

**Albertus Magnus College**  
**New Haven CT 06511**  
**EN 143: Introduction to Creative Writing**  
**Online**  
**MTWThF**  
**1-3:30**

Instructor: Prof. Sarah Harris Wallman  
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Office Hours: by appointment

**Tradition of Honor:** As a member of Albertus Magnus College Community, each student taking this course agrees to uphold the principles of honor set forth by this community, to defend these principles against abuse or misuse and to abide by the regulations of the College. To this end, every student must write and sign the following statement at the end of each examination: "I declare the Honor Pledge."

**Special Needs and Accommodations:** Please advise the instructor of any special problems or needs at the beginning of the semester or mod. Those students seeking accommodation based on disabilities should provide a Faculty Contact Sheet obtained through the Academic Development Center in Aquinas Hall (203) 773-8590.

**Course Objectives:** This intersession we'll be considering a variety of genres (forms of reading and writing) and their respective abilities to channel the creative impulse. We'll be talking about how writers harness that initial impulse through discipline and practice. Student learning outcomes include critical reading, thinking and speaking skills. Within our broader examination of genre boundaries, we will take time for microscopic inspection of the aesthetics of language. By the end of the semester, students will be producing creative works of fiction and poetry, as well as articulating their desired place in the contemporary creative writing scene.

**Grade Assessment:**

Class participation: 25%  
Napkin fiction: 10%  
Slam Poem: 20%  
Story for workshop: 15%  
Final portfolio: 30%

**Texts:**

All texts are either available online or through the library database. You will need to be able to log in to the library website.

### **Course Policies:**

- Class participation is crucial, particularly in the second half of the seminar, which will be conducted in a workshop format. You are expected to have read your classmates' work and comment politely and intelligently.
- Attendance policy: Because this is such a compressed course, you should not be absent outside of exceptional circumstances. Please be in touch with me if it looks like you're going to be absent.
- Please be on time. Three lates equals one absence.
- Quizzes are unannounced and cover reading comprehension and class concepts. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes.
- We will collectively write our camera policy.

Please try to avoid browsing in other windows or looking at your phone

\*\*\*The syllabus and assignments are subject to change.\*\*\*

\*WITHDRAWING FROM A COURSE: It is the responsibility of the student to officially drop or withdraw from a course. However, failure to attend a course for 14 calendar days may result in an administrative withdrawal from the course. The policies on course withdrawals and administrative withdrawals may be found online at:

<http://www.albertus.edu/policy-reports/academic-policies-regulations-ug#apgr>

### **Albertus Magnus College adheres to the definition of a credit hour in compliance with, and as defined by [NECHE commission policy](#):**

The Commission defines a credit hour as an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates not less than – (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time or (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** By the end of the session, students will be able to write clearly and insightfully about the aesthetics of poetry and short fiction, both by established authors and by classmates. In addition, they will have produced poems and short stories of their own and reflected on the processes of inspiration, composition, and revision.

### **Course Description**

Introduction to Creative Writing is designed to sharpen your skills as a writer and as a reader, hence it involves a great deal of, well, reading and writing. The course is not designed to inflate your grade point or offer a respite from the rigors of science/math/business etc. There aren't any lab reports or multiple choice tests; instead you'll learn how to compose and revise (on your own) and workshop (as a group).

We are dealing with exciting subject matter: death, war, disenfranchisement, anger, loss, betrayal and, of course, love. Our reading will vary widely in authorship, subject matter, and style. The best part of this class is that after all this reading (which you should consider a kind of apprenticeship), you get to be an author yourself. You get to have your own take on betrayal, love, etc. Much of our class and assignment time will be spent equipping you for this task. You will learn to read as a writer, examining the choices writers make (both published writers and writers in the seats next to you).

You're going to be hearing a lot about writers' choices, which we'll call *craft*. Craft includes everything from word choice to the all-important work of throwing out that cute little paragraph that just doesn't belong. At times I refer to aspects of craft as "rules," but I don't mean it in an oppressive way. Think about how much more fun it is to watch a baseball game if you understand the intricacies of pitching, the histories of the teams, the millions of statistics. If you don't know the rules, baseball is three hours of watching some dudes in tight pants mostly standing around.

I'm not forgetting that pesky term "creative" from the course title. I want us all to work together to create a class environment where inspiration and critique can coexist (though not always on the same day). You may get a little queasy thinking about a relationship between creativity and grades, so I'll be as detailed as possible about expectations.

## **Week One: The temporal and the timeless**

### **Day 1: The temporal**

This class will consider the most clichéd writing advice: write what you know. We will complete some autobiographical writing exercises and have an introduction to some of the building blocks of creative writing: scene and image.

In class work: start a Google Drive portfolio, introductory writing exercises, mini-memoir

Homework: Read "Sleeping Giant" by Ashleigh Pedersen

### **Day 2: The timeless**

Yesterday, we were focused on your special place in the universe; today we'll consider the universe's place in you (well, maybe not the whole universe....it's an Earth-centric class). We'll consider myths and fairy tales, talk about allusion.

In class work: notes on last night's reading, fairy tale hunt, allusion exercises, listen to Lesley Arimah Nneka

Homework: Read "Mastiff" by Joyce Carol Oates.

### **Day 3: The contemporary**

Today we will have a guest speaker, Ashleigh Pedersen who wrote the story we read on Monday.

Homework: work on your napkin fiction, due Friday

### **Day 4: The timely**

Today we will think deeply about the structure of flash fiction: how do settings and characters facilitate or obstruct the formation of plot? What is a plot exactly? How does restriction effect creativity?

In class work: Junot Diaz, word count exercises,

Homework: "Cat Person" by Kristen Roupenian

### **Day 5: Tempus fugit**

Today you read! Bring in your napkin fiction assignment and read it to the class. We will have a miniature version of a fiction workshop. We will also discuss the relationship stories you've been reading all week: the Diaz, the Oates, the Roupenian.

In class work: Discussion, possible written response to stories.

Homework: Read: I recommend you get a head start on next week's reading, the Wickersham and the Johnson.

## **Week Two: Freedom and Constraint**

### **Day 6: Poetic forms**

They say you've got to learn the rules before you can break them; today we'll spend some time on both sides of that equation.

In class work: experimenting with form poems

Homework: Find a video of a slam poem to present to the class tomorrow

### **Day 7: Slamming the form**

Your big writing assignment/presentation this week will be the slam poem on Friday. In preparation, I'd like you to bring in a video of someone performing in a poetry slam. We will play them all in class and break into groups to discuss what makes them work. Collaboratively, we will write the rules for Friday's assignment.

In class work: Structuring Friday's assignment, brainstorming  
Homework: Work on your slam performance.

### **Day 8: Fun with form**

Just because most forms and restrictions have long histories, doesn't mean new ones are never created. Today we'll look at Flarf and Oulipo, and talk about the interplay between spontaneity and discipline, chance and design.  
In class work: We'll practice Oulipian restrictions and Flarf romps.  
Read: "An Inventory" Joan Wickersham, "Control Negro" by Jocelyn Nicole Johnson

### **Day 9: Stories by design**

Can you use pattern to create story? We'll look at stories that use distinctive scaffolding.  
In class work: dissecting pattern stories, progress check-in on all assignments.  
Homework: Finish work on your slam poem and write a reflection: how do you think you did? Describe your process and your product. Did the end result match your ambition? Could it be improved?

### **Day 10: Virtual Poetry Slam**

Today you perform! Each of you will present your slam poem. Please take notes on each performance so we can discuss them afterward.  
In class work: responding to others, begin to discuss the final paper.  
Homework: Read each other's fiction

## **Week Three: Author Author**

### **Day 11: Get ready**

We will not meet due to MLK day, but it's very important that you read all your classmates' stories and prepare some questions for them. You will be asked to write up two stories more in depth. You will send that feedback to them and to me.

### **Day 12: Lightening rounds**

Workshop stories 1, 2, 3, 4.  
Each workshop will be 15-20 minutes. The writer will read aloud from their work and then answer questions from the rest of us.

### **Day 13: The five-workshop challenge.**

We've got to move fast today!  
Workshop stories: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

### **Day 14: Home stretch.**

Workshop stories: 10, 11, 12, 13

Today is our last day to meet synchronously, so we will share our final thoughts and writing exercises as well as complete the workshops. I'll answer any questions about the final paper and portfolio.

**Day 15: The last boss**

Final paper (4-5 pages): This paper is about your personal taste in poetry and/or story, but it shouldn't just be a list of what you like. For each piece that you cite, you should talk about what exactly it accomplishes that you aspire to emulate with your own writing. You should make connections between the choices the author has made (such as literary devices) and the meaning of the piece. How does form (or lack of form) shape function? What do you think is the ideal balance between the temporal and the timeless? You must use quotes and include a works cited page (not part of the page count).