Introduction to Creative Writing

Hartwick College ENGL 213-A (3 Credits; EL; GEO 1, 3, 4, 7) Spring 2021

Dr. Bradley J. Fest

Assistant Professor of English

Office: 226 Clark Hall, ext. 4921

TuTh 8:40–10:00 a.m., Clark 329

Zoom link for class: by request

Office Hours: by appointment via Zoom

Email: <u>festb@hartwick.edu</u> Office Hours link: <u>https://hartwick.zoom.us/j/2723931441</u>

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

Zoom. If you are coming to class remotely, make sure to install Zoom on your computer.

Microsoft Office. Students are required to use Microsoft Word for this class. Please 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.

Prerequisites

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

Note on Class Meetings

Participants will wear face coverings in the classroom. 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 1, 3, 4, 7)

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 you will compose poems and stories of your 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 student work in a writing workshop, and students will be workshopped at least twice during the semester. Within the next two weeks, I will post a workshop schedule with primary reader assignments to D2L. Primary readers are principally responsible for responding to their assigned writer's work at the beginning of our workshops. Each student will also be expected to write brief comments on their peers' work and email the instructor and writer those comments for credit after each workshop.

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) learn to identify conventional creative writing techniques; 2) learn to read as writers and use this knowledge to more successfully write and discuss works of creative writing; and 3) learn to produce works of creative writing that demonstrate an understanding of literary and formal conventions while also articulating a personal artistic vision.

Other Course Requirements and Assignments

Texts—As becoming a strong, careful reader is essential for developing as a writer, 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 and making sure you can easily access .pdfs from D2L (either digitally or printed out), along with 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. 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 assignment can also be revised for a new grade that will replace the original. For reasons of logistics, writing assignments will not be accepted late. The due dates are below. The assignments will follow. All assignments must be uploaded to D2L as .doc or .docx files (that is, as MS Word files). Other file formats will not be read and will not receive credit. There will be a link under "Discussions" 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. (Turning in revisions is optional.)

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 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. These responses will be collected for credit. Please consult the assignment, "Responding to Your Peers' Work," for further details.

Participation—As we will critically read texts 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 three absences will negatively affect your grade and can be grounds for failure, in which case you may want to consider withdrawing from the course and taking it again under better circumstances.

As all course sessions will be held synchronously, students attending class online will be treated as "present" or "absent" in a fashion similar to attending class face to face (see more below on attendance). Students are responsible for communicating with me regarding any issues they might have attending class, whether online or in person.

Grading

Participation: 20%

Responses to Your Peers: 10% Poems 1–6: 30% (5% each)

Flash Fiction: 5% Shorty Story 1: 15% Short Story 2: 20%

Expectations

This semester, we again take up our scholastic work under the emergency conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic. I therefore want to share what you can expect from me and what I expect from you to ensure we can meet our course objectives. Let us expect each other to be:

Flexible—I understand that challenges related to health, technology, family, and more are likely to come up this term, so I plan to be accommodating. I am also sensitive to the heightened levels of anxiety and stress the pandemic produces. If anything comes up, get in touch with me right away so we can work together. I must also ask you to be flexible with me and your peers as we adapt to the changing conditions at Hartwick and in our larger community.

Responsive—I check email regularly and usually answer quickly. I will communicate with you via your Hartwick email account. I ask you to check email daily, read all messages I send, and get back to me as soon as you can when a response is required.

Present—Usually, we build relationships and community in the classroom. This semester, some of us might be doing so from a distance. I want you to feel that I am available and engaged with you and with our collective work. I also want you to find support from friends and peers in our class. I am hoping our meetings will help us achieve this. In addition, I will offer feedback on assignments, answer questions, and be eager to see you online if you schedule a meeting with me. I ask you to be present not only for me, but for each other too. Especially for those online: Take group conversation seriously. Contribute to class discussion. Ask questions and share thoughts and support each other in the chat, just as you would in class. Turn on cameras as often as you can. Do not browse other unrelated windows during our meetings (more below).

Classroom Etiquette: In Person

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). It is fine if students use a laptop or tablet to access course readings or student writing; students are also heavily encouraged to print out their own copies of texts and bring them to class (trust me on this one). Using your phone to access course texts, however, will not be permitted.

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.

Laptops, Phones, Tablets—Students are permitted to use a laptop or tablet during class, but students observed using their mobile phones will be marked absent (whether I draw attention to it or not). Limit the use of your laptop or tablet to class materials only. Doing otherwise will result in being marked absent.

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 with that student 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 you are not prepared, have not done the assigned reading, or have not read your peers' work, you will be marked absent.

Participation—Because of the concurrent mode of instruction for this course, all students should be prepared to participate throughout the class. This also means that I will frequently call on students, whether they are online or in person, 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.

Seating—Wherever you are sitting today is your assigned seat for the remainder of the semester.

Classroom Etiquette: Online

Some students may be attending class online, so the guidelines below are intended to help them understand my expectations. If the class moves fully online at any point during the semester, all class meetings will be held synchronously via Zoom at our normal meeting time and, unless otherwise informed, all assignments, course policies, and due dates will remain the same.

Camera—Though not a requirement, students are *highly encouraged* to turn their cameras on. In my experience, Zoom participants tend to be more engaged this way, and, as participation is part of your grade, having your camera turned on is a good way of showing that you are participating.

Microphone—Unless you are speaking or desire to speak, please mute your microphone.

Raising Hands—If possible, please try to visually indicate that you would like to speak by: physically raising your hand, using the "raise hand" button under "Participants," or using the "clap" emoji on Zoom (or, if we are fully online, indicate that you would like to speak in chat).

Stepping Away—If you have to step away from the computer, please indicate that you are doing so (and when you are back) in the chat channel. (This can be as simple as typing: "brb.")

Cold Calling—Students who are online should expect me to call on them at least once per class (even if they have not raised their hands). If a student is unavailable to answer my question—say, because they have stepped away from the computer without indicating they have done so in the chat—they will be marked absent for the day.

Chat—Students are encouraged to use the chat channel and to do so somewhat informally. That said, during in-person classes, it is difficult for me to look at the chat, so please visually indicate that you have a question or comment.

Content Warnings

Every piece that we read in this class will be concerned, in one way or another, with what it means to be human. This can mean joy, humor, healing, and hope. This can also mean conflict, pain, isolation, and loss. If you have serious concerns about encountering a particular type of content or are struggling with assigned material for any reason, please let me know. If you are concerned that one of your own poems or stories tackles material that will be potentially distressing to your classmates, consider placing a content warning (CW) on the top of your draft, like so: "CW: violence." Such warnings are not intended to spoil your story or to offer readers an excuse not to engage, but rather to ensure your audience is in the right mindset to fully invest themselves in the world of your writing.

College Policy on Social Distancing, Personal Protective Equipment, and Personal Hygiene

Hartwick College's policies in adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic are covered in detail in the Reopening Plan, which describes our Social Compact (https://www.hartwick.edu/about-us/reopening-our-campus/). Some specifics of the plan that are relevant to instruction include: 1) Face coverings must be worn while in any campus building and/or public space, even when a six-foot distance is thought to be possible [and they must cover your mouth and nose]. 2) Whenever possible, maintain social-distancing of six-feet in all instructional spaces. 3) Students who cannot attend class in person will have the opportunity to continue their education through distance learning methods. 4) Instructional spaces will have assigned seating. [Note: If a student is not abiding by these policies, they will be asked to leave the classroom immediately.]

College Policies and Guidance on Distance Learning

From time to time, the College teaches courses by distance learning, or in hybrid (online/distance learning and face-to-face mixed) formats. This may be due to the original class design, to control classroom capacity, or because students are unable to attend classes for reasons beyond their control. Situations may force the course to change from one mode to another during the semester. If this happens, you will need to be prepared for online distance learning with access to a reliable internet connection, an adequate computing device (typically a PC or tablet), and access to D2L and Zoom videoconferencing software (both available at no charge). We will also be using the College's learning management system, BrightSpace D2L, for which online training is available and for which we can provide support. Different formats will have different time requirements and expectations. College policies on credit hours for courses can be found by clicking here. In addition to these policies, your faculty will:

- Account for course time: Whether teaching in one, or when transitioning between, different types of
 instruction the amount of instructional time across the entire term is critical. If there are some
 weeks when class activities are suspended, we will help you make them up within the term.
- Take attendance and record participation: Attendance in synchronous sessions (learning at fixed times
 online), or participation in asynchronous (learning anytime) activities such as discussion boards
 and taking quizzes, will be recorded as attendance or participation for distance learning courses.
- Schedule synchronous sessions at the time classes are scheduled for in WebAdvisor: If synchronous online sessions are used, they will be held at the same time the face-to-face course is scheduled to allow you to integrate your time for academics with other obligations.

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 2021 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.

Special Assistance

Hartwick offers free counseling for students who are experiencing personal or emotional difficulties. The Counseling Center is located in the Perrella Health Center and offers psychological services and sexual assault services. Appointments can be made Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., by calling (607) 431-4420 or emailing counselingcenter@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.

Calendar¹

2.16 Syllabus

Introductions

2.18 **Poem 1 Due**

Kenneth Koch, Making Your Own Days (pp. 13-26)

Emily Dickinson, "I would not paint—a picture—" (pp. 210–11 in MYOD)

- 2.23 No Class, Break Day
- 2.25 Kenneth Koch, *Making Your Own Days* (pp. 27–49)

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)

3.2 **Poem 2 Due**

Kenneth Koch, *Making Your Own Days* (pp. 51–92)

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*)

3.4 Workshop

3.9 **Poem 3 Due**

Kenneth Koch, *Making Your Own Days* (pp. 93–133)

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*)

- 3.11 Workshop
- 3.16 **Poem 4 Due**

Terrance Hayes, *Hip Logic* (pp. 1–24)

- 3.18 Workshop
- 3.23 **Poem 5 Due**

Terrance Hayes, *Hip Logic* (pp. 27–57)

- 3.25 Workshop
- 3.30 **Poem 6 Due**

Terrance Hayes, *Hip Logic* (pp. 61–90)

4.1 Workshop

¹ 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.

4.6 Midterm Portfolio: Poetry Revisions Due Ernest Hemingway, "A Very Short Story" George Saunders, "Sticks"² Alison Townsend, "The Barbie Birthday"3 Michael Augustin, "The Handbag"4 4.8 David Foster Wallace, "Incarnations of Burned Children"⁵ Deb Olin Unferth, "Likable"6 Lucy Corin, "Miracles"⁷ Hugh Behm-Steinberg, "Taylor Swift"8 4.13 **Flash Fiction Due** Denis Johnson, "Car Crash While Hitchhiking" 4.15 Workshop Denis Johnson, "Emergency" ¹⁰ 4.20 4.22 No Class, Break Day 4.27 **Short Story 1 Due** Jhumpa Lahiri, "A Temporary Matter" 11 4.29 Workshop Jhumpa Lahiri "Interpreter of Maladies" and "Sexy" and "Sexy" and "Sexy". 5.4 5.6 Workshop **Short Story 2 Due** 5.11 George Saunders, "Escape from Spiderhead"¹⁴ 5.13 Workshop 5.18 George Saunders, "Semplica Girl Diaries" ¹⁵ 5.20 Workshop

5.24

12:00-3:00 p.m.

(More Info TBD)

Final Portfolio: Fiction Revisions Due Class Wrap-Up: Group Reading

Endnotes

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Jake Wolff for the language used in the "Learning Outcomes" section of this syllabus, to Amy J. Lueck and Racheal Fest for the language used in the "Expectations" section, and to Tessa Yang for the language used in the "Content Warnings" section.

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 Lahiri, Jhumpa. "Sexy." *Interpret of Maladies*, Mariner, 1999, pp. 83–110.

¹⁴ Saunders, George. "Escape from Spiderhead." *Tenth of December*, Random House, 2013, pp. 45–81.

¹⁵ Saunders, George. "Semplica Girl Diaries." *Tenth of December*, Random House, 2013, pp. 109–67.