

Creative Writing and Literacy

CI H149-A
Suffolk University, Spring 2017
Friday, 1:15-3:55
Classroom: Sawyer 1108

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Catalog Description

This course introduces students to the creative process as a disciplined approach to problem solving with broad application to everyday life. Students will be encouraged to embrace research, ambiguity, iteration, divergent thinking, synthesis, adaptation, risk taking and failure as essential elements of creativity. They will learn that creativity requires persistence, courage, and grit. The course will engage students in productive collaborations and will help them to appreciate the power of effective verbal and non-verbal communication.

3 credits. No prerequisites. Fulfills the Core Creativity and Innovation requirement for CAS/SBS.

Specific Course Description

This course will explore the value of creativity and play in developing reading and writing skills and the habits of lifelong learning, both in our own lives and in the lives of young people in Boston. In this **Service-Learning Creativity and Innovation course**, we will work closely with the non-profit literacy organization [826 Boston](#), located at 3035 Washington St., Roxbury, which works with students aged 6-18 on reading and writing skills through playful, creative workshops, as well as tutoring and other kinds of support. We will begin the semester by reflecting on the history of our own relationship to reading and writing and using those experiences to conceive of new ways to keep ourselves and others inspired and engaged in developing these skills. Students will learn about the work of 826 Boston through volunteering with the organization, and by the end of the semester you will conceive, plan, and run creative writing workshops of your own at 826 Boston.

826 Boston Mission Statement: “826 Boston is a nonprofit youth writing and publishing organization that empowers traditionally underserved students ages 6-18 to find their voices, tell their stories, and gain communication skills to succeed in school and in life.

“Our services are structured around the understanding that great leaps in learning can happen with one-on-one attention and that strong writing skills are fundamental to future success. With this understanding in mind, we provide after-school tutoring, field trips, creative writing workshops, in-school tutoring, help for English Language Learners, and in-depth publishing projects.

“Each of our free programs seeks to empower students to express their ideas effectively, creatively, confidently, and in their individual voices.”

Service-Learning

Service-Learning is a pedagogy integrating academically relevant service activities that address human and community needs into a course. Students connect knowledge and theory to practice by combining service with reflection in a structured learning environment.

Learning Goals and Objectives

Course Goals Upon successful completion of this course, students will understand:	Learning Objectives Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:	Assessment How the student will be assessed on these learning objectives:
... how to recognize and foster creative thinking to solve problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... identify challenges as opportunities in order to develop innovative ideas and outcomes. • ... approach problem solving reiteratively through testing and critiquing until feasible solutions are found. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly group projects, including creative writing exercises. • Reflection essays. • Final project: creating and running workshops at 826Boston.
... how to cultivate the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in fruitful collaborations.	... display essential interpersonal skills needed for effective teamwork.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly group projects, including creative writing exercises. • Final project: creating and running workshops at 826Boston.
... how to increase their verbal & non-verbal communication skills.	... communicate verbally and non-verbally with different audiences in the process of designing and implementing projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly group projects, including creative writing exercises. • Weekly journals • Reflection essays • Volunteer work with 826Boston. • Final project: creating and running workshops at 826Boston.
... how to meet and respond to ambiguity and risk in a variety of contexts.	... think creatively to adapt to the needs of different audiences as projects are designed and implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly group projects, including creative writing exercises. • Volunteer work with 826Boston. • Final project: creating and running workshops at 826Boston.

... how to demonstrate an awareness of diverse perspectives and understand how to adapt to individual differences	... communicate and work with diverse audiences to achieve the goals of the projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly group projects, including creative writing exercises. • Volunteer work with 826Boston. • Final project: creating and running workshops at 826Boston.
Collaborating with a community partner, students will understand a community need and work to address that need through mutual learning, critical analysis, and reflection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...tutor young people in 826 Boston's afterschool tutoring program • ... work with 826 Boston to develop ideas for programming that suit their needs and support their mission of developing literacy skills in young people ages 6-18. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer work with 826Boston. • Final project: creating and running workshops at 826Boston. • Writing reflections on service-learning experience

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT HOURS		
To complete this course, students will need to dedicate, at a minimum, the following amount of time to the listed activities:		
Assignment/Activity	Engagement Estimate	Engagement Hours
Course readings	~400 pages x 5 min. per page	35
Weekly journal	5 hours per week x 15 weeks	75
Formal writing assignments	2 hours per weekly (15) writing assignment	30
Volunteer service	15 hours	15
Class attendance	15 weeks x 3 hours	45
Total Engagement Hours		200

Required Text

Tharp, Twyla. *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life*. Simon and Schuster, 2003.

Additional readings will be placed on Blackboard as pdf files or links to online readings. You will also be required to read one book of writing by students at 826 Boston, which you will choose as part of a group project. Finally, you will be keeping a weekly journal, which will include writing about any reading you do for pleasure (see details below under Assignments).

Assignments and Projects

Weekly: Every week there will be a **reading assignment** to be completed before class, an **in-class group exercise**, and a **reflection essay**, which will be drafted in class and then written more formally and in more detail for the following week’s class. You will also be asked to keep a **reading and writing journal** to reflect on the reading for pleasure you do during the semester and the creative writing you do between classes. These journals will be collected at least twice during the semester for evaluation.

Volunteer Work: You will be required to volunteer with 826 Boston for at least 15 hours outside of class time during the semester. This is a requirement of the course. It will include a mandatory volunteer training at 826 Boston, traveling on your own to and from 826 Boston outside of class time, and coordination with Isabella Aleman, the faculty assistant from Suffolk’s Center for Community Engagement (CCE) and Jennifer Javier, the Volunteer Coordinator at 826Boston. You will be required to keep track of your hours, signed by your volunteer supervisors, and detail the volunteer work you do in a **volunteer work reflection journal**. The 15 hours of volunteer service will include both individual service (for example, in the afterschool tutoring program) and group projects at 826 Boston. You will be required to observe or volunteer for 826 Boston workshops during Boston Public Schools February Break (Feb. 20-24) and run a workshop at 826 Boston during BPS April Break (Apr. 17-21).

Final Project: Our final project will be to run creative writing workshops at 826Boston in the final weeks of the semester. Each group in the class will design, plan, and run a workshop for students who attend 826Boston. There will be multiple options for scheduling these workshops, but the options will be limited by 826Boston’s own schedule. Leading up to our final project, we will experiment with a variety of ideas for workshops, testing and evaluating them in class by having each group present their ideas to the class and running mock workshops.

Final Reflection: The semester will culminate in a final reflection essay, due during Finals Week, that will take into account all of the work you have done over these weeks.

Final Grade Breakdown

Weekly Reflection Essays	15%
Weekly Reading and Writing Journal	10%
Volunteer Work	20%
Final Project	20%
Final Reflection Essay	15%
<u>Participation</u>	<u>20%</u>

Total 100%

94-100= A	87-89= B+	77-79= C+	67-69= D+	59 or below= F
90-93= A-	84-86= B	73-76= C	64-66= D	
	80-83= B-	70-72= C-	60-63= D-	

Course Policies

Participation/Attendance Policy

Your participation grade is based primarily on your active engagement in group activities and your volunteer work outside of class, which much of the class is structured around. Participation also includes coming to class on time and turning in assignments on time. **I will allow one absence during the semester with no grade penalty. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. After two absences, I will take one point off of your participation grade for each additional absence. Five or more absences will result in an F for the course. Not completing your volunteer requirements can also result in a severe deduction in your final grade, including an F in the course.** Frequent late attendance may be counted as one or more absences. In the case of multiple absences related to a medical emergency, I will require documentation and notification from the Dean of Students, and you must meet with me to discuss making up the work you missed.

Submission of Work and Late Work

Except for work written in class, all written work submitted for this class must have your name on the first page and be typed in 12-point Times New Roman or other standard font, double-spaced, numbered on each page, and have one-inch margins on all sides. **I do not accept work by email unless specifically requested or approved by me.**

Late Work: All assignments must be turned in on time at the beginning of class. Late essays will receive a half-point (0.5) deduction for each day late. More than one week late will receive a zero. **Work for group projects, such as presentations, and the final essay cannot be completed late.**

I may ask you to revise an essay in order to receive a grade. In that case, you must first meet with me to discuss the requirements of the revision.

Additional Information:

Credit Hour Compliance and Expected Student Work

This course follows the Federal Government's Credit Hour definition for a four-credit course. Expect to do two hours of work outside of class per one hour of classroom instruction. For more information on this engagement requirement see:

http://cihe.neasc.org/downloads/POLICIES/Pp111_PolicyOnCreditsAndDegrees.pdf

Students with Disabilities

If you anticipate issues with the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in my classroom. If you determine that you need formal, disability-related accommodations, it is very important that you register with the Office of Disability Services (located at 73 Tremont Street, 7th floor; 617.994.6820; disabilityservices@suffolk.edu) and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. We can then plan how best to implement your accommodations. For more information, see www.suffolk.edu/disability

[Absences and Attendance Policy from the Student Handbook](#)

<http://www.suffolk.edu/studenthandbook/19864.php>

Please note: Students should contact the Student Affairs Office at 617.573.8239 or studentaffairs@suffolk.edu if they expect to be absent for a period of a week or more.

Academic Misconduct Policy for All Undergraduate Students

Suffolk University expects all students to be responsible individuals with high standards of conduct. Students are expected to practice ethical behavior in all learning environments and scenarios, including classrooms and laboratories, internships and practica, and study groups and academic teams. Cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, use of unauthorized electronic devices, self-plagiarism, fabrication or falsification of data, and other types of academic misconduct are treated as serious offenses that initiate a formal process of inquiry, one that may lead to disciplinary sanctions.

You are responsible for understanding the University's policies on Academic Misconduct as presented in the Student Handbook. Please see this webpage for more information:

<http://www.suffolk.edu/studenthandbook/19863.php>

Academic Grievances

There is a formal process students must follow for grieving a grade; please review the [Academic Grievance Policy](#) in the student handbook.

General Information about Academic Resources and Student Support Services

See: <http://www.suffolk.edu/explore/54511.php>

Academic Support and Student Success

The Center for Learning and Academic Success (CLAS) is a free on-campus resource offering peer and professional tutoring in Math and English, as well as a wide range of business, science, and liberal arts courses. Students may join study groups, participate in drop in help, or make appointments with tutors to reinforce course content and encourage effective study habits. The CLAS is conveniently located inside Sawyer Library. Go to this office for **writing help** (tutoring) and other study and learning skill help and improvement. You can find the [Center for Learning and Academic Success \(CLAS\)](#) at 73 Tremont Street, 9th Floor, 617.573.8235, clas@suffolk.edu

The Early Alert Project

This class participates in Suffolk's Early Alert Project. Around week 6, I will notify the Center for Learning and Academic Success (CLAS) if you have struggled with writing or language skills, excessive absences, incomplete work, or difficulty with the course content. This warning is not an official grade, yet it indicates concerns about your progress that need to be addressed immediately. If you receive an Early Alert, please visit me during my office hours so we may talk about strategies for your success in this class.

Counseling Resources and Physical/Emotional Health

As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, health issues, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, lack of motivation, or feeling ill. These concerns or other stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Suffolk University services are available to assist you in addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of medical services and confidential mental health services available on campus here: www.suffolk.edu/health or at the **Office of Health, Wellness, and Counseling Center**, 73 Tremont Street, 5th Floor, 617.573.8260.

Statement on Technology Services

Suffolk University provides a variety of resources to support course technology:

- University Help Desk (Mon-Fri, 8:30am – 8pm): 617.557.2000 or helpdesk@suffolk.edu
- For Blackboard and Collaborate assistance, please contact the 24-hour support line at 866.886.4861.
- Step-by-step Blackboard tutorials are accessible within every Blackboard course via the Bb Tutorials menu
- [On Demand Knowledge Base](#) provides information on all other technologies that are used in courses, including teaching, learning, research and productivity tools

Statement for International Students

International Students Services Office (ISSO), a part of the Center for International Programs and Services, provides comprehensive support to international students regarding immigration status and DHS regulatory responsibilities. If you are an international student in F-1 or J-1 status, you are responsible to maintain full-time enrollment (minimum of 12 units) every semester, else your immigration status is at risk. For more information, go to <http://www.suffolk.edu/isso>, call 617-573-8034, email isso@suffolk.edu or visit ISSO at 73 Tremont Street, 9th floor.

Email Policy and Office Hours

I will send frequent email messages to the class through Blackboard, announcing changes to the syllabus, writings assignments, and other information. Emails sent through Blackboard are sent to your suffolk.edu address. You need to check your suffolk.edu email at least once a day, or have it forwarded to an address you check at least once a day. If you need to reach me, the best way to do so is by email at wbonikowski@suffolk.edu. Please allow me 48 hours to respond, though I will usually respond within 24 hours.

My office hours at 73 Tremont, 8th Floor, Room 8054, are open to any students wishing to discuss the course or other academic issues. I especially encourage you to visit if you have questions or difficulties about the course. While you may drop by at any time during office hours, I encourage you to email me for an appointment.

SCHEDULE (subject to change)

General Continuity Plan for Unexpected Cancellations

In the event that the university cancels classes, such as for severe weather, or in the case of any unexpected class cancellation, such as instructor illness, students are expected to continue with readings as originally scheduled. Any assignments scheduled during those missed classes, such as an exam or paper, are due at the next class meeting unless other instructions are posted at the course website or communicated via email.

Specific Continuity Plan for Expected Cancellations

In the case of expected class cancellations, such as University holidays, students are expected to complete the readings and assignments for the next class meeting unless other instructions are posted at the course website or communicated via email. There is also one scheduled cancellation on Friday, April 21, because we will be running workshops at 826 Boston (see below). Other than University holidays and scheduled cancellations there are no cancellations expected for this course this semester.

Reading and writing assignments are listed on the day they are due. All page numbers refer to the required texts. Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard in pdf files in the Course Documents section; those readings are marked below with a (B).

Note 1: Since we are working with a partner organization, we may sometimes make schedule changes based on the needs of the organization.

Note 2: Some of the plans for the later weeks described below may change based on student input and the direction of our mutual interests as developed in the first weeks of the semester.

Week 1 F 1/20

Introduction to 826 Boston and service learning in general. We will have a visit from Jennifer Javier (“J.J.”), Volunteer Coordinator at 826 Boston. We will learn about their mission, and take a look at some of the projects they have done. We will discuss the service-learning obligations of the course and introduce Isabella Aleman, faculty assistant from Suffolk’s Center for Community Engagement. We will discuss what “literacy” and “creativity” mean, and we will do exercises that will encourage you to learn about one another and help prepare for the work we will do this semester.

Week 2 F 1/27

Visit to the Greater Boston Bigfoot Research Institute (aka, 826 Boston)! We will meet in class at the regular time and head off to 826 Boston together for a volunteer training. It takes approximately 30 minutes to get there from Park St. T station and we have to be there at 2 pm. This means we will leave a few minutes after class begins. Make sure to be on time and to have money with you to ride the T there and back.

In-class activity: volunteer training at 826 Boston. Also, you will be assigned groups and each group will pick one book by 826 Boston students to read and study for Week 3.

Reading Assignment due: Tharp, Chapters 1 and 2 (2-33). All narratives in Blackboard folder “Literacy Narratives”

Writing Assignment due: Complete Blackboard Community Engagement and Service Orientation. Weekly journal. Literacy narrative.

Week 3**F 2/3**

Reading assignment: 1) Tharp, Chapter 3 (34-59); 2) Review the literacy narratives on Blackboard again, thinking about relationships among them: are there common elements to these stories in spite of their differences?

Writing Assignment: 1) Answer the creative autobiography questions in Tharp, 45-46. Write up your creative autobiography based on your answers, due in class (2-3 pages). 2) Weekly journal: every day (at least Monday through Thursday) write down three concrete images that you notice in the world around you (not ideas or abstractions).

Group Activities: We will do in-class exercises based on the Tharp readings and the literacy narratives. We will also begin brainstorming ideas for our workshops at 826 Boston.

Week 4**F 2/10**

This week we will begin brainstorming and workshopping ideas for 826 Boston workshops. We will reflect on our creative interests by creating a “box” according to Tharp’s Ch. 5 which you will draw on in thinking up ideas and how to implement them. After general discussion of Tharp’s chapters on creative process, we will discuss our ideas, and focus on one idea to develop. You will create a simple exercise based on this idea to exchange with another group. Groups will do the exercises they are given, then give feedback.

Reading Assignment: Tharp, Chapters 5-6 (80-115)

Writing Assignment: Weekly journal prompts (see Blackboard Announcement). An initial brainstormed list of workshop ideas. Make a “box,” according to Tharp in Ch. 5, basically a collection of things that inspire you, that you can draw on in thinking up ideas for workshops. (See Blackboard for assignment details.)

Week 5**F 2/17**

This week we will continue our brainstorming and developing ideas for workshops by thinking about memory as a source of creative ideas, as Tharp writes in Ch. 6. We will explore our own memories and the memories of family members by doing the following assignment. Then we will explore the ideas we’ve generated so far for ways we can incorporate memory into our workshop ideas.

Assignment: Family Histories. Before class this week, interview a family member of an older generation (parent, grandparent, uncle/aunt, or other similar caregiver) about their life growing up. Record and transcribe the interview and bring it to class. In addition, bring a photograph (or a copy) of this family member when they were young; if you do not have one, you can bring your parents’ wedding photo or bring a photo of any kind from your early childhood or before.

Reading: Tharp, Chapter 4 (60-77); Jayne Anne Phillips, “ ‘Cheers!’ or How I Learned to Write” and “Wedding Picture” (B)

Writing Assignment: Weekly journal prompt.

Group Activities: Share your interviews with your group by playing or reading aloud an excerpt from the interview. Discuss the similarities and differences among them, as well as the differences of their lives to your own. Exercise: Write a paragraph describing the photograph you brought to class, following Jayne Anne Phillips’s model. Read aloud in your groups. Share the results of these activities with the class as a whole.

Week 6 **F 2/24**

Note: This week, we will all be either observing or volunteering at 826 Boston for their February break workshops. This is very important, so please keep your schedule as open as possible. In order to run our own workshops in April, we must first see how 826 Boston does it. We will still be holding class on Friday.

Reading Assignment: Tharp, Chapter 7 (116-139)

Writing Assignment: Weekly journal: brainstorm for workshop ideas—one idea per day!

Group Activities: Today we will be submitting first-draft proposals to April Wang, Education Director at 826 Boston. So this class period will be devoted entirely to the process of creating a first draft of the proposal. I will submit them to her after class. She will review them and give us feedback by next Friday, Mar. 3.

Week 7 **F 3/3**

Workshop Feedback week. By next week we need to have our final proposals submitted to 826 Boston. We will use the initial feedback to revise and improve our proposals. You will work in your groups to review the feedback and come up with ideas for revision.

Week 8 **F 3/10**

Final Workshop Proposal week. You will work in your groups to finalize your proposals. I will submit them after class. After Spring Break, we will know which proposals have been selected. **Bring journals for mid-semester evaluation!**

Week 9 **F 3/17**

Spring Break—No Class, University Closed

Week 10 **F 3/24**

Re-think, Re-plan, Revise. Based on the feedback from 826 Boston, modify your workshop ideas. Also: what materials do you need for your workshop? Make a contingency plan by imagining possible ways the workshop might run in the real world and how you would respond to challenges.

Week 11 **F 3/31**

Mock mini-workshops: you will run your workshops for your peers and your peers will evaluate you.

Week 12 **F 4/7**

Mock mini-workshops: you will run your workshops for your peers and your peers will evaluate you.

Week 13 **F 4/14**

Time for any last-minute adjustments or plans for the workshops that begin next week (see Week 14 below).

Week 14 F 4/21

No Class – This week we are running workshops at 826 Boston in separate groups over the course of the week. Schedule TBA.

Week 15 F 4/28

Last Day of Class: A reflection on our experience this semester, which will include feedback from 826 Boston on the workshops we ran and your own self-evaluation. In-class writing will prepare for the Final Reflection Essay (see below). We will also celebrate the work we've done at 826 Boston and consider how to take our experience with us into future work and service.

Final Exam: In place of a Final Exam, we will have a Final Reflection Essay that gathers together all of the work you have done this semester—your volunteer work, your reading and writing, your group projects, your final workshop—and finds the connections between them.

Final Reflection Essay due Friday, May 5, electronically submitted via Blackboard.