

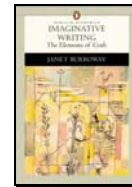
## ENGLISH: INTRO TO CREATIVE WRITING TENTATIVE SYLLABUS, SPRING SEMESTER 2005

**PROFESSOR:** Lex Williford  
**SECTION:** Intro to Creative Writing—ENGL 3361 003 (CRN 26852): TR 10:30-11:20 am  
**ROOM:** Hudspeth Hall 213  
**OFFICE:** HUD 309  
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**PHONE:** 747-8806 (HUD 309), 747-5731 (English office), 747-5713 (CW Office), 351-7144 (home). I write most days other than Tuesdays and Thursdays. My writing time is sacred time. Feel free to call me at home after five p.m. weekdays.

**OFFICE HOURS:** 2-4:30 TR. *Also by appointment.*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In this cross-genre course, we'll focus on those elements that make for vivid, effective writing across genres (especially fiction and poetry, but including the essay, drama and even, briefly, screenwriting; significant detail, lyrical language and memorable image; inventive metaphor and simile; and authentic voice, dialogue and characterization.

**TEXT:** *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft*  
Janet Burroway  
Publisher: Longman  
1st edition (August 5, 2002)  
ISBN: 0321081919



**PLAGIARISM:**  
**DON'T EVEN**  
**THINK ABOUT IT.**

According to UTEP online:

Committing plagiarism [is defined as]:

“[P]lagiarism” means the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one's own academic work offered for credit, or using work in a paper or assignment for which the student had received credit in another course without direct permission of all involved instructors.<sup>1</sup>

**GRADES:**

Your grades will be determined by your completion of:

1. Three fifteen-minute fictions/poems a week for the first five weeks of the semester. We will do several in-class exercises, which you may include in the total. You may also use the text's “Warm Up” and “Try This” exercises as starting points for fifteen-minute exercises.
2. *At least two oral critiques of another student's story two stories, poems, essays or plays, each due the week your own story's up on the worksheet, one critique before and one after mid-semester.* The way it works is that you will discuss the work of one other writer up for workshop the same day your work is up. Prepare to discuss *all* the writers' work for that day, in whatever genres they're writing in.
3. Oral discussions of *at least two* stories, poems, essays or plays in *Imaginative Writing*. Essentially, you'll lead the discussion of the work you've chosen to critique (listed in the syllabus below). Assume we've all read the piece and that we don't need a plot summary. Instead of saying you liked or disliked a piece or why (critical evaluation), focus on some matter of craft relevant to the text's reading that day (critical analysis), citing two or three examples from the text to support your observations. For example, you could start the discussion by saying,  
The setting of this poem suggests the speaker's inner landscape of depression and grief over the loss of her lover and hoped-for husband. For example, the image of the willow, “its branches drooping and swaying/like the hair of drowning children,” suggests the speaker's feeling of drowning in grief and her lost hope of having children” with a man who never wanted them.
4. Using the workshop coversheet, the “Workshop Symbol Code” and “A Workshop Guide for Creative Writing” at the end of this handout, mark up each workshop piece, writing marginal commentary throughout the manuscript and using the abbreviated symbols at the end of this syllabus. Then write a one to two-paragraph critique. For these critiques, please focus on one technique the author has used and cite specific examples from the text. Depending upon what kind of critique the author requests, please do a descriptive and/or prescriptive critical analysis of the piece *as written* (not necessarily as you might have written it), discussing its themes, characterization, imagery, poetics, etc. (Helpful prescriptions include problems with accident, coincidence, or verisimilitude, doggerel, abstraction and the like—when you found a character's actions or dialogue

<sup>1</sup> <http://studentaffairs.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=4386>

less than credible, for example, or a poem too much like an 19<sup>th</sup> century poem or a Hallmark Card. Unhelpful prescriptions abound, including nit-picky discussions of typos or suggestions about writing the piece you'd write rather than the author.) Cite specific examples from the text to illustrate your points and suggest concrete suggestions for changes.

5. Drafts of at least two *new* stories, novel chapters, essays, short plays, or screenplay shorts, or, if you wish, a series of five short-short stories or five *new* poems, due at the times you sign up for at the beginning of the semester—all to be revised for your end-of-the-semester portfolio.
6. A final portfolio: a standard manila folder (with your name and the class section on the tab) including no fewer than about *thirty pages* of prose or *fifteen* of poetry or a combination of both (two revised stories of eight to fifteen pages in length, one story and three or four short-shorts or poems, one long story of no more than thirty to thirty five pages, or two to three novel chapters, for example). Also include a cover-page with a couple of paragraphs describing your revisions for each story/chapter and a self-evaluation of your work for the semester. Assign yourself a fair and honest grade for your semester's work.
7. Reading quizzes if it becomes clear that you're not reading the assignments closely.

### MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES:

1. All manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, with standard one-inch margins, and well photocopied on white paper. If you use a printer, make copies in letter-quality. **Number all pages** and (if your word processor has the capability to do so) include a heading on each page with your name and the story title on each page (use the heading of this syllabus as a guide). **Please use a copy of this syllabus's last page as a cover page, and fill it out, describing the kind of critique you'd like.** If you wish to have concrete feedback about problems with your story or poem, or problems you had in writing it, write a series of specific questions on the story coversheet at the end of this handout.
2. Carefully collating and stapling your story, poems, essays or plays, and following closely the format suggestions in *IW*, Appendix B, 387-388, make a copy for each member of the workshop and one copy for me. **Turn in copies of your work in class the week before they're due.** If you're unable to meet this deadline, follow the instructions on the Workshop Coversheet at the end of this syllabus. Failure to turn the story in by this deadline may result in a lowering of your final grade. If you submit a chapter from a novel-in-progress, make a clear note of that fact on the manuscript and summarize briefly what has come before in the longer manuscript.
3. Carefully revise all worksheet manuscripts, making them free of grammatical errors and typos. Think of the workshop as submitting the manuscript for publication and present your work as professionally as you would submit it to an editor.

### ATTENDANCE:

Creative writing doesn't mean creative attendance. If you must miss class please call me beforehand to let me know, especially if you're signed up for workshop on that day. You have one free unexcused absence. After that, unexcused absences will affect your grade. Over three absences (excused or unexcused) can affect your grade significantly, simply by creating a low class participation grade. **IMPORTANT NOTE: I will not play workshop cop. I may not even say anything to you about your excessive absences or tardies. I'll simply take roll at five minutes after and leave it at that. If you come into class five minutes late, you'll be tardy; if you come into class thirty minutes late, you'll be counted absent; two tardies count the same as an unexcused absence. If you miss a lot of class, please note the drop date and drop the class right away.** Otherwise, excessive absences will earn you a *D* or an *F*, which could significantly affect your GPA. Your attendance is *your* responsibility.

<b>SYLLABUS:</b>				
The reading assignments listed reflect the dates they're <i>due</i> , not the dates they were assigned. We may choose to do in-class exercises or other activities instead of discussing assigned stories for particular days, but please read the assigned stories anyway, closely enough so that you can discuss them insightfully.				
<b>CLASS DATE, DEADLINES</b>	<b>DUE DATES</b>	<b>READINGS, DISCUSSIONS</b>	<b>IMAGINATIVE WRITING STORY, POEM, ESSAY AND PLAY REPORTS</b>	<b>WORKSHOP THESE WRITERS' STORIES, POEMS, ESSAYS OR SHORT PLAYS</b>
<b>WEEK 1</b> Tuesday, January 11		Discuss this syllabus. Fifteen-Minute Writing Exercise.	Sign up below for open slots to discuss stories, poems, essays, etc., from <i>IW</i> , at least one before mid-semester and one after.  ⇩	Sign up below for open slots to workshop your stories, poems, essays, etc., one before mid-semester and one after. (Sign up only once in each slot.)  A reading of short-short stories from <i>IW</i> and other sources: ROBERT HASS, "A Story About the Body" 202; LAURIE BERRY "Mockingbird" 290. ↓
Thursday, January 13	X	INVITATION TO THE WRITER xx You... xx ... and writing ... xxi ... and reading ... xxii ... and this book ... xxiii ... and your workshop xxvi. PART I THE ELEMENTS OF CRAFT: Chapter I: IMAGE 2; Image and Imagination 3; Concrete, Significant Details 7; Metaphor and Simile 11. <b>Essays:</b> ANNIE DILLARD, "The Giant Water Bug," 14; DAVE EGGERS, from <i>A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius</i> , 15. APPENDIX B: Formats 387, 1. Prose fiction and nonfiction, 387; 2. Poetry, 387; 3. Drama, 387; <b>In-Class Fifteen-Minute Writing Exercise.</b>		<b>Group and Individual Writing Exercises.</b>
<b>WEEK 2</b> Tuesday, January 18	Three Fifteen-Minute Fictions/Poems Due.	<b>Fiction:</b> LOUISE ERDRICH, "Sister Godzilla," 19.  <u>Start signing up in the blanks listed here.</u>	DENIS JOHNSON, "Car Crash While Hitchhiking," 26.  <u>Start signing up in the blanks listed here.</u>	<u>Start signing up in the blanks listed below, beginning here, two slots per day only.</u>
Thursday, January 20	X	<b>Poems:</b> TED HUGHES, "The Hawk in the Rain," 31.  ROBERT PINSKY, "The Haunted Ruin," 32.  YUSEF KOMUNYAKAA, "Facing It," 33.	MAY SWENSON, "The Surface," 34.  DAVID KIRBY, "How to Use This Body," 35.  GALWAY KINNELL, "Why Regret?" 36.	
<b>WEEK 3</b> Tuesday, January 25	Three Fifteen-Minute Fictions/Poems Due.	CHAPTER 2: VOICE 43; Your Voice 44; Persona 45; Character Voice 47; Point of View 49. VLADIMIR NABOKOV: "Invitation to a Transformation," 63. <b>In-Class Fifteen-Minute Writing Exercise.</b>		
Thursday, January 27	X	<b>Essays</b> 55: FRANK MCCOURT, from <i>An Angela's Ashes</i> , 55.  DONALD BARTHELME, "The School," 72.	<b>Fiction</b> 64: HA JIN, "In the Kindergarten," 64.	
<b>WEEK 4</b> Tuesday, February 1	Three Fifteen-Minute Fictions/Poems Due.	<b>Poems:</b> DONALD JUSTICE, "Order in the Streets," 74.  TED HUGHES, "Hawk Roosting," 76.  HILDA RAZ, "Father," 78.	GARY SOTO, "Black Hair," 75.  WILLIAM TROWBRIDGE, "Kong Looks Back on His Tryout with the Bears," 77.  LYDIA DAVIS, "A Mown Lawn," 79.	

Tuesday, February 1, cont.		BARBARA HAMBY, "The Language of Bees," 80.		
Thursday, February 3	Last day to select P/F Option: February 7, 2003	CHAPTER 3: CHARACTER 6; As Desire 87; As Image 89; As Voice 91; As Action 94; As Thought 96; As Presented by the Author 97; As Conflict 98. <b>Essay:</b> SCOTT RUSSELL SANDERS, "The Inheritance of Tools," 99. <b>In-Class Fifteen-Minute Writing Exercise.</b>		
<b>WEEK 5</b> Tuesday, February 8	<b>Three Fifteen-Minute Fictions/Poems Due.</b>	<b>Fiction:</b> JUNOT DIAZ, "Ysrael," 106.	<b>Poems:</b> THEODORE ROETHKE, "I Knew a Woman," 115.	
		CAROLE SIMMONS OLES, "Stonecarver," 116.	STEPHEN DUNN, "My Brother's Work," 116.	
Thursday, February 10	John Huston's Adaptation of James Joyce' "The Dead" Saturday, February 15, 8 pm.	FRED WAH, "Old man Hansen comes in at ten to," 117.	ELIZABETH JENNINGS, "One Flesh," 118.	
		B.H. FAIRCHILD, "Old Men Playing Basketball," 118.	EDWARD HIRSCH, "Portrait of a Writer," 119.	
<b>WEEK 6</b> Tuesday, February 15	<b>Three Fifteen-Minute Fictions/Poems Due.</b>	CHAPTER 4: SETTING 128. As the World 130; As a Camera 133; As Mood and Symbol 136; As Action 137. <b>Essays:</b> JOAN DIDION, "At the Dam," 139; BARRY LOPEZ, "Landscape and Narrative," 141. <b>In Class Fifteen-Minute Writing Exercise.</b>		
Thursday, February 17		<b>Fiction:</b> CHARLES BAXTER "Snow," 147.		
<b>WEEK 7</b> Tuesday, February 22	<b>Three Fifteen-Minute Fictions/Poems Due.</b>	<b>Poems:</b> Joy HARJO, "Deer Ghost," 156.	HEATHER MCHUGH, "Earthmoving Malediction," 157.	
		RITA DOVE, "Vacation" 158.	YUSEF KOMUNYAKAA, "Nude Interrogation," 158.	
		GEORGE MACBETH, "Advice From the Extractor," 159.		
Thursday, February 24		CHAPTER 5: STORY, 178. As a Journey, 179; As a Power Struggle 181; As Connection/ Disconnection, 183. <b>Essay:</b> PATRICIA HAMPL, "Red Sky in the Morning," 190. <b>In-Class Exercise.</b>		
<b>WEEK 8</b> Tuesday, March 1 <b>Mid-semester</b>		<b>Fiction:</b> ROBERT OLEN BUTLER, "Missing," 194.	RON WALLACE, "Worry," 201.	
Thursday, March 3	<b>Course Drop Deadline: March 7, 2003</b>	<b>Poems:</b> RICHARD WILBUR "Digging for China," 202.	ELLEN BRYANT VOIGT "Short Story," 203.	
		MAXINE KUMIN "Woodchucks," 204.	LI-YOUNG LEE "The Hammock," 205.	
		LOUISE GLÜCK, "Vita Nova," 206.		
<b>MID-SEMESTER: SIGN UP FOR ONE STORY, ESSAY OR PLAY OR THREE POEMS TO WORKSHOP BEFORE AND ONE AFTER THESE DATES.</b>				

<b>WEEK 9</b> Tuesday, March 8		CHAPTER 6: DEVELOPMENT AND REVISION 216; Developing a Draft 218; Revision and Editing 222; The Workshop 226; Examples 229 ELIZABETH BISHOP; First and final drafts of "One Art," 229; JANET BURROWAY, "The Opening of Time Lapse: a revision narrative," 231; Developing Scene 237; Undrafting 238; Line Editing 239. <b>In-Class Editing Exercise.</b>		
Thursday, March 10		CHAPTER 7: ESSAY 242; Kinds of Essay 244; Essay Techniques 247; Fact and Truth, 251.		
		<b>Readings:</b> MARGARET ATWOOD; "The Female Body," 254.	JAMAICA KINCAID; "Those Words That Echo ... Echo ... Echo Through Life," 257.	
<b>WEEK 10</b> Tuesday, March 15		RICHARD SELZER, "The Knife," 261.	SUSAN LESTER "Belongings," 268.	
Thursday, March 17		CHAPTER 8: FICTION 272; Story and Plot, 273; Scene and Summary, 276; Backstory and Flashback, 278; Text and Subtext, 281		
		Readings 283; NADINE GORDIMER; "The Diamond Mine," 283.	RICK DE MARINIS; "Your Fears Are Justified," 289.	
		HEATHER SELLERS; "It's Water, It's Not Going to Kill You," 291.		
<b>WEEK 11</b> Tuesday, March 22	<b>Spring Break—No Classes</b>			
Thursday, March 24				
<b>WEEK 12</b> Tuesday, March 29		CHAPTER 9: POETRY 306; Free Verse and Formal Verse, 308; Imagery, Connotation, and Metaphor, 310; Density and Intensity, 312; Prosody, Rhythm, and Rhyme, 316; APPENDIX C: A Basic Prosody, 393. Poetry Forms Exercise.		
Thursday, March 31		<b>Class Canceled: I will be presenting a paper at the Associate Writing Programs Conference in Vancouver.</b>		
<b>WEEK 13</b> Tuesday, April 5		SYLVIA PLATH, "Stillborn," 322.	STEVE KOWIT "The Grammar Lesson," 323.	
		PETER MEINKE, "The Poet, Trying to Surprise God," 323.	ADRIENNE RICH "Like This Together," 324.	
Thursday, April 7		ENID SHOMER, "Romantic, at Horseshoe Key," 326.	RAYMOND CARVER, "Locking Yourself Out, Then Trying to Get Back In," 327.	
		JAMES TATE, "Prose Poem," 328.	DAVE SMITH, "Black Silhouettes of Shrimpers," 329.	
<b>WEEK 14</b> Tuesday, April 12		RUTH STONE, "Repetition," 330.	AGHA SHAHID ALI, "Ghazal," 331.	
		SHARON OLDS, "The Language of the Brag," 332.	JOHN BERRYMAN, "Dream Song 14," 333.	

Tuesday, April 12, cont.		YVONNE SAPIA, "My Uncle Guillermo Speaks at His Own Funeral," 334.		
Thursday, April 14		CHAPTER 10: DRAMA 336 The Difference Between Drama and Fiction, 337; Sight: Sets, Action, Costumes, Props, 339; Sound: Nonverbal and Verbal, 342; Some Notes on Screenwriting, 347.	<b>Readings 349;</b> RICHARD DRESSER, <i>The Road to Ruin</i> , 349.	
<b>WEEK 15</b> Tuesday, April 19		SYBIL ROSEN, <i>Duet for Bear and Dog</i> , 357.	JOSE RIVERA, <i>Gas</i> 362.	
Thursday, April 21		LANFORD WILSON, <i>Funkiah</i> 367.	DAVID IVES, <i>The Philadelphia</i> 371.	
<b>WEEK 16</b> Tuesday April 26		<b>Final Discussion of Portfolio. Group exercise.</b>		
Thursday, April 28		<b>LAST DAY OF CLASS. PORTFOLIOS DUE.</b>		

NAME	PHONE NUMBER(S)	E-MAIL ADDRESS

*A Note on My Workshop Philosophy:*

Only one rule applies to the critique of manuscripts in this class: *Kindness is the only wisdom*. The principal task of this workshop is to create a safe place for writers to be honest and authentic in their discussions and their work. Some writers may be struggling to find the courage

to write stories of difficult events that have happened to them personally, or to people they know. The last thing we need to do as a class is to make the *discussion* of these stories difficult, too; doing so may cause writers to withdraw and stop taking risks for fear of making mistakes or being honest. There are no mistakes in this workshop, only opportunities to see, understand and revise.

If a writer has troubles with his or her story, try to find a way to deliver that information in a non-personal, nonjudgmental way, with empathy and compassion and, if possible, without undo sarcasm or judgment. One approach is simply to describe how you read the story or poem, what it meant to you, focusing on one or two techniques (*irony* or *sarcasm*, for example) the author has used that have contributed to that effect. Focus on what poet John Ciardi says is most important: not just *what* a poem or story means but *how* it means.

The more I teach writing, the less faith I have in giving advice, especially the whole notion that a poem or a story is something to find problems with and “fix.” If the author discovers that she has been misinterpreted in a descriptive analysis, then it follows that she will have to revise. Avoid using such subjective judgments as *good* or *bad* or *I really like/dislike this poem/story*. Even *This story works/doesn't work* isn't particularly helpful, unless you add, *for me*, and even then you must say *how* and *why* so that the author can have concrete, practical feedback to go back home and revise with. Each of us reads a story differently, with our own distinct visions, and that's what makes workshop such effective places to discuss our work. Take what you can use and forget the rest. We all have a right to tell our own stories in our own ways, and we all have a right to our own interpretations of others' stories and poems so long as there's evidence from the text to support our views. We may interpret the image of a child's flying saucer toy lying upended in a bathtub as a hint that a story is about alien abduction, but if there's nothing else in the story to support that point then perhaps the story may be about something else, the death of a child, say, or the grief of a father.

We show our work to others to help us when we're too close to it to trust our instincts completely about whether what we've written does what we'd intended, whether what's in our head has gotten onto the page. Workshops should be both honest *and* supportive, writers telling other writers not necessarily what they want to hear but what they might need to hear to make their stories work better, meanwhile helping them through the sometimes painful task of revision: re-seeing their own work clearly with some dispassionate distance, finding their stories and poems in the process of rewriting them, making unconscious elements more conscious. Workshops should also be open, generous, productive and fun, everyone feeling free to laugh a great deal—and not at others' expense—meanwhile recognizing that criticism must never be equated with cruelty or preoccupations with who's up or down but always with the shared difficulty of the work itself, always balancing a commitment to honesty about the work's effectiveness with mutual respect for those who create it and their individual creative processes and aesthetics.