

# CREATIVE WRITING

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND COURSES

*SPRING 2025 EDITION*

*ENGLISH @ NEIU*

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ONCE UPON A TIME

# CREATIVE WRITING: COMMUNITY

**Do you**  
write short stories,  
poems, novels, screen-  
plays, diary entries?

Do you like playing  
with memory, characters,  
setting,  
*language itself?*

We are an inclusive writing community, nurturing one another's writing practice through collaboration, experimentation, rigorous reading, games, and conversation.

Our students often create their own student-led literary events and salons. The University has a literary journal (*La Mosca*), and the Minor itself hosts two student literary events each year, through our series, **THE 82**.

We have classes in Creative Nonfiction, Fiction, Hybrid-form writing, Literary Editing & Publishing, Poetry, and Screenwriting.

Our faculty is comprised of *writers who teach*; our teachers are innovative, experimental, and knowledgeable in the classroom; they also perform publicly, curate, edit, and are published writers. Creative Writing classes are open spaces for expression and intellectual, artistic, and personal evolution. Our classes stress community, inquiry, and engagement.

As part of NEIU and NEIU's English Department, the Creative Writing Minor strives to be anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-Islamophobic, anti-ageist, anti-classist, anti-heterosexist, anti-transphobic, anti-exclusionary; our program seeks to nurture its students' writings and welcomes all styles and interests.

## CONTACT:

Email **Olivia Cronk**,  
Coordinator of the Creative  
Writing Minor, at  
[o-cronk@neiu.edu](mailto:o-cronk@neiu.edu)

Feel free to ask any  
questions at all!

# CREATIVE WRITING: FAQ's

## Do you have to be a Creative Writing Minor to take Creative Writing classes?

No: Anyone can take CW classes; ENGL 235, Introduction to Creative Writing, is the prerequisite for all others. The sequence classes do NOT have to be taken in order.

The Creative Writing Minor itself is 235, 340A, plus any two workshops, and any two electives.

## Do you have to be an English Major to be a Creative Writing Minor?

No: In fact, we have Minors who are majoring in things like Computer Science, Philosophy, Sociology, and more! We also have English or Secondary Ed students who want to explore writing in the midst of their other work.

## Do you offer CW classes in Spanish?

We currently have one bilingual Creative Writing course:  
(ENGL 250/SPAN 255)

## Does NEIU offer an MFA in Creative Writing?

We're working on it! At this point, we offer seven classes for Graduate credit:

ENGL 397 (Sum. Creative Writing Inst.), 403N, 404, 416, 446A, 474A, 478

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## To Declare a Creative Writing Minor:

Email Olivia Cronk ([o-cronk@neiu.edu](mailto:o-cronk@neiu.edu))  
or Hilary Jirka ([h-jirka2@neiu.edu](mailto:h-jirka2@neiu.edu)) for the  
Minor Declaration form

# FOUNDATIONS

## ENGL 235: INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING

*\*PREREQUISITE FOR ALL  
CW COURSES*

In some respects, “creative writing” is a slippery and misleading term. Arguably, all writing is “creative” in that as we set our thoughts and ideas down on the page, regardless of format or genre, we experience and shape it in meaningful ways for an imagined audience.

This course focuses on practice in the craft of nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and the study as well as discussion of the writing process through close readings of student and published writers’ work, and the workshopping of student pieces. It is designed for both beginners and practicing writers.



## ENGL 340A/404: ELEMENTS OF STYLE

*\*ELE COURSE*

In this course, we’ll learn to find meaning not only in what we write, but how we write—and then we’ll use that new power to shape work that makes every word, every mark of punctuation, count. We’ll spend time at the intersection of literary style and material, exploring their reciprocal, nuanced, and miraculous relationship.

Language is a living, breathing thing, and we’ll learn how to follow its movements and respirations to make work that means more to who we are, and who our readers are. We’ll think about how we came to language, who taught it to us, and how we treat it. We’ll write across genres, and across styles—experimenting and growing as writers and thinkers. This is a course for people who want to look at language in entirely new ways.



# WORKSHOPS

## ENGL 374A/474A: HYBRID-FORM WRITING

Are you committed to being a writer, whatever form it takes? Do you love to play with language? Are you interested in combining nonfiction and fiction, fiction and poetry, poetry and critical writing, critical writing and creative writing, text and image, or something yet to be invented?

We’ll examine examples of Hybrid-form Writing (like a Lit class) AND produce our own works of Hybrid-form Writing (like a Creative Writing Class). We will experiment with different forms, conceive of projects, and consider how form affects content/why certain forms might be culturally or personally privileged.



## ENGL 374B: FLASH FORMS

Flash forms are often studied (if at all) as a footnote within a contemporary literature or creative writing course, the literary version of the short story’s cute younger cousin. However, while flash forms—stories and essays composed of less than 1000 words—have become increasingly popular over the past two decades, they have been around for centuries.

In this course, students will investigate the form’s origins and the cultural contexts and developments that gave rise to its current prevalence. Students will study and practice specific craft elements while also exploring the plasticity of the form. They will read and write stand-alone pieces and investigate the possibilities and varieties of flash.



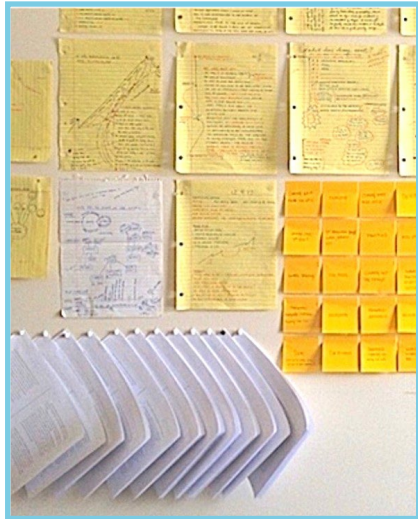
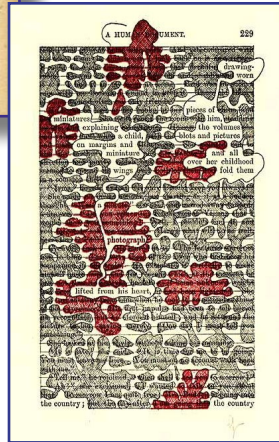
# WORKSHOPS

## ENGL 384: POETRY I

## ENGL 385: POETRY II

These courses focus on methodology in the creation of poetry, and the study as well as discussion of its various writing processes through close readings of student and published poets' work, articles and essays on craft, and the workshoping of student poems. They are designed for both beginners as well as practicing poets—no prior experience is required.

As we begin, consider that the word "poet" comes from the Greek *poiētēs*, literally "maker," meaning that a poem is not just an expression of an idea or an emotion, but a consciously as well as carefully made piece of art.



## ENGL 386: FICTION I

## ENGL 387: FICTION II

These fiction writing classes are as much about *how* you write as *what* you write. You'll spend time thinking about what you're obsessed with, what you care about, what you want to know... and how you can explore that with the conventional (and unconventional) craft of making stuff up. You'll learn how to think about/talk about/make fiction, all while working on one story—composing, reworking, revising, monkeying, fine-tuning, etc.—throughout the semester. It's not a traditional workshop; it's a collective, fun plunge into what happens when you commit deeply to making the fiction *you* believe should exist. You'll read one another's work, and contemporary short stories by writers across the spectrum of traditions and backgrounds.

# WORKSHOPS

## What you see is what you get



"What You see Is What You Get" - Barbara Kruger

## ENGL 398A: CREATIVE NONFICTION I

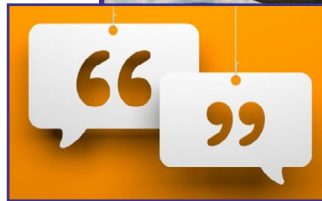
## ENGL 398B: CREATIVE NONFICTION II

These introductory Creative Nonfiction courses will open up space for writers to think about how we might put language to real, lived, messy, complex experiences. These experiences will act as both creative prompt and creative material; the resulting renderings, translations, interpretations, and adaptations will ask us to consider both the possibilities and ethics of using real life as source material for art. What is the truest word choice? The truest form? Do we pursue veracity of events or veracity of emotion? How do we form characters based on real people? And how do we form characters based on ourselves?

Beyond ransacking our own pasts and presents, we'll take the time to notice, observe, research, and listen to others in order to find broader and deeper truths on which to report. Creative nonfiction is as much about looking outward as it is inward. We'll read across the genre and past its edges, looking at memoir, personal essay, lyric essay, narrative journalism, documentary writing, and hybrid works. (And what can we learn from unexpected forms of nonfiction like the manifesto? The memorial? The *crónica*?) You'll write a series of short pieces and engage in peer feedback, the work culminating in a longform project.

# ELECTIVES

**ENGL 250/SPAN 255:  
BILINGUAL  
CREATIVE WRITING**



This course, part of an effort to expand options for Creative Writing students, is Creative Writing in Spanish and English. It enables students to study creative writing in the bilingual mode and to 1) develop effective approaches to the craft of writing, 2) explore new techniques of the craft, and 3) consider their own craft and techniques in the context of two languages.

We know that some of you would like to either hone already strong writing skills (explicitly under the expertise of someone who can instruct in Spanish), or try your hand at Creative Writing in Spanish, and/or you may simply be looking to write in BOTH languages! Topics include: Poetry, Nonfiction prose (literary journalism, lyric essay), Fiction, Theater—all in a dual language approach.

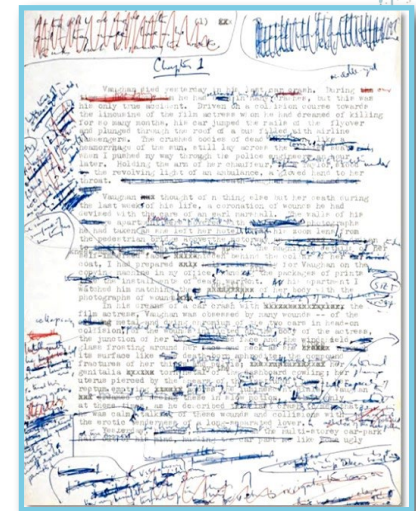
**You will need two prerequisites—ENGL 102 and SPAN 225—OR permission of the Instructor.**

# ELECTIVES

**ENGL 304A:  
LITERARY EDITING**

This course is an introduction to literary editing (as an intellectual and aesthetic process and as literary citizenship) and an exploration of the collaboration between writer and editor. We'll discuss and enact the procedures, concepts, and nuances of literary editing, focusing particularly on manuscript editing, copyediting, and proof-reading. We'll be working with NEIU's very own LA MOSCA: A Literary & Visual Arts Journal—both writing and editing for them.

**Things to know:** While our work might include some tools that relate to editing, in general, our focus is on literary editing, closely examining creative writing itself. We will, also, do our own creative writing work in this class—in individually chosen genres and for the purpose of submitting to LA MOSCA.



**ENGL 305A:  
LITERARY  
PUBLISHING**

This course concerns the transformation of literary art into a distributable object. As writers, we'll use the frame of art-work as we investigate publishing models from anarchist zines to mega-conglomerate corporations. We'll think about the creative, ethical, and practical opportunities and challenges of literary publishing. We'll work in service of an on-campus or local publication, learning about the networks of promotion, marketing, and publicity. We'll explore the visual and physical aspects of book design. This course runs on imagination, invention, speculation, community spirit and – most importantly – a desire to put more art into the world.

# ELECTIVES

## ENGL 316: FORMS OF POETRY

In this class, we'll examine a sampling of the many fixed poetry forms established to date—lyric, narrative, and dramatic—as well as read selected analytical essays. We'll also look at forms historically, write about them critically, and craft formal imitations, making this a hybrid of a traditional literary survey and a creative writing class. An English course for the poetically adventurous scholar and scribe!



## ENGL 346A/446A: CREATIVE WRITERS AS CRITICAL WRITERS

This course is a seminar and writing workshop in one.

Students will: examine models of texts that operate in the critical-creative or creative-critical mode; choose outside reading of their own through an inquiry-based process; produce various critical, creative, creative-critical, and critical-creative pieces; submit a book review/essay for possible publication; and through this process “enter the discourse,” as writers working in multiple modes.

From Madison McCarthy's *Cryptodrone* sequence



# ELECTIVES

Our work in 374N/403N is to respond to current sociopolitical issues. (Take your pick! Think of the world we live in, think of our moment in history, think of pandemics and Zoom screens and police violence and Supreme Court rulings and climate issues and AI!) Our response, of course, is via creative writing work across genres (fiction, creative nonfiction/the personal essay, poetry, drama/screenwriting, graphic narrative). We'll accomplish this work by reading and discussing: examining writers' responses to historic moments and movements. Our reading is hyper-contemporary. How does literary art get politicized and otherwise activated in the moment?

## ENGL 374N/403N: WRITING THE NOW



“Collective Consciousness/Consciencia Colectiva (Tijuana Otay Mesa)”  
2019, Tanya Aguiniga

Students will work independently on a multi-genre semester-long portfolio and share writing within the classroom community, as well as in a public-facing symposium, which we'll all plan, as a collective.

# ELECTIVES



## ENGL 384R: RESEARCH POETRY

Research Poetry engages students in poetry writing which incorporates the research process as a method for exploring topical questions relating to the humanities, social sciences, poetic identity, and inquiry. **ENGL 384R** is an evolutionary step in the compositional poetic process that also adds to the overall demands of the Creative Writing minor.

Students research various topics to define thematic written work that will ultimately be incorporated in a chapbook-length manuscript, the natural next step in a working poet's professional publishing undertaking.

## ENGL 392A: WRITING/LIFE: ADVANCED CREATIVE WRITING PRACTICE



There are so many ways to be a writer in the world. **Writing/Life** asks graduate and experienced undergraduate writers to explore dimensions of literary citizenship by developing significant creative projects and experimenting with ways to interface with literary communities from the hyperlocal to the international. We'll examine the writing process from origin to revision; we'll share and respond to one another's work; and we'll consider options for publication and distribution, with the inclusion of radical collaborative acts. We'll look critically at the politics of arts funding, at ideas of genre, and the blurry borders between art and labor.

Our work will be to recognize, celebrate, and find potential in the intersections, symmetries, and frissons of private creative practice and public creative communities.

# ELECTIVES

## ENGL 394: WRITING THE PERSONAL ESSAY

Students will write in the creative non-fiction genre of the personal essay. This will involve work on techniques and approaches in a workshop setting, as well as critiques of other students' work. How do we define "true" when writing about a slippery memory? What are the ethics of crafting stories that include other "real" people? This course will also explore the personal essay as a literary form through readings of classic and recent examples.



In this course dedicated to short fiction, we'll explore the tradition of story writing, with a focus on work made in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by authors all around the world. From the conventional to the experimental, the texts we'll study will teach us about the form, its possibilities, and its limitations. We'll use our examinations of craft – from premise to structure to voice – to write and offer stories of our own for critique by the class. Experienced and newer writers are welcome.

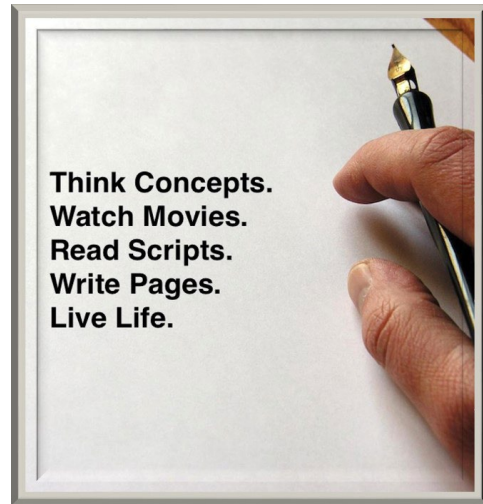


## ENGL 395: CRAFT OF THE SHORT STORY

# ELECTIVES

## ENGL 396/478: SCREENWRITING: THE SHORT SCRIPT

Writing a screenplay, or even a script for a short film, can be daunting. What are the rules? How does that software work? How do I write visually? All these questions and more answered in ENG 396 & ENG 478, a “stacked” screenwriting workshop in which we’ll conceive, write, and workshop two short scripts.



**Think Concepts.  
Watch Movies.  
Read Scripts.  
Write Pages.  
Live Life.**

# ELECTIVES



**ENGL 397:  
SUMMER CREATIVE  
WRITING INSTITUTE**



### Recent Guest Authors at the Summer Creative Writing Institute include:

**2022**

Stefania Gomez, Imani Elizabeth Jackson, Mia Manansala  
David Mathews, Cecilia Pinto, Jacob Saenz, Rachel Swearingen, John Young

**2023**

Asia Calagno, Rachel Castro, James Kennedy, Meghan Lamb,  
Lisa Low, Natasha Mijares, Mojdeh Stoakley, Michael Zapata

**2024**

Michelle Alexander, Rabha Ashry, Nat Holtzmann, C. Russell Price,  
Julian Randall, Timothy Rey, Deborah Shapiro, Jeremy T. Wilson

This is a **10-day, summer-only** intensive course that runs from early to mid July. Students focus on poetry, prose, or mixed genre, writing from prompts given in-class as well as online, **meet and work with published authors** who bring their own expertise and experience to eight of the ten days. Emphasis is on a streamlined workshop experience and an atmosphere of constructive critique leading to the production of a significant portfolio of writing.

***This course can also be taken for Graduate credit.***



# ELECTIVES

## ENGL 416: EKPHRASTIC PRACTICE

Ekphrasis is, in its simplest sense, *writing that examines and describes a piece of art*. This Creative Writing course, available for **MA Lit and MA Comp** students, takes that denotation as a starting position and pursues its potential as a writerly practice. In other words: Students will write creative work (any genre/any combination of genres) about art. To do so, we will: examine multiple-genre book-length and individual pieces of Ekphrastic writing;



“Self-Portrait Talking to Vince”

consider those works as sites of inquiry about the complex relationship between source and response, content and form; plan and execute a small manuscript-length project of creative writing that is both in the ekphrastic mode and rooted in inquiry.

This course works for both experienced Creative Writers and those who would like to simply try their hand at new forms.

# FACULTY

## Writers who teach and Teachers who write



**Olivia Cronk, MFA**  
**Creative Writing Minor**  
**Coordinator/Senior Instructor**  
o-cronk@neiu.edu

**Olivia Cronk** is the author of *Gwenda, Rodney* (Meekling Press, 2024), *WOMONSTER* (Tarpaulin Sky, 2020), *Louise and Louise and Louise* (The Lettered Streets Press, 2016), and *Skin Horse* (Action Books, 2012). With Philip Sorenson, she co-edits *The Journal Petra*.

**Areas of Interest:** Contemporary Poetry, Ekphrasis, Hybrid Forms, Hybrid Pedagogies, Constraint- and Game-Based Writing Modes



**Larry Dean, MFA**  
**Instructor**  
l-dean@neiu.edu

**Larry O. Dean's** books include *I Am Spam* (2024), *Muse, Um* (2022), *Activities of Daily Living* (2017), *Brief Nudity* (2013), *Basic Cable Couplets* (2012), *Abbrev* (2011), and *About the Author* (2011). He is also an acclaimed singer-songwriter whose latest solo album is *Good Grief* (2015).

**Areas of Interest:** Contemporary Poetry, Working Class Writing, Hard-boiled Literature, Satirical Literature, Music, Movies, Popular Culture



**Amanda Goldblatt, MFA**  
**Instructor**  
a-goldblatt@neiu.edu

**Amanda Goldblatt** is the author of the novel *Hard Mouth*. Goldblatt's stories and essays have appeared in *Guernica*, *Chicago Review*, *Harp & Altar*, and elsewhere. More information is available at [amandagoldblatt.com](http://amandagoldblatt.com)

**Areas of Interest:** the Novel, the Short Story, Narrative Forms, Literary Style, Creative Nonfiction, the Art and Literature of Resistance, Literary Editing and Publishing, Experimental Pedagogies.

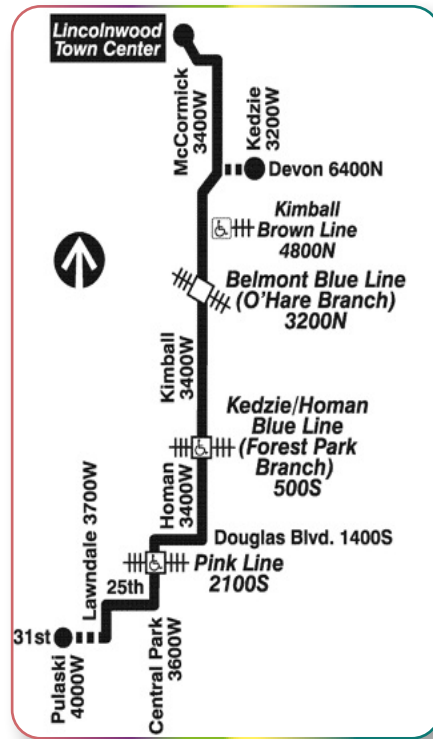
# CREATIVE WRITING: THE 82

The English Department's Creative Writing Minor hosts several literary events each semester, most of which are part of our series **The 82**, named after the Kimball bus line, which transports many of us to NEIU's Main Campus and to El Centro Campus, and which connects us to one another and to the rich tapestry of influences that is Chicago.

Each semester, we host 2-3 events with Student Writers, Faculty Writers, and Visiting Writers.

**Past writers have included:**

Michelle Alexander, Jessica Anne, Rabha Ashry, Lilly Be, Tara Betts, Jan Bottiglieri, Marie Buck, Asia Calcagno, Rachel Castro, Ada Cheng, Kristiana Rae Colón, Sean Cusick, Steve Dawson, Guillermo Delgado, Eric Elshaint, T. Clutch Fleischmann, Tasha Fouts, Gina Frangello, Hannah Gamble, Laura Goldstein, Stefania Gomez, Bill Hillmann, Nat Holtzmann, Imani Elizabeth Jackson, James Kennedy, Amaryah LaBeff, Meghan Lamb, Dan Libman, Lisa Low, Sheila Maldonado, Mia P. Manansala, Sara Matson, David Matthews, Cris Mazza, Patty Ann McNair, Molly McNett, Joshua Mehigan, Rachel Mennies, Scott Miles, Tyler Mills, Ash Miranda, Dipika Mukherjee, Daniela Olszewska, Karen Osborne, Jeremy Owens, Dawn Paul, Nick Pecucci, Audrey Petty, Cecilia Pinto, C. Russell Price, Julian Randall, Timothy David Rey, Kenyatta Rogers, Frankie Rollins, Kathleen Rooney, Jacob Saenz, Selah Saterstrom, Suzanne Scanlon, Deborah Shapiro, Christine Sneed, Jennifer Steele, Megan Stielstra, Mojdeh Stoakley, Rachel Swearingen, Marvin Tate, Ben Tanzer, Natalia Toledo, Luis Tubens, Cyn Vargas, Donna Vorreyer, Sara Wainscott, Jeremy T. Wilson, Daniel Woody, Bill Yarrow, John Young, Michael Zapata, Snežana Žabić, and Zoe Zolbrod.



# CREATIVE WRITING: THE 82

Writers share material from their award-winning work and from works-in-progress; they also talk with students about their processes and their own influences.

Each semester we also host **two student-writers events**. We open up eight slots, by lottery, to all students currently enrolled in Creative Writing classes.

**Your CW faculty can also help you to start your own event!**



Through these events, we foster meaningful literary encounters for students and community members, and we create a space by which NEIU students and community members might enter into the discourse.



# NEIU CREATIVE WRITING

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DEPARTMENTS/ENGLISH