



Navajo Technical University

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Introduction to Creative Writing

Course #: ENGL 2310 ONL

Credit Hours: 3

Semester: Spring 2022

Faculty: Associate Professor Dr. Jennifer Wheeler

E-mail: jwheeler@navajotech.edu

Office Hours: Online by appointment

Preferred Communication: Email

Modality: Online via Blackboard

Class Location: Online

Required Materials: Internet access/Wi-Fi and a reliable device with which to access class and course materials on Blackboard online; writing materials (notebook, pen/pencil).

Laptop and Internet Access: Every student is required to own a laptop and have internet access.

Textbooks: No textbooks to be purchased through the bookstore. All reading materials/texts will be provided digitally or accessed online. You are responsible for accessing these readings as well as classmates' workshop pieces.

Mission, Vision, and Philosophy

Mission: Navajo Technical University honors Diné culture and language, while educating for the future.

Vision: Navajo Technical University provides an excellent educational experience in a supportive, culturally diverse environment, enabling all community members to grow intellectually, culturally, and economically.

Philosophy: Through the teachings of Nitsáhákees (thinking), Nahátá (planning), Íina (implementing), and Siihasin (reflection), students acquire quality education in diverse fields, while preserving cultural values and gaining economic opportunities.

Course Description: This course will introduce students to the basic elements of creative writing, including short fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. Students will read and study published works as models, but the focus of this workshop course is on students revising and reflecting on their own writing. Throughout this course, students will be expected to read poetry, fiction, and nonfiction closely, and analyze the craft features employed. They will be expected to write frequently in each of these genres.

Together, we will read from a broad range of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction to help illuminate the different roads we might take to begin to build our own creative writing.

Class sessions will include craft discussion, close reading/discussion of assigned texts, writing exercises/prompts, and a writer's workshop (at the end of the semester). Occasionally, we will watch videos of interviews, readings, and craft talks.

Course Outcomes	Course Assessments
Participate in a constructive conversation and community about creative writing.	Discussions; reading and writing assignments
Read and critically engage with a variety of texts.	Discussions; reading and writing assignments
Compose creative works in various genres of creative writing.	Major writing assignments/workshop
Provide respectful, honest, and critical feedback to peers about their work.	Workshop
Revise creative work based on peer feedback and critique.	Final Portfolio
Develop thoughtful workshop reflection on students' own writing and writing process.	Final Portfolio; Discussions
Communicate clearly.	Midterm Presentation; Discussions, major writing assignments/workshop; reading and writing assignments

The above are the quantifiable aims of the course—the objectives upon which you will be graded. But there is another aim of the course, one that is not easily quantifiable. This aim concerns the goal of any workshop, which is not to make better *writing*, but to make better *writers*. Thus, though you will earn your grade based on the above aims.

Connections to Program Assessment (Course-Embedded Measures): Provide knowledge and skills to qualify students for positions in teaching, publishing, editing, writing, etc. Critically interpret Navajo, American Indian, and multicultural works, compose creative works, analyze professional and student works, produce a professional portfolio.

Course Activities: This schedule is a living document, so expect updates. In order to be responsive to the needs of the class, changes may be made from time to time. As the term develops, changes will be made often, as suitable and necessary, and this will be updated on Blackboard regularly. Please plan to check the schedule regularly to keep updated with any adjustments.

Week	Date	Class Topics/Reading Due	Assignments Due	Assessments
1	1/18-21	First week of class / Introductions Course syllabus review	All assignments TBA/Posted on Blackboard	All assignments TBA/Posted on Blackboard
2	1/24-28	Diné Writers: Tapahonso, Tohe, Bitsui, Jim		
3	1/31-2/4	Diné Writers: Your choice		
4	2/7-11	Native Writers: Alexie, Harjo, Ortiz		
5	2/14-18	Native Writers: Your Choice		

6	2/22-25 (Holiday 2/21)	Short Fiction, Short Nonfiction, Poetry Senses, Figurative Language		
7	2/28-3/4	Author & Works		
8	3/7-11	Midterm Exam - Presentations		
	3/14-18	<i>Spring Break</i>		
9	3/21-25	Writing about what we wear, writing prompts and readings		
10	3/28-4/1	Writing about family, writing prompts and readings; Kincaid, Moore, Derricotte		
11	4/4-8	Structure and form		
12	4/11-15	Reflections and resolutions writing prompts and readings		
13	4/18-22	Workshop		
14	4/25-29	Workshop		
15	5/2-6	Workshop Portfolio Preparation		
16	5/9-12	Revision work/Wrap up Final Portfolio Due		

Grading Plan

Major Writing Assignments/Workshop

Reading and writing assignments

Presentation (Midterm Exam)

Final Portfolio (Final Exam)

Attendance

A = 100-90%
B = 89-80%
C = 79-70%
D = 69-60%
F = 59% or less

Grading Policy: Students must do their own work. Cheating and plagiarism are strictly forbidden. Cheating includes (but is not limited to) plagiarism, submission of work that is not one's own, submission or use of falsified data, unauthorized access to exams or assignments, use of unauthorized material during an exam, or supplying or communicating unauthorized information for assignments or exams.

Every student in this course is expected to submit their original work for each and every assignment. The work must be authored by you (and only you) and only for this course. Any referenced sources must be cited.

Self-plagiarism occurs when you submit your own previously produced work, which you have written in another course or at another time. You are not allowed to self-plagiarize in this course.

What is Self-Plagiarism?

- The student submits a poem for class that she wrote last year for a different class. Another student may re-write an old story a little bit to make it conform to the assignment, but much of the story is the same. A third student may write an essay to satisfy writing assignments in two different courses. A fourth student may submit a piece of writing they created in high school.

- o No effort is made to cite and document the student's own earlier work.

- o Nothing indicates that this work was not completed as a learning activity assigned in this course.

- This is NOT what we normally think of as plagiarism because the work submitted is still the student's own work. She is NOT presenting someone else's work as her own.

- However, by recycling work already done, the student is skipping the learning activity designed by the professor to achieve the stated student learning outcomes. While the student skips work, the professor must still read, grade and provide feedback. Normally, students who choose not to complete an assigned learning activity get a grade of zero for that activity.

Assignments and projects are intended to be significant learning activities within their courses. A student who submits last year's work for a class this year is essentially skipping that learning activity, just like the student who doesn't do it at all. Even a student who revises and updates a project is skipping parts of the process.

Course Measurements/Requirements

Presentation (Midterm): Research an author of your choice and her/his writing style(s). What types of advice does this author give to beginners? What tips on writing does she/her share? How did she/he start writing? Complete a 5-10 minute video/audio/visual presentation about the author, related to the craft of creative writing, which you will research and study independently during the first half of the semester. This presentation will count as your midterm exam. You will choose one author, and I'll approve your selection early in the term.

Discuss the information about the author you've read about in an in-depth, meaningful way. That is, you are to discuss the various aspects of *your experience reading about the author*, paying special attention to *how the information has informed your writing process*.

You should include a very brief summary of the author’s background, your thesis or central “argument” about writing, three to four key points about the author, what you determine to be the main “takeaway” from the author and her/his writing background, and your overall assessment.

Some points to address: How this author connects to your own work; why you think this author is relevant; how your attitudes about creative writing were affected by this author throughout your process; and anything else you deem important to discuss with the class.

Category	Criteria	Points	Score
Organization (15 points)	The type of presentation is appropriate for the topic and audience.	5	
	Information is presented in a logical sequence.	5	
	Presentation appropriately cites (gives credit to) references.	5	
Content (45 points)	Introduction is attention-getting, lays out the subject well, and establishes a framework for the rest of the presentation.	5	
	Terms are well-defined in language appropriate for the target audience.	5	
	Presentation contains accurate information.	10	
	Material included is relevant to the overall message/purpose.	10	
	Appropriate amount of material is prepared, and points made reflect well their relative importance.	10	
	There is an obvious conclusion summarizing the presentation.	5	
Presentation (40 points)	Speaker maintains good contact with the audience and is appropriately animated (e.g., gestures, moving around, etc.).	5	
	Speaker uses a clear, audible voice.	5	
	Delivery is poised, controlled, and smooth.	5	
	Good language skills and pronunciation are used.	5	
	Visual aids, if used, are well prepared, informative, effective, and not distracting.	5	
	Length of presentation is within the assigned time limits.	5	
	Information was well communicated.	10	
Score	Total Points	100	

Final Portfolio (Final): You will submit a portfolio at the end of the semester. This portfolio reflects the three genres of creative writing we will have worked on all semester (fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction), and it will include one poem, 3-5 pages of your fiction writing, and 3-5 pages of your creative nonfiction writing, as well as substantial revisions of any *two* of those pieces of writing. In each revision, you will highlight all changes you have made, or otherwise note on the document itself which parts you have revised. (e.g., if you have revised your poem, you should highlight any new words, phrases, or lines

you have added to the text. If you have removed a line, for example, you should indicate in the margin that you have removed a line).

You will also include a cover letter explaining your revisions and how your writing has evolved over the semester. This letter should be a piece of writing which discusses your personal writing experience throughout this class. A considerable portion of your letter should focus on your revision process (drafting, freewriting, workshops, revision strategies, etc.), what you have learned from it, and how it has affected you as a writer. As you do this, you should discuss the specific drafts you have revised for your portfolio. The letter should not be a flippant thing drafted moments before submitting your portfolio. This is your final word about why you chose the particular pieces for revision, the decisions you made during revision, and the inspiration and influences that shaped the pieces from their origin to the final drafts. Your letter should be 500-750 words. Do not address the fact that you've fixed your punctuation unless it changes the emotion or theme of the story, poem, etc. Do address how you restructured plot, rethreaded a dominant image, sharpened a character's tension, etc. Your letter should be formatted and structured professionally. Please follow the guidelines/template included here, obviously tailoring your letter to our purpose:

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-write-an-official-letter>

Your cover letter and portfolio will be submitted as one single document and uploaded to Blackboard (this must be either a .doc, .docx, or .pdf). All materials included must be formatted properly (see: "Submitting and Formatting Your Assignments" below. Each text should also be labeled (i.e., "Poem Draft," "Revision of Poem," "Fiction Draft," "Revision of Fiction," etc.). The cover letter will appear first, and your drafts of your poem, short story, and nonfiction essay will follow it. Your drafts should be inserted into the document without comments from your instructor or peers; you should include the drafts as you originally submitted them. Following your drafts, you will include your revisions/final drafts of two of those pieces of writing.

100-90: Excellently addresses the craft elements that have been revised, with an eye toward how they have impacted the emotion of the piece, as well as what the writer has learned about various elements of craft.

89-80: Demonstrates an above-average knowledge of craft but doesn't express any insight gained through the process of revision, OR does not analyze in-depth the relationship between revision and the emotional or intellectual impact of the piece.

79-70: Demonstrates an adequate knowledge of craft and the revision process, though no new insight may have been gained through the process of revision. Shows a weak relationship between revision and the emotional or intellectual impact of the piece.

69-60: Demonstrates an adequate knowledge of craft and the revision process, but no new insight has been reached and there is no demonstrable relationship between revision and the emotional/intellectual impact of the piece.

>60: Fails to demonstrate an adequate knowledge of craft and the revision process. No new insight has been reached. Fails to demonstrate the relationship between revision and the emotional/intellectual impact of the piece.

Major Writing Assignments/Workshop: Students will write poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. We will workshop your pieces of writing. To workshop your poetry, you may submit one poem. To workshop fiction and creative nonfiction, you may submit 3-5 pages; this will not be a complete piece (beginning, middle, end & every structural element), so be sure to let us know what your focus is. For example, you might focus on scene & summary, characterization, setting, or dialogue. For fiction and creative nonfiction,

you are not expected to have an entire story or essay, rather you are expected to focus on crafting a few pages to the best of your ability using the tools you've learned from the readings and discussions thus far.

If you do not upload your work on time, you will not have a chance to be workshopped.

NB: Your Writing is Public

Each piece of writing you complete for this course, whether in class or at home, is exposed to fellow readers and writers through the discussion and workshop process. Part of becoming a good writer is learning to appreciate the ideas and criticisms of others. Remember that you will be expected to share your writing, so you may want to avoid writing about events or sentiments that you are uncomfortable sharing with our writing community. Select your topics responsibly and bear in mind the possible effect your words may have on others.

Each piece is worth 100 points:

100-90: Excellent effort at incorporating the rules of the genre and deploying craft elements that make well-voiced writing. Writing demonstrates an exceptional commitment to understanding the elements of form, craft, and technique and attention to audience, and thus the creative writing reads inspired, complex, and thoughtful, is aware of its goals, has been thought through, is attentive to voice and diction, etc., and ultimately puts the elements to use in terms of what creative writing attempts to accomplish as an art form.

89-80: Adequate effort at incorporating the rules of the genre; craft elements may seem lacking, hackneyed, or ill-conceived. Writing demonstrates above average engagement with the fundamental elements of form, craft, and technique and audience, that read relatively inspired, vaguely complex, even in humor, satire, or daily observation.

79-70: Minimal effort at incorporating the rules of genre; craft elements are lacking originality; language is trite and clichéd. Writing demonstrates average engagement with the fundamental elements of form, craft, and technique, that read marginally inspired, obscure, or clichéd.

69-0: Inadequate effort has been given to the craft of the writing, and the piece seems either inadequately developed, ill conceived, or suffers from trite language. Writing has clearly been produced minutes or hours before class—that is, work that demonstrates a clear lack of engagement and investment in what is being read, how we're reading it in class, and the reason why we're reading it the way we are.

*To make sure this runs as smoothly as possible, **everyone will submit their work one week before workshop sessions begin**, to give us all time to comment on the work before we meet for class. You will follow directions posted on Blackboard to upload your writing (.doc, .docx, or .pdf files only). No late submissions will be accepted. This space on Blackboard is also where you will access your classmates' work.*

You are expected to read your classmates' work at home, write detailed notes, and be ready to discuss the writing during workshop. Make sure you come to workshop prepared to talk intelligently and constructively about the work.

Some notes on participation during workshop sessions:

A portion of your grade involves your ability to give and receive constructive criticism. You are expected

to

- participate in reading and critiquing the work of others;
- critique with grace and kindness, even if you don't "like" the piece;
- accept suggestions with grace, even if you don't like the criticisms;
- treat everyone with civility and respect.

When someone in a workshop says, "I loved it. I didn't find anything wrong with it," the statement itself is meant to make the writer feel good, but it is so unhelpful that saying nothing would most likely be better. What did you love? Why? Did the turn of phrase in this line make your heart jump? Did this character's way with words win you over? When something doesn't work, why not? Did something seem implausible? Did something confuse you?

Try to use the "Describe, Evaluate, Suggest" approach:

- **Describe** – Say what you see as a reader.
- **Evaluate** – Explain how well the writer is achieving a specific goal. In a positive evaluation, your comments tell writers what they should keep doing. In a critique, your comments tell writers what needs to change.
- **Suggest** – offer concrete advice for improvement. Offer the writer a way to revise. Try to give feedback about what to try next instead of saying how to fix the problems.

100-90: Comments are helpful to the reader: full sentences, fully-explored ideas. Feedback is writer-centric, not commenter-centric. Comments are insightful, specific, and constructive, and indicate clearly what worked well and what could be improved. Writer develops and strengthens creative writing as needed by revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. Focuses on the content rather than the person, keeps comments non-judgmental and descriptive, provides a balance of positive and negative feedback, provides useful and specific suggestions for revision, attributes feedback to specific techniques used in the work.

89-80: Writer-centric comments that sound professional. Comments are not "short and sweet." Some constructive feedback about what worked well and what could be improved. Writer demonstrates attention to feedback in revision. Comments are mostly helpful but could be more specific and concrete.

79-70: Feedback is not helpful — too "short and sweet" and commenter-centric. Limited comments about what worked well and what could be improved. Writer demonstrates minimal effort in using feedback to develop and strengthen his or her creative writing. Very little specific, concrete, useful feedback is provided.

69-0: The tone is vague, commenter-centric is condescending, or too nice, and not professional. Feedback is not useful or specific. Writer does not use feedback to develop or strengthen his or her creative writing at all. Provides no specific, concrete, useful feedback or was not completed at all.

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to complete all assignments. Absence from class, regardless of the reason, does not relieve the student of responsibility to complete all course work by required deadlines. Furthermore, it is the student's responsibility to obtain notes and any other information covered when absent from class. Incomplete or missing assignments will necessarily affect the student's grades. Instructors will report excessive and/or unexplained absences to the Counseling Department for investigation and potential intervention. **Instructors may drop students from the class after three (3) absences unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor to make up work and the instructor deems any excuse acceptable.**

Study Time Outside of Class for Face-to-Face Courses: For every credit hour in class, a student is expected to spend two hours outside of class studying course materials.

Submitting and Formatting Your Assignments: Type every assignment in Times New Roman font, using 12 pt. font size, and double space (however, poems are single-spaced unless you have an aesthetic or creative reason for formatting otherwise). Include page numbers. Include the following information on the upper left corner of page 1: Your name, my name, course name and number, the assignment and the *title of your work* (e.g., Poem for Workshop: “Title of My Poem”), the due date. Title the **FILE ITSELF** as follows: YourFirstName YourLastName CourseName Assignment DueDate (for example: John Smith Intro to Creative Writing Poem for Workshop Due Sept. 28). All assignments will be submitted electronically.

Miscellaneous Policies: Late work is not accepted.

SUGGESTED ACTION PLANS: Have a “back-up” plan for computer/technological issues so you will be prepared to submit/retrieve your assignments in case of personal computer/internet problems.

Do not wait until your computer “crashes,” you lose your laptop charger, your internet service goes out, etc. out to come up with a back-up plan – set this up now to avoid missing assignments. Given that computer and technical problems can often crop up at the last minute, it is never wise to wait until the last minute to submit assignments. Give yourself plenty of time in the event you need to implement a back-up plan.

Save your work often, and *always* save before running your spell check program. Save each draft as a separate document. Back up your disk or hard drive regularly, and make sure you keep a copy of your work on disk when you submit it.

NOTE: Everything you write *must* be saved. Don’t delete any writing or even small piece of writing until you’re certain that the course is completed, and you have received a final grade. You will need to save each draft separately. Do not save a revised draft over an old draft. You need every individual draft. You are responsible for all your writing and for all the work we do in and out of class including major writing assignments, writing, writing prompts/exercises, and your reading and writing HW assignments.

Because we will submit and exchange our work electronically, be sure to save copies of everything you submit in several locations.

Academic Integrity: Integrity (honesty) is expected of every student in all academic work. The guiding principle of academic integrity is that a student’s submitted work must be the student’s own. Students who engage in academic dishonesty diminish their education and bring discredit to the University community. Avoid situations likely to compromise academic integrity such as: cheating, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism; modifying academic work to obtain additional credit in the same class unless approved in advance by the instructor, failure to observe rules of academic integrity established by the instructor. **The use of another person’s ideas or work claimed as your own without acknowledging the original source is known as plagiarism and is prohibited.**

Diné Philosophy of Education: The Diné Philosophy of Education (DPE) is incorporated into every class for students to become aware of and to understand the significance of the four Diné philosophical elements, including its affiliation with the four directions, four sacred mountains, the four set of thought processes and so forth: Nitsáhákees, Nahát’á, Íina and Siih Hasin which are essential and relevant to self-identity, respect and wisdom to achieve career goals successfully.

At NTU's Zuni Campus, the A:shiwí Philosophy of Education offers essential elements for helping students develop Indigenous and Western understandings. Yam de bena: dap haydoshna: akkya hon detsemak a:wannikwa da: hon de:tsemak a:ts'umme. *Our language and ceremonies allow our people to maintain strength and knowledge.* A:shiwí core values of hon i:yyułashik'yanna:wa (respect), hon delank'oha:willa:wa (kindness and empathy), hon i:yyayumola:wa (honesty and trustworthiness), and hon kohoł lewuna:wediyahnan, wan hon kela i:tsemanna (think critically) are central to attaining strength and knowledge. They help learners develop positive self-identity, respect, kindness, and critical thinking skills to achieve life goals successfully.

Students with Disabilities: Navajo Technical University is committed to serving all students in a non-discriminatory and accommodating manner. Any student who feels that she or he may need special accommodations should contact the Accommodations Office (<http://www.navajotech.edu/student-services#accomodations-services>) in accordance with the university's Disability Accommodations Policy (see http://www.navajotech.edu/images/about/policiesDocs/Disability_Exhibit-A_6-26-2018.pdf).

Email: Students are required to use NTU's email address for all communications with faculty and staff.

Note: This course syllabus may be modified as necessary by the professor at any time during the semester.