DePaul University | School of Continuing and Professional Studies
Undergraduate Program

COURSE: CCA 176, AI 176

COURSE TITLE: CREATIVE WRITING

TERM: WINTER 2021

COURSE DATES: JANUARY 4 – MARCH 21, 2021

COURSE LOCATION AND DELIVERY FORMAT: ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

NAME: MOLIA DUMBLETON

OFFICE LOCATION: ZOOM OFFICE LINK
https://us04web.zoom.us/j/5609231896?pwd=QlVWa0VSWTkyVFVvRHaKaxrQ2xydz09

OFFICE HOURS:
• January 14, 6:30-7:30 pm CST
• January 28, 6:30-7:30 pm CST
• February 11, 6:30-7:30 pm CST
• February 25, 6:30-7:30 pm CST
• March 11, 6:30-7:30 pm CST
• Or by request

EMAIL: You can reach me at mdumblet@depaul.edu or SNLdumbleton@gmail.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Creative Writing is an asynchronous online course designed to help you explore the art of writing stories. In this writing-intensive workshop, you will be required to write 6 short writing exercises aimed at practicing particular elements of craft (e.g., setting, characterization, dialogue), one full-length short story (2000-8000 words), and a revision of that full-length story. In addition, you will complete 1-2 exercises aimed at articulating a particular analytical skill or competence, plus a thoughtful final reflection. Throughout our 11 weeks together, you will
share all of your original creative works on our class discussion board, and engage with the works of classmates by responding thoughtfully to several postings each week, in a way that demonstrates your new and accumulated learning. In return, your classmates (and instructor) will respond thoughtfully to your own postings. The writing we do in this course is shared with the entire class, which means we serve collectively as one another’s best analytical readers and audience, as well as one another’s best supporters and top admirers.

This workshop is held entirely online. There are no required class meetings, although your instructor is always available to provide support or clarity via email, during Zoom office hours, and/or as needed. Primarily, though, we will use our D2L discussion board, as well as Google Docs. We will share trustingly, respond generously, and discuss rigorously, and get to know one another through our creative work in ways that will be supportive, helpful, and sometimes even surprising.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES AND COMPETENCIES:**

AFTER COMPLETING THIS COURSE, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Differentiate between narrative and exposition (showing vs. explaining)
- Identify, reflect on, and apply elements of story (including elements of plot, character, and setting)
- Analyze a story’s structure and voice for effectiveness
- Exercise the options involved in selecting a narrative point of view
- Apply narrative techniques to shape and create a story that is either wholly fictional, comes from your own life, or derives from the experiences of others
- Work to revise, rewrite, and edit your own work, and help others with this process
- Participate in supportive analytical discussions about elements of craft that are contributing to or detracting from a story’s intended effect
- Reflect on your experience and production in the course and assess your own learning

THE SCPS COMPETENCIES AVAILABLE FOR THIS COURSE ARE:

- A1C: Can analyze artistic or textual works in terms of form, content, and style
- A2A: Can create an original work of art, explore its relationship to artistic form, and reflect on the creative process
- A5: Can define and analyze a creative process

**REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL BOOKS AND RESOURCES**

- **REQUIRED:** There are no required texts for this class
- **OPTIONAL:** *What If*, by Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter
• OPTIONAL: Any anthology or collection of award-winning literary fiction. Some recommendations include *Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses*, *Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*, *Best American Short Stories*, the *O. Henry Prize Short Stories Anthology*, any *New Yorker* Fiction Issue, etc. Having an easy-to-grab set of high-quality literary short stories nearby may be helpful to you as you begin making choices about point of view, voice, story structure and length, etc., and may also provide some helpful models for formatting (e.g., how to properly format dialogue in fiction, how different authors demonstrate interior thought, etc.).

**WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE & DELIVERABLES**

**Module 1:**
1.1 INTRODUCTION
Post an introduction to the discussion board, and say hello to a couple of your classmates
DUE: End of week 1

**Module 2:**
2.1 SHOW-DON’T-TELL, SCENE-NOT-SUMMARY
Short exercise: *Bringing Abstract Ideas to Life*
Peer feedback: Post kind, specific, helpful feedback on the posts of at least 3 of your classmates
DUE: Middle of week 2

2.2 ACTIVATING DETAIL
Short exercise: *Person, Place, and Song*
Peer feedback: Post kind, specific, helpful feedback on the posts of at least 3 of your classmates
DUE: End of week 2

**Module 3:**
3.1 CHARACTER
Short exercise: *Oh, That Sort of Person!*
Peer feedback: Post kind, specific, helpful feedback on the posts of at least 3 of your classmates
DUE: Middle of week 3

3.2 SETTING
Short exercise: *Creating a Character’s Background*
Peer feedback: Post kind, specific, helpful feedback on the posts of at least 3 of your classmates
DUE: End of week 3
classmates
DUE: End of week 3

**Module 4:**

4.1 DIALOGUE
Short exercise: *A Verbal Dance: Not Quite a Fight*
Peer feedback: Post kind, specific, helpful feedback on the posts of at least 3 of your classmates
DUE: Middle of week 4

4.2 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
Short exercise: *From Situation to Plot*
Peer feedback: Post kind, specific, helpful feedback on the posts of at least 3 of your classmates
DUE: End of week 4

**Module 5:**

5.1 EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS
Provide your instructor with a basic summary of your story (it’s okay if this is still evolving), plus the first 250+ words of your draft.
DUE: End of week 5

**Module 6:**

6.1 STORY DRAFT
Complete a first draft of your story (2000-8000 words), which must include a beginning, middle, and end. (No “to-be-continueds.”)
DUE: End of week 6

**Module 7:**

7.1 COMPETENCE-SPECIFIC EXERCISES
Complete 1-2 competence-specific essays (details will depend on your registration details).
DUE: End of week 7

**Module 8:**

8.1 PEER FEEDBACK
Provide extensive, thoughtful feedback on at least 3 of your classmates’ full-length stories.
DUE: End of week 8

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Module 9:
9.1 REVISED STORY
   Take peer and instructor feedback into account while revising and polishing your story draft.
   DUE: End of week 9

Module 10:
10.1 FINAL REFLECTION ESSAY
   In an essay (750-1000 words), reflect on the course and your own learning.
   DUE: End of week 10

Module 11:
This special exam period may be made available, by special arrangement, to individual students who need to make use of this extra time to re-do or complete missing assignments.

GRADING

WEIGHTED ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS

- Module 1: Introduction - 5%
- Modules 2, 3, 4: Short Writing Exercises and Peer Feedback: 45%
  - Short Writing Exercises (5% per exercise, x6)
  - Peer Feedback (5% per week, x3)
- Module 5: Evidence of Progress - 5%
- Module 6: Complete Story Draft - 10%
- Module 7: Competence-Specific Exercises - 10%
- Module 8: Peer Feedback - 5%
- Module 9: Story Revision - 10%
- Module 10: Final Reflection - 10%
Total: 100%

UNIVERSITY-WIDE GRADING SYSTEM

- A  95 to 100
- A-  91 to 94
- B+  88 to 90
- B   85 to 87
• B-  81 to 84
• C+  77 to 80
• C   73 to 76
• C-  69 to 72

(Grades lower than C- are not passing)
• D+  65 to 68
• D   61 to 64
• F   60 or below

**Pass/Fail Grade Policy**

Students interested in taking a course on a Pass/Fail grade basis need to contact their academic advisor to request the option by the end of the second week of the course. SCPS students can email their requests to their advisors and include the course number, quarter, and student ID number. Non-SCPS students need to contact their home college for instructions on submitting these requests. Please review the P/F guidelines, course restrictions and GPA implications in the [University catalog](#) before making your request. A grade of Pass represents a D or better standard and therefore will not meet requirements that have a minimum standard of C- or better. For further clarification of the P/F option for SCPS students beyond the university guidelines, please refer to the [SCPS catalog](#).

**Incomplete (IN) Grades**

This course adheres to the university’s [Incomplete Policy](#). Contact your instructor if you would like to request an Incomplete for this course.

The Incomplete Request process follows university policy. That is, a student who encounters an unusual or unforeseeable circumstance that prevents them from completing the course requirements by the end of the term may request a time extension to complete the work. During normal circumstances, the student must formally initiate the request by submitting the Contract for Issuance of Incomplete Grade form (via email, word doc), no later than week 10 (or prior to the final week of a shorter-term course). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Incomplete policies may have changed. You can keep track of the most recent guidelines and FAQs here: [https://resources.depaul.edu/coronavirus/faqs/Pages/classes-academics-students.aspx](https://resources.depaul.edu/coronavirus/faqs/Pages/classes-academics-students.aspx)

Keep in mind: The instructor has discretion to approve or not approve the student’s request for an IN grade. If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the
course, the instructor also has discretion to set the deadline for completion of the work, which may be earlier but no later than two quarters (not counting Summer term). The instructor may not enter an IN grade on behalf of a student without a completed and agreed upon contract, including a specific due date for each missing assignment and an end date for the contract. At the end of the agreed-upon incomplete period, a revised grade will be submitted by your instructor. Any outstanding Incomplete grades will automatically convert to "F" grades. Ordinarily no incomplete grade may be completed after the grace period has expired. Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee. Note that IN grades are not considered by Financial Aid as evidence of satisfactory academic progress.

You can find an Incomplete Contract on the SCPS Undergraduate Resources page, under Documents and then Incomplete Contract.

**Minimum SCPS Grade Policy**

SCPS degree programs with majors (BAPSBA, BAPSC, BAHA, BADA, BANM, and BALS) require a grade of C- or better in courses taken at DePaul or transfer work applied to course requirements in the Major and in the LL 261: Essay Writing course in the College Core. All other course requirements in these programs can be completed with a grade of D or better. SCPS degree completion major programs (BAABS and BALS) require a C- or better in all courses taken at DePaul applied to those programs. SCPS competence-based programs (BAIFA, BAC, BAGB and BAECE) require a D or better in courses taken at DePaul or transfer work applied to competence requirements.

**Grading Philosophy**

I believe everyone is creative. I believe everyone can benefit from taking a creative writing course, and that the world would be a better place if everyone did. I also believe that many creative people have been told, often at an impressionable and very creative age, that they were not creative, or that their work wasn’t good enough, or that their voices weren’t unique, important, welcome, or “right”—and so they stopped creating. My top goal in life is to undo that damage, and to usher as many people as I can back into the joys and benefits of writing creatively.

That said, this is a rigorous, college-level course, and in order to grant university credit for your work, I must assess your submissions numerically. This is a tricky business, and every creative writing instructor manages it a little differently. I’m happy to discuss the criteria below to be sure we are on the same page and to ensure that you feel your work is being assessed fairly.
In a nutshell: Everyone begins this class with an A. The only way to “lose” your A is to miss deadlines; miss assignments; turn in work that demonstrates that you haven’t done the reading, followed the guidelines, or engaged with the lesson in a genuine way; or to turn in work that fails to explore or evolve on an authentic level. I will, from time to time, ask you to revise and re-post an assignment. Until you do this, you will not receive full credit for that module.

The most important goal of this course is for you to write a lot, read a lot, and learn to articulate your thoughts about the things you read and write, in terms of the elements we are learning about—including structure, voice, plot, “engine,” characterization, dialogue, setting, detail, tension, etc. In other words, your grade here won’t be a reflection of whether you are a “good” writer or a “bad” writer; it will be a reflection of whether you’ve been a good learner and citizen in our online learning space during these 11 weeks. This means that no matter what level of experience you bring to the course, your grade is 100% under your control.

I will be in touch with you directly if you are missing work, need to revise and re-post an assignment, and/or if I am concerned about your grade slipping. You are also free to check in with me at any point to see how you’re doing.

**EXPECTATIONS**

**ATTENDANCE AND LATENESS**

This course moves fast, and it’s not great to fall behind. In order to help you avoid the snowballing of late work, I do not typically accept late work unless you contact me ahead of time and negotiate for a 24- or 48-hour extension.

That said, life happens—and, obviously, we are in the middle of an unprecedented moment in history during which I realize we will all need flexibility and compassion, above all. So—if you have a serious life interruption occurring, please get in touch with me and we will work something out. You do not need to “broker” compassion by sharing personal details. I trust you. You, your health (both physical and emotional), and your family are the most important thing.

**BE KIND, BE SPECIFIC, BE HELPFUL**

Creative Writing is a naturally vulnerable and intimate field, and in this course, we will act as both writers and readers. As writers, we will always be nervous about submitting our own newborn creative works to strangers, no matter how much experience we have. As readers, our job is to remember this. We are here to provide readership, not critique. Our goal is not to “tell
the writer what’s wrong with their piece.” Rather, it is to help the writer discover what is on the page and what isn’t, and to share our experiences of the piece as a reader. We may help the writer by telling them what’s working best for us and why, and by asking clarifying questions that may help them see something that is confusing. We can also tell the writer what we’d like to see more of.

Writers can learn a lot by hearing readers discuss their work. Readers will often make connections the writer never even thought of! Above all, readers help writers determine whether their work is creating the experience that they intended for the reader to have. If not, it will be up to the writer to figure out how to rectify that gap.

Above all, workshop feedback should be kind, specific, and helpful. It should keep in mind that every posting on our classroom board will be the vulnerable product of someone else’s creative mind. Before you post any feedback at all, ask yourself: is it kind? Is it specific? Is it helpful?

**Trust Yourself, Trust the Process**

This is an 11-week course. During several of these weeks, you will be given prompts and be expected to generate brand-new creative works, very quickly, in response to them—and all of this on top of regular life plus other academic work! There are very few writers in the world who operate within these constraints. So remember this:

You (and your classmates) are not expected to produce perfect, polished work. The sooner you get comfortable with the concept of drafting, and sharing things that don’t feel perfect, and being comfortably welcoming of people discussing your work, the happier you will be and the more you will take from the course.

You are, however, expected to stretch yourself, try new things, and see what happens! I always prefer an ambitious experiment with mixed results over a safe, simple success. As I’ll say over and over again this quarter, this is a laboratory, or even a sandbox, not a polished recital.

**Grammar**

Do your best. We’re not here to proofread and perfect. There are plenty of other places to do that (try Grammarly, Tutor.com, or the Writing Center) once a piece is complete and ready to be polished, but unless grammar, misspellings, or sheer carelessness are getting in the way of what the writer is trying to convey in their draft, this won’t be a top priority. We will have plenty of other things to focus on during our short time together.
TRIGGERS AND TRAUMA

You are not asked or expected to dive into any personal experiences that are likely to cause you pain or trauma. There is a great deal of research that suggests that writing into trauma outside of a clinical setting is not therapeutic, and can often make things worse. Please be gentle with yourselves here in your choices of reading and writing topics, and be in touch with me if you believe I should adapt any readings or assignments in the future.

OTHER CONCERNS

I want this class to be a safe and positive experience for everyone. Although the original syllabus and course shell were designed by someone else, I have taught this course for many years and made some minor adaptations to the content. I try to give students enough options and freedoms to express themselves and their own intellectual preferences and interests. I also try to actively shape workshop conversations to make sure all participants lead with warmth, welcome, respect, and mutual support. If you have a concern about a reading, a prompt, an interaction, or anything else in our course space, please contact me right away so we can work together to solve it.

PLAGIARISM

The DePaul Student Handbook defines plagiarism as follows: “Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following: (a) The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material (...), whether published or unpublished, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else’s. (b) Copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with acknowledgement. (c) Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency. (d) The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.”

All creative material generated for this course is expected to be entirely original and authored by the student who submits it, in response to the particular prompts and assignments for this course. In academic essays, all sources should be cited and credited appropriately. Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is a serious matter. Penalties are at the discretion of the instructor.

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In accordance with DePaul’s Acceptable Use Policy, commentary and materials within SNL

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Online classes shall not be copied, reproduced, or published elsewhere without the express written consent of individuals involved. Please also note that the works students share with one another and the instructor in our online classroom are private, and should not be shared outside of our created community for any reason.

**OTHER STUDENT RESOURCES**

**Dean of Students Office**
The Dean of Students Office (DOS) helps students in navigating the university, particularly during difficult situations, such as personal, financial, medical, and/or family crises. Absence Notifications to faculty, Late Withdrawals, and Community Resource Referrals, support students both in and outside of the classroom. Additionally we have resources and programs to support health and wellness, violence prevention, substance abuse and drug prevention, and LGBTQ student services. We are committed to your success as a DePaul student. Please feel free to [contact us](mailto:).  

**Undergraduate Resources Page**

**Undergraduate Student Handbook**

**Academic Integrity Policy (including Plagiarism Policy)**

**SCPS Writing Resources (including Writing Supports, Writing Assignment Examples, Writing Boot Camps, and more)**

**The University Center for Writing-based Learning**

**Withdrawal/Drop Policy** and policies regarding [Withdrawal Tuition](mailto:)

**Incomplete (IN) and Research (R) Grades Expiration Policy**

**Protection of Human Research Participants**

**Center for Students with Disabilities**
The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) coordinates DePaul University’s provision of accommodations and other services to students with disabilities pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. CSD regularly works with students diagnosed with a range of disabilities such as learning disabilities, AD/HD, medical conditions, chronic illness, mental health disorders, and physical/visual disabilities, amongst others. Instructors are not qualified to grant accommodations for students experiencing any of the

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above federally protected disabilities, and so students are encouraged to enroll with CSD to receive support services.

Students seeking disability-related accommodations and support services may register with DePaul’s Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) by contacting csd@depaul.edu, Loop Campus: Lewis Center 1420, (312) 362-8002, or Lincoln Park Campus: Student Center 370, (773) 325-1677.

Students are also invited to contact their instructors privately to discuss how the instructor may assist in facilitating the accommodations students will use in this course. This is best done early in the term and the conversation will remain confidential.

**Course Credits**

This course was designed and produced by Thomas H. Sullivan and staff at SCPS, School of Continuing and Professional Studies of DePaul University. It has been revised with the help of comments from the instructors who have taught it: Molly Dumbleton, Ezzat Goushegir, and Nina Kutty. My thanks to them all.

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**Instructor Bio**

Molia (Molly) Dumbleton has taught Creative Writing, Making Poems, and other courses at DePaul University since 2003. Her fiction has appeared in various journals including New England Review, Kenyon Review, Cincinnati Review, and elsewhere, and been awarded prizes including the Sean O Faolain Story Prize and the Columbia Journal Winter Fiction Award. She is Assistant Fiction Editor at Split Lip Magazine, a reader for the AWP Grace Paley Fiction Prize, and a member of the Curatorial Board at Ragdale. She holds a B.A. from Oberlin College, an M.A. from Rice University, and an M.A. in Creative Writing from Northwestern University, and is expecting to complete an M.F.A. in Fiction from Bennington College in June 2021. Her website is [www.moliadumbleton.com](http://www.moliadumbleton.com).