

English 285: Introduction to Creative Writing

Course	ENG 285 001
Day & Time	T/TH 11:00-12:15 p.m.
Place	Simpkins 308
Instructor	Barbara Harroun
Office	Simpkins 216
Email	BC-Harroun@wiu.edu
Phone	298-2754
Office Hours	T/TH 9:30a.m-10:45 p.m., W 1:30a.m.-2:30 p.m., & by appointment.

Course Description: An introductory course for students who wish to explore various forms of poetry, short-fiction, and creative nonfiction writing. ENG 285 or consent of instructor is prerequisite for ENG 385, 386, 485. 3 credit hours.

English 285 is an introduction to the crafts of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. The course focuses on the writing of poems, short stories and essays frequently assigned in upper level writing workshops, with an emphasis on learning the relationship between reading and writing, between writing and observation, between writing and thinking, and between writing and fearless revision. English 285 gives students a sense of contemporary poetry, and nonfiction while providing a workshop setting and a writing community.

Course Goals

The goals of this class include:

- Understanding that a poem is an object of art, observation, meditation, vision, and transformation.
- Appreciating what metaphor and simile are and how they enrich a poem.
- Using poetic terminology wisely and well in terms of your own work and the works of others (line, simile, metaphor, voice, verse, free verse, traditional verse, rhyme, stanza, image, end stop, enjambment, etc.).
- Understanding that imagery, and the use of concrete, vivid, sensory detail is the “life-blood” of all forms, not abstraction.
- The importance of revision in triggering discovery.
- A sense of the “vivid and continuous dream” (John Gardner) in short fiction.
- Understanding when the “creative” component of nonfiction becomes “fiction.”
- The difference between scene and summary in short fiction and nonfiction and a command of time in terms of flashbacks, flash-forwards, slow motion, and transitions.
- A fundamental sense of point-of-view.
- Means of character development (appearance, speech, thoughts, background, objects, place, actions, and motivation).
- Conflict, crisis and resolution are necessary in understanding and writing literary fiction and nonfiction.
- Every narrative unit matters—exact word choice, command of the sentence, paragraph construction, and shaping of scene.
- Growth and discovery as a writer.

Required Texts

The Practice of Creative Writing: A Guide for Students second edition by Heather Sellers
ISBN 978-0-312-67602-5

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Materials

- **A notebook** to be kept as an in and out of class journal—do NOT come to class without it.
- **Pen and pencil**—do NOT come to class without a writing implement.
- **Two flash sticks.** Always back up your work, and take the precaution of emailing your work to yourself. I do not accept as an excuse, ever, a crashed computer, lost flash stick or a printer that ran out of ink.
- **A pocket folder** for additional handouts and readings.
- **A three-ring binder** for your final portfolio of initial and revised work.
- **Enough copies of your work** for instructor and classmates on your designated workshop days. Copies should be ready to hand out at the beginning of class.

Assignments

- 1) **Journal (10%):** In and out of class writing, including responses to poems and stories assigned.
- 2) **2 Poetry Exercises (5%):** These exercises will assist with the invention and drafting process.
- 3) **5 poems (10%):** These poems should reflect time, effort, thoughtfulness and the application of aspects of craft studied. All poems must be typed.
- 4) **2 Fiction Exercises (5%)** focusing on characterization/setting/conflict-crisis-resolution/scene and summary/point of view: 1 page each.
- 5) **One story (10%)** the workshop story should be 5(minimum)-7(maximum) pages. Again, this story must be typed, and as polished as possible. It is your responsibility to provide copies for the instructor and your fellow students. No genre fiction. We are studying and attempting literary fiction in this course. No porn, detective fiction, fantasy, science-fiction or romance. We'll discuss this at length.
- 6) **2 Nonfiction exercises (5%):** Two exercises to assist with invention and drafting: 1 page each.
- 7) **Creative Nonfiction (10%):** This workshop essay should be 3(minimum)-5(maximum) pages.
- 8) **Typed workshop responses to your peers (20%):** Each poem or story that is workshopped requires written comments on the original and a one page, typed, response.
- 9) **Class Presence (10%)** includes attendance, two mandatory conferences, attentiveness, participation and attitude.
- 10) **Workshop Partner (5%):** You will be responsible for introducing your partner's poetry, fiction, and nonfiction on their workshop days. You should lean on one another in terms of peer review, missed classes, and class materials.
- 11) **Revised portfolio (10%): This portfolio should include 2 revised poems, a revision of your of story and essay and all working drafts.**

Grading

You must complete all assignments to pass the course. Late assignments will not be accepted without documentation of an emergency or illness.

A=94-100%	A-=90-93%	
B+=87-89%	B=84-86%	B-=80-83%
C+=77-79%	C=74-76%	C-=70-73%
D+=67-69%	D=64-66%	D-=60-63%

U/F=59 and below: *Please be aware of and understand the difference between a U and an F. U indicates you attended class, and attempted all work but it wasn't at a passing level. F indicates a failure to attend and/or attempt work.*

Conferences: You are required to conference with me twice during the semester. Once before your midterm, and once prior to the final fiction portfolio.

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Attendance

Attendance is necessary to foster your development as a writer and central to developing a sense of community and respect in the classroom. Your input is needed and valued. Tardiness is disruptive and disrespectful, and excessive lateness counts as an absence (10 minutes). I keep track of attendance, but do not grant “excused” or “unexcused” absences. You are either here or you are absent. Sleeping in class will result in a marked absence. **If you are absent more than 3 times, your grade will be docked ½ letter grade for each day you are absent. You automatically fail on the 8th absence.** If a situation arises during the semester that prohibits you from attending class, I urge you to communicate responsibly with me. Please call me, email me or see me during my office hours. If you miss a class, please check Western Online and consult the class schedule.

Workshop Considerations

This class focuses on workshopping original student work, and it is very different from a lecture based class. It requires student participation and discussion. It also requires a level of maturity in being able to divorce yourself from your own work, and to listen to others dissect it in terms of craft.

- 1.) It is important for you to hand in work—finished drafts—that you care about. Don’t ask either the instructor or your classmates to take seriously what you do not. Start writing early, and work through several revisions before you submit things to the class.
- 2.) You need to remain silent during classroom discussion of your poem or story. Take notes. Listen closely, openly and without defensiveness. The workshop does not judge you as a person; it is meant to help you become a better writer. It is not a therapy session or an encounter group or a TV talk show.
- 3.) After workshop you may ask 3 questions of the class pertaining to your work and/or workshop discussion. Do not defend or explain what you were attempting to achieve in your work. We will deal with what is actually written on the page.
- 4.) Your poems should have your identifying info in the upper left hand corner, a centered title (do not underline or italicize), and be justified left unless you are deliberately playing with form. 12 point, Times New Roman font please. Stories and essays must be double spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font. Workshop copies are due the class **BEFORE** your workshop. Stories must be stapled prior to class. *Workshop copies are due the class BEFORE your workshop. Work must be stapled prior to class, and should be printed front and back. Please don’t make us wait on you. If work isn’t ready to be passed out at the start of class, you will forfeit your workshop.*
- 5.) When we respond to others’ work, we do so with respect and compassion. Your written and verbal responses should be constructive and you should read as a writer reads—with an eye towards elements of craft that are working and/or are problematic. Your written responses should summarize the story, essay, or poem briefly, address what is working specifically, and what is not working, along with suggestions to strengthen the piece. Your responses must be typed and ready to be turned in on workshop days. I will not take responses late. **Print out two copies of your responses; one for the author and one for the instructor.**

Student Conduct

We are building a learning and writing community, which means creating and maintaining an atmosphere of respect. In this classroom you may encounter ideas, values, beliefs and perspectives that are different from your own. We will freely exchange ideas, but intimidating or disrespectful language or behavior has no place in our exchanges, our classroom, or at Western Illinois University. No texting, emailing, or placing/receiving calls during class. No iPods on or ear buds in during class. Turn off your cell phone before class. Excessive disruption will result in following the procedure dictated by WIU.

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Plagiarism

You must do your own work in English 285. Any act of plagiarism will result in an F grade in this course. If you have any doubts about whether or not you are using your own or others' writing ethically and legally, ask me. Work cannot be handed in for credit in 285 that is or was written for another class, either here or elsewhere, even if it is much revised. Work you did in high school is best left there. The whole idea of ENG 285 is to give you new occasions to write, for you to discover fresh ways to imaginatively deal with the world around you. Please submit work written only during the current term. Western Illinois University's official Academic Integrity Policy is found at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>. Please read it, in its entirety and see me with any questions you may have.

Disability Support Services

"In accordance with University policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. For the instructor to provide the proper accommodation(s) you must obtain documentation of the need for an accommodation through Disability Support Services and provide it to the instructor. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor's attention, as he/she is not legally permitted to inquire about such particular needs of students. Students who may require special assistance in emergency evacuations (i.e. fire, tornado, etc.) should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow in such an emergency. Contact Disability Support Services at 298-2512 for additional services."

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Please be advised of your rights and responsibilities as a student at Western Illinois University by visiting <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>.

UCC

The University Counseling Center is a wonderful, free and confidential service for WIU students. Some of the types of concerns that can be addressed in personal counseling are: transition to college life, interpersonal relationship difficulties, lack of self confidence or self esteem, stress, anxiety, depression, sexual assault, family concerns, sexual orientation/identity concerns, alcohol/substance abuse and eating concerns. **University Counseling Center**, Memorial Hall 1st Floor. **Please call to schedule an appointment. Appointments cannot be made through email. Phone:** (309) 298-2453

Important Dates

January 26: Open registration ends (technically at 11:59 PM, but if students need permission to enroll or drop, they should seek permission before 4:30 that day)

February 2: Last day of restricted schedule changes (technically at 11:59 PM, but students need permission to enroll [and sometimes to drop], so they should seek permission before 4:30 that day)

February 12: Lincoln's Birthday—no class

February 13: Writing Program Assessment Day

March 16-20: Spring Break—no class

April 6: Last day to drop a course (students needing permission to drop should seek permission prior to

April 6 at 4:30) AND last day for a total university withdrawal

Syllabi disclaimer: This syllabus is subject to change. This class will be notified of changes due to University closings, severe weather, class progress, incorrect statements in this document, and unexpected demands on the instructor.