

# Fall 2023 Creative Writing I Syllabus

“If there’s a book that you want to read, but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it.”

- Toni Morrison

**Course Title:** Creative Writing

**Credit:** One

**Classification and Maximum Weight:** 4 Quality Points

**Instructor Information:**

Anne Beatty, Room 201

The Early College at Guilford

336.316.2860

beattya@gcsnc.com; beattyap@guilford.edu (I check both daily.)

**Office Hours/Tutoring:**

Before School: Thursday, 8:30 a.m. -9:10 a.m. I also may be available other mornings from 8:30 a.m.-9:10 a.m. by appointment, or after school.

Lunch: Monday, 12:30-1:10 p.m. (and other days by appointment)

Syllabus available online, on my webpage under [Course Expectations](#).

**\*Signature required on page 5**

**Course of Study:**

In Creative Writing I, students will learn and practice the craft (and joy!) of writing fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. Students will deepen their understanding of craft by reading and analyzing literature as mentor texts, participating in writing workshops in which they serve both as authors and as editors for their peers, and most importantly, writing and revising their own writing daily. We will also study language closely, meaning vocabulary, grammar, and style, to analyze how writers decide on *le mot juste*: the exactly right word. Becoming a better writer requires becoming a better reader, and we will learn from the masters as well as each other’s writing. Yet we will read slightly differently than in traditional English classes: here, we will be reading as writers, learning the craft as we read. While this class aims to encourage and nourish students’ creativity, these skills transfer from a creative to an academic context, and thus this class will also help prepare students for the intense reading and writing demands they will face in college.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

You will develop background knowledge you need to write fiction, poetry, drama, and creative nonfiction. You will create a regular writing practice and experience what it is like to participate in a community of writers. That means you’ll become a better reader of other people’s writing, and a better reader of your own writing. You will also further develop your own taste and style, in both reading and writing. Through close reading and production of your own writing, you will become familiar with a variety of approaches to writing well—*well* meaning both logically and beautifully. Perhaps most importantly, this course is a space for you to explore *what you want to say* and *how you want to say it*... and then figure out how to say it even better (which requires both experimentation and revision). You will probably write more this semester than you ever have before, and you will walk out of here a better writer, reader, and thinker because of it.

**Class Structure:**

We will follow a loose weekly schedule. Every day, of course, we’ll write in class, in addition to the following activities.

**Monday:** Introduce the week’s skill/focus and readings, including both mentor texts and craft essays.

**Tuesday:** Read/Discuss the readings.

**Wednesday:** Analyze a writer's essay on craft. Grammar or language skill.

**Thursday:** Read/Discuss another set of readings (weekly reading response due in class). This is also revision day, when we will focus on revision techniques and you will have class time to revise your work and conference with me.

**Friday:** Workshop pieces that authors are ready to share with the group for feedback. (Each student is required to submit at least one piece of writing for workshop each quarter, so two pieces total, but you are welcome to workshop more frequently as time allows.)

## **Texts:**

All readings will be provided on paper or digitally. See below for specifics.

## **Units and Standards:**

The course is divided into four units, each roughly four weeks long. In their attention to language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), the lessons and assignments in every unit will teach and reinforce the North Carolina state standards for English Language Arts grades 9 and 10.

Following is a tentative list of the four units and reading selections, which may evolve in response to student interest and student participation in selecting texts for common study. Portfolio requirements are also listed.

### **Unit 1: The Basics of Good Writing**

**Focus:** sensory details and setting, concrete vs. abstract, sound and sense, revising and borrowing

**Texts (subject to change):** "On Keeping a Notebook" by Joan Didion, "The Measure of My Powers" by M.K. Fisher, excerpts from Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*, excerpts from Ursula K. Le Guin's *Steering the Craft*, excerpts from Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones*, excerpts from John McPhee's *Draft No. 4*, excerpts from Ross Gay's *The Book of Delights*, "Once More to the Lake" by E.B. White, "Things I Didn't Know I Loved" by Nazim Hikmet, "Shelter in Place" by Traci Brimhall, "Letter to Someone 50 Years in the Future" by Matthew Olzmann, "The Blue Terrance" by Terrance Hayes, Letters of Recommendation, "The Stranger in the Photo Is Me" by Donald M. Murray

**Selected Assignments:** The Place Where I Live, Where I'm From poem, A Delight, Letter poem, and Letter of Recommendation, photo essay

### **Unit 2: Fiction**

**Focus:** character, plot, dialogue, irony and humor

**Texts (subject to change):** excerpts from John Gardiner's *The Art of Fiction*, "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway, "Gorilla, My Love" by Toni Cade Bambara, "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid, "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin, "The Moment Before the Gun Went Off" by Nadine Gordimer, "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson, "Rules of the Game" by Amy Tan, "A Full-Service Shelter" by Amy Hempl, "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" by Leo Tolstoy, "A Jury of Her Peers" by Susan Glaspell, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

**Selected Assignments:** two short stories and one flash fiction piece

**First Quarter Portfolio:** 1 polished short story/essay and at least 5 shorter pieces of writing which you are proud of and which you have revised **OR** 2 polished short stories/essays and at least 3 shorter pieces of writing which you are proud of and which you have revised

### **Unit 3: Poetry**

**Focus:** rhythm and meter, sound devices, form, making the line, and leaps

**Poets (subject to change):** W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop, Eavan Boland, Lucille Clifton, John Donne, Louise Erdrich, Robert Frost, Amanda Gorman, Joy Harjo, Seamus Heaney, Gerard Manly Hopkins, Ha Jin, Jackie Kay, John Keats, Yusef Komunyakaa, Marilyn Krysl, Jamal May, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Naomi Shihab Nye, Sylvia Plath, Rainer Maria Rilke, Clint Smith, Dylan Thomas, Margaret Walker, William Carlos Williams

**Selected Assignments:** A sonnet, an abecedarian, an ode, and plenty of other poems

### **Unit 4: Class Choice**

**Focus:** We'll decide as a class how to spend our last month together. Some ideas and texts that classes have picked in the past:

**Drama/screenwriting:** *Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (screenplay by Simon Stephens based on novel by Mark Haddon), *Feeling Through* by Doug Roland

**Spoken Word Poetry:** Performances by Amanda Gorman, Harry Baker, Denise Frohman, Phil Kaye, Sarah Kay, and others

**Creative Nonfiction:** Lyric essays, personal narratives, and braided essays by authors like Eula Biss, Leslie Jamison, James Baldwin, George Orwell, Vauhini Vara, and others

**What else could we do? Podcasts? Reviews? Critiques of pop culture? Documentary? Profiles? We'll vote on our choice.**

**Second Quarter Portfolio:** 8 pieces total, including at least: 2 polished long pieces, fiction or nonfiction (1000 words+); 1 revised piece with 3 drafts showing revisions included; no more than 2 pieces from Q1 portfolio (25% or less)

### Materials:

- Pens or pencils
- 1 spiral or composition notebook (you may need more, depending on how quickly you fill them)
- A 3-ring binder or folder with pockets to compile readings throughout the semester

### Evaluation Methods and Guidelines for Assignments:

Evaluation will include but will not be limited to teacher observation, preparation for and participation in discussions and workshops, homework/classwork grades, written reading responses, in-class writing assignments, out-of-class writing and revision assignments, and writing portfolios (to be collected twice during the semester).

The overall semester-long grade breakdown is as follows:

Quarter 1: 40%

Quarter 2: 40%

Final Exam (portfolio): 20%

### Evaluation each quarter will be based on the following percentages:

**Minor** assignments (classwork/homework/reading responses/workshop participation as editor).....40%

**Major** assignments (out-of-class revisions/notebooks/portfolios/workshop participation as writer).....60%

### Guilford County Schools Grading Scale (Policy IHA):

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 59 AND BELOW

INC = INCOMPLETE

**Given the pandemic, grading policies are subject to change based on recommendations and requirements from Guilford County Schools and/or the NC Department of Public Instruction.**

### Honor Code:

All students must abide by the Early College at Guilford Honor Code. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances. You are not permitted to either give or receive help on any assignment or assessment. Your work should be your own and should not resemble that of another student or of an Internet source. Please see the Early College at Guilford Student Handbook for

more detailed discussion of the Honor Code and consequences for failing to adhere to the Honor Code.

## **Attendance Policy:** Policy JBD-P (Guilford County Schools)

### **STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE**

#### **Make-up Work**

Students are responsible for all work missed when absent from school. Immediately upon returning to school students must make arrangements with teachers to make up all work (assignments, tests, projects, etc.) missed while absent.

#### **First Three Lawful Absences within a Semester**

The initial three lawful absences are handled between student and teachers. Students are expected to make up work assigned during the lawful absences within three school days of the student's return to school. The actual grade earned will be recorded. The ultimate responsibility for make-up work lies with the student.

#### **Excessive/Unlawful Absences**

Students who have excessive absences from a class during the following time periods will be placed on NO CREDIT STATUS until attendance obligations have been met:

- Four absences during a marking period from a 90-day block class.
- Four absences during a marking period from a 90-day A Day/B Day block class.

Removal of no credit status may include opportunities for making up time and assignments before school, after school, on weekends, or teacher workdays. Removal of no credit status is earned at the rate of one make-up session of forty-five minutes per academic course absence in all ninety-minute block courses. The attendance obligation begins at the fourth day of absence from school and applies to each subsequent absence. For more information on consequences for absences and tardies, please refer to the school policy in your Student Handbook.

### **Additional Requirements/Information:**

#### **Online Assignments:**

You will do some writing by hand in class, which you will turn in on paper, but some assignments you may turn in digitally, on Canvas. Any assignments you turn in on Canvas **must be either in pdf form or a Microsoft Word document, no Google docs**. Google docs is a great tool but it's problematic with Canvas because 1) sometimes students forget to give me access and 2) documents can be edited after the due date. It's fine to work in Google docs, just save your work as a pdf before uploading to Canvas.

Once you turn something in on Canvas, I will check and make sure I can open/access your submission. If not, I will put a comment on the submission which will appear as a note to you on the homepage for my course. You should get in the habit of checking this regularly, especially if you have submitted something. If I cannot open your document, you have 24 hours to remedy it from the time I post the comment alerting you to the problem. After that, the work will be counted late.

#### **Missing Assignments:**

I accept late work for one week after the due date, with a deduction of 10% for each school day an assignment is late, unless a student has negotiated with me in person regarding extenuating circumstances PRIOR to the deadline. For example, an assignment turned in two school days after the deadline could not earn a score higher than 80%. Exceptions will only be granted in extenuating situations, and only with a teacher conference.

#### **Make-Up Work:**

If an assignment or assessment is due on the day of a student's absence, the student must turn in or make up the assignment on the first day of the student's return to school. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis for students who have missed class immediately prior to the due date of the assignment (or other such circumstances deemed appropriate by the teacher).

**All make-up work is to be completed within 3 school days of a student's absence.**

### **Papers and Major Projects:**

All final drafts must be typed in **12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced, using MLA format**. The [Purdue OWL \(Online Writing Lab\)](#) is an excellent resource for MLA format questions. Be sure you have used a spelling/grammar check on anything typed that you submit. Take pride in your writing and respect the written word: I expect all papers to show care for detail and attention to instructions.

### **Cell Phone Policy:**

Students should turn cell phones off or silence them and put them in their backpacks (not in pockets, on the desk, etc.). When cell phones may be used for instructional purposes, the teacher will instruct students to get them out.

### **Expectations:**

1. **Respect:** Treat others and this space just as you'd like yourself or your room to be treated. In this class, you will regularly share your ideas with others—both verbally and in writing. Thus, respecting your classmates and their perspectives, opinions, and beliefs is of utmost importance. We will honor and practice the concepts of *gracious honesty* and *constructive friction* in our discussions. Literature and writing cannot be learned in isolation; the more voices and opinions we hear, the greater our understanding of the deeper meanings, nuances, and conflicts in the text. This is a discussion-based class where you have the right to speak your mind freely without fear of ridicule or censorship. Maintaining that freedom requires us to respect each other. Given the personal nature of what might be shared in this class, it is also imperative that what is read or said in this class stays in this class, until the author is ready to share it with the wider world. Other people's stories are not yours to tell, especially not for the purposes of hurting or exploiting anyone. If we all commit to creating a community of trust in this classroom, we will all be more free to speak the truth.
  2. **Responsibility:** Take responsibility for your own learning. Use a planner or cell phone reminders to keep track of your assignments and come to class ready to work with all assignments completed (or submit online on time). Schedule a time to meet with Ms. Beatty if you have questions or concerns. Adhere to the Early College at Guilford Honor Code and ensure that all work you submit is of your own creation; approach all situations with honesty and integrity.
  3. **Participation:** Your participation is determined by your attendance, active involvement in class, and quality completion of in-class work. Volunteering to read aloud, answering questions, or sharing your ideas would be examples of active involvement in class. Additionally, you'll have opportunities to collaborate with your classmates in groups. Share your experiences, your insight, and your wisdom. Support your classmates when they share with you. Be daring in your willingness to explore, to share, and to push yourself.
  4. **Focus/Attentiveness:** Please avoid any distracting behaviors that will interfere with your classmates' (or your own) ability to learn. Unless you have received specific directions to use your cell phone in conjunction with a class activity, your cell phone should be off and put away for the entire class period. If you need to eat a snack between classes, that snack should be consumed within the first 5 minutes of class (but please avoid nuts). You may leave the class to use the bathroom during group work or individual work, but please avoid leaving during whole-class instruction or discussion except in cases of emergency.
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**I have read and understand the syllabus for Creative Writing.**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian(s) Email Address(es): \_\_\_\_\_