

**English 338: Creative Writing (Poetry)**  
**Spring 2002 / TTH 11:00-12:20 / JGM 105**  
**Dr. Anna Leahy**

**Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism**  
**Division of Liberal Arts and Sciences**  
**Missouri Western State College**

**INSTRUCTOR OFFICE HOURS:** T 1-2 & 3:30-5, W 11-12, Th 3:30-5 in SSC 222D  
**INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFO:** amleahy@missouriwestern.edu / 271-4316 or 271-4310

English 338: Creative Writing serves as an exploration of imaginative writing. This semester, the course focuses on poetry writing. The course employs a variety of strategies, including workshopping, to help generate and revise individual poems and to help form a community of writers. Through a relatively rigorous course, each student is able to explore different categories, approaches, and techniques by completing a critical project as a creative writer and by drafting and revising several pieces of original poetry. The main goals for students in this course are as follows:

- to form a supportive and critical community of poetry writers
- to learn ways to read poetry as creative writers
- to develop ways to talk about and write about poetry as creative writers
- to write a variety of original, imaginative poetry pieces
- to move beyond what you already know
- to move beyond what you already can do
- to make active, informed choices about writing and revising
- to recognize strengths and possibilities as creative writers.

Students have individual goals and should work to bring individual and course goals together to become more interesting writers. The instructor in a creative writing course is an expert guide and evaluator; however, the student must negotiate the territory.

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

*My Favorite Apocalypse* by Catherine Rosemurgy  
*The Sounds of Poetry* by Robert Pinsky  
*The Best American Poetry* edited by Robert Hass (listed as BA on the schedule)

## **GRADING**

Course grades will be based upon the following components:

- Participation (exercises, discussion, responsibility to peers, etc.) – 25%
- Mid-Term Critical Essay – 25%
- Final Portfolio – 50%

All three components must be completed. More than four absences (for whatever reasons) constitutes failure to complete the Participation component. The Mid-Term Critical Essay and the Final Portfolio will not be accepted late and must include all required parts. Failure to complete a component results in a course grade of F.

Note that a C represents average, college-level work and that merely doing assigned work does not guarantee a C. Grades of A or B represent work above the basic, minimum expectations for a 300-level course and, in a creative writing course, most often indicate exceptional talent, active engagement, and exceptional exploration and diligence, particularly in revision. Grades of D or F indicate an inability to complete minimally acceptable work or an inability to complete exercises, drafts, or reading on time. Additional criteria for the critical paper and the portfolio will be provided.

## **OTHER POLICIES**

While some students initially worry that evaluation of creative work is entirely subjective, your writing in this course is evaluated according to somewhat standard, academic criteria, including originality, active engagement with language, effectiveness, evidence of thoughtful revision, and so on. In addition to whatever personal investment one already has in one's own writing, the course encourages each writer to see creative writing as a serious, academic pursuit in which one creates texts for readers. Also, workshopping and other course activities encourage establishing appropriate approaches to reading and judging imaginative writing as serious writers. Because of the course's emphasis on linking reading, thoughtful discussion, and writing, revision becomes a very important component of the writing process and offers students the opportunity to move well beyond their first impulses and comfortable tendencies. The Mid-Term Critical Paper also offers students a venue in which to articulate some judgments, as writers. As with other kinds of writing, well-read, well-informed readers can make valuable and supported judgments about what is written and how it is written. Thus, evaluating and grading creative work becomes an extension of informed judgments in an academic writing community. Evaluation is not just a matter of taste.

As part of this course, you are required to attend a reading by writer Catherine Rosemurgy on January 22 at 4:30pm in MC 214. Please adjust your schedule accordingly, and see me for an additional assignment if you are unable to attend.

Assigned work must be completed before the class meeting for which it is due. All out-of-class writing must be typed, unless otherwise indicated in class or on the schedule. Late participation work is not accepted and lowers your participation grade, though not all written exercises/responses are collected. Each late required draft of a poem (listed in bold on the schedule) lowers your final course grade by a full letter and receives no written or workshop comments; lack of enough copies is treated as lateness.

While some guided collaboration is encouraged in this course, plagiarism is not tolerated and will result in a failing grade for this course, which values authorship. Refer to your student handbook or to the instructor for more information.

I sometimes hold group or individual conferences and encourage additional conferences as needed. Missing a conference is treated as an absence. Many students find one-on-one discussion an important component of growth as a creative writer because it offers individual attention from the instructor, encourages active involvement from the student, and can create a time for immediate clarification or brainstorming. Though I provide some written responses to some of your work, I can provide additional response in conference conversations. You can determine how you want conferences to be a part of your writing process.

Students with disabilities that inhibit work in this course should notify me in writing within the first two

weeks of this semester so that accommodations can be considered.

No food or beverages (other than water) are allowed in carpeted areas of JGM.

Other relevant policies are covered in your student handbook.

While I do not check up on your work beyond listed assignments, I expect you to spend time on creative writing every day; in addition to the course assignments, you should try to read poetry of your own choosing and to write for at least thirty minutes every day. In the end, any kind of accumulated engagement in the writing process often pays off in the work you include in the Final Portfolio. To an even greater extent than in many other courses, reaping benefits from a creative writing course depends upon individual enthusiasm and engagement.

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

### **Tuesday, January 15**

Introduction to the course and each other. What is poetry?

### **Thursday, January 17**

Read through page 30 in the Rosemurgy collection.

### **Tuesday, January 22**

Instead of meeting as a class, we will attend the reading by Catie Rosemurgy at 4:30pm in MC 214. Bring a one-page close reading of one poem at page 30.

### **Thursday, January 24**

Read Pinsky "Accent and Duration." Read in BA: Collins, Katylia Davis, Pinsky. Always bring both these texts to class so we can refer to them as needed.

### **Tuesday, January 29**

Read Pinsky "Syntax and Line." Read in BA: Kinnell, Olds, Phillips.

### **Thursday, January 31**

**Write a poem; bring two copies.** Generating poems. After today, never turn in a first draft of a poem; in other words, always revise and polish before you share your work.

### **Tuesday, February 5**

Revising poems.

### **Thursday, February 7**

Read in BA: Paley, Simic, Welt. Assignment for Mid-Term Critical Essay.

### **Tuesday, February 12**

**Write a poem; bring copies for the entire class.**

### **Thursday, February 14 - Tuesday, February 26**

Workshopping.

**Thursday, February 28**

Instead of meeting as a class, I'll hold conferences on complete drafts of critical essays.

**Tuesday, March 5**

Bring your finished Mid-Term Critical Essay. Revising poems.

**Thursday, March 7**

We will not meet as a class. Instead, place in my mailbox (by noon) drafts or versions of a single, **new poem** that represent a minimum of four hours of work.

**March 10-17 - Spring Break**