Instructor Syllabus  
NorthWest Arkansas Community College  
FALL 2009  
ENGL 2023, Imaginative Writing I, FALL 2009, T R 7:30-8:45, BH 2114

Instructors:

Curtis Harrell  
Office: BH 1055. Office Hours: MWF 9-11:30; T 2-5; Th 2:30-5:30; by phone, e-mail, and appointment.  
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Faculty web page: http://faculty.nwacc.edu/charrell.

Tim McGinn  
Office: BH #2009 HOURS—MW—1-2 p.m.  
TRF 10:30-1:30 p.m. & by appointment  
Phone and voice mail: (479) 986-6905  
Email: tmcginn@nwacc.edu  
Faculty web page: http://faculty.nwacc.edu/tmcginn

The English Department web page can be found at http://www.nwacc.edu/academics/english/index.html. Faculty contacts, information about the Writing Center, and course outlines are available at this site.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is the first semester of a two-semester sequence here at NWACC. (2033 is usually offered in the Spring term, if there is sufficient interest.) In this course, we will be working on the construction of both poetry and short fiction. Emphasis will be on using poetry to discover the power of language, of the single word and its impact on a reader. In conjunction with this exploration of the power of poetry, we will explore the single scene and its impact on the overall narration of the short story form. We will also explore all elements of characterization, plot, setting, mood, tone, atmosphere, voice, etc. in the development of the short story form. In order to accomplish these lofty goals, we will write together one complete short story and revise it at least once--all the way through--and about a half-dozen poems, also revised. This class will be a workshop where we bring ideas and work to share with one another and where we learn from each other as much as, if not more than, we learn from the act of creating.

PREREQUISITE: (Prerequisites for this course are English 1013 & 1023 or presentation of writing portfolio/consent of instructor.)

CREDIT HOURS: 3 credit hours.

COURSE GOALS:

Students completing this course will be able to complete the following tasks which correspond to the NWACC Institutional Outcomes:

Knowledge
1. Demonstrate knowledge of the genres of poetry and short fiction.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the terms and conventions of each genre.

Critical Thinking
3. Analyze literary works, finding themes and elements that characterize the genre.
4. Compare and contrast literary pieces.

Basic Skills
5. Write clear, coherent, well-organized prose and poetry.

Awareness of Cultural Perspectives
6. Demonstrate knowledge of ethical, cultural, political, historical, and social aspects of life gleaned from workshops and class discussions.

TEXTS AND STUDENT RESOURCES:


Writing Fiction, 7th ed. by Janet Burroway & On Writing Short Stories, by Tom Bailey.

Additionally from NWACC (not required):
1. Computer access to word processing in the Learning Lab.
2. A Writing Center located in BH 1109 is available. Hours of operation are Mondays and Tuesdays 9 am – 7 pm, Wednesdays and Thursdays 9 am – 5 pm, and Fridays 9 am – noon.

ASSIGMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS: Students will read assigned chapters from the text each week and complete writing exercises. There will be lecture, group discussion, reading aloud of professional and student work, group critiquing of student work, individual instructor to student feedback, response to photocopies of student work outside of class and discussion of reading in assigned chapters covering topics listed above.

TEST AND EXAMS: Portfolio. No assignments are graded all term; however a midterm conference and end of term assessment, as well as a two-hour self-assessment, help the student writer improve his/her skills in both poetry and fiction.

GRADES: We will use a portfolio grading system for this course. By this we mean that each individual poem or scene or revision of either will not receive a letter grade. Instead, we will give you extensive written feedback on how to revise the scene or poem and possibly how to edit it for greater strength and precision of language. (We will mainly coach you to explore, improve and try out new ideas and methods to see how they work in your writing.) This class, like many other writing workshops, will attempt to help you develop a sound creative and editing process which will remain with you long after this course ends.

The portfolio system will also allow you to worry about improving the material you have written rather than just the grade. At the end of the term, you can arrange your work from strongest to weakest or from best to worst or any other scheme you design. This input gives you a greater sense of control over your own grade, by providing information we might have missed all semester long in my assessment of your performance. The self-assessment you will write in lieu of a final exam will add to this arrangement your own logic and overview of your own performance. Grading in this manner should help de-emphasize competition and help foster cooperation, which is necessary for any workshop to function well.
Since this is a workshop, **HALF of your grade will be determined by how you perform in class**—verbal and written critiques of each others’ work, class participation, reaction and responding to homework, etc. (Positive, constructive feedback is required from each student. Tearing down/destructive criticism will not be allowed.) Reading and responding to the assigned homework is essential for your writing to improve. Doing the writing assignments alone will not affect your writing significantly (**see diagram below**). Part of how we will determine your final grade will be based on how you incorporate the suggestions from both writing texts as well as from class input and my own input. In other words, you must avoid being shy and quiet if you desire both to improve your writing and get a good grade. (We know this can be hard for many writers and poets.)

The other **HALF of your grade will be based on the writing components of the course**—the poems and the short story, with particular emphasis on revision. Be sure to keep everything you write all term long, no matter how little you might like any particular version of any piece. In no way will your work ever be compared to any other student’s work, so the Portfolio System emphasizes improvement from one assignment to the next, from one version of an assignment to another. Little or no content revisions on any pieces, even with satisfactory completion of all assignments, would mean a grade of “C” for the writing component of the course. Vast improvement through extensive revisions of all your work would almost assure an “A” grade in this area of the course.

Let us change gears here and say a few words about “talent.” We do believe that some people can be more “talented” than others at writing or critiquing or reading and analyzing, but at no time will we ever assess your “talent” at doing any of the aforementioned activities. We will, however, make every attempt to assess, as objectively as is humanly possible, your **EFFORT** at doing all that is required of you in this class. In all our years of teaching, we have seen very “talented” students work very little and receive grades of “C” or lower and less “talented” students earn a grade of “B” or higher for their work. Thus, we try never to get into the dangerous area of determining whether or not you should be a writer or a poet—that is for you to decide.

Finally, if you ever have any questions about the class or want an approximate grade on any assignment, feel free to talk to us during office hours or leave a message on our voice mail, and we will be sure to get back to you. Remember both the **Quality and the Quantity** of your work determine your grade in this class.

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**PLAGIARISM:** The intentional use of someone else’s words, without proper documentation, will result in an automatic “F” on the assignment where plagiarism has been discovered. Two discoveries of plagiarism will result in failure of the course. See page 170 in the 2009-2010 NWACC Catalog for the specific college regulations concerning academic honesty.

**ATTENDANCE:** Students are expected to attend all classes. There are no “excused” absences. Following the fifth absence, students’ grades will be affected. Exemplary attendance will be rewarded with a bonus of 10 percentage points. Excessive absences (50%) will result in failure to pass the course.

**MAKE-UP POLICY:** Scheduled exams and homework assignments may be made up within two class periods, but daily in-class work may not be made up. Students must provide advance notification if they will be missing an exam. Requesting a make-up date at the Testing Center and obtaining missed assignments and announcements are the responsibility of the student. Missing class, submitting late assignments, and failing to complete assignments will lead to low or failing grades. There are no extra-credit assignments to make up for missed or late work.

**COURSE WITHDRAWAL:** The last day to drop with a “W” will be by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, November 6th. Students who withdraw must fill out the appropriate forms with the registrar. Students who do not officially withdraw will receive a failing grade due to their absence. August 31st is the last day to drop 16-week classes and receive a 100% refund.

**BAD WEATHER POLICY:** Information relating to the cancellation of classes will be released to local T.V. and radio. Day classes will be announced by 6:00 a.m., evening classes by 3:00 p.m. Student weather line is 619-4377, or look at NWACC’s homepage (http://www.nwacc.edu) to find out.

**DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER:** If you feel you need adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the Disability Resource Center at disability@nwacc.edu or by phone at (479) 619-2660. Additionally, if you have a medical condition that may result in an emergency situation during class or you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, you should also contact the DRC. The DRC coordinates reasonable accommodations for students who have documented disabilities. Once
your registration with that office is complete, you should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. The DRC is located inside the Global Communities Center, on the second floor of the Student Center. **FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT**: NWACC is committed to your right to privacy as outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). For more information please refer to page 32 in the 2009-2010 NWACC Catalog. **STUDENT CONDUCT**: Students at NWACC have rights and responsibilities especially concerning personal conduct. Please refer to page 165 in the 2009-2010 NWACC Catalog for particular guidelines. **INCOMPLETE FINAL GRADE POLICY**: A grade of incomplete will not be automatically given to students who simply fail to turn in work. To receive a grade of incomplete, a student must initiate a formal process that is described on page 28 in the 2009-2010 NWACC Catalog. **ASSIGNMENT OUTLINE:**

This is a tentative schedule which does not include all of the assignments. Additional assignments will be given in class. Be sure to attend regularly to stay current with all assignments. In order to maximize the writing time for assignments, we will meet on Thursdays and Tuesdays.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Introduction to course. Explanation of syllabus and initial writing exercises.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td><strong>Fiction</strong>: Discuss Chapters 1 &amp; 2 in <em>Writing Fiction</em> &amp; pp. 3-13 in <em>On Writing Short Stories</em>.</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Fiction Workshop: Go over story ideas.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong> Read Chapters 1, 3, and 4.</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong> Workshop.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td><strong>Fiction</strong>: Discuss Chapter 7 in <em>Writing Fiction</em> &amp; 48-56 in <em>On Writing Short Stories</em>.</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Fiction: Workshop Story Scene Chart.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong> Read Chapters 5, 6, and 7.</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong> Workshop.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td><strong>Fiction</strong>: Discuss Chapters 3 &amp; 4 in <em>Writing Fiction</em> &amp; pp. 29-47 in <em>On Writing Short Stories</em>.</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong> Workshop.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td><strong>Fiction</strong>: Workshop Major Character Sketches.</td>
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<td><strong>Thursday—10/1 Poetry</strong> Read Chapters 8, 9, and 10.</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong> Workshop.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td><strong>Fiction</strong>: Discuss Chapter 5 &amp; 6 in <em>Writing Fiction</em> &amp; 57-68 in <em>On Writing Short Stories</em>.</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Fiction: Workshop Setting Description for Short Story.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong> Read Chapters 22, 23, and 24.</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong> Workshop.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td><strong>Fiction</strong>: Discuss Chapter 8 in <em>Writing Fiction</em>.</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td><strong>Fiction</strong>: Workshop one, 2-3pp. scene from your short story.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong> Read Chapters 25, 26, and 27.</td>
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<td><strong>Friday--November 6th--Last day to withdraw from a full-semester course!!!</strong>**</td>
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Thursday--11/5 Fiction: Discuss pp. 80-90 in On Writing Short Stories.

Week 12--Tuesday--11/10 Fiction: Workshop a NEW 2-3 pp. scene from your short story.

Thursday--11/12 Poetry Read Chapters 28, 29, and 30.

Week 13--Tuesday--11/17 Poetry Poetry Workshop.

Thursday--11/19 Fiction: Discuss Chapter 11 in Writing Fiction.

Week 14--Tuesday--11/24 Fiction: Workshop another NEW 2-3 pp. scene from your short story.

**Thursday--11/26--Thanksgiving--No Class!!!!!!

Week 15--Tuesday—12/1 Poetry Read Chapters 34, 35, and 36.

Thursday--12/3 Poetry Poetry Workshop.

Week 16--Tuesday--12/8—Combined Class. COMPLETE, 15-20 pp. SHORT STORY DUE TODAY!

Week 17--December 10-16—Final Exam Week

Thursday—December 10 Final Exam: 8:30-10:30 p.m. Party and reading aloud of work. Bring a dish to pass.

**Rather than take up valuable reading and eating time, we will ask you to write a self-assessment looking back at the work you have written all semester and commenting on it and then send it to us electronically in either Rich Text Format or as a word document. It usually takes about two hours to write this. Further directions for this final assignment will be given out at the end of the term.