

Course Syllabus

[Jump to Today](#)

English 225-E: Introduction to Creative Writing

Spring 2023 TR 12:45-2:05pm – KEIPER 100

Professor Montemarano

he/him

Office Hours: KEIPER 300 – TR 2:10-2:50pm, F 1:30-2:30pm, and by appointment

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“We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.”

—Ernest Hemingway

Course Description:

The writing of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry with a focus on student work. It is my belief that creative writing is, or should be, more than a means of self-expression; it is also an art form, and we will treat it as such. With very few exceptions, the skills necessary to become a strong writer can be learned. You can improve your writing through careful reading, consistent practice, and a close examination of your own and others' work.

Some Course Goals:

- To discover your subject matter.
- To practice reading as writers.
- To become more aware of, more in control of, the choices you make as writers.
- To learn how to avoid sentimentality, melodrama, and other forms of overwriting.
- To discover the musical pleasures of prose and verse.
- To practice discussing writing in an intelligent way.
- To provide your classmates with constructive feedback on their writing.
- To understand what true revision entails, and to practice it.
- To reflect on the strengths of your writing and specific ways you would like to improve.

Required Texts:

- *Curious Attractions* – Debra Spark
- *The Poet's Companion* – Kim Addonizio & Dorianne Laux
- Handouts (available on Canvas)

The course will be divided into four modules:

1. **Fiction.** We will spend this section of the course reading fiction, discussing craft, completing writing exercises, and writing a short story.
2. **Nonfiction.** We will spend the second section of the course reading nonfiction, discussing craft, completing writing exercises, and writing a work of nonfiction.
3. **Poetry.** We will spend the third section of the course reading poems, discussing craft, and writing poems of our own.
4. **Workshops & Revision.** During the semester, we will read and discuss *your* work. One of the best ways to become a better writer is to read someone else's work closely and actively, note its strengths, and suggest ways to improve.

Course Expectations:

You may expect the following from me:

- I will show up to every class on time, prepared to engage with you and the material.
- I will make sure that the classroom atmosphere is welcoming. We are all supporting each other in the practice of “a craft where no one ever becomes a master.” This is a time and space for you to take risks, have fun, discover your strengths, and improve as writers.
- I will take your writing as seriously as you take it, and read it with respect.
- I will give you feedback on your writing with specific suggestions for improvement. (Time won't allow me to read any writing beyond what is required for the course, nor will it allow me to proofread your writing.)
- I will be open to all voices in the classroom and will make sure everyone gets an opportunity to participate.
- I will provide you with plenty of opportunities to generate ideas and to practice before having to turn in work.
- I will be available during office hours – and via appointment – to discuss readings, your writing, or anything related to the course and writing.

I expect the following from you:

- I expect you to come to class having carefully read all of the assigned readings actively – this means that you read with a pen, pencil, or highlighter (your readings should be marked up).
- I expect you to participate – to be fully present.
- I expect that your phones will be turned off or silenced before class begins.
- I expect all of your work to be on time.
- I expect you to respect each other and each other's writing.

Workshop Notes:

What is required?

The writer will listen during the discussion of their piece, but will have an opportunity to pose a few questions at the end. Every writer should expect a generous response letter to each piece discussed. These must be **typed** and **at least 250 words**. You're writing a letter to the writer, summarizing (1) what you find interesting, pleasing, and exciting about the draft, and (2) what you believe could make the draft the best version of what it seems to want to be. Be *specific* and *constructive*. These will make up half of your course participation grade. These are to be completed *before* each workshop and given to each student writer at the conclusion of class. If you miss class, you are still responsible for returning feedback to the writer that day. **Important note: Not returning feedback to your classmates about their writing, or returning insufficient feedback, is an unacceptable breach of workshop courtesy, and is the most common cause of low grades in this course.**

What is my approach to workshop?


Too often workshop assumes that its primary task is to *fix* or *correct* what's "wrong" with the writing. While it's true that sometimes there *are* mistakes to address (e.g. unintentional verb tense shifts, proofreading), and we will point those out, I encourage us to approach workshop with a different mindset: to seek out the **magic** and **successes** and **exciting opportunities** in a draft so that the writer leaves workshop inspired to continue working on subsequent drafts.

Attendance and Absence Policy:

You are allowed **3 unexcused absences** during the semester, no questions asked. Please come to class on time. Every 15 minutes you are late will also count as an absence. Your course grade will be lowered 1/3 for every absence beyond 3. For example, if you earn a B for the course, but miss 4 classes, your final grade will drop to a B-.

Academic Honesty:

All writing turned in for this class must be your own. Any passages you include in your fiction that comes from another source must be cited. You may not turn in work for this class that you turned in for another course at F&M.

Please refer to the F&M website for a full statement on [Academic Honesty](https://www.fandm.edu/catalog/academic-honesty) 
(<https://www.fandm.edu/catalog/academic-honesty>).


Accessibility:

F&M does not discriminate on the basis of disability or any other protected class in its programs, activities, or employment practices. The College is committed to providing effective communication and ensuring that qualified individuals with disabilities receive equal access to its programs and activities.

For more information, please visit the webpage for [F&M's Office of Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](https://www.fandm.edu/office-of-student-accessibility-services) 
(<https://www.fandm.edu/office-of-student-accessibility-services>).

As your professor, I assume that everyone – that includes me – learns and processes information uniquely. Please speak with me as soon as possible about your individual learning needs and how the course can best accommodate them.

Title IX / Mandated Reporting:

It is the policy of Franklin & Marshall College that all faculty and staff are mandated reporters of sexual misconduct. This policy was enacted to ensure compliance with Title IX and other laws. It is important that students understand how mandatory reporting of sexual misconduct affects them. Here is F&M's statement regarding [Title IX and Mandated Reporting](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1otWwkAW96l1SZFBgs0CR8BPXiAhY_VVzg4gthJCJBYo/edit) 
(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1otWwkAW96l1SZFBgs0CR8BPXiAhY_VVzg4gthJCJBYo/edit).

Grades:

- Fiction draft (5+ pages), 20 points
- Nonfiction draft (5+ pages), 20 points
- Poems (3), 10 points
- Revision of one poem, 10 points
- Revision of either fiction or nonfiction (with annotations), 20 points

- Course participation, 20 points (breakdown below)
 - specificity and generosity of written feedback on student stories (10 points)
 - verbal participation during class and workshops and other evidence of engagement with the class, e.g. emailing me *before* class with thoughts/questions about the readings, stopping by during office hours (10 points)

Important note: Turning in work late, especially late enough to cause your workshop to be canceled, is also one of the most common causes of low grades in this course. Any work turned in late will receive a grade deduction of 10% per day.

Your grade will be based on a 100-point scale. Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

93-100 (A), 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-86 (B), 80-82 (B-), 77-79 (C+), 73-76 (C), 70-72 (C-), 67-69 (D+), 63-66 (D), 60-62 (D-), <60 (F)

Note: You must complete *all* requirements for the course in order to pass.

Schedule:

1/17

- Syllabus
- **Triggers:** Where Stories Come From
- Exercise: Truth and Lies

1/19

- **Narrative Delay**
- Ray Bradbury – “Mars Is Heaven”
- Shirley Jackson – “The Lottery”
- Exercise: Productive Confusion

1/24

- **Openings**
- *Curious Attractions* (16-32)
- Handout of openings (in class)
- Tyler Barton – short story openings
- Exercise: Types of Openings

1/26

- **Sentimentality**
- *Curious Attractions* (55-73)
- Tim O’Brien – “The Man I Killed” (CW: violence)
- Lydia Davis – “Grammar Questions”

1/31

- **Point of View**

- *Curious Attractions* (123-144)
- Lorrie Moore – “How to Become a Writer”
- Jamaica Kincaid – “Girl”
- Exercise: How To...

2/2

- **Characters**
- Camille Acker – “Mambo Sauce”
- Denis Johnson – “Emergency”
- Exercise: Road Trip

2/7

- **Style**
- *Curious Attractions* (33-54)
- Justin Torres – *We the Animals* (CW: violence)
- Susan Minot – “Lust”
- Exercise: Narrator with a Dynamic Voice

2/9

- Fiction Review
- Writing Lab

SAT 2/11

- Due by 4:30pm via Canvas: Short Story (5+ pages)

2/14

- Fiction workshops begin

2/16

- Fiction workshops (cont’d)

2/21

- Fiction workshops (cont’d)
- **Memory**
- Joe Brainard – *I Remember* (handout in class)
- Exercise: I Remember...

2/23

- Fiction workshops (cont’d)
- **Place**
- James Agee – “Knoxville: Summer of 1915”
- Exercise: Writing About Place

2/28

- Fiction workshops (cont'd)
- **Dear _____**
- Mary-Louise Parker – *Dear Mr. You* (79-88, 105-122, 139-144)
- Exercise: Letter as Memoir

3/2

- **EWF Writers**
- Angelique Stevens – "Ghost Bread"
- Paige Towers – "[The Cooldown](https://baltimorereview.org/winter_2015/contributor/paige-towers#The%20Cooldown)" [↗\(https://baltimorereview.org/winter_2015/contributor/paige-towers#The%20Cooldown\)](https://baltimorereview.org/winter_2015/contributor/paige-towers#The%20Cooldown)
- Edgar Kunz – poems from *Tap Out*
- Su Cho – poems from *The Symmetry of Fish*

3/7

- **Pain and Delight**
- Sonali Deraniyagala – *Wave* (excerpt) (CW: death, natural disaster)
- Ross Gay – *The Book of Delights* (excerpts)

3/9

- **Evidence**
- Jo Anne Beard – "The Fourth State of Matter" (CW: gun violence)
- Lia Purpura – "Autopsy Report"

SAT 3/11

- Due by 4:30pm via Canvas: Nonfiction (5+ pages)

SPRING BREAK

3/21

- Nonfiction workshops begin

3/23

- Nonfiction workshops (cont'd)
- Camille Acker – BANK VISITING WRITER
 - Bank Prize Craft Class, 4:30pm, Writers House
 - Bank Prize Reading, 8pm, Writers House
 - **NOTE: You must attend at least one of the above events**

3/28

- Nonfiction workshops (cont'd)

3/30: CLASS REPLACED WITH EWF (details below)

- 3/29: READING #1, 7:30pm, Green Room Theatre
- 3/30: READING #2, 7:30pm, Green Room Theatre + Craft classes during the day at Writers House

- 3/31: Craft classes + panel discussion + BBQ at Writers House
- NOTE: When the EWF schedule is finalized, I will share it with you. **You are required to attend at least one reading and at least one craft class (or the panel discussion).**

POETRY

4/4

- **Poetry Basics**
- Shel Silverstein – “Sick”
- Billy Collins – “Snow Day”
- Maggie Smith – “Good Bones”
- Catherine Bowman – “No Sorry”
- Alan Shapiro – “Questions for the Soul”

4/6

- **Images**: No Ideas but in Things
- *The Poet’s Companion* (19-29, 85-93)
- Carolyn Forché – “The Colonel”
- Robert Hass – “A Story About the Body”
- Tiana Clark – “Self Portrait as First Kiss”
- Claudia Emerson – “Driving Glove,” “Artifact”

4/11

- **Metaphor**
- *The Poet’s Companion* (94-103)
- Jack Gilbert – “Michiko Dead” (in book)
- Sharon Olds – “Feared Drowned” (in book)
- James Hoch, “Sleeping Shark”
- Matthew Dickman – “V”
- Danez Smith – “fall poem”

4/13

- **Line & Stanza Breaks**
- *The Poet’s Companion* (104-114)
- William Carlos Williams – “This Is Just to Say,” “The Red Wheelbarrow”
- Hanif Abdurraqib – “No Diggity”
- Ross Gay – “catalog of unabashed gratitude”

4/18

- **Poetry as Music**
- *The Poet’s Companion* (115-128, 138-160)
- Todd Boss – “Wood Burning”
- W.S. Merwin – “Thanks”
- Ada Limon – “The End of Poetry”

- Gabrielle Calvocoressi – “Miss you. Would like to grab that chilled tofu we love.” and “Miss you. Would like to take a walk with you.”

4/20

- **Formal Poetry**
- *The Poet’s Companion* (161-170)
- Martha Collins – “The Story We Know”
- Deborah Paredez – “Uvalde Shooting Highlights Roles of Doors in Security Plans”
- Diane Seuss – “[OD’d on his suboxone]” and “[Where is the drug to drug]”

SAT 4/22

- Due by 4:30pm via Canvas: 3 Poems

4/25

- Poetry workshops

4/27

- Poetry workshops






5/3



- **One poem revision due @ 11:59pm**

5/5

- **Prose revision (fiction or nonfiction) + annotations due @ 11:59pm**

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Sat Feb 11, 2023	 Short Story (5 pages) https://fandm.instructure.com/courses/18527/assignments/187810	due by 4:30pm
Sat Mar 11, 2023	 Nonfiction (5 pages) https://fandm.instructure.com/courses/18527/assignments/187807	due by 4:30pm
Sat Apr 22, 2023	 3 Poems https://fandm.instructure.com/courses/18527/assignments/187804	due by 4:30pm
Wed May 3, 2023	 Revision: 1 poem https://fandm.instructure.com/courses/18527/assignments/187808	due by 11:59pm
Fri May 5, 2023	 Revision: Fiction or Nonfiction (with annotations)	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
	 (https://fandm.instructure.com/courses/18527/assignments/187809) 	
	<div>  <div> <div>Course engagement: in-class,</div> <div>email, office hours</div> </div> </div> <div> (https://fandm.instructure.com/courses/18527/assignments/187805) </div>	
	<div>  <div> <div>Course engagement: written</div> <div>workshop feedback</div> </div> </div> <div> (https://fandm.instructure.com/courses/18527/assignments/187806) </div>	