ENGL 3312.001 Creative Writing 1  
Fall 2014  
Professor Luke Goebel  
University of Texas at Tyler

Required Texts:
1. One piece of poetry or prose (or several short pieces) that you will bring to read aloud during our first day of class—something(s) you find exemplary in terms of sound and affect.
2. Your work. Bring your photocopied work on the class meeting prior to the one in which your work will be discussed in workshop. You will also bring two copies of a letter for each student in workshop the day of their workshop, printed on printing paper, addressed to the student.

NEVER GIVE AN INCH -Ken Kesey

What we are up to: A writer must have dominion on the page—must keep the reader between states of wanting and awe.

We are going to look at writing in terms of its effect, in what we call “good” or even “great” writing, in fiction or poetry or creative non-fiction—our written word is always employed to establish effective force on the page. This does not mean the use of brute force, but the establishing of authority that comes from knowing and demonstrating one’s craft: sound and recursion, what delights, and what implicates, and what alerts a reader to the presence of a new sort of genius. This genius is available to you now, or soon, if you want it.

In this class, we will study what I am calling “the economy of language”. We will learn how we can gain more effective force in our uses of language and employment of sound and form and the elements of a chosen genre. We will gain more power and more control—we will find the ability to understand the choices we are making in our making! We will see how we can do this “economically” meaning with the least amount of waste or loss.

We will read, investigate, scrutinize, and discuss the constructions of poetry, short fiction, creative non-fiction, and prose. We will read, re-read, and then ask questions in class about the assigned reading materials—always paying attention to work being done in each sentence or line—to sound and effect. We will probe. We will realize. This isn’t about looking good or proving how intelligent we are. We are here to discover the techniques authors have employed in their literary works and we are going to glean what we can from these techniques, learning as we
go about what is accidental, mysterious, wondrous about the writing process, but with attention to choices, so we can focus our endeavors rather than fire blindly.

In this class, you are reading to discover how the writer has achieved what they have (achieved!): this isn’t about morality, right and wrong, and/or moralizing. We will be doing some analysis of texts, but not for the sake of traditional criticism—we will be analyzing affect, economy, and dominion in pursuit of taking a clearer look at our writing in order to gain genius in our work.

What we are going to learn is how to prevent “lossiness”, as in the loss of power, of control, of economy, of implication of the reader, of genius, and of delight—the loss of our ability to keep the reader and ourselves all the way into the words on the page.

We also will discover why it is that we write. We must have something original compelling us to the page. This class should inspire you to find what you must write, and should teach you the craft of your writing and how to attend to the choices and elements you face in writing.

The Work and the Process: We will read and we will discuss a wide array of texts to investigate how authors have exhibited economy of language, control, and mastered affect. You will write personal imitations and engage in meaningful discussions with our fellow writers. Perhaps most importantly, every member of this class will write. Each member will participate in workshop, giving and receiving careful feedback within the workshop setting we will create together.

Each of you will create a portfolio of your writing—both self-directed writing and writing generated through assignments given in class. What you write will be strengthened through revision and revision will be strengthened and directed through class and workshop. We will forge meaningful and rigorously honest relationships, with the hope that we will build lasting connections. One of the greatest tools and sources of inspiration for a writer is another writer with a good ear and an honest tongue. Hopefully, you will leave this class with at least one good reader with whom you can show your work when you are no longer in a creative writing class/workshop.

Note: Although playing it safe, being complimentary or silent about another’s work during workshop may seem kind or may appear to pay off in terms of popularity or comfort, in workshop this is harmful and unkind. While tact is a necessary component, and feedback must be given in a manner that is supportive to the work and the author, a workshop is a place (as the name entails) for craftsmanship. This always entails shaving, sanding, reworking, pitching—we need others that help us to see that which we are not aware of in our writing. That being said, you also need to have the strength to know when you are on the trail, following your guts, even if others don’t see it or praise it.

Format: The course will be divided into the study of five literary elements.

• Style/Sound/Voice: What do we mean by style? How do we talk about it? How do we discover our own style in our work? In what ways is an author’s voice determined by their choices and uniqueness of language, and in what ways can an author testify or signify in a way that is uniquely their own?

• Form: How is space utilized on a page? What forms are employed for what affects? What does
the visual presentation of a text tell us? What is different about the approach utilized in writing a novel versus a short story? What are the attributes of poetry, fiction, and personal essay?

- Character: What makes a successful character? How is this different from what makes a successful person? How does one determine which P.O.V. to employ? Why are the greatest characters flawed? What do we want from a character that we do not necessarily want from a friend, a love, a family member? Why do we want flawed characters, evil characters, characters that disgust us? What about unreliable narrators?

- Place: How does a writer establish place within a text economically? What is the relationship between place, characters, and plot? How do authors create sensory location? Why do authors place their characters where they do?

- Plot: What makes a story a story? What makes a poem a poem? How are narrative arcs created? What shape do these arcs take and why? The basic story is: a character begins somewhere and ends somewhere. What are the economics of action between these events? How do you know when a story should end? Where it should begin? What should and should not be included?

Of course, the study of these elements will overlap and we will look at more than one element at a time; we will use each one as a springboard to discuss specific texts, but our discussion will never be limited to any one of these terms at any one time.

**Student Learning Objectives:**
Upon finishing this course, students will be able to achieve the following objectives:

1. Critical Thinking: assessed by student ability to relate their life experience to larger social/cultural narratives.
2. Communication: through prompts and creative writing assignments, assessed by student communication skills through their choices of syntax, voice, and sound.
3. Team work: assessed by groups and teamwork in workshop and revision to demonstrate student oral communication skills.
4. Social responsibility: assessed by student personal ethical choices articulated through creative writing to indicate larger significance of these choices based on a variety of cultural settings.
5. Personal responsibility: assessed by student demonstration of “ethics” in creative writing through understanding the nature of responsibility to self and others in creative writing and through the discussion of contexts and freedom in creative writing.

**GRADES:**

50% Participation:

Half of your grade will depend on your participation. This includes: attendance, discussion, commitment to the work of your peers in workshop, and the letters you will write to your peers for their workshop dates.
50% Portfolio:

13-20 pages of writing that you generated and work-shopped in class. This will be revised “final” work that has been written during the semester and which has gone through the workshop process. IF YOU FAIL TO TURN IN YOUR WORK FOR WORKSHOP THE CLASS MEETING BEFORE YOUR WORKSHOP, YOU WILL LOSE 1/3 of THIS GRADE for each time you fail to bring copies for everyone in the class the meeting before your workshop!

Attendance & Tardiness:
You will be on time, present, and appropriately engaged in class meetings with all necessary materials including required texts. You may miss 3 documented, excused classes before your course grade goes down by 10 percent. After this, your grade will drop one grade for each unexcused absence that follow.

University Policies
Students Rights and Responsibilities
To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: http://www2.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date
Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar. Each semester’s Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:
• Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
• Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
• Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
• Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
• Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy
Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses
dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

**Disability Services**

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, PTSD or ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources office and schedule an interview with the Accessibility Case Manager/ADA Coordinator, Cynthia Lowery Staples. If you are unsure if the above criteria applies to you, but have questions or concerns please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please visit the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call 903.566.7079. You may also send an email to cstaples@uttyler.edu<mailto:cstaples@uttyler.edu>

**Student Absence due to Religious Observance**

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

**Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities**

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

**Social Security and FERPA Statement**

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

**Emergency Exits and Evacuation**

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor’s directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.
This syllabus is subject to change, so long as all students are notified of the changes and all changes apply to all students in the class equally, and so long as the changes are in keeping with university policies and standards.

**Detailed Syllabus: We will get behind schedule due to delight and this schedule WILL CHANGE!**

**WEEK ONE:**
**Tuesday August 26th:**  **Introductions:** getting to know one another. Discussion of our favorite writers/texts. Looking at a brief piece of writing you bring to class. Syllabus review.

HOMEWORK: TBA

**Thursday August 28th:**  TBA

HOMEWORK: Read *The Sentence is a Lonely Place* by Gary Lutz and fiction by Gary Lutz

**WEEK TWO:**
**Tuesday Sept 2nd:** Discussion of *The Sentence is a Lonely Place*. Lecture on sound. Nabokov’s *Lolita*, Melville’s *Moby Dick*. First sentences and paragraphs. Possibly a look at Gordon Lish, for studying consecution.

Homework: WORK on first sentences and bring one or several to class next class.

**Thursday Sept 4th:** Looking at first sentences. Reading Joyce Carol Oats’ “Where Are You Going Where Have You Been”

HOMEWORK: Read a Good Man Is Hard To Find by Flannery O’Connor

**WEEK THREE:**
**Tues Sept 9th:** In-class reading of Junot Diaz “Fiesta 1980”

HOMEWORK: write your creative writing

**Thursday Sept 11**  Lindsay Hunter’s *Nixon* Reading BARRY HANNAH. Southern Gothic

HOMEWORK: WRITE your creative writing. You will need something to workshop soon.

**WEEK FOUR:**
**Tuesday Sept 16th:**  Free write Exercises. Lessons on Poetry. Possible look at Charles Bukowski’s story “The Prettiest Girl in Town”

HOMEWORK: FINISH WHAT we don’t read in class

**Thursday Sept 18th:**  CRAFT NOTES: select writers on writing from Tin House’s *Field Notes*

**WEEK FIVE:**
Tuesday Sept 23rd: WORKSHOP: __________________ & ________________________
& __________________ & ________________________
Homework: WRITE

Thursday Sept 25th: WORKSHOP: __________________ & ________________________
& __________________ & ________________________

WEEK SIX:
Tuesday Sept 30th: WORKSHOP: __________________ & ________________________
& __________________ & ________________________
Homework to be finished by October 3rd. See Blackboard.

Thursday October 2nd: WORKSHOP: __________________ & ________________________
& __________________ & ________________________

WEEK SEVEN:
Tuesday October 7th: WORKSHOP: __________________ & ________________________
& __________________ & ________________________

Thursday October 9th: A LOOK AT Memoir and The Creative Personal Nonfiction Essay

HOMEWORK: Write

WEEK EIGHT: PERSONA
Tuesday October 14th: Fiction by Ben Marcus.
Thursday October 16th: Fiction by Susan Steinberg

WEEK NINE:
Tuesday October 21st: TBA

HOMEWORK: Write

Thursday October 23rd: Reading of J.D. Salinger’s “A Perfect Day for Banana Fish”

WEEK TEN:
Tuesday October 28th: Reading “Two Brothers” by Brian Evenson

HOMEWORK: WRITE

Thursday October 30th: POETRY

HOMEWORK: WRITE

WEEK ELEVEN:
Tuesday Nov. 4th: In class reading of Aimee Bender’s “The Girl in the Flammable Dress”
Thursday Nov. 6th: WORKSHOP Three writers _________&___________&__________

WEEK TWELVE:
Tuesday Nov. 12th: WORKSHOP Three writers _________&___________&__________
Thursday Nov. 14th: WORKSHOP Three writers _________&___________&__________

WEEK THIRTEEN:
Tuesday Nov. 19th: WORKSHOP Three writers _________&___________&__________
Thursday Nov. 21st: WORKSHOP Three writers _________&___________&__________

WEEK FOURTEEN:
Tuesday Nov. 26th: WORKSHOP Three writers _________&___________&__________
Thursday Nov. 28th: WORKSHOP Three writers _________&___________&__________

WEEK FIFTEEN:
Tuesday Dec. 3rd: TBA
Thursday Dec. 5th: Hand in Portfolios