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ENG 2007-001: Creative Writing, Fiction

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ENG 2007, Creative Writing, Fiction, Spring 2012

11-11:50 am MWF, Coleman 3159
Office: 3331 Coleman Hall
E-mail: rgay at eiu dot edu
Office Hours: M, W: noon-1p; Th: 4-5

Textbooks: What We'll Be Reading:

Writing Fiction, Burroway et al.
Best American Short Stories 2010, Russo, ed.
Other readings as assigned.

The Meaning of Life or What This Course is About:

In this class we will learn about what it means to tell stories, to create fictions, to build worlds and then inhabit those worlds with people who are, like us, complex and interesting. This class will also focus on reading because, as it is so often said, the best writers are the best readers. Finally, we'll talk about what it means to be a writer in this day and age—how to study literary magazines to know where your work will fit best, how to manage the submission process, resources that will help you as a writer, as well as how the shifting publishing industry will affect you as a writer.

What We Will Be Doing:

This class will function like a creative writing workshop--students will be assigned to a cohort of four or five peers with whom you will workshop your stories periodically throughout the semester. We'll also be doing writing exercises and by the end of the semester, you will have produced two short stories, one shorter than 1,000 words, and one longer short story. We will be reading a great deal of fiction from the *Best American Short Stories* anthology and popular (and emerging) literary magazines. You will be expected to keep a weekly reading journal you should set up at Wordpress.com.

Syllabus

The syllabus for this class is ENTIRELY online. The best way to get up to date information about what is due and when is to consult the syllabus, online:
<http://www.creatingtexts.org/courses/eng-2007-spring-2012/>

All assignments will always be posted on the assignment page according to the date the work was assigned. You can find that page here:
<http://www.creatingtexts.org/courses/eng-2007-spring-2012/assignments/>

Learning Outcomes

There are two goals in this class—to become a better fiction writer and to become a stronger reader as a writer.

How to Get an "A" in This Class

- Read and critically engage with assigned material prior to class and come prepared to contribute to class discussions;
- Submit all homework in typewritten form unless otherwise noted;
- Complete individual and group assignments, do your best work, and submit homework on time;
- Participate in class discussions, engaging in enthusiastic, respectful communication;
- Provide constructive feedback to your classmates during peer workshops.
- If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Reading & Writing Expectations

This is college and as such, you will be expected to do a college-level amount of work. There is a lot of reading and writing in this class. If you do not like the idea of a lot of reading and writing, this may not be the class for you and I completely understand.

Throughout the semester, you will be responsible for several forms of writing because this is a writing class, including:

- a weekly reading blog
- writing exercises as assigned
- two short stories
- a literary journal map

This class not only emphasizes writing, it also emphasizes revision. To that end, you will turn in both rough and final drafts of the two, polished short stories you are expected to craft this semester. I expect significant revision between drafts, where you focus on truly rethinking your ideas, how you shape your story, the emotions you want to elicit from your audience, and so on. Revising is, in many ways, the most important part of the writing process because it allows you to take the raw material of your rough draft and craft something unique.

Workshop Expectations

Sharing your writing with your peers is a vulnerable process. You have a responsibility in each workshop as both a reader and a writer. As a reader, you want to engage with the stories you read, thoroughly. You want to think about those stories as both a reader and a writer and you want to provide your classmates with CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK. You should not be afraid to critically engage the stories you read. If there are elements of a given story that aren't working, that are poorly written, that are not believable, it is your responsibility to voice your concerns. Simply saying, "I like your story," is not providing feedback. There's nothing in that kind of statement for a writer to grow. You not only need to share your opinions, informed by the concepts we discuss in class, you need to explain WHY you have those opinions. When you are workshopping with your small groups, you should provide them with at least 500 words of typewritten feedback they can use to assist in their revision process.

Communication and Classroom Etiquette

Etiquette is important. While I want our class time to be fun and I am a fairly easygoing person, there are a few areas where I am not so easygoing. When you are e-mailing me, it is not acceptable to write something like "Hey" or simply begin your e-mail without any greeting. Please begin any e-mail correspondence with me (or, frankly, with anyone) with "Dear Roxane," or "Dear Dr. Gay," or "Hi Professor Gay," or something along those lines that indicates an awareness that you are addressing a specific individual for a specific purpose. E-mails that don't follow a certain etiquette for communicating will not be responded to. If you ask me, "Will I miss anything important?" when querying if it is acceptable to miss class, I will get irritated because every class day is important. Electronic devices such as cellphones, iPods, and iPads (unless you are reading a textbook on an iPad or other e-reader) should be stowed in the overhead cabins or beneath the seat in front of you during class. If your cellphone rings or buzzes or begins playing the latest Top 40 song during class, I might answer it or confiscate it and that won't be fun for anyone.

Attendance Policy: Showing Up Matters

Attendance in a course like this is very important and will be rewarded through the participation portion of the grade. If you miss more than three classes, your final grade will be affected. Excused absences will not be penalized. You are responsible for acquiring the information missed as a result of an absence. Assignments must be submitted when due even if the you will be absent from class on the due date. No late assignments will be accepted without prior arrangement. Attending class unprepared is considered an absence.

Using the Writing Center

I encourage you to use the EIU Writing Center located at 3110 Coleman Hall. This free service provides one-to-one conferences with writing center consultants who can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support, and documenting your papers.

The writing center is open to help any student from any major at any stage of his or her writing process, and its system of one-to-one conferences demonstrates value and respect for individual writers, all of whom can benefit from feedback about their works in progress. The center is not a proofreading or editing or remedial service, however. It is a place where you can learn how to become a more thoughtful, independent, and rhetorically effective writer.

To schedule an appointment, you can drop by the center (3110 Coleman Hall) or you can call 581-5929. The writing center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. On Friday hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sessions last anywhere from 10 minutes to 45 minutes.

No One Likes a Cheater: Plagiarism Policy

Here is the official statement on plagiarism by EIU's English Department: "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources."

Grading

You must complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in this course. It is possible to receive a total of 1,000 points (give or take) throughout the semester.

Reading Blog 15%

Short Stories 40%

Writing Exercises 20%

Literary Journal Map 10%

Participation 15%

Grading Scale

A=Outstanding Work; B=Good Work; C=Average Work; D=Deficient in form or structure or content; F=Seriously deficient in form or structure or content; sad face.

100-99% = A

89-80 = B

79-70 = C

69-65 = D

Below 65% = F

**All material in the syllabus is subject to change.*