

## CREATIVE WRITERS' COURSE OUTLINE

The Creative Writers' class exists as a means of publishing the Saint Mary's literary magazine, PARADOX, and of creating a supportive, collaborative creative writing community on campus.

You will play with your writing, completing many casual pieces, as well as "workshopping" select pieces to achieve a higher degree of polish. Discussion of submissions to the literary magazine provides a context for general discussion of style, technique, and mechanics. Oral contributions to the class are required, as is reading your work for discussion and feedback. *This is not a writing mechanics course; grammar is only discussed as it relates to message.*

PARADOX is an academic class, not a club, and as a result, you do need to be at each "meeting" and you will earn a grade on your official transcript for each semester. Class meets during Z-Block (from 2:20 to 3:25) on one of the two days. The course is a full-year and you will automatically be enrolled for both semesters. I cannot emphasize this issue of attendance fully enough. You may not miss this class, even for other academic reasons (i.e. to take a test, attend a review session, talk to a teacher, work on a group project) or for other student activities (i.e. to go to a club meeting). A missed class that is not an excused absence is a "cut" and will be treated as such.

### PARADOX MISSION STATEMENT

It's the classiest non-class class  
Ruled by the majority  
Where editors have seniority  
Though everyone takes their own stance  
We really do give every piece a chance  
If you want to think outside the box  
You must read your PARADOX. A poem.

Class meetings *generally* follow the following format:

1. A brief reading (a poem, quote, or short piece of prose) upon which we can reflect, and the opportunity to clear our minds of daily stress and clutter.
2. A creative writing exercise to generate ideas and provide rough draft material for later revision. Normally, we do some brainstorming, read a model (see #1), and use both as a springboard for our ideas.
3. The option to read/share the results of those creative writing exercises.

4. The reading aloud of pieces submitted to PARADOX for potential publication in the magazine.
5. Discussion and eventual decision-making on those submissions.
6. Distribution of cookies occurs throughout the class period.

There are, however, a number of special formats which will alter our routine by replacing all or some of the activities above:

1. ***You Do It/ Workshop***: 3 times per semester.

For the “You Do It” portion of class, each member of the class will bring a piece of published writing to share. You will read in small groups, discuss each person’s contribution and select one to share with the class as a whole. ***Important:*** On You Do It days, students bring the cookies!

For the “Workshop” portion of class, you will need to bring your ongoing portfolio assignment (more details to follow) to share with an editor-led workshop group so that you may receive constructive feedback on this piece.

2. ***Submission Circles***: Approximately 2 times per semester. When we have a significant number of submissions to work through, we will split into two groups, led by your editors, and read through submissions in those smaller groups.
3. ***Editors Rule***: 1 time per semester. The PARADOX editors will lead you in one or more writing activities and thus, on those days, the class format and use of our time will be up to them.

## **ATTENDANCE**

It is essential that you understand that this is a class just like any of your others here at Saint Mary’s (English, math, etc.) and, just as for those classes, once you have enrolled, it is not your choice or decision whether or not to be here.

You must be in Room 321 by 2:20 every class period. That’s a 5 minute longer passing time than the official one because of my great beneficence. If you are coming to class after 2:20, bring a pink slip from the main office. Please do this as a matter of course rather than coming to class and making me send you back.

If you are absent, please bring a pink slip to me to excuse your absence. In any case, you will need to go to the office to get your absence excused, lest you find yourself in detention.

Based on the Saint Mary’s policy for credit/non credit for courses, more than 4 absences in the semester may lead to a non-credit. (For the fall semester, there are a maximum of 12 absences allowed for a course that meets 4 times per week. We meet once, thus, 4 per semester is the same percentage of missed class time.)

## **DEADLINES:**

Because we only meet once per week, it may be difficult to keep in touch about deadlines or last minute changes to our schedule, especially if you have been absent. In order to facilitate communication, you MUST sign up with Mr. T's new library social networking site and join the group for the Creative Writers' class. Students officially enrolled in the class have already been sent an invitation to join via their Saint Mary's gmail account. If you need help accessing your account or joining the network, please see Mr. T ASAP.

## **PARADOX (THE LITERARY MAGAZINE):**

There may be times during class when you are asked to help with tasks related to the literary magazine. Such tasks range from the mundane (counting and bundling issues) to the sublime (planning themes and/or activities). For those students who are interested in becoming more intimately involved with PARADOX, the literary magazine and perhaps eventually becoming an editor, you may attend the weekly editorial meetings Fridays at lunch. We are also always looking for help with magazine distribution when issues come out and with lunchtime activities to help promote the latest issue.

## **GRADING:**

Required Submissions:	20%
You-Do-It/Workshop:	30%
Reading Aloud/Participation in Discussion:	30%
Portfolio:	20%

It is against the philosophy of this course to differentiate students or to assign course grades based on current writing skills. Rather, success is available to any student who fulfills his or her course responsibilities and actively engages him or herself in the pursuit of creativity, fun, and improvement in writing. It is also against the philosophy of this course to assign an "A" grade to a student who does not demonstrate exceptional interest, effort, involvement and/or achievement. The "A" student in Creative Writers':

- ❖ Attends class regularly, with no unexcused absences, and no more than 2 excused absences.
- ❖ Turns in the two required submissions on time. Turns in additional voluntary submissions.
- ❖ Comes prepared with portfolio assignment on workshop days and selections for "You-Do-It" on the assigned dates.
- ❖ Volunteers frequently to read the work of others aloud.
- ❖ Works well in class and maintains his/her focus during weekly writing activities.
- ❖ Volunteers to read his or her work aloud more than the required minimum of twice per semester.
- ❖ Participates actively and regularly in class discussions, going beyond the suggested minimum of once per period.
- ❖ Offers quality comments which are truly constructive.
- ❖ Saves and organizes his/her writing.
- ❖ Demonstrates growth and improvement, especially by means of the semester portfolio.
- ❖ May help with the publication of the magazine outside of official class hours.

## **SUBMISSIONS**

You need to turn in 2 pieces of writing to me per semester. These will be read anonymously at one of our meetings (unless you want people to know you wrote them) and considered for publication in the magazine. You may submit a short story, poem, essay, rap/song lyrics, memoir or any other written piece that fits the magazine's format. These pieces will not be graded, but they should be pieces which show your growth and development as a writer. In other words, they should be pieces on which you have invested time, thought, and energy. If your work seems hastily done, or if it is clearly "first-draft fiction" your grade may be lowered. I may also require you to turn in a new submission. Turning in your submissions on time is crucial, not only for your grade, but also for the timely production of the magazine. Please understand that there are not many required assignments for this course, so missing even one or turning one in late can adversely affect your grade.

\*You are free to turn in more than two submissions per semester and may turn them in at any point during the semester; these required submissions are the minimum level of contribution.

## **YOU-DO-IT/WORKSHOP**

For more details here, please see the descriptions above. To succeed here, come to class prepared with your ongoing portfolio and published pieces and your published piece to share. Both must be printed out and ready at the beginning of class to be considered as on-time. You must also participate actively in the discussion of your work and the work of your peers.

## **READING ALOUD/ PARTICIPATION IN DISCUSSION**

You may volunteer to read the published work of other writers and/or the submissions of your peers so that they may be considered for publication. Beyond that, you should volunteer to read one of your own pieces of writing aloud in front of the class a minimum of two times per semester. This class is a community of writers and, as such, you are required to participate in the development of other writers by offering feedback on their work and involving yourself in discussion about class materials. You should strive to contribute to class discussion in this way at least once per class period. More is great. Quality of feedback is key: it is essential to be constructive without being abusive. Neither "empty" praise nor blame advances our discussion. General attitude, attention, and enthusiasm are also factors in this aspect of your grade.

## **PORTFOLIO**

This assignment is an ongoing one for the semester. You will:

- ❖ select a genre (short story, poetry, drama, etc.).
- ❖ undertake a project in that genre.
- ❖ work on it throughout the semester, bringing it to class for a check in on 3 workshop days.
- ❖ turn it in at the end of the semester for evaluation.

The goal of this project is to permit you to work on a more continuous, extended project than our class time allows and to show growth/improvement over the course of our four months together. However, if you bring it to class with you regularly, you will often have time to make progress on it during class time. You may also seek me out outside of class time for help or advice with this piece or series of pieces. ***You will also save and organize all handouts and writing exercises from our class time together, clearly labeled with dates and titles.***

# COURSE OUTLINE SIGN-OFF FOR CREATIVE WRITERS'

By signing below I acknowledge and accept the following:

1. I have read and understood the Course Outline.
2. I am interested in exploring and improving my writing and pledge to participate actively in class activities and discussions.
3. I understand that an A is for exceptional involvement and performance as described in the Course Outline and that if I only meet the minimum requirements for the class, I do not merit an A.
4. I understand that I cannot miss or be late to this class unless I have the absence excused by a parent or guardian.
5. I understand that #4 applies even if I have a “good reason.” Examples of reasons that might seem worthy but which do not excuse an absence are:
  - making up a test.
  - working on a group project.
  - talking to a teacher.
  - participating in set up for a school activity.

These examples are not meant to limit this provision of course policy but rather to illustrate it.

6. I am aware that being disruptive in class, missing more than 4 classes (excused or unexcused), and/or failing to turn in submissions and/or workshop pieces may lower my course grade to a D or an F.

---

Student Signature