

**Course Title: An Introduction to Creative Writing: Fundamentals of Narrative**

**Course Code: EGL 40**

**Instructor: Brenden Willey**

## **Course Summary:**

This course will introduce the fundamentals of narrative writing—in fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction—and of the creative writing workshop. Each week we'll read three or four texts, usually quite short, in one of the genres, and students will be given prompts to produce short manuscripts of their own. Most weeks, we will discuss the exemplary texts as a full class, and will break up into smaller groups of three or four to discuss student manuscripts. At the end of the term, students will have the opportunity to submit one of these manuscripts, revised, (or a new short manuscript, a scene or a poem) for the whole class to read and respond to. We'll investigate the commonalities and differences in storytelling across different genres, and there's surely no better way to investigate than by trying your hand at each form.

We have no assigned textbook or anthology. Readings will be sourced from free texts online. Occasionally they will require free registration with a website, but no more than that. Most of the stories are also widely found in collections and anthologies in any bookstore, used or otherwise (not to mention the local library).

You will need a budget for printing. Most weeks you will need to bring four or five copies of your short writing manuscripts (no more than two pages each) to distribute to me and to your small workshop group.

*\*Please see course page for full description and additional details.*

## **Grade Options and Requirements:**

- No Grade Requested (NGR)
  - This is the default option. No credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - Score will be determined by student attendance and participation. Credit is given at 70% completion of requirements.
- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - Please note that you will not receive graded work throughout the term, but you are welcome at any time to inquire about your standing in the course.
    - Participation 40%

(including workshop letters)	
▪ Short writing assignments	30%
▪ Workshop submission (revision of any short assignment)	15%
▪ New manuscript for week 10	15%

*\*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.*

### **A note on workshop comments and letters, or “peer critiques”:**

One of the most valuable elements of a writing class is the opportunity to have your work seriously critiqued both by your instructor and your peers. The critiques you write and give will be as valuable as those you receive. You will engage, therefore, in the traditional workshop ritual of writing short responses to other writers in the class (though the nature of this course will likely necessitate that these responses be shorter than they will be in the more advanced workshops). Giving such critiques encourages us to take the critical step of articulating and beginning to form fully our own personal literary philosophies. In other words, a good critique might benefit you more than it will benefit the writer of the draft you’re responding to. Make sure your comments and responses are carefully thought-out, both critical and kind. It’s important to remember that we won’t be discussing polished manuscripts but early drafts.

### **Tentative Weekly Outline:**

#### Week 1: Introductions

Greetings, icebreakers  
Introduction to narrative  
In-class reading  
In-class writing

#### Week 2: Short stories

Flannery O’Connor, “The Nature and Aim of Fiction”  
Flannery O’Connor, excerpt from “Writing Short Stories”  
Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find”  
James Joyce, “Araby”  
Fiction scene due

#### Week 3: Short stories, cont’d

John Barth, “Incremental Perturbation”

James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"  
Fiction scene due  
Small-group workshops

Week 4: Memoir and personal essay

James Agee, excerpt from introduction to *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*  
James Agee, "At the Forks" and "Near a Church"  
Nonfiction exercise due  
Small group workshop

Week 5: Memoir and personal essay

Virginia Woolf, "The Death of the Moth"  
Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting"  
Elizabeth Tallent, "Little X"  
Nonfiction exercise due  
Small group workshop

Week 6: Poems and Prose

Austin Smith, "The Halverson Brothers"  
Austin Smith, a selection of poems  
Guest lecture from the author  
One poem due

Week 7: Poems

A selections of poems by Ellen Bryant Voigt, Robert Lowell, James Dickey, and others  
One poem due  
Small group workshop

Week 8:

Full Class Workshop 1

Week 9:

Full Class Workshop 2

Week 10:

Full Class Workshop 3 and/or readings of new work