

SYLLABUS
English 208
Section 001, MWF 11:30-12:20 p.m.

Instructor: Gabriel Scala
Email: jgscala@bgnet.bgsu.edu
Office: 411b East Hall
Office Phone: 372-0583
Office Hours: 12:30-2:00 p.m. Monday (and by appointment)
Mailbox: 210 East Hall (my mailbox is above my name)
Writers Lab: 303 Moseley Hall
Writers Lab Phone: 372-2221 (call ahead to make an appointment)

IMPORTANT DATES

- Monday, August 26 First day of class
- Monday, September 2 No Class – Labor Day
- Wednesday, September 4 Villanelle due
- Monday, September 9 Sestina due
- Wednesday, September 11 No Class- Remembrance of 9/11/01
- Monday, September 16 1st round Critiques due/Pantoum due
- Monday, September 23 2nd round Critiques due/Sonnet due
- Monday, September 30 Free Verse Poem due
- Monday, October 7 Poem Critique due
- Friday, October 11 No Class – Fall Break
- Wednesday, October 30 Characterization Piece due
- Monday, November 11 No Class - Veteran's Day
- Wednesday, November 13 Point of View Piece due
- Monday, November 25 Period Piece due
- Wed/Fri, November 27/29 No Class – Thanksgiving
- Monday, December 9 Short Story Critique due
- Wednesday, December 11 Portfolios due
- Friday, December 13 Last day of class

The Red Book = In the Palm of Your Hand

The Green Book = The Making of a Poem

The Yellow Book = Writing Fiction

Week 1

Monday, August 26

In Class Activities: Go over Achievement Requirements, do introductions, show textbooks, etc.

Assignment: Purchase the required texts at the campus bookstore. Bring In the Palm of Your Hand, The Making of a Poem, three ring binder with paper and pen to the next

class, and to every class afterwards. Bring a poem that you have written, either in the past or a new one, to class on Wednesday. Bring enough copies for everyone including yourself.

Wednesday, August 28

In Class Activities: Go over textbooks, go over syllabus, read section from the Triggering Town, discuss the workshop environment. Discuss the “truth” in creative writing.

Assignment: Read pp. 1-6, How to Begin, in the red book. Read pp. 5-20 in the green book. Come to class ready to discuss the poems in this section. Read the poems you received today and offer written feedback. Refer to your “workshop guide” for suggestions.

Friday, August 30

In Class Activities: Define line, stanza, and rhyme scheme. Discuss the villanelle examples assigned. Specifically discuss form and subject matter. Go over rhyme scheme, slant rhyme. Answer questions. Read around of first poems. Workshop in small groups for about 15 minutes.

Assignment: Write a villanelle. Bring it to class on Wednesday with enough copies for everyone including yourself. Begin revising your first poem.

Week 2

Monday, September 2

No Class – Labor Day Holiday

Wednesday, September 4

Villanelle due

In Class Activities: Writing exercise—write a poem about a town in which you have never been assuming one or more of the following:

1. You have lived there all your life and should have left long ago but couldn't.
2. You work in a warehouse on second shift. You are the only one in town on second shift.
3. The churches are always empty.
4. There is no music.
5. The movie house has been closed for years.
6. The town is on a map but no roads to it are shown.
7. Once in a while an unlikely animal wanders into town, a grizzly bear or cougar or wolverine.
8. There is one prisoner in jail, always the same prisoner. No one is certain why he is there. He doesn't want to get out. People have forgotten his name.

Assignment: Read pp. 38-47, The Secret of Writing: Awful Poems, in the red book. Go back and revise your first poem or the one you wrote in class today using the examples in that section. Put comments on the villanelles you received today, refer to your “workshop guide” for guidance.

Friday, September 6

In Class Activities: Discuss sentimentality and the reading assignment. Read around of villanelles. Workshop in small groups. Discuss as a class.

Assignment: Read pp. 21-42 in the green book, *The Sestina*. Write a sestina. Bring enough copies for everyone including yourself to the next class.

Week 3

Monday, September 9

Sestina Due

In Class Activities: Discuss the sestinas assigned and the writing process of the sestina. Bring a collection of poetry books. Students are to take about 20 minutes passing them around and signing up to write a critique of their book of choice. Most books will be critiqued by more than one person. The first round of critiques (for those getting the books first) will be due next Monday. The books will then be given to the second round students and their critiques will be due the following Monday. Discuss the assignment for the first critique. Answer questions.

Assignment: Read pp. 48-53 in the red book, *The Art of Revision*. Begin revising your villanelle. Write comments on the sestinas you received today; use your “workshop guide” for guidance.

Wednesday, September 11 **No Class in Remembrance of Sept. 11, 2001**

Extra Credit Opportunity: Write a poem from the perspective of a tree or stone, a stray dog or a little boy’s toy witnessing the events of Sept. 11, 2001. It doesn’t have to be in NYC, maybe some girls are sitting under the tree or near the stone in Nebraska when they hear of the events and the tree or stone overhears their conversation. Maybe the dog belongs to a person who died in the tragedy. Use your imagination. Try to stay away from sentimentality.

Friday, September 13

In Class Activities: Opportunity for students to read the extra credit assignment. Read around of sestinas. Workshop in small groups.

Assignment: Read pp. 43-54 in the green book, the Pantoum. Write a pantoum. Bring enough copies to class for everyone including yourself.

Week 4

Monday, September 16

Pantoums Due, 1st round Critiques due

In Class Activities: Discuss the pantoums assigned and the writing process for the pantoum. Writing exercise—write a poem about one of the following:

1. a pleasant time in the past
2. a building in which you once lived
3. a secret you once had
4. a magical person from your childhood
5. an incident that filled you with dread
6. something dangerous you did when you were young
7. something that happened many years ago near a body of water
8. your first romantic infatuation

The only stipulation is that whatever you write about cannot be true.

Assignment: Read pp. 56-63 in the red book, *After-Glow: The Interior Music*. Make written comments on the pantoums you received today, use your “workshop guide” for guidance.

Wednesday, September 18

In Class Activities: Quiz on the reading assignment. Read around of pantoums.
Workshop in groups.

Assignment: Read pp. 146-153 in the red book, *Playing with Meter*.

Friday, September 20

In Class Activities: Discuss meter in preparation for the sonnet exercise. Do some meter exercises in class.

Assignment: Read pp.55-72 in the green book, *the Sonnet*. Write a sonnet. Bring enough copies for everyone including yourself to the next class.

Week 5

Monday, September 23

Sonnets due, 2nd round Critiques due

In Class Activities: Discuss the sonnets assigned and the writing process for the sonnet. Writing exercise—write a short rhymed poem that contains lines of alternately 7 and 9 syllables. Though you can keep to perfect rhymes where you wish to, try for enough off-rhymes—assonance and partial consonance—to keep it from having a too formal and sing-song feeling. In fact, if the casual reader doesn't notice that it's a rhymed poem, all the better. You may wish, in order to further mute end rhymes, to use a more subtle rhyme scheme than abab. Perhaps every fourth line will rhyme so that you end up with something like abcdabcd or some variation on that pattern. Or perhaps you will opt for a random rhyming pattern in which the only rule is that every line must rhyme with at least one other line.

In this poem reveal at least two of your smaller secrets (I never go anywhere without dental floss/I read Harlequin romance novels). Then compare your more innocent foibles with the monstrous crimes of Hitler, Stalin, Attila the Hun, or whoever comes up in your mind. It might be a real person in your life, perhaps your mother's father, or a neighbor who shot his wife, or perhaps someone you recently read about in the paper: a man who killed a family of six, or a woman who drowned her two children. Let whatever tone and discourse that emerges out of this situation develop as it will.

Assignment: Make written comments on the sonnets you received today. Use your workshop guide for guidance. Continue revising your poems. Think of a topic that interests you that you know very little or nothing about. For example: gypsies, Buddhist monks, the parts of a flower, the anatomy of bullfrogs, UFO sightings, flamenco dancing, etc. Go to the library and read as much as you can about your topic. Take notes.

Wednesday, September 25

Library Day – No Class

Assignment: Complete the Library Exercise. Write out a memory—either very joyful or extremely painful. Do not be concerned with poetics; just write it out in paragraph form. Be as specific as possible, remember the tiny details: what you were wearing, the weather, the smells, how your clothes felt on your skin, etc. Bring both exercises to class on Friday.

Friday, September 27

Library & Memory Exercise due

In Class Activities: Discuss free verse and metaphor. Hand out packet of free verse poems. Read around of sonnets. Workshop in small groups.

Assignment: Read the packet of free verse poems. Read pp. 169-178 in the red book, Line Breaks. Write a poem in free verse that uses your library exercise as metaphor for your memory exercise. Bring enough copies for everyone including yourself to class on Monday.

Week 6

Monday, September 30 **Free Verse Poem due**

In Class Activities: Discuss free verse poems assigned and the writing process for the free verse poem. Discuss revision in more detail. Bring Memphis Blues copies (or transparency) to class to illustrate the revision process.

Assignment: Make written comments on the free verse poems you received today. Use your workshop guide for guidance. Continue to revise your poems.

Wednesday, October 2

In Class Activities: Bring poetry books back. Have students look through and find a favorite poem. Discuss poetry readings and how to read poetry aloud. Have students copy their favorite poem from their book. Read around of free verse poems by option. No workshop. Hand out critique assignment, due Monday.

Assignment: Write a critique of your favorite poem. Practice reading it aloud and be prepared to do so in class on Friday.

Friday, October 4

In Class Activities: Poetry reading.

Assignment: Continue to revise your poems and work on your critique, due Monday.

Week 7

Monday, October 7 **Poem Critique due**

In Class Activities: Collect critiques. Discuss poetry in general, have students talk about what they like and don't like in poetry; what was difficult or easy.

Assignment: Have a great break and come back ready for fiction!

Wednesday, October 9 **No Class – Have a nice break**

Friday, October 11 **No Class – Fall Break**

Week 8

Monday, October 14

In Class Activities: Go over the Writing Fiction book. Discuss how fiction requires a much longer breath than poetry; however, the language of fiction is just as important as the language of poetry.

Assignment: Read pp. 1-27 in the yellow book, Whatever Works: The Writing Process.

Wednesday, October 16

In Class Activities: Discuss the reading assignment. Give notes on the basics: plot, character, story line or arc, setting, point of view, dialogue, and theme.

Assignment: Read pp. 118-143 in the yellow book, Characterization, Part I. Begin to create a character. Take notes on what s/he wears, eats, smells like, looks like, the places s/he frequents, his or her bad habits, secrets, lovers, enemies, age, past traumatic experiences, passions, what bores him or her, what really gets her pissed off, what really makes him laugh. Consider everything. DO NOT use a real person that you know...this is fiction. Make it up.

Friday, October 18

In Class Activities: Discuss the stories assigned. Using your notes on your character thus far, write a character sketch without any elements of type. We shouldn't be able to tell the age, race, gender, nationality or class of your character.

Assignment: Read pp. 144-156 in the yellow book. Continue to work on your character. This time, consider how your character would respond in the following situations: a traffic jam, at a wedding ceremony where the bride is 30 minutes late, witnessing a violent crime, finding \$1,000 on the street in a wallet, being party to a bank robbery, at a picnic on a warm sunny day. Write out your ideas and bring them to class on Monday.

Week 9

Monday, October 21

In Class Activities: Discuss the stories assigned. Discuss the students character assignments, how are they coming? Questions? Trouble spots?

Assignment: Read pp. 157-181 in the yellow book. Be ready to discuss on Wed.

Wednesday, October 23

In Class Activities: Quiz on characterization. Discuss assigned reading.

Assignment: Read pp. 181-197 in the yellow book. Write out a scene from your own life in which a discovery led to a quick decision, a shocking event took place, you received some very bad news, you overreacted to a situation. Bring your scene with you to class.

Friday, October 25

In Class Activities: Discuss the stories assigned. Writing exercise—take the scene from your own life and place your character in the middle of it. Now, re-write the scene with your character in place. How will it be different?

Assignment: Go to the library and research a famous person you know little or nothing about. Take some notes. Add this information to your characterization piece. Maybe your character keeps spouting off little known facts about Albert Einstein or perhaps there's a Picasso painting in the room that s/he cannot take his or her eyes off. Finish your characterization piece. Bring enough copies to class for everyone including yourself.

Week 10

Monday, October 28

Library Day

Assignment: Complete your characterization piece.

Wednesday, October 30

Characterization Piece due

In Class Activities: Discuss the writing process for the characterization piece. Writing exercise—write a short monologue from the point of view of a mother—your own or imaginary—laying down the rules for her child.

Assignment: Make written comments on the characterization pieces you were given today. Use your workshop guide for guidance.

Friday, November 1

In Class Activities: Read around of characterization piece by volunteer. Workshop in small groups.

Assignment: Read pp. 254-273 in the yellow book, Point of View Part I.

Week 11

Monday, November 4

In Class Activities: Quiz on point of view. Discuss readings.

Assignment: Read pp. 273-286 in the blue book.

Wednesday, November 6

In Class Activities: Discuss the story assigned. Overview of the different points of view and dialogue, monologue and interior monologue.

Assignment: Read pp. 287-301 in the yellow book, Point of View Part II. Place your character from the characterization piece in an uncomfortable situation and write a passage in the limited omniscient, in which his/her dialogue is in sharp contrast to his/her interior monologue. Bring to class on Friday.

Friday, November 8

In Class Activities: Discuss the reading and point of view exercise.

Assignment: Read pp. 302-324 in the yellow book. Take your characterization piece, add the uncomfortable situation to the story and re-write it using a different point of view. Try to choose a point of view as drastically different from your original story as possible. For example, if you used third person limited omniscient, re-write the story in first person central narrator OR if you really want to risk it, write the story in second person you as reader-turned-character. Understand that this will completely change your story. Don't be so attached to the old version that you get hung up on writing the new version.

Consider this a completely different story—because it will be. Bring enough copies for everyone including yourself to class on Wed. Have fun with it!

Week 12

Monday, November 11

No Class – Veteran's Day

Wednesday, November 13 **Point of View Piece due**

In Class Activities: Discuss the writing process behind the point of view piece. Writing exercise—write a brief scene with two characters in conflict over the setting: one wants to go, and one wants to stay. The more interesting the setting you choose, the more interesting the conflict will inevitably be.

Assignment: Read pp. 198-219 in the yellow book. Make comments on the point of view pieces you were given today. Use your workshop guide for guidance. Begin to do

some research on a specific time and place in history. It could be the roaring 20's of Chicago, Nazi Germany, the Harlem Renaissance in New York, Russia during the Cold War, the romantic period (early 1900's) in England. You choose. Make it as interesting and different as you can. Your research should include the furnishings of the time, the clothing, the overall mood of the population: were they angry, panicky, scared, excited, etc. Get to know your time and place as if you were living there now.

Friday, November 15

In Class Activities: Discuss stories assigned. Read around of point of view pieces by volunteer. Workshop in small groups.

Assignment: Read pp. 219-253 in the yellow book. Continue to research your place and time. Bring your research notes with you to class on Monday.

Week 13

Monday, November 18

In Class Activities: Discuss stories assigned. Writing exercise—take the scene you wrote in which two characters were in conflict over the setting and place that conflict in your time and place that you've researched. How does it change? What did you have to delete/add to make it make sense?

Assignment: Read pp. 30-48 in the yellow book, Story Form and Structure.

Wednesday, November 20

In Class Activities: Discuss story form and structure. Talk about how to take all of the smaller pieces we've worked on and incorporate them into a complete short story.

Assignment: Begin to re-write your character, including all of the situations s/he has been in in previous pieces, in the time and place you have researched. Many details will inevitably have to change. Choose any point of view that fits this final story, due Monday.

Friday, November 22

In Class Activities: Discuss revision in fiction.

Assignment: Finish your period piece. Bring enough copies for everyone including yourself to class on Monday.

Week 14

Monday, November 25 **Period Piece due**

In Class Activities: Discuss the writing process of the period piece and the short story.

Assignment: Read the period pieces you were given today and give written feedback. Use your workshop guide for guidance. Have a great break!

Wed., November 27 & Fri., November 29 **No Class – Thanksgiving Break**

Week 15

Monday, December 2

In Class Activities: Have students give back comments on stories, no workshop. Discuss short story critique assignment. Pass out packet of short stories to choose from. Critiques due next Monday.

Assignment: Continue to revise your short stories and poems. Work on Critique.

Wednesday, December 4

In Class Activities: Discuss publishing. Bring the Poet's Market and some literary journals for students to look at.

Assignment: Continue to revise and work on critique.

Friday, December 6

In Class Activities: Discuss course requirements and portfolio requirements. Discuss the reading at Cosmos on Friday, December 13. Answer any last questions. Students decide what they want to read at the reading.

Assignment: Continue to revise and work on critique, due Monday.

Week 16

Monday, December 9

Critique due

In Class Activities: Read some of my work and favorite authors, class discussion of the course, course evaluations.

Assignment: Continue to revise. Portfolios due Wednesday.

Wednesday, December 11

Portfolios due

In Class Activities: Discuss the reading, practice voluntarily.

Friday, December 13

Last day of class. See you at Cosmos!