

L209.01 ~ Genre Experiments: Introduction to Creative Writing ~ Fall 2010

Instructor: Thomas C. Jones
Time/Location: T 1:00-3:45 B431

Email: tjones@mica.edu
Office Hours: tba

REQUIRED TEXTS:

J.D. McClatchy, ed.: *The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry* (2nd EDITION)
Janet Burroway: *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft* (8TH EDITION)
+ weekly handouts & online readings

COURSE DESCRIPTION

L209 is a creative writing workshop in which students write original poetry, memoir, and fiction. To understand how these genres diverge and overlap is the course's primary objective. After all, techniques we associate with poetry are applicable to memoir and fiction, just as techniques we associate with memoir and fiction are applicable to poetry. In achieving this objective, students gain not only basic craft experience in each genre but also learn to integrate these experiences—to think of your own writing process in a genre-integrated way.

THE WORK:

- 1) Analyzing contemporary literature by established writers in the three genres
- 2) Writing contemporary poems and stories that reflect L209's craft-related objectives
- 3) Sharing those works with classmates in feedback sessions
- 4) Revising those works substantially for a portfolio due at course's end

Note: Please read assignment descriptions carefully. If you don't understand what an assignment is asking for then contact me ASAP. Failure to do what the assignment requires will result in low points or zero points. If, for example, an assignment asks for dialogue and you submit a scene with little or no dialogue then, no matter how well written otherwise, you technically did not do the assignment.

MIDTERM & FINAL EXAMS:

Midterm and Final constitute 10% of your grade. Midterm is in-class without notes. Final is take-home. Questions will relate to some of L209's major concepts/terms and to the various readings.

CONFERENCES:

Throughout the semester you can meet with me in office hours or at a scheduled time to discuss literary analysis, creative writing exercises, portfolio revisions, the workshop experience, or any other concerns you have related to writing. At least one conference post-midterm is required.

PORTFOLIO:

The L209 Portfolio is due the last week of class and constitutes 375 of semester's 1,000 points. It includes three poems, a short memoir, and a fictional short story, each of which has been substantially revised. Also to be included: all original drafts with teacher comments. Note: It is important to clearly label everything you submit—see Written Work below.

ATTENDANCE:

Please communicate with me regarding any absence, preferably in advance, and be prepared to **verify excuse** (e.g. doctor's note). More than one unexcused absence may result in a lowering of the final grade. More than three unexcused absences may result in failure of the course. Also: **Absent students are responsible for getting any handouts and assignment information from the missed class.** If the missed class is *prior* to a workshop, absentees should arrange for a fellow student or the teacher to distribute photocopies to classmates on their behalf. Missed workshops

cannot be made up. Note: ‘**Productive attendance**’ of the class means paying attention and participating in discussion. Excessive lateness, as well as in-class behaviors like sleeping, net-surfing, emailing, texting, reading newspapers, knitting, sudoku, etc., may qualify as an absence equivalent.

LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS & POINT VALUES:

On page four is a breakdown of the assignments. Students are encouraged to keep track of points received (for weekly analyses and writing exercises) and checks (for poems and stories). The ‘check’ system is utilized as a progress-marker for poems and stories that will constitute the final portfolio. These poems and stories should go through a series of 1-5 revisions, raising the mark from ✓— (60-69 points) to a ✓ (70-79 points) or ✓+ (80-89 points). An ‘A’ student will aim for a portfolio in which every poem and story has been revised substantially enough to receive ✓+ or +. **Revisions may be submitted anytime during the semester.** With each revision remember to **include previous drafts, specifically the copies with teacher comments.**

WRITTEN WORK:

Assignments should be **typed, double-spaced**, with a **standard 12-point font**. Poems may be single-spaced. Multiple pages should always be numbered and stapled. Clearly label everything you submit, preferably in the top right-hand corner under your name. By label I mean “Poem #2 Draft #1” or “Memoir Draft #3” or “Analysis #6.” (This will make portfolio-compilation easy.) I prefer **hard copies**. If work must be emailed, please remember to *attach* the assignment and to *paste* it into the email body itself in case attachment won’t open. Be sure to ask about emailed assignments if they are not returned to you. Both emailed work and late work may warrant a reduction of points. Untyped work cannot be accepted.

WORKSHOPS:

Handwriting may, of course, be utilized when making comments directly on a classmate’s poem or story. The student whose work is ‘up’ should reserve all questions, comments, and explanations until the end of the discussion. Workshops will vary for each poem or story but they will always involve the following questions.

1. What do you think the poem or story is about? If you have trouble answering, speculate why.
2. What about what it’s about? In other words, what do you think are the author’s thematic intentions for presenting the subject as he or she does? If you have trouble answering, speculate why.
3. Are the formal elements in the poem or story working (alone and/or together) to achieve what you perceive as the author’s thematic intentions? Address 1-3 specific elements.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

MICA is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of MICA in this respect. Students are urged to avoid any behavior that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, or misrepresentation of facts. Academic dishonesty, like the **intentional or unintentional** claiming of another’s writing or ideas as one’s own, can result in suspension or expulsion.

WRITING STUDIO:

The Writing Studio (Bunting 452) offers tutoring to all MICA students—undergraduates, graduates, and those for whom English is a second language—in every phase of the writing process and on a wide variety of projects (e.g. weekly analyses). For additional info, call 410-225-2418, email writing@mica.edu, or refer to <http://www.mica.edu/learning>.

ADA COMPLIANCE STATEMENT:

In order to provide the highest quality educational experience for every student, MICA is committed to compliance with the ADA/Section 504. Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me at tjones@mica.edu to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Learning Resource Center at 410-225-2416, in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional info refer to <http://www.mica.edu/learningresourcecenter>

HEALTH & SAFETY COMPLIANCE:

The Office works to provide EHS support for all members of the MICA community. The primary goal of the Office is to be proactive in establishing a culture of safety in which each member of the community shares ownership responsibility that allows each person to be involved in maintaining a healthy work and studying environment. EHS uses several methods to achieve this objective.

First, the EHS office looks at the totality of the EHS requirements by combining campus needs with the state and federal requirements and clearly communicating the shared policies and procedures. Second, EHS identifies training needs and develops guidelines for the use of equipment, materials, and procedures. Third, we ensure compliance with policies through evaluations, inspections, and committees.

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to understand health and safety policies relevant to their individual activities and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan, as well as to participate in training, drills, etc. It is also each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of the Academic Departments also publish EHS procedures and policies such as dress code, the use of personal protective equipment, fire safety, training, and how to properly dispose of chemical waste., Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, it is the responsibility of the faculty to review, test, and assess each student's awareness of basic safety procedures, such as evacuation routes, use of chemicals, fire prevention, and all other guidelines posted by the EHS (e.g. smoking policy, independent studio policies, pet policy, disposing of hazardous/chemical waste, etc.).

For any question relating to EHS, please contact Denelle Bowser, EHS manager, at dbowser@mica.edu or by calling 410-462-7593. You can also visit the department online at www.mica.edu/ehs.

NIH1 PANDEMIC INFORMATION:

If you are sick consider the following:

- Limit contact with other people as much as possible. DO NOT GO TO CLASS! Seek medical attention at Mt. Royal Medical Assoc. but please call ahead (410) 225-8855.
- Students who are sick should self-isolate for at least 24 hours after any fever is gone.
- Make sure to get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids to keep from being dehydrated.
- Avoid normal activities including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

Reporting Procedures:

- Contact the Office of Student Affairs at 410-225-2422 who will assist with plans for self-isolation, arranging for meals, and any other necessary support.
- Contact any faculty whose class you anticipate missing and inform them of your illness. Work with them to make arrangements for catching up on any missed work. If you have difficulty reaching your faculty or if your illness lingers to the point where you miss two or more of any one class contact the Office of Student Affairs.

L209.01 ~ LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS & POINT VALUES

ANALYSIS

Analysis # 1	_____ /25	Analysis # 2	_____ /25
Analysis # 3	_____ /25	Analysis # 4	_____ /25
Analysis # 5	_____ /25	Analysis # 6	_____ /25
Analysis # 7	_____ /25	Analysis # 8	_____ /25
Analysis # 9	_____ /25	Analysis # 10	_____ /25

POETRY

Poetry Exercise #1	_____ /25
Poetry Exercise #2	_____ /25
Poetry Exercise #3	_____ /25

Poem #1 (Persona Poem) _____ /50
 Draft #1 _____ Draft #2 _____ Draft #3 _____ Draft #4 _____ Draft #5 _____

Poem #2 (Dramatic Situation Poem) _____ /50
 Draft #1 _____ Draft #2 _____ Draft #3 _____ Draft #4 _____ Draft #5 _____

Poem #3 (Dramatic Situation Poem in Third Person) _____ /50
 Draft #1 _____ Draft #2 _____ Draft #3 _____ Draft #4 _____ Draft #5 _____

MEMOIR

Memoir Exercise #1	_____ /25
Memoir Exercise #2	_____ /25
Memoir Exercise #3	_____ /25

Memoir _____ /100
 Draft #1 _____ Draft #2 _____ Draft #3 _____ Draft #4 _____ Draft #5 _____

FICTION

Fiction Exercise #1	_____ /25
Fiction Exercise #2	_____ /25
Fiction Exercise #3	_____ /25

Fiction _____ /125
 Draft #1 _____ Draft #2 _____ Draft #3 _____ Draft #4 _____ Draft #5 _____

EXAMS

Midterm Exam	_____ /50
Final Exam	_____ /50

Participation _____ /50

TOTAL _____ /1000

T H E S C H E D U L E

WEEK #1 : Aug 30

Language

Objectives: Course Introduction + Types of Language

Vintage:

62: Randall Jarrell "Well Water"

504: Louise Gluck "The Drowned Children"

WEEK #2 : September 6

No Class

WEEK #3 : September 13

Making The Scene

Objectives: Summary Versus Scene

WF:

208-245: Chapter 6 on Summary and Scene, including:

222-228: Jill McCorkle "Hominids"

228-243: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni "Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter"

244-245: John Gould "Feelers"

Due: Analysis #1:

Due: Fiction Exercise #1:

WEEK #4 : September 20

Imagery & Significant Detail

Objectives: Imagery, Significant Detail /// First Person Point of View & Persona

WF:

21-28: on Significant Detail

305-312: on First Person Point of View

Vintage:

58-62: Randall Jarrell "Death of Ball Turret Gunner," "Woman at Washington Zoo," & "Next Day"

99: May Swenson "Staying at Ed's Place"

305: Anne Sexton "Music Swims Back to Me"

310: Anne Sexton "The Room of My Life"

+ Handout: Persona Poems, Letter Poems, and Found Letters

Due: Analysis #2 and #3

Due: Poetry Exercise #1 and #2

WEEK #5 : September 27

Structure & Conflict

Objectives: Story/Narrative versus Plot versus Dramatic Situation

WF: 247-265: Chapter 7 on Story Form, Plot, and Structure +

+ Handout: Sandra Cisneros "Linoleum Roses," Julia Alvarez "Snow,"
Grace Paley "A Man Told Me the Story of His Life"

Vintage:

208-20: Frank O'Hara "The Day Lady Died"

289-291: Four poems by James Wright

212-217: All poems by David Wagoner

508-509: Two Poems by Louise Gluck

+ Handout on Narrative Jokes

Due: In-class performance of a Narrative Joke

Due: Analysis #4

Due: Poem #1 (Persona Poem)

WEEK #6 : October 4

Meaningful Rhythms

Objectives: Line, Stanza, Enjambment /// 'Half-Meanings' /// Punctuation, Meter, Free Verse /// Prose Rhythm

Vintage:

100: May Swenson "Strawberrying"

368-380: All poems by Sylvia Plath

381-2: Mark Strand "Keeping Things Whole" & "Coming to This"

530-533: All poems by Kay Ryan

545-546: Edward Hirsch "Fast Break"

WF:

6-7: "Clustering" + 85-88 "Prose Rhythm"

+ Handout: Poems Experimenting with Line & Stanza

Due: Analysis #5

Due: Poetry Exercise #3

Due: Poem #2 (Dramatic Situation Poem)

WEEK #7 : October 11

Point of View & Setting

Objectives: Types of Third Person /// Alien & Familiar Settings /// Atmosphere

WF:

164-180: Chapter 5 on Setting, Atmosphere, and Characterization

300-304: "Third Person"

+ 286-298: Flannery O'Connor "Everything That Rises Must Converge"

Vintage:

156-158: James Dickey "The Hospital Window"

163-164: Anthony Hecht "Third Avenue in Sunlight"

430: C.K. Williams "Alzheimer's: The Wife"

563-65: Mark Doty "Brilliance"

+ Handout: Third Person Poems

Due: Analysis #6

Due: Revision of Poem #1 or #2 (Bring 16 copies for Workshop distribution)

Due: Poem #3 (Dramatic Situation Poem in Third Person)

WEEK #8 : October 18

Fall Break; No Class

WEEK #9 : October 25
Poetry Workshop

Handout: *tba*

Due: Analysis #7

Due: Memoir Exercise #1 and #2

Due: Comments on Workshop Poems to be signed and returned to their authors

WEEK #10 : November 1
Memoir ~ Scene & Dialogue

Objectives: Autobiographical Significance /// Methods & Functions of Dialogue /// Formatting Dialogue

WF:

74-88: Chapter 3 on Dialogue “Building Character: Characterization Part 1”

+ 112-114: Pia Z. Ehrhardt “Following the Notes”

Vintage:

34-37: Elizabeth Bishop “In the Waiting Room”

209-210: Frank O’Hara “Having a Coke with You”

+ Handout: Annie Dillard “An American Childhood” & Luis J. Rodriguez “Always Running”

+ Handout: “Reconstructing Scenes” / “A Reconstructed Scene” / “Setting the Scene” / “Sequencing”

Due: Analysis #8

Due: Memoir Exercise #3

Last 30 minutes of Class: Midterm Exam

WEEK #11 : November 8
Characterization

Objectives: Methods of Characterization & Conflict Between Them

WF:

116-126: Chapter 4 “The Flesh Made Word: Characterization Part 2”

+ 137-138: “Character: A Summary”

Due: Short Memoir (3-4 pages)

WEEK #12 : November 15
Distance & Reliability

Objectives: Authorial Distance /// Unreliable Narrators

WF:

313-316: “At What Distance”

+ Handout: Lee Smith “Between the Lines,” Raymond Carver “Cathedral,”
& Toni Cade Bambara “The Lesson”

Due: Analysis #9

Due: Fiction Exercise #2 and #3

WEEK #13 : November 22

Due: First half (first one or two scenes constituting 3-4 pages) of a Fictional Short Story*

*I will email comments to you by Tuesday night

WEEK #14 : November 29

Due: Fictional Short Story (6-8 pages) Bring 16 copies for Workshop distribution

**WEEK #15 : December 6
Workshop**

WF:

346-353: on Revision

Due: Take-Home Final

Due: Comments on Group #1 Workshop Stories

**WEEK #16 : December 13
Workshop cont'd**

Due: Analysis #10

Due: Comments on Group #2 Workshop Stories

Portfolio DUE BY THURS December 16 @ 5pm