



## Syllabus

ENG 120-FA110: Introduction to Creative Writing  
 Time & Place: Mondays, 1-3:55 pm, S058, Main Campus  
 Prerequisites: Successful completion of ENG 111  
 Instructor: Lauren Smith  
 Office: S003  
 Instructor Telephone: 989-686-9496  
 Division Telephone: 989-686-9159  
 E-mail: [laurensmith3@delta.edu](mailto:laurensmith3@delta.edu)

Contacting Me: I am on campus Monday through Thursday. You can stop by my office hours or make an appointment to see me. I check my e-mail and voicemail often, and I will try to respond to messages within two days. E-mail is best.

Office Hours: By appointment AND:

Monday	10:00-11:00 am
Tuesday	1:45-2:45 pm
Wednesday	10:00-11:00 am
Thursday	1:45-2:45 pm

*"I can write better than I think. I like to write not to [spurt] thoughts but to transfigure them through labor and care and the pressure of putting them down on paper where they can't be taken back. I am not a particularly smart or imaginative man, but I find that after much suffering and several drafts I'm sometimes capable of producing smart and imaginative prose. Writing [...] not only brings out the best in me—it brings out **stuff I never would have dreamed was there.**" ~David Foster Wallace*

*"In a sense, we are all crashing to our death from the top story of our birth to the flat stones of the churchyard and wondering with an immortal Alice in Wonderland at the patterns of the passing wall. This capacity to wonder at trifles—no matter the imminent peril—**these asides of the spirit**, these footnotes in the volume of life are the highest forms of consciousness"*  
 ~Vladimir Nabokov

Welcome to English 120, a course that helps you find your voice as a writer. When I was in college, I took a class like this, and it made me the person I am today. I am honored to have this chance to work with you.

Some aspects of writing—and all kinds of creative expression—will always remain a mystery. But what are we to do, then, if we want to get better as writers? By having this class, are we asking to do what can't be done?

No. While we all have natural gifts, we also have practicable skills, and great writing usually shows a number of recognizable traits: **image, voice, character, setting, and story**. Along with celebrating the wonder of writing, ENG 120 introduces you to hallmarks of strong craft.

I hope this class will be enjoyable, challenging, and inspiring, and I promise to do everything I can to make it so. I look forward to getting to know you.

### *Needed Materials and Tools*

1. A notebook or good supply of loose-leaf paper.
2. A folder with a “silly” front cover (will explain). Stores with back-to-school sales tend to have these.
3. Consistent access to a printer and/or photocopier.
4. A Delta e-mail account.
5. Familiarity with Delta’s eLearning system.
6. Pens and/or pencils with which you especially like to write.
7. At least two places to save your written work (computer, flash drive, web-based e-mail, etc.).
8. *Imaginative Writing*, fourth edition, by Janet Burroway (available at the Delta bookstore and for purchase online).
9. Belief in yourself as a writer.
10. A spirit of friendliness and collegiality.
11. A sense of humor.

### *Schedule*

Depending on how things go and who we are as a group, I may make changes to this schedule. You will know about any changes ahead of time.

Date	Topics	Activities
8/25	Introductions	
9/1	*Labor Day Holiday: No Face-to-Face Class	
9/8	Poetry	Small Group Workshops
9/15	Poetry	Small Group Workshops
9/22	Poetry/Fiction	Poetry Reading!
9/29	Fiction	
10/6	Fiction	Large Group Workshops
10/13	Fiction	Large Group Workshops
10/20	Fiction	Large Group Workshops
10/27	Fiction/Nonfiction	Large Group Workshops
11/3	Nonfiction	
11/10	Nonfiction	Large Group Workshops
11/17	Nonfiction	Large Group Workshops
11/24	Nonfiction	Large Group Workshops

12/1	Nonfiction	Large Group Workshops
12/8	Closing Thoughts	

### *Assessment*

Original Pieces and Workshop Participation (4)	20%
Weekly Exercises	20%
Reading Responses and Quizzes	20%
General Participation	15%
Revised Piece	10%
Reading and Publication	10%
Reflection	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### *Original Pieces and Workshop Participation (20%)*

In this class, you will write new stuff in three genres: poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. You will not receive a grade on original pieces; the idea of grading creativity is ridiculous. For each original piece, you can earn a check, a check-minus, or a zero. A check is for completing the assignment in full, a check-minus is for completing it partially, and a zero is for not completing it.

You'll get in-class feedback on your writing four times during creative writing workshops. If you haven't participated in a workshop before, here's a description of how it can go:

First, a writer shares with a group a piece of original writing. It may be a poem, a short story, or nonfiction. For longer pieces, it's best if the group can read and write comments on it in advance (we will talk in class about how to comment). Then, the group discusses the piece, naming its strengths and weaknesses and making suggestions. For the most part, the writer stays silent, and the group speaks about him or her in the third person. This can be weird at first, but it helps to keep the workshop productive: participants are freer and writers more able to listen. The writer listens carefully and takes the feedback into account when he or she revises.

In our class, we will have different-sized workshops; this way, you will have a chance to experience more than one kind of writers' group. When we write poetry, you will be in a workshop group with two to four other people, and you will bring them (and me) at least one new poem that you have worked on.

When we write fiction and nonfiction, the whole class will be your workshop group. You will know in advance when your large-group workshop days are. You will write 3-5 pages (typed in a plain 12-point font, double-spaced with regular margins). While a draft needn't have an ending, the reader should feel as though some kind of story is underway.

For fiction and nonfiction, you need to distribute hardcopies of your work **the week before your workshop**. If you don't get your material to the class in time for your workshop, you won't earn points for that original piece, and if you are absent the day of your scheduled workshop, the maximum you can receive for that piece is a check-minus. We will try to squeeze you in the following week, but that may not be possible. If you use the printers in the LLIC, keep in mind that you can print a limited number of pages per semester. This limit can be extended, however; talk to the LLIC staff.

Experience has shown me that e-mailing workshop material to the class just doesn't work. Most often, people blow off these e-mails, and the writer has a lame workshop because no one's prepared. Also, by e-mailing us instead of giving us a hardcopy, you are telling everyone that your time and your resources are more important than ours. This is not cool. Unless every single person in a class has a laptop or a tablet, we need hardcopies for workshop.

On a large group workshop day, I may collect your copy of your peers' work so that I can see your comments. "Show up" for your colleagues and their work.

One more thing about original pieces: do not submit for workshop something you wrote before the semester began. Although a writer may have good reasons and the best intentions when doing this, it sends the message that he or she would rather rest on his or her laurels and take the easy way out. Most of the time, workshop participants know when a piece isn't fresh.

I consider using an old piece in place of a new one a form of academic dishonesty. Don't do it.

### *Weekly Exercises (20%)*

In some ways, writing is like physical exercise; the more you do, the stronger you get. And it's wonderful to discover that not everything you write has to go somewhere or lead to something. Sometimes we write just for practice or to generate ideas. Each week, I will give you a creative writing exercise to try, and you will also sometimes have the option to write whatever you want. Keep all your exercises in your "silly" folder. A few times during the semester, I will collect your folder and take a look at what you've been doing. I will probably ask you in class how the week's writing went, and we might listen to a few aloud in class.

### *Reading Responses and Quizzes (20%)*

Because we can learn a great deal by studying models, each week, we will be reading the published work of professional writers (usually from *Imaginative Writing*). You will also write a couple of two-page responses to readings. A solid response doesn't just describe—it identifies. What does the work do well? How does it seem to be lacking? You'll have more instructions as due dates approach.

One of the outcomes of ENG 120 is to "Learn by reading contemporary or classic writers." (You can find the other outcomes listed in the online course description.) Along with the reading responses, to support this outcome, you will often take a quiz on the material you read.

### *General Participation (15%)*

Perhaps more than others, creative writing classes need strong participation from everyone. Imagine how awkward you would feel, for example, if we were workshoping your piece and no one had anything to say! In order to get the most out of this class, we need to build a supportive, active community of writers. In our conversations, then, let's aim for honesty, tact, civility, and joy.

Sometimes, we may use an online discussion board—this will offset the challenges we face meeting in person just once a week. Your activity on discussion boards will count towards your general participation.

If you have questions about participation, let me know.

### *The Revised Piece (10%)*

You will revise one workshoped piece(s) and hand it in to me at the end of the semester. Which piece you revise will be up to you. I will ask, however, that we have a one-on-one meeting to discuss your selection and the class as a whole. The goal is to make this piece as finished and as perfect as you can. Again, you will not be graded on art but on effort. You should submit the original draft along with the revised draft.

### *Reading and Publication (10%)*

Our writing takes on a special energy when we know others will read it or hear it, and sharing what you write with others is a big part of ENG 120. I applaud all of you for taking this extraordinary risk!

At the end of our section on poetry, you will read aloud to us a new, polished poem. By the time this happens, you will have had the feedback and the support of a small group of class members, and I will also be available to talk with you. Reading your poem is worth 5% of your grade.

To earn another 5% of your final grade, you will publish a piece on a class wiki. In some ways, it makes sense for you to publish your revised piece, but I am open to other options.

Currently, I am the editor-in-chief of the *Pioneer Post*, Delta College's student literary magazine ([pioneerpost.net](http://pioneerpost.net)), and I am excited to have this room of potential authors! Towards the end of the term, I will ask each of you to consider the work of your peers and "nominate" some for the *Post*'s consideration. More details to come later.

### *Reflection (5%)*

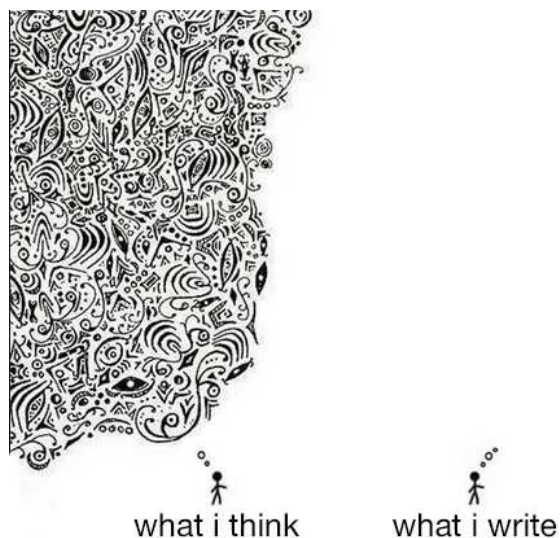
At the end of the semester, you will write a reflective essay. You can write about any aspect of your experience in the class: your progress, your process, the workshops, the reading assignments, etc. The goal of the reflection is to figure something out on paper. A successful reflection is thorough, candid, and clear.

### *Assignments and Policies*

You'll have an assignment of some kind every week. I usually try to mention it when the class comes back from a break or just before we're through for the day. I also use the "Checklist" feature on eLearning—to see it, pull down the Toolbox menu. If I haven't updated the checklist by Wednesday night, feel free to e-mail me.

You can find information about course policies related to attendance, cell phones, etc., on our eLearning page. Go to the Content area and look under "Syllabus, Policies, and Professor Contact Information." More or less, they boil down to this: working hard and creating a culture of mutual respect will help you do well in this class.

And now, a visual...



Look familiar?

*Again, welcome.*