ENG 475 IA: Writing and Community
Fall 2014
Dr. Sandra Meek

T & H 2-3:15 p.m., Evans 207

Note: some off-campus evening hours (approximately 10-15 over the semester) will be required for the practicum part of the course.

Instructor contact info:

Professor Sandra Meek
Office: Evans 219
Phone: 802-6723
Email: smeek@berry.edu
Office hours: M 1-5; T & H 3:15-5:30; W 1-1:50; 3-3:30

Catalogue Course Description:

Seminar in integrating creative writing and community service. Classroom instruction in areas of service, including writers-in-the-schools programs and writing for special communities, such as nursing homes, hospices, and shelters. Course includes an experiential learning component through community outreach. PR: ENG 470, 471, or 305.

Hours of Credit: 3

Required Texts:

*Writing Works: A Resource Handbook for Therapeutic Writing Workshops and Activities (Writing for Therapy or Personal Development)*. Gillie Bolton, editor.

*Blueprints: Bringing Poetry into Communities*. Katharine Coles, editor.

Evaluation Components and Grading Scale:

*Journal 20%*
In-class Participation 5%
Service Participation 10%
Group Project: Creative Writing Prompt/Class Presentation 10%
Reflective Essay on Service (4-5 pp.) 10%
Individual Writing Prompt/Audience Assessment (3-5 pp.) and Class Presentation 10%
Final Project: Community Project Plan (10-15 pp.) 25%
Final Essay Exam 10%
*The journal: This is a critical/reflective journal engaging specific aspects of your reading assignments. You will be expected to write two or three in-depth entries a week for the first twelve weeks of the semester. Specific assignments/details will be given in class.

Grade Range:  
90-100=A-/A  
80-89=B-/B/B+  
70-79=C-/C/C+  
60-69=D/D+  
0-59=F  

Excellent work  
Good work, clearly above average  
Average work; meets expectations of assignment  
Work is below expectations  
Work is unacceptable, far below minimum expectations  

Specific grades will be assigned on the following basis:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>93 and above</th>
<th>80-82</th>
<th>67-69</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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Course Description

This is a senior-level seminar class with a significant community service component. The course will consider the many ways creative writing can be integrated into community service, surveying existing programs for special groups and venues. We will also grapple with underlying questions regarding the relationship between the individual artist and the community, such as where do we draw the line, if we can, between art for art's sake, and "therapeutic" writing? The course will also consider other aspects of the writer's life--including publication, translation, and criticism--from the perspective of communal service. Students will be challenged to think deeply about their own relationship, present and future, with their communities as individual writers.

Course Goals and Expected Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will have a broad understanding of the existing types of programs that integrate creative writing into community service. They will understand how to create such a program by considering audience/client needs and logistical realities, and will demonstrate this understanding through a final project in which each student offers a detailed plan for a writing program in his or her own community. Students will create lesson plans and writing prompts that demonstrate understanding of the needs of the specific group, considering age, mental capacity, trauma, health, and other relevant factors. They will have an understanding of the spectrum of purpose for creative writing, from art for art's sake to the solely therapeutic, and will demonstrate an ability to apply their knowledge of craft and genre accordingly by guiding audiences through generative learning and expressive experiences.
Methods of Instruction

Group discussion will be the dominant format for this class. There will also be brief lectures as well as the airing of audio/video podcasts and other multimedia presentations. As a service learning course, students will also work actively in groups and individually—in and out of the classroom—in interviewing and teaching capacities.

A Special Note about This Class:

As this is a 400-level seminar class with a strong community service component, it is essential for each student to demonstrate a high level of responsibility and initiative as well as a willingness to engage actively with empathy—within the classroom, and especially outside the classroom, in our community venues. It is also essential that all students have a tolerance for flexibility in this class; as we will be responding to community needs and creating a service program from scratch, we may need to make changes during the semester in some reading and journal assignments and/or in our schedule for discussing readings, as issues related to our service practice may come up and demand our immediate attention.

Class Policies and Special Requirements

**Attendance is required:** excessive absence will result in a lower course grade and could cause you to fail the course. You will be allowed two absences during the semester, for any reason, with no penalty; after the second absence—whether these first two absences were excused or unexcused—your course grade will be lowered by one-third of a letter grade for each additional unexcused absence. For example, a third absence, unexcused, would lower a course grade of A to A-, and a course grade of A- to B+. Each unexcused absence after the fifth will lower the course grade by an additional full letter grade. An absence will generally be excused only if it is a verified illness (with a note/email from the clinic, doctor, or appropriate Berry official), a verifiable and serious family emergency, or a college-sponsored event requiring your participation (for example, Model UN or an athletic event), verified by the appropriate faculty or staff sponsor. Excessive and disruptive tardiness may also cause your letter grade to be lowered as much as one full letter grade. Remember, if you must miss class for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to keep up with readings and to get notes and handouts.

**Attendance is also expected at all service activity sessions;** we will work together to find a time that will work with everyone's schedule and to deal with transportation logistics. Once we have done this, though, any unexcused absence or tardiness will result in a lowered grade for service participation.

As the development and communal significance of reading series is part of this course's concern, **attendance at several literary readings will be required** over the course of the semester. These dates are indicated on the syllabus schedule. If you have a conflict with any of these events, please let me know well ahead of time.
Portfolio Requirement for English Majors

One of the graduation requirements for English and Creative Writing Majors at Berry College is the creation of a portfolio during your final semester at Berry. This portfolio represents your work and educational experiences during your college career, particularly as an English or Creative Writing major. It is possible that you may want to include work completed for this class in your portfolio, so please preserve your work carefully and securely. For more information about the portfolio requirement, what goes into the portfolio and when it is due, please see your academic advisor or the department chair, Dr. Tom Dasher.

College-Wide Information, Policies, and Support

Writing Center: The Berry College Writing Center, located on the second floor of Memorial Library, offers free support to students writing in any discipline. The center is staffed by trained peer tutors from a variety of disciplines who have taken a three-credit course in the theory and practice of tutoring writing. These tutors are available to help their peers with any part of the writing process for any course, including this one. Sessions are usually 20-40 minutes and typically focus first on higher order concerns, such as understanding a writing prompt, generating ideas, logical development and connection of ideas, and format/organization; they then may move to later order concerns on the sentence level, such as grammar, punctuation, tone, style, and correctness. In general, sessions are hands-on, and tutors ask students to help themselves by developing and practicing concrete revision strategies. While students are welcome to drop by the Writing Center without an appointment, appointments do receive priority service. To make an appointment, and to see the center’s regular hours, go to http://www.berry.edu/wc/. It is best, of course, to go early in the drafting process, though feedback at all stages of the writing process can be very useful. Always allow yourself enough time to work on a paper after getting such feedback; the center does require that students come at least two hours before an assignment is due. When you go, make sure that you take the relevant writing assignment with you and that you have questions in mind to ask. Remember, this is not a proofreading service.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Academic Support Center in Memorial Library, 1st Floor, (706 233-4080) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. Any students who believe they may need tutoring in this class are encouraged to talk to me directly as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made with the Academic Support Center to provide a tutor.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and other forms of cheating, of course, will not be tolerated. Getting feedback from Writing Center tutors, other students in class, or other readers, including me, of course, does not constitute cheating. Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else’s work, ideas, or words as your own. Plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and could cause you to fail the course and/or to face disciplinary action from the college. Please review the relevant sections in the Viking Code.
Tentative Schedule of Class Sessions (Reading and Assignment Due Dates)

Week 1  
(8/26-8/28)  
T: Introductions. What do we mean by community?


Thursday, 8/28: Final day for add/drop (by 4:00 p.m.)

Thursday, 8/28 Poetry Night, Schroeder’s (7:00 p.m.), and interview with Jon Hershey, 406 Broad Street, downtown Rome. REQUIRED.

Week 2  
(9/2-9/4)  

David James Poissant Reading, 7:30 p.m., College Chapel. REQUIRED.


Week 3  
(9/9-9/11)  

H: View short videos on Inside Out (Detroit), Write Girl, and Pongo (Seattle) programs. Discuss handouts, "Writing Our Stories" and "Writing with Teens." Distribute handout: Open the Door, "Life as Primary Text," James Kass (Youth Speaks). Individual writing prompt/audience assessment (with class presentation) and final project (community project plan) assigned.
Week 4

Wednesday, 9/17: Eric Shonkwiler Fiction Reading: 4 p.m., McAllister Auditorium. RECOMMENDED.

H: Meet with Delana Hickman, Director at Sara Hightower Regional Library, Rome, 2:15-3:00 p.m. Present proposal.

Thursday, 9/18: Conson Wilson Lecture: Luis Alberto Urrea (fiction writer): 7:30 p.m., Cage Center. STRONGLY RECOMMENDED.

Week 5


Thursday, 9/25: Berry College Poetry Night at Schroeder's, 7:00 p.m.; plan to be there at 6:30 p.m. REQUIRED.

Friday, 9/26: Last day to withdraw with automatic W grade.

Week 6
(9/30-10/2) T: IFW Chapter 2, "Writing about Place," pp. 56-73, and Chapter 3, "Writing from Objects," pp. 74-96. Group work on lesson plans for library group.

Week 7
(10/7-10/9) T: IFW Chapter 9, "Life's Journey," pp. 198-211; Chapter 10, "Loss and Change," pp. 212-229. Discuss Allan and Almond handouts. **Group project creative writing prompt due; group presentations.** Further discussion of lesson plans for library group. **Distribute handout, "Creative Writing in Health Care: A Branch of Complementary Medicine."**


Week 8
(10/14-10/16) Tuesday: No class--fall weekend.

H: Discuss handouts, Lauer and Goldfield, Nylund, and Place. **Distribute handouts, David R. Frampton, "Restoring Creativity to the Dying Patient" and Gull, O'Flynn, and Hunter, "Creative Writing Workshops for Medical Education: Learning from a Pilot Study with Medical Staff." Reflective essay on service assigned.**

Week 9
(10/21-10/23) T: Discuss handouts, David R. Frampton, and Gull, O'Flynn, and Hunter. **View/discuss video: "Creative Writing Workshops for Medical Education" (Rafael Campo and Natasha Trethewey). Distribute handout: Thomas E. Kennedy, "'Humanitarians at the Grate: The Writing Group at Graterford Maximum Security Prison."**

H: **Student presentation.** Readings TBA (student-selected). Discuss Kennedy handout. **Distribute handout: poems by Sholeh Wolpe.**

Week 10
(10/28-10/20) T: **Student presentations.** Readings TBA (student-selected).

Week 11
(11/4-11/6) T: Discuss handouts: “Poetry and Community,” by Bruce Bond, and "Balancing Craft & Commitment: Writing Political Fiction," Rosellen Brown, Tracy Dougherty, and Ellen Meeropol. **Distribute handouts:** "Ageing and Verbal Creativity: Creative Writing for the Elderly in the Library" (Oddgeir Synnes); assorted briefs about storytelling, creativity, and dementia.

H: **Writing and Global Citizenship: Writing as Witness.** Q & A with visiting Iranian American poet Sholeh Wolpe.

**Thursday, 11/6:** Sholeh Wolpe Poetry Reading, 7:30 p.m., McAllister Auditorium. **REQUIRED.**

Week 12
(11/11-11/13) T: **Student presentation.** Readings TBA (student-selected). **Discuss handouts,** "Ageing and Verbal Creativity" and briefs about dementia.

H: **Student presentation.** Readings TBA (student-selected). **Distribute handouts,** "A Community Bound by Words: Reflections on a Nursing Home Writing Group," Elizabeth Schuster, and excerpts from *I Never Told Anybody: Teaching Poetry Writing to Old People,* Kenneth Koch. **Final journals due.**

**Friday, 11/14:** Last day to withdraw from classes with W or WF.

Week 13


Week 14
(11/25-11/27) T: Discussion about publication, criticism, and community.

H: No class--Thanksgiving.

Week 15
(12/2-12/4) T: Discussion about aesthetics and community. Readings TBA. **Final project (community project plan) due.**

H: Evaluations and conclusions. **Take-home final exam assigned.**
12/8-12/12: Final exams.

Take-home exam due at the end of final exam period (2-4:00 p.m., Tuesday, December 9th).

NOTE: ALL ITEMS ON SYLLABUS SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Additional short reading assignments, both instructor- and student-selected, will be added to this schedule; specific journal assignments will be given in class. This schedule will be adjusted as needed in accordance with our community service project at Sara Hightower Library. 10-15 hours of group service work, outside of class hours, will be scheduled over the course of the semester.