

**HS 3920**

**Creative Writing**

**Instructor: Dr. John Pistelli**

**Class: R 6:30-9:00 M219**

**Fall 2013**

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**Office Hours: R 5:00-6:00 Learning Center**

### **Description and Goals**

This course investigates the aesthetic issues at the heart of writing as itself an art. Course topics will illuminate the kind of thinking that guides and inspires, and will require students to develop presentations and to explore creatively. Students will engage in deep investigations into the nature of communication and inquiries about the role of language. The class may include trips to and possible participation in local events to enhance the classroom experience and students' understanding of the creative writing process.

### **Objectives**

- Read, analyze, and discuss examples of writing as art
- Identify, examine, and utilize the kind of thinking that guides and inspires
- Develop deep investigations into the nature of communication and the role of language
- Present and explain written work orally and professionally in a workshop setting
- Create a portfolio reflecting the drafts, revisions, and final versions of various works

### **Methodology**

Class sessions are discussion-based. Students will develop presentations and creative projects, in written and in other forms. The class may include trips to and possible participation in local events.

### **Textbooks and Websites**

- Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook*
- Blackboard course site

### **Attendance**

Attendance in classes is mandatory. There are no officially excused absences. For classes that meet once a week, two absences will result in one full grade deduction. Any additional absences will result in the loss of one half of a letter grade. For classes that meet twice a week, four absences will result in one full grade deduction. Two additional absences will result in the loss of one half of a letter grade. Repeated tardiness will result in the loss of a letter grade.

### **Grading Procedure and Criteria**

Your grade in this course will be based on your performance on four major tasks:

- |                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| • Class Participation            | 30% |
| • Weekly Exercises and Workshops | 30% |
| • Final Poetry Assignment        | 20% |
| • Final Fiction Assignment       | 20% |

The course overall will be out of 100 points, but I will assign a number value that corresponds to the letter grade you've earned (see MCAD Grading below) rather than deducting points numerically.

*Class Participation:* This includes contributing to our large group discussions, participating in workshop activities, giving written feedback to your workshop partners where required. Attending my office hours is not mandatory but will reflect well on your participation.

*Weekly Exercises and Workshops:* Each week a hard copy of a typed writing exercise will be due, and you will share them either with the whole class or with a smaller workshop group for written and spoken responses from your classmates (which means you will also be responsible for providing responses on the writing of others). At the end of each class you will turn in your written exercises to me for my comments. (Note: sometimes I may ask you either to bring in more than one copy of your exercise or to share it electronically before class so that everyone in your group has their own.) At the midterm and at the end of the semester, you will turn in to me the written feedback you provided your peers. This can be done in electronic form, as a typed and printed document, or as *neatly* hand-written loose-leaf pages. But please try to be consistent. You are allowed to miss one and only one written exercise and one and only one workshop without penalty.

*Final Poetry Assignment and Final Fiction Assignment:* At the midterm you will turn a hard copy of 4-6 poems in final-draft quality, polished form. At the end of the class, you will turn in a hard copy of a 5-10 page short story, also a final draft. Both of these assignments will be accompanied by a brief essay (1-2 pp.) explaining your intentions, process, and technique with reference to three texts read in the course. More detailed criteria for these assignments will be given later as the class proceeds.

Due dates for all assignments can be found in the course outline below.

### **MCAD Grading**

Grades at MCAD are based primarily on the quality of outcomes. Grades consider student' performance of assignments listed on each course syllabus, participation in class, magnitude of improvement, attendance, level of project difficulty, timeliness of project completion, compliance with class policies, and effort/dedication.

- *A* - Excellent work, progress far beyond expectations of effort and outcomes, and full class participation.
- *B* - Good work, completion of course requirements and preparedness for the more advanced study or next course in a sequence.
- *C* - Average work, completion of course requirements and preparedness for the more advanced study or next course in a sequence.
- *D* - Passing but below average work, some promise of improvement if the class were repeated.
- *F* - Work not acceptable or not enough course requirements completed to receive a passing grade.

Plus and minus notations on letter grades indicate which side of the grade spectrum work and performance falls, whether above the assigned letter grade but short of the next higher one or short of the assigned letter grade and at risk of falling to the next lower one.

### **Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty**

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in MCAD courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows: Scholastic dishonesty: submission of false records of academic achievement; cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing; altering, forging, or misusing a College academic record, taking, acquiring or using test materials without faculty permission; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonesty grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement in a dishonest manner. In this course, a student who is responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to an including an "F" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, please ask.

### **Learning Center Assistance**

The Learning Center offers assistance with every level and style of writing, software & digital skills, professional development, and time management. Tutors provide one-on-one feedback and instruction for students and are available 65 hours/week. You can sign up for a tutor appointment or you can just drop in to meet with a tutor. *Writing*: If you experience particular difficulty with a writing assignment or you're struggling to get started on your paper or develop your ideas – the MCAD Learning Center can help. LC tutors assist students at any stage of the writing process, including planning, pre-writing, drafting, and revision. *Software*: Tutors can support all of the software you will use in your classes, and some tutors have advanced knowledge in these programs. For a list of the software expertise of each tutor, and their hours of availability, see the "Tutor Schedule" on the LC intranet page. *Professional Development and Time Management*: Come to the LC to get help creating a resume or a cover letter, or with a grant proposal. Tutors are also available for weekly appointments to help you track your time and to problem-solve your schedule.

### **Special Needs**

Students who have a learning disability, even those who do not plan to seek accommodations, are strongly encouraged to register with the Learning Center Director, Margaret McGee (mmcgee@mcad.edu). This will ensure that you have access to all of the services and accommodations that are available. For more information about these services, please contact the Learning Center Director. You can call (612-874-3633), email, or drop by her office (L110). She is available for individual meetings with students and can direct both faculty and students to the resources that suit their needs.

### **Classroom Laptop Usage Policy**

You will find that participation in the new laptop initiative has many benefits, but you will also find that along with those benefits come responsibilities:

- You are responsible to bring your laptop to class on days we are scheduled to use it.
- Your laptop should be in good working condition. If you are experiencing problems with your machine, it is your responsibility to go to Computer Support for help. Technical difficulties (including printing, uploading, saving, etc.) do not excuse late or missing work.

- During classroom discussion, demonstration, or lecture, you should not be connected to network resources unless specifically instructed to do so. Avoid distractions - web surfing, email, chats, etc.
- Chatting or emailing during class is no more acceptable than talking on a cell phone during class time. Non-class related use of the laptop (including homework for other courses) during class time may result in a request to close or turn off the laptop - or a grade penalty.
- Unless otherwise indicated, you should never use headphones during class time.
- Reminder: Always store copies of your backup files in two locations. Never store your only copy of a paper/project on the student server space in case the server is down, and you're unable to access the paper/project before the due date.

### **Course Outline (Subject to Change)**

#### *Notes:*

1. *All readings aside from A Poetry Handbook will be on the course Blackboard site*
2. *Readings and assignments should be completed before the class indicated on the syllabus*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **08/29 – Welcome**

#### READING

- Ezra Pound, “In a Station of the Metro”

## **PART 1. POETRY**

### **09/05 – Sound**

#### READING

- *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 19-34
- Gerard Manley Hopkins, “As Kingfishers Catch Fire”
- Langston Hughes, “Trumpet Player”
- Dylan Thomas, “Fern Hill”
- Seamus Heaney, “Personal Helicon”
- Kay Ryan, “Force”

#### ASSIGNMENT

- Haiku/Imagiste exercise

### **09/12 – Image**

#### READING

- *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 92-108
- Li Po, trans. Seaton, “In the Old Style: The Yellow River”
- T. S. Eliot, “Preludes”
- Claude McKay, “The Tropics in New York”

- H. D., “Sea Poppies”
- Elizabeth Bishop, “The Man-Moth”

ASSIGNMENT

- Rhyme/alliteration/assonance exercise

**09/19 – Voice**

READING

- *A Poetry Handbook*, pp. 35-57, 76-91
- Sappho, trans. Lattimore, “[Like the very gods]”
- Emily Dickinson, “[I started early—took my dog]”
- William Carlos Williams, “To Elsie”
- Philip Larkin, “Aubade”
- Sylvia Plath, “Lady Lazarus”
- Margaret Atwood, “A Sad Child”

ASSIGNMENT

- Descriptive poem exercise

**09/26 – Experiment/Translation**

READING

- Edward Lear, “How Pleasant to Know Mr. Lear”
- Wallace Stevens, “Disillusionment of Ten O’Clock”
- Man Ray, “Sound Poem”
- Gertrude Stein, “Cézanne”
- Charles Baudelaire, “*Paysage/Landscape*”
- Aimé Césaire, “*La femme et la flamme/The Woman and the Flame*”
- Pablo Neruda, “*Explico algunas cosas/I Explain a Few Things*”

ASSIGNMENT

- Poem in a stranger’s voice exercise

**10/03 – Myth/Narrative**

READING

- Ovid, trans. Ted Hughes, “Pygmalion”
- Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, “Pygmalion’s Image”
- Anne Carson, “The Glass Essay”

ASSIGNMENT

- Translation without understanding exercise

**10/10 – Poetry Assignment Workshop**

ASSIGNMENT

- Draft of final poetry project due for in-class workshop
- Mid-term exercises and workshop feedback due to me

## **PART 2. FICTION**

### **10/17 – Possibilities**

#### READING

- Leo Tolstoy, “Alyosha the Pot”
- Franz Kafka, “A Hunger Artist”
- Marie NDiaye, “Revelation”

#### ASSIGNMENT

- Final poetry project due to me

### **10/24 – Plot**

#### READING

- Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find”
- David Foster Wallace, “Incarnations of Burned Children”

#### ASSIGNMENT

- Narrative scale exercise (one hour or one lifetime in one page) due

### **10/31 – Character**

#### READING

- Edgar Allan Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart”
- George Saunders, “Home”

#### ASSIGNMENT

- Plot in nothing but dialogue exercise due

### **11/07 – Setting**

#### READING

- Eudora Welty, “A Worn Path”
- Samuel R. Delany, “Driftglass”

#### ASSIGNMENT

- Character through action exercise due

### **11/14 – Implication/Symbol**

#### READING

- Virginia Woolf, “The Mark on the Wall”
- Vladimir Nabokov, “Signs and Symbols”

#### ASSIGNMENT

- Story without characters exercise due

### **11/21 – Revision**

READING

- D. T. Max, “The Carver Chronicles”
- Raymond Carver, “Beginners”
- Jason Lucarelli, “The Consecution of Gordon Lish” (optional)

ASSIGNMENT

- Missing puzzle piece/mysterious symbol exercise due

**11/28 – Thanksgiving**

NO CLASS

**12/05 – Fiction Assignment Workshop**

ASSIGNMENT

- Draft of final fiction assignment due for in-class workshop

**CONCLUSION**

**12/12 – Reading**

ASSIGNMENT

- Prepare a five- to seven-minute reading for the entire class based on your favorite of the pieces you’ve written during the course, whether fiction or poetry, exercise or final project
- Final fiction project due