

## Introduction to Creative Writing

Hartwick College  
ENGL 213-6  
MWF 1:25–2:20 p.m., Clark 252  
(3 Credits; EL; GEO 2)  
Fall 2023

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### Required Texts

Hayes, Terrance. *Hip Logic*. Penguin, 2002.  
Oliver, Mary. *A Poetry Handbook*. Mariner, 1994.

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.

### 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 as a gateway course for 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. (Comments will also be collected on occasion to make sure students are doing this work.)

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. More information on workshops can be found in the Primary Reader Assignment.

### **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 or has received academic accommodations, 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. The due dates are below and 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.

*Portfolios*—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 portfolios is optional.

*Quizzes*—Students will often be given unannounced short quizzes on the assigned material. Students who have done the reading will, for the most part, find these quizzes quite manageable. Students who fail a quiz will lose two percentage points off their total final grade. (If you do the math, multiple failed quizzes could dramatically lower your grade.) Quizzes cannot be made up, though I will drop the lowest score. Unless otherwise informed, all quizzes are open book.

*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.

*Spot-Checking Comments*—Occasionally, I will also collect the marginal comments required from each class participant on the writing we’ll be workshopping to make sure students are providing feedback to their peers. Students who have failed to provide marginal comments and a

brief paragraph of feedback on *all* of a writer's work on a given day will lose two percentage points off their total final grade.

*Participation*—As we will read texts critically and discuss each other's work, 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, it is each individual student's responsibility to communicate with me regarding any issues they might have attending class sessions 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.

### **Grading**

Participation: 20%

Primary Reader Responses: 5%

Poems 1–5: 35% (7% each)

Flash Fiction: 5%

Shorty Story 1: 10%

Short Story 2: 25%

## **Classroom Etiquette**

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 *printouts* of readings from D2L and *their peers' writing*—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 twenty years of teaching in higher education, I have found that, unsurprisingly, students who take notes in class perform better than students who do not. (Remember too that 20% of your grade is based on participation; taking notes is clear evidence of engagement in the class discussion and thus evidence of participation as well.)

*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. 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 or if a student has received academic accommodations.

*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.

*Headphones*—Please make sure to remove your headphones or earbuds in class. Failure to do so will result in being marked absent.

*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. (Note: this is a separate policy than either spot checks or quizzes; see above.)

*Participation*—Students should be prepared to participate throughout the class. I frequently call on students even if they have not raised their hand. Please speak with me during the first week of class if this is an issue for you.

*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.

### **FlightPath**

Hartwick's 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 highlight your accomplishments. This course supports the development of student educational outcomes in the following way(s): it fulfills FlightPath General Education Outcome 2 (GEO 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 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. Plagiarism also includes: copy and pasting from online (or offline) sources without quotation or attribution; using online paraphrase tools (such as QuillBot) to change other people's words and then submitting them as your own; and using generative AI (such as ChatGPT) and submitting without attribution any portion of its output as your own, including any ideas or topics it may have generated.* In this class, students are prohibited from using generative AI in any way unless an assignment says otherwise, and any unattributed use of generative AI constitutes plagiarism.<sup>1</sup> Finally, as each assignment in this class is designed to build upon the previous one, culminating in midterm and final portfolios, if a student is found plagiarizing any portion of work that might be revised for a portfolio—so Poems 1–5 for the midterm portfolio, or Flash Fiction and Short Story 1 and 2 for the final portfolio—they will be ineligible to submit their portfolios for new grades. 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 fall 2023 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](mailto:sanfordl@hartwick.edu) or [AccessAbilityServices@hartwick.edu](mailto: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 free one-on-one writing support for any stage of writing, including brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and revising. The Writing Center offers personalized feedback on short assignments, essays, senior theses, resumes, graduate school applications, scholarship applications, and other documents. Students can request in-person or [Zoom](#) support by scheduling thirty-minute or one-hour appointments through [Navigate](#). Asynchronous email support is also available by emailing your assignment prompt, assignment, and any questions to [WritingCenter@Hartwick.edu](mailto:WritingCenter@Hartwick.edu). In some cases, I may send you to the Writing Center for help on a particular assignment or issue.

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<sup>1</sup> On attributing AI output in MLA style, see "Ask the MLA: How Do I Cite Generative AI in MLA Style?" *MLA Style Center*, 17 Mar. 2023, <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>.

### **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 many other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you. 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

## Calendar<sup>2</sup>

- 8.28 Syllabus
- 8.30 **Poem 1 Due**  
Introductions  
Ice-Breaking Activity  
Robert Frost, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” (p. 25 in Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook*)
- 9.1 Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook* (pp. 1–12)  
William Carlos Williams, “The Red Wheelbarrow” (p. 73 in *A Poetry Handbook*)
- 9.4 No Class, Labor Day
- 9.6 **Poem 2 Due**  
Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook* (pp. 13–34)  
Walt Whitman, from *Leaves of Grass* (p. 71 in *A Poetry Handbook*)  
Elizabeth Bishop, “The Fish” (pp. 95–97 in *A Poetry Handbook*)
- 9.8 Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook* (pp. 35–66)  
John Donne, “Holy Sonnet 10” and “Holy Sonnet 14”<sup>1</sup>
- 9.11 Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook* (pp. 67–91)
- 9.13 **Poem 3 Due**  
Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook* (pp. 92–122)
- 9.15 Workshop
- 9.18 Terrance Hayes, *Hip Logic* (pp. 1–24)
- 9.20 **Poem 4 Due**  
Workshop
- 9.22 Class Canceled
- 9.25 Terrance Hayes, *Hip Logic* (pp. 27–57)  
(Workshop if necessary: TBD)
- 9.27 **Poem 5 Due**  
Workshop
- 9.29 Workshop
- 10.2 Terrance Hayes, *Hip Logic* (pp. 61–90)  
(Workshop if necessary: TBD)
- 10.4 Workshop
- 10.6 Workshop
- 10.9 **2nd Primary Reader Responses Due for Poetry**  
Workshop
- 10.11 Introduction to fiction (in class)

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<sup>2</sup> 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.



- 10.13 **Midterm Portfolio: Poetry Revisions Due**  
Ernest Hemingway, “A Very Short Story”<sup>2</sup>  
George Saunders, “Sticks”<sup>3</sup>  
Alison Townsend, “The Barbie Birthday”<sup>4</sup>  
Michael Augustin, “The Handbag”<sup>5</sup>
- 10.16 No Class, October Break
- 10.18 David Foster Wallace, “Incarnations of Burned Children”<sup>6</sup>  
Deb Olin Unferth, “Likable”<sup>7</sup>  
Lucy Corin, “Miracles”<sup>8</sup>  
Hugh Behm-Steinberg, “Taylor Swift”<sup>9</sup>
- 10.20 **Flash Fiction Due**  
Flash Fiction Continued (bring both flash fiction reading packets to class)
- 10.23 Denis Johnson, “Car Crash While Hitchhiking”<sup>10</sup>
- 10.25 Denis Johnson, “Emergency”<sup>11</sup>
- 10.27 **Short Story 1 Due**  
Denis Johnson, “Emergency” (continued)
- 10.30 Jhumpa Lahiri, “A Temporary Matter”<sup>12</sup>
- 11.1 Workshop
- 11.3 Workshop
- 11.6 Jhumpa Lahiri “Interpreter of Maladies”<sup>13</sup>
- 11.8 Workshop
- 11.10 Class Canceled
- 11.13 George Saunders, “Escape from Spiderhead” (pp. 45–65)<sup>14</sup>
- 11.15 **Short Story 2 Due**  
Workshop
- 11.17 Workshop
- 11.20 George Saunders, “Escape from Spiderhead” (pp. 65–81)<sup>15</sup>  
(Workshop if necessary: TBD)
- 11.22 No Class, Thanksgiving Break
- 11.24 No Class, Thanksgiving Break
- 11.27 **2nd Primary Reader Responses Due for Fiction**  
Workshop
- 11.29 Workshop
- 12.1 Workshop
- 12.6 **Final Portfolio Due on Top of Bookshelf Outside Dr. Fest’s Office (Clark Hall 226) and Uploaded to D2L (Clark 226) by 5 p.m.**

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Handout transcribed from: Donne, John. “Holy Sonnet 10” and “Holy Sonnet 14.” *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, edited by Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy, 5th ed., W. W. Norton, 2005, p. 320.
- <sup>2</sup> Hemingway, Ernest. “A Very Short Story.” *In Our Time*, Scribner, 1996, pp. 65–66.
- <sup>3</sup> Saunders, George. “Sticks.” *Tenth of December*, Random House, 2013, pp. 29–30.
- <sup>4</sup> 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.
- <sup>5</sup> 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.
- <sup>6</sup> Wallace, David Foster. “Incarnations of Burned Children.” *Oblivion: Stories*, Little, Brown, 2004, pp. 114–16.
- <sup>7</sup> Unferth, Deb Olin. “Likable.” *Noon*, no. 12 (2012), <http://muumuuhouse.com/dou.fiction2.html>.
- <sup>8</sup> Corin, Lucy. “Miracles.” *One Hundred Apocalypses and Other Apocalypses*, McSweeney’s, 2013, pp. 114–15.
- <sup>9</sup> 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/>.
- <sup>10</sup> Johnson, Denis. “Car Crash While Hitchhiking.” *Jesus’ Son*. Picador, 1992, pp. 1–10.
- <sup>11</sup> Johnson, Denis. “Emergency.” *Jesus’ Son*. Picador, 1992, pp. 55–72.
- <sup>12</sup> Lahiri, Jhumpa. “A Temporary Matter.” *Interpreter of Maladies*, Mariner, 1999, pp. 1–22.
- <sup>13</sup> Lahiri, Jhumpa. “Interpreter of Maladies.” *Interpreter of Maladies*, Mariner, 1999, pp. 43–69.
- <sup>14</sup> Saunders, George. “Escape from Spiderhead.” *Tenth of December*, Random House, 2013, pp. 45–81.
- <sup>15</sup> Saunders, George. “Escape from Spiderhead.” *Tenth of December*, Random House, 2013, pp. 45–81.

## 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>).