

McLennan

C O M M U N I T Y

COLLEGE

WACO, TEXAS

COURSE SYLLABUS

AND

INSTRUCTOR PLAN

INTRO. TO CREATIVE WRITING

ENGL 2307.001

Dr. Jessica Zbeida

NOTE: This is a 16-week course.

COVID 19 Notice:

McLennan Community College is committed to providing you with every resource you need to reach your academic goals including your safety. We will continue to monitor the evolving situation with COVID 19 and adjust our safety guidelines to make sure we offer a safe environment for you and our faculty. Please make sure to consult your faculty and the MCC website at <https://www.mclennan.edu/crisis-management/coronavirus-updates/index.html> on any changes to these guidelines.

Course Description:

Practical experience in the techniques of imaginative writing. May include fiction, nonfiction, poetry, screenwriting, or drama. Semester hours 3 (3 lecture).

Prerequisites and/or Corequisites:

ENGL 1301 or equivalent.

Course Notes and Instructor Recommendations:

Creative writing introduces students to the conventions of imaginative writing and publishing. In this class, you will read and write creative works representing several genres. You will also participate in writing workshops in which we discuss one another's work and offer feedback and suggestions. This course emphasizes the writing process (prewriting, drafting, and revision), collaboration, and the fundamentals of engaging poetry, prose, and drama. Students who complete this course should feel prepared to pursue creative projects and publication.

Instructor Information:

Instructor Name: Dr. Jessica Zbeida

MCC Email: jzbeida@mclennan.edu

Office Phone Number: (254)299-8949

Office Location: Faculty Office Building (FOB) 113

Office/Teacher Conference Hours: MW, 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm (via Zoom)

Other Instruction Information: I respond most quickly to e-mail (within 24-48 hours). If you want to meet outside of office hours, please contact me at least 24-48 hours in advance.

Required Text & Materials:

Title: *Imaginative Writing: The Elements of Craft*

Author: Janet Burroway

Edition: 4th ed.

Publisher: Pearson

ISBN: 978-0-13-405324-0

MCC Bookstore Website: <http://www.mclennan.edu/bookstore/>

Methods of Teaching and Learning:

This course uses a mix of assigned reading, lecture, class discussion, and short and long writing assignments to help students meet the learning objectives, including:

- Assigned Reading, Lecture, and Class Discussion
- Writing Workshops and Peer Response Letters
- Draft Submissions (including Writer's Notes)
- A Publication Project (revise and submit a work for publication)

-
- A Final Portfolio (a collection of the student's work over the semester, including one assignment revised for publication)

Submit your work online in Brightspace (**save your files in .rtf or .docx format**). *All assignments **MUST be submitted online**—hard copies are not accepted.*

Course Grading Rubrics

I use holistic grading rubrics for assignments in this course. Each rubric is tailored to the assignment and appears in the course units in Brightspace.

Core Objectives for Communication:

Courses in this category focus on developing ideas and expressing them clearly, considering the effect of the message, fostering understanding, and building the skills needed to communicate persuasively. Courses involve the command of oral, aural, written, and visual literacy skills that enable people to exchange messages appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience.

- **Critical Thinking (CT)** -- to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- **Communications Skill (COM)** -- to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- **Teamwork (TW)** -- to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
- **Personal Responsibility (PR)** -- to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making

Course Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Generate creative writing in several genres.
2. Describe how literary elements such as plot, character, dialogue, conflict, and tone contribute to imaginative writing.
3. Write in a style appropriate to diverse audiences and purposes.
4. Prepare creative works for publication according to a journal's submission guidelines.
5. Use edited American English in creative works.

Course Grading Information:

Final grades are determined as follows:

Course Component	Description	Percentage
Draft Submissions	Drafts for writing workshop in three genres (creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry); drafts must include 'Writing Notes' (see below)	30%
Peer Response Letters	Response letters (1-2 pg.) written for each peer's draft discussed in workshop	30%

Publication Project	Includes the revision and submission of one draft to a literary magazine, conference, or contest	10%
Participation & Attendance	Includes attendance and participation in discussion, exercises, and writing workshop	10%
Final Portfolio	Final project that presents a collection of the work, including one draft revised for publication	20%

Draft Submissions

You will prepare drafts for workshop in three genres: creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry.

Instructions for each draft and a grading rubric appear in Brightspace. *Submissions are 'works in progress.' They don't have to be perfect as long as they demonstrate creative effort toward your goal.* At the end of each submission, include a 'Writing Notes' section that describes your writing process, intentions, difficulties with the project, and intended audience. (A sample of 'Writing Notes' appears in Brightspace). *Submit all drafts online by uploading a file in .rtf or .docx format to the Writing Workshop discussion forum in Brightspace.* I post feedback as soon as possible, usually within two weeks of submission. If you have any questions regarding feedback, please contact me.

Peer Response Letters

Before workshop, read and provide feedback on your peers' drafts by writing notes (handwritten or electronic) on the draft AND preparing a Peer Response Letter. **Letters should: address the writer by name; use an appropriate tone; and, be typed, double-spaced, and 1-2 pages in length.** Successful letters will include *observations, questions, and possibilities* for revision. Balance the space devoted to each—remember, the goal is to *encourage* and support the writer; not to 'fix' their work. Use the letter to provide 'macro' feedback for the draft as a whole, and use the margins of the draft to add 'micro' feedback on specific scenes, lines, or passages. **A sample Peer Response Letter appears in Brightspace.**

Publication Project

For this project, you will select one draft (such as 2-3 poems, an essay, or a short story), revise it, and then submit your work to a literary magazine, conference, or contest. *Before revising, be sure to identify a target publication and to review its submission guidelines and back issues.* Revisions should be tailored to the publication's audience and standards. Be sure to prepare a short cover letter for your submission, too. **Instructions and a rubric appear in Brightspace.** Please save files in .rtf or .docx format, and upload your work to the assignment submission folder in Brightspace.

Participation & Attendance

Attendance is required for this course. Our class is a community of writers, and it requires students' active engagement. Each week, I take an attendance grade (posted in Brightspace). To be counted 'present,' students must attend class and participate in activities, such as short writing exercises, writing workshops, discussion posts, etc. **Students at MCC enrolled in 16-week, face-to-face classes are allowed TWO WEEKS (or four classes) of excused absences without academic penalty.** **NOTE:** *Students who miss more than **three weeks** of class receive a lower Participation & Attendance grade, and students who miss more than **four weeks** of class may be dropped from the course and/or receive a failing grade.*

WRITING WORKSHOP GUIDELINES

Over the semester, you will share drafts with your peers in writing workshop. For each workshop, students will upload a copy of their file in .rtf or .docx format to the 'Writing Workshop' discussion topic in Brightspace. Keep in mind that **successful workshops operate on the 'Golden Rule' principle: treat others how you want to be treated.**

Advice on Reading and Responding to a Draft

Read each draft twice. The first reading orients you to the work, so you don't add comments yet. At the end of the draft, you should see the author's Writing Notes. Read them to better understand the writer's goals, intended audience, and overall writing process. When you read the draft *a second time*, consider where the draft is in the writer's creative process. Add questions to the margins of the draft about specific lines or passages you want to address—focus on why the writer made a particular choice (plot, setting, character, conflict, etc.) and how it affects (or doesn't affect) the rest of the work.

Keep your comments brief and specific, and use your Peer Response Letter to address the work as a whole. Remember, broad comments like, "I liked it" or "I didn't really like it" aren't all that helpful—on the other hand, a comment like, "What if the story opened with the last scene instead of the first one?" or "Would the poem change if it used softer sounds?" are more specific and invite the writer to respond. Strive for open-ended questions like this that focus on possibilities for the work (rather than 'corrections').

Advice on Receiving Feedback in Workshop

It's natural to have some anxiety about workshop. You may feel defensive about your work. As much as possible, listen with an open mind. If you feel the class has misinterpreted something or should move on, **feel free to jump in**, perhaps by asking a question like, "What parts of the work gave you that impression?" or "Could we discuss X? I wasn't sure how to handle that..." Questions like these guide your classmates to the elements of the work you want to address.

Also, remember that some comments may not be the best advice for you or your work. *Don't take every suggestion*—trust your instincts. You may need time (a few days or a week) between receiving feedback and beginning the revision process. That's okay—it gives you time and space to reflect. When you revise, think carefully about your choices. Remember, fixing a 'problem' area in draft might involve changing other parts of the text or rewriting the whole thing. Also, if

your peers don't have specific suggestions for revision, remember that knowing which part of the work tripped them up is valuable, too. You can figure out a solution on your own if you know what part of the draft needs attention.

Last, don't expect for your peers to tell you that your work is perfect. That's not the point of workshop. Remember, the best part about writing is that you have an infinite number of chances. Persistence pays off, so stick with it and don't give up! Workshop motivates you to keep writing.

What to Expect during Workshop

1. At the start of workshop, the author of the work reads one or two favorite lines or passages from the work (5 min.). This is good practice, but it also helps the class understand how the work *sounds* to the author.
2. Next, one student volunteers to briefly describe the text, focusing on how the author addresses the audience, what kind of work the text is or wants to be, how the work resembles or differs from other works in the genre, etc. *The description isn't a time to summarize or criticize the work*; rather, it's a chance to establish what's most memorable or interesting to readers. Other students may add to the description.
3. After listening to the description, the author will ask a question or series of questions to kick-start the discussion. The workshop will have an open conversation addressing these areas, which may involve asking the author, instructor, or other students questions or offering possibilities and suggestions for revision. As much as possible, questions should focus on material that isn't addressed in the text or the author's Writing Notes.
4. If time allows, the workshop will unpack specific passages and examples in the text. Remember, though, that workshop isn't the place to regurgitate the points you made in your Peer Response Letter—the author reads those later.
5. If *at any time* the writer feels like the workshop is getting sidetracked, he/she/they can 'redirect' the workshop by asking a question or simply saying, "Let's move on." The author is ALWAYS free to ask questions, and everyone should remember that the author is a *participant* in the conversation.
6. At the end of workshop, the author will identify one or two points from the discussion to explore during revision. The author should leave workshop with some concrete ideas to improve the text.

Final Portfolio

Rather than a final exam, students will prepare a Final Portfolio that presents their growth and development as a writer. Instructions for this assignment and a rubric appear in Brightspace. The portfolio includes:

- (1) **Portfolio Reflection Paper** (750+ words) that describes the student's experience in the course, including a discussion of the works chosen for revision, the student's goals for revision, and the student's progress toward achieving them.

-
- (2) **Revision of One Draft Submission** (this should include the revision submitted for the publication project)
 - (3) **Revision of One Additional Draft Submission** (revision of one other draft submitted for the course)
 - (4) **A Collection of Notes/Feedback Used to Revise** (2-3 examples of written feedback used to revise the major assignments; this may include Peer Response Letters provided in class, student notes from workshop discussion, instructor feedback, etc.)

Course Outline or Schedule:

The schedule below provides a general overview of the course. A detailed course schedule with weekly assigned reading is available in the “Course Introduction Unit” in Brightspace.

Week 1 1/10 – 1/16	Start Here: Syllabus, Schedule, & Course Intro. Unit - Discuss the syllabus, schedule, textbook, & course shell in Brightspace.
	<i>Work Due: Syllabus Quiz (1/16); “About Me” Discussion Post (1/16).</i>
MLK, Jr. DAY HOLIDAY, Mon., Jan. 17th, 2022; MCC Campus Closed	
Weeks 2-4 1/17 – 2/6	Unit 1: Creative Nonfiction - Discuss Creative Nonfiction (CNF) assignment & rubric; Forms and methods of Creative Nonfiction, including memoir and personal essay; Fact vs. Truth in nonfiction; “Image” and Imaginative Writing; Writing Workshop #1: Creative Nonfiction; Development & revision: quilting, research, editing, and the workshop; Revision Strategies for CNF.
	<i>Work Due: Discussion Post #1 (1/23); Post draft of CNF to Writing Workshop #1 in Brightspace (1/28); Writing Workshop #1: Peer Response Letters due (2/1 and 2/3).</i>
Weeks 5 – 8 2/7 – 3/6	Unit 2: Fiction - Discuss Short Fiction (SF) assignment & rubric; Forms and methods of Short Fiction, including story, plot, flashback, character, point of view, text, and subtext; Voice and style in writing; Writing Workshop #2: Short Fiction; Revision strategies for Short Fiction.
	<i>Work Due: Discussion Post #2 (2/13); Post draft of SF to Writing Workshop #2 in Brightspace (2/25); Writing Workshop #2: Peer Response Letters due (3/1 and 3/3).</i>
SPRING BREAK, March, 7th – 12th, 2022; MCC Campus Closed	
Weeks 9 – 12 3/14 – 4/10	Unit 3: Poetry - Discuss Poetry (P) assignment & rubric; Forms and methods of Poetry, including the line, verse, imagery, metaphor, and sound; Discuss setting; Discuss Appendix A – Basics of Prosody; Writing Workshop #3: Poetry; Revision strategies for Poetry.
	<i>Work Due: Discussion Post #3 (3/20); Post draft of Poetry to Writing Workshop #3 in Brightspace (4/1); Writing Workshop #3: Peer Response Letters due (4/5 and 4/7).</i>

Weeks 13 – 14 4/11 – 4/24	Unit 4: Publishing Your Work - Discuss Publication Project assignment & rubric; Discuss publishing your work, finding venues for your work, reading submission guidelines, writing a cover letter, and simultaneous submission; Participate in Zoom conference with Dr. Zbeida; Discuss revision strategies for Publication Project.
	<i>Work Due: Discussion Post #4 (4/17); Publication Project (4/24).</i>
Weeks 15 – 16 4/25 – 5/6	Unit 5: Final Portfolio - Discuss Final Portfolio assignment & rubric; What is a Final Portfolio? Course Wrap Up & Reflection.
	<i>Work Due: Discussion Post #5 (4/29); Final Portfolio due May 3rd, 2022.</i>

Late Work, Attendance, and Make Up Work Policies:

As a rule, I do not accept late work. In rare cases (hospitalization, serious car accident, etc.), I will allow students to submit work late, but only if I feel the situation warrants it. If something unexpected happens that may affect your ability to submit an assignment, please contact me immediately (either by e-mail or phone). **Make-up work is allowed solely at my discretion.** For assignments, I **deduct five points for each day late—assignments that are not submitted within ONE WEEK of the original deadline receive a “0” grade.**

Student Behavioral Expectations or Conduct Policy:

Students must treat all participants in the course with respect. In all assignments and interactions with others in the course, you should **strive to provide respectful, constructive feedback.** In a course like creative writing, success depends on our ability to collaborate and help one another reach our writing goals. To do this, we must practice active listening and develop empathy for others, particularly those who come from different backgrounds.

Students who disrupt the learning environment (such as posting offensive material to the discussion board) will be marked absent for the week. Make up work is not allowed in such cases. If you experience any behavior in the course that you find inappropriate, please contact Dr. Zbeida or another MCC campus official (See Title XI Statement below).

[Click Here for the MCC Academic Integrity Statement](http://www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity)
(www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity)

The link above will provide you with information about academic integrity, dishonesty, and cheating.

[Click Here for the MCC Attendance/Absences Policy](https://www.mclennan.edu/highlander-guide/policies.html)
(<https://www.mclennan.edu/highlander-guide/policies.html>)

Click on the link above for the college policies on attendance and absences. Your instructor may have additional guidelines specific to this course.

McLennan

C O M M U N I T Y

COLLEGE

ACADEMIC RESOURCES/POLICIES

Accommodations/ADA Statement:

Any student who is a qualified individual with a disability may request reasonable accommodations to assist with providing equal access to educational opportunities. Students should contact the Accommodations Coordinator as soon as possible to provide documentation and make necessary arrangements. Once that process is completed, appropriate verification will be provided to the student and instructor. Please note that instructors are not required to provide classroom accommodations to students until appropriate verification has been provided by the Accommodations Coordinator. For additional information, please visit www.mclennan.edu/disability.

Students with questions or who require assistance with disabilities involving physical, classroom, or testing accommodations should contact:

disabilities@mclennan.edu

254-299-8122

Room 319, Student Services Center

Title IX:

We care about your safety, and value an environment where students and instructors can successfully teach and learn together. If you or someone you know experiences unwelcomed behavior, we are here to help. Individuals who would like to report an incident of sexual misconduct are encouraged to immediately contact the Title IX Coordinator at titleix@mclennan.edu or by calling Dr. Drew Canham (Chief of Staff for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion/Title IX) at (254) 299-8645. Individuals also may contact the MCC Police Department at 299-8911 or the MCC Student Counseling Center at MCC at (254) 299-8210. The MCC Student Counseling Center is a confidential resource for students. Any student or employee may report sexual harassment anonymously by visiting <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/mclennan/>.

Go to McLennan's Title IX webpage at www.mclennan.edu/titleix/. It contains more information about definitions, reporting, confidentiality, resources, and what to do if you or someone you know is a victim of sexual misconduct, gender-based violence or the crimes of rape, acquaintance rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, dating violence, or domestic violence.

Student Support/Resources:

MCC provides a variety of services to support student success in the classroom and in your academic pursuits to include counseling, tutors, technology help desk, advising, financial aid, etc. A listing of these and the many other services available to our students is available at <http://www.mclennan.edu/campus-resource-guide/>

College personnel recognize that food, housing, and transportation are essential for student success. If you are having trouble securing these resources or want to explore strategies for balancing life and school, we encourage you to contact a Success Coach by calling (254) 299-8226 or emailing SuccessCoach@mclennan.edu. Students may visit the Completion Center Monday-Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. to schedule a meeting with a Success Coach and receive additional resources and support to help reach academic and personal goals. Paulanne's Pantry (MCC's food pantry) provides free food by appointment to students, faculty and staff based on household size. Text (254) 870-7573 to schedule a pantry appointment. The Completion Center and pantry are located on the Second Floor of the Student Services Center (SSC).

MCC Foundation Emergency Grant Fund:

Unanticipated expenses, such as car repairs, medical bills, housing, or job loss can affect us all. Should an unexpected expense arise, the MCC Foundation has an emergency grant fund that may be able to assist you. Please go to <https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/scholarships-and-resources/emergencygrant.html> to find out more about the emergency grant. The application can be found at https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/docs/Emergency_Grant_Application.pdf.

MCC Academic Integrity Statement:

Go to www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity for information about academic integrity, dishonesty, and cheating.

Minimum System Requirements to Utilize MCC's D2L|Brightspace:

Go to <https://www.mclennan.edu/center-for-teaching-and-learning/Faculty-and-Staff-Commons/requirements.html> for information on the minimum system requirements needed to reliably access your courses in MCC's D2L|Brightspace learning management system.

Minimum Technical Skills:

Students should have basic computer skills, knowledge of word processing software, and a basic understanding of how to use search engines and common web browsers.

Backup Plan for Technology:

In the event MCC's technology systems are down, you will be notified via your MCC student email address. Please note that all assignments and activities will be due on the date specified in the Instructor Plan, unless otherwise noted by the instructor.

Email Policy:

McLennan Community College would like to remind you of the policy (<http://www.mclennan.edu/employees/policy-manual/docs/E-XXXI-B.pdf>) regarding college email. All students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to use their McLennan email addresses when conducting college business.

A student's McLennan email address is the preferred email address that college employees should use for official college information or business. Students are expected to read and, if needed, respond in a timely manner to college emails.

Instructional Uses of Email:

Faculty members can determine classroom use of email or electronic communications. Faculty should expect and encourage students to check the college email on a regular basis. Faculty should inform students in the course syllabus if another communication method is to be used and of any special or unusual expectations for electronic communications.

If a faculty member prefers not to communicate by email with their students, it should be reflected in the course syllabus and information should be provided for the preferred form of communication.

Email on Mobile Devices:

The College recommends that you set up your mobile device to receive McLennan emails. If you need assistance with set-up, you may email Helpdesk@mclennan.edu for help.

Forwarding Emails:

You may forward emails that come to your McLennan address to alternate email addresses; however, the College will not be held responsible for emails forwarded to an alternate address that may be lost or placed in junk or spam filters.

Disclaimer:

The resources and policies listed above are merely for informational purposes and are subject to change without notice or obligation. The College reserves the right to change policies and other requirements in compliance with State and Federal laws. The provisions of this document do not constitute a contract.