Birthday.” *Flash Fiction Forward: 80 Very Short Stories*, edited by James Thomas and Robert Shapard, W. W. Norton, 2006, pp. 24–25.
- ⁴ Augustin, Michael. “The Handbag.” Translated by Sujata Bhatt. *Flash Fiction Forward: 80 Very Short Stories*, edited by James Thomas and Robert Shapard, W. W. Norton, 2006, pp. 155–56.
- ⁵ Wallace, David Foster. “Incarnations of Burned Children.” *Oblivion: Stories*, Little, Brown, 2004, pp. 114–16.
- ⁶ Unferth, Deb Olin. “Likable.” *Noon*, no. 12 (2012), <http://muumuuhouse.com/dou.fiction2.html>.
- ⁷ Corin, Lucy. “Miracles.” *One Hundred Apocalypses and Other Apocalypses*, McSweeney’s, 2013, pp. 114–15.
- ⁸ Behm-Steinberg, Hugh. “Taylor Swift.” *Gulf Coast*, vol. 28, no. 2, Fall 2016, <http://gulfcoastmag.org/journal/28.2/2015-barthelme-prize-winner-taylor-swift/>.
- ⁹ Johnson, Denis. “Car Crash While Hitchhiking.” *Jesus’ Son*. Picador, 1992, pp. 1–10.
- ¹⁰ Johnson, Denis. “Emergency.” *Jesus’ Son*. Picador, 1992, pp. 55–72.
- ¹¹ Lahiri, Jhumpa. “A Temporary Matter.” *Interpreter of Maladies*, Mariner, 1999, pp. 1–22.
- ¹² Lahiri, Jhumpa. “Interpreter of Maladies.” *Interpreter of Maladies*, Mariner, 1999, pp. 43–69.
- ¹³ Saunders, George. “Escape from Spiderhead.” *Tenth of December*, Random House, 2013, pp. 45–81.
- ¹⁴ Saunders, George. “Semplica Girl Diaries.” *Tenth of December*, Random House, 2013, pp. 109–67.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Jake Wolff for language used in the “Learning Outcomes” section of this syllabus and to the Rochester Institute of Technology for their statement on health and success (<https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/syllabus-design/rit-policies>).