

“A professional writer is an amateur who didn’t quit.”

— Richard Bach

Course Information

Semester & Year: Fall 2022

Course ID & Section #: **Engl 33-V3476**

Instructor’s name: Ruth Rhodes

Location: Online

Course units: 3

Note: This late-start class begins September 3 and runs 14 weeks

Instructor Contact Information

Office location: CA 132, Eureka Campus

Office hours: Call for an appointment (Or drop by—I’m usually in my office 9 am-3 pm)

Phone number: 707-476-4583 (but email is best for a quick response)

Email address: Ruth-Rhodes@redwoods.edu

Catalog Description

A study in developing the art of writing fiction¹, emphasizing communication, clarity, and economy. Students read and analyze many types of fiction while they generate, develop, critique, and revise their own and others' texts.

Course Student Learning Outcomes

1. Differentiate and utilize concrete detail and abstraction in fiction.
2. Control grammar and punctuation to clarify ideas.
3. Apply a process-oriented approach to writing fiction that involves inventing, drafting, revising, and editing.
4. Compose original written texts using genre-specific structures and formal conventions.

¹ This is a course in *prose* (writing that isn’t poetry). But the course outline also specifies *fiction* (writing describing imaginary events). While we will dabble in creative non-fiction (memoir), most of what we work on will be fiction.

Prerequisites/Co-Requisites/Recommended Prep

None.

Accessibility

College of the Redwoods is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you have a disability or believe you might benefit from disability-related services and accommodations, please contact your instructor or [Disability Services and Programs for Students \(DSPS\)](#). Students may make requests for alternative media by contacting DSPS based on their campus location:

- Eureka: 707-476-4280, student services building, 1st floor
- Del Norte: 707-465-2324, main building near library
- Klamath-Trinity: 530-625-4821 Ext 103

If you are taking online classes DSPS will email approved accommodations for distance education classes to your instructor. In the case of face-to-face instruction, please present your written accommodation request to your instructor at least one week before the needed accommodation so that necessary arrangements can be made. Last minute arrangements or post-test adjustments usually cannot be accommodated.

Primary Focus

Good writers do **four** things continually:

1. They read examples of good writing
2. They read advice about the craft of writing
3. They write. *A lot.*
4. They share their work with other writers who provide constructive feedback.

These habits make us better writers. Practicing these habits is the focus of this class.

Class Organization and Structure

Assignments for this class are arranged in weekly modules. Work is due at the end of the week on Sunday, just before midnight. English 33 is a 3-credit class—and this is a late start class, so lessons are compressed a bit. Students should expect to devote an average of 10 hours per week to complete assignments for this course.

The week typically begins with an introductory video and a short **lecture**. The lectures contain quizzes. They're self-tests and don't count towards your grade. But they're in the lectures to help you stay engaged and to help you check your understanding.

In the lecture, you will access links to **readings**, which generally include a reading by a professional writer on writing craft and a creative reading, such as a memoir, short story, or a few pieces of flash fiction. The assignments usually appear as links at the end of the lecture.

After reading the course materials, you will join a **discussion** about what you read so that you can make some connections to cement your learning. Then you will do a **writing practice**. Think of the writing practices as your weekly workouts where you get your writing muscles in shape. You may experience some soreness from the writing workouts: feeling disappointed, getting stuck, and sometimes just muddling through assignments in which you may not be particularly interested. That's normal.

As the weeks progress, we will add occasional writing **workshops** where you will take turns sharing creative work and providing one another with specific feedback. Students will have an opportunity to submit creative writing to workshop several times during the semester.

At the end of the semester, lecture pages and readings are shorter and less challenging. This change allows you to focus your attention on participating in the final workshops and completing your **portfolio**.

Working Ahead, Falling Behind

All weekly modules are open. If you know you're going to be busy with other activities, you can complete most assignments in advance of the deadline. This gets tricky when you need to respond to another classmate's post in a discussion or provide feedback during a workshop, so keep that limitation in mind.

Try not to fall behind. English 33 requires a high degree of interaction. You can revisit old discussions and workshops, but make an initial post and reply by the deadline to get credit. I do not accept late work. Not turning in work because you didn't do it *should* affect your grade—that seems reasonable, doesn't it?

On the other hand, if you have a technical problem uploading something, send me an email or Canvas message with that document attached. We're not going to let computer issues rob you of credit. Also, if you have a serious life crisis that prevents you from meeting a weekly deadline, we can negotiate a plan for you to move forward. Don't feel guilty about asking for help under unusual circumstances if you need it.

Feedback

I will give you a lot of feedback in this class, including specific and detailed comments on your revised work, balancing encouragement with ideas for improvement. My feedback is my gift to you for putting yourself out there. Your gift to me is that you will read and consider my feedback. I am a human being who likes what she likes. I do have specific ideas about what I think is "good." But I will try not to let personal taste interfere with the kind of writing you want to do as I provide feedback². I will, however, give you my honest assessment to help you develop your writing in the direction you want it to go.

Your fellow students will also provide you with feedback during writing workshops. They will have ideas about what they like, too, as will you. Their feedback will be helpful in the same way

² Except pornography. It's not that I don't like it. I just don't want to read *yours*. It's a teacher-student thing.

mine will be. The more eyes on your work and the more responses you have, the better your sense of how a general audience will respond to your work.

You will learn feedback techniques to help you make constructive, specific, honest, and thoughtful comments. We will even do a practice workshop to set a positive and supportive tone. Sometimes you may fail to communicate your feedback clearly, but you should do your best to be supportive. English 33 is not a class where we give harsh critiques, tear writing apart, or make writers want to give up. I advise avoiding courses or programs that engage in one-upmanship and animosity. They're counterproductive to good work and overall happiness.

As you do your best to give constructive feedback, receive it with appreciation rather than defensiveness. Occasionally, feedback might *feel* less than generous. Sometimes, it might even *be* less than generous. When feedback hurts, try to pivot. Accept the limitations of the person giving it and move on. Some hurt feelings along the way are the cost of doing business because we're all imperfect. For my part, I will try to encourage and support you and guide others to do the same.

Grading Policy

English 33 is a class that focuses on creativity, not conformity and obedience. The creative process flourishes in an environment where students are free to experiment and try new things. Students need to be challenged, flail about unsuccessfully, and feel good about it. For writers, flailing is *natural and right*.

I expect you to work hard, do the assignments, and give this class your all. I assume you enrolled in English 33 to become a better fiction writer. That has its own reward.

While I would like to eliminate grades from English 33, I must issue them. All assignments, except the portfolio, are graded as follows:

3=Complete. All directions followed. Required elements present. Acceptably proofread.

2=Partially complete. Nearly all directions followed. Some required elements may be missing or assignment has not been proofread.

0=Not turned in.

Your **portfolio** is graded out of 100 points. Read on for more details about that below.

Assignment Types:

Discussion Participation	25% of total grade
Writing Practices	25% of total grade
Workshop Participation	25% of total grade
Portfolio and Cover Letter:	25% of total grade

Discussion Participation (25% of course grade)

Each week, we read about the craft of writing and look at examples of professional writing (mostly fiction). In the discussions, we process what we're seeing and thinking. Weekly discussion posts and replies should be detailed, specific, proofread, and a total of 300+ words.

Writing Practices (25%)

Each week, you will submit a writing practice (generally around 500 words). Usually, it is a story or part of a story. Depending on what we've studied that particular week, I might ask you to riff using a certain narrative voice or to pay careful attention to mood. Some weeks I will ask you to revise a previous practice. Writing practices do not always have to be complete and polished. They're just for practice. I read and comment on your practices and revisions.

Workshop Participation (25%)

Writers need feedback from more than one person. That's the role of the writers' workshop. When we hold workshops, I invite students to submit revised work for the class to read and then students will provide constructive feedback. You earn a workshop participation grade based on the *feedback you provide to peers* on their stories, not the drafts you submit.

For each writing workshop, comment on **at least two stories** full credit. There will be five (5) workshops over the semester.

Aim to submit to 2 workshops. Hungry, eager writers will clamber to be workshopped, but shyer, more sensitive folks will probably hang back until they see value in the process. Submit at your own pace. Remember that to earn an A, B, or C, at least one of your portfolio items must have been submitted to workshop (see next section, "Aiming for a Specific Grade?").

Portfolio (25%)

Near the end of the course, you will select three stories to further revise for a final portfolio. The portfolio should represent your best work, and unlike all other assignments, it is graded out of **10 points** and worth 25% of your grade. Using your portfolio, I will evaluate your achievement of the course learning outcomes.

Your portfolio pieces don't have to be brilliant. After all, you won't have worked on them for very long. But they should show growth, especially in the areas we focused on in the class.

In your portfolio **cover letter**, you will describe the contents of your portfolio and the skills you have gained. You will also request the final grade you are seeking, explaining why you have earned it (see Grading Policy above). I reserve the right to have the final say on grades, but I am inviting you to participate in the grading process through a self-evaluation that allows for grading adjustments. Aim for 2000+ words total, including the cover letter.

Aiming for a Specific Grade?

A (100-90%) To earn an A, complete all your assignments, earning 90-100% collectively. Present a polished 2000+ word portfolio that includes **three** stories revised in response to workshop and instructor feedback.

B (89-80%) To earn a B, complete *nearly* all your assignments, earning 80-89% collectively. Present a polished 2000+ word portfolio including at least **two** stories revised in response to workshop and instructor feedback. Sometimes, you can't do it all. B is a perfectly respectable grade.

C (79-70%) To earn a C, complete *most* of your assignments, earning between 70-79% collectively. Present a polished portfolio of at least **two** stories revised from feedback. At least *one* should be revised in response to workshop feedback. Pat yourself on the back. You dared to keep going even though you experienced some setbacks.

D (69-60%) D is not a "passing" grade at CR, but it shows you did not give up. When you win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, we will all have a good laugh about all those writing practices you missed because you were working three jobs and taking care of your kids. If you would like a D instead of an F, earn between 60-69% on your assignments collectively. Present a portfolio of at least **two** stories, even if neither of them was revised from workshop feedback.

F (59-0%) Your assignments totaled between 0-59%. Something went wrong. You lost interest. You ghosted. Maybe life gave you lemons. Contact me. I probably can't make the F go away, but I can provide you with advice about applying for an incomplete or academic renewal so that the F grade won't delay or derail your plans. Remember that road for writers is long, and a grade in this class is not a prediction of future writing success. It's not a judgement of the kind of person you are or who you are becoming. *Illegitimi non carborundum*. Don't let the bastards grind you down.

Admissions deadlines & enrollment policies

Here's a link to important dates throughout [fall, 2022](#).

Academic dishonesty

In the academic community, the high value placed on truth implies a corresponding intolerance of scholastic dishonesty. In cases involving academic dishonesty, determination of the grade and of the student's status in the course is left primarily to the discretion of the faculty member. In such cases, where the instructor determines that a student has demonstrated academic dishonesty, the student may receive a failing grade for the assignment and/or exam and may be reported to the Chief Student Services Officer or designee. The Student Code of Conduct ([AP 5500](#)) is available on the College of the Redwoods website. Additional information about the rights and responsibilities of students, Board policies, and administrative procedures is located in the [College Catalog](#) and on the [College of the Redwoods website](#).

Academic dishonesty is rare at the College of the Redwoods, but when it does occur, it is often the result of plagiarism. **Plagiarism** is taking the words and/or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. We will learn how to cite the ideas of others in this class. We will also use

Turnitin.com (an app already integrated into Canvas) to guide us. Accidental plagiarism is common and is never punished. Students are invited to revise their work. But deliberate plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and possible removal from the class. So please do not buy an assignment online or copy information and/or words from websites to present as your own.

Disruptive behavior

Student behavior or speech that disrupts the instructional setting will not be tolerated. Disruptive conduct may include but is not limited to: unwarranted interruptions; failure to adhere to instructor's directions; vulgar or obscene language; slurs or other forms of intimidation; and physically or verbally abusive behavior. In such cases where the instructor determines that a student has disrupted the educational process, a disruptive student may be temporarily removed from class. In addition, the student may be reported to the Chief Student Services Officer or designee. The Student Code of Conduct ([AP 5500](#)) is available on the College of the Redwoods website. Additional information about the rights and responsibilities of students, Board policies, and administrative procedures is located in the [College Catalog](#) and on the [College of the Redwoods website](#).

Setting Your Preferred Name in Canvas

Students have the ability to have an alternate first name and pronouns appear in Canvas. Contact [Admissions & Records](#) to request a change to your preferred first name and pronoun. Your Preferred Name will only be listed in Canvas. This does not change your legal name in our records. See the [Student Information Update Form](#).

Canvas Information

Log into Canvas at <https://redwoods.instructure.com>

Password is your 8 digit birthdate

For tech help, email its@redwoods.edu or call 707-476-4160

Canvas Help for students: <https://webapps.redwoods.edu/tutorial/>

Canvas online orientation workshop: [Canvas Student Orientation Course \(instructure.com\)](#)

Community College Student Health and Wellness

Resources, tools, and training regarding health, mental health, wellness, basic needs, and more designed for California community college students, faculty, and staff are available on the California Community Colleges [Health & Wellness website](#).

[Wellness Central](#) is a free online health and wellness resource that is available 24/7 in your space at your pace. Students seeking to request a counseling appointment for academic advising or general counseling can email counseling@redwoods.edu.

Student Support Services

The following online resources are available to support your success as a student:

- [CR-Online](#) (Comprehensive information for online students)
- [Library Articles & Databases](#)
- [Canvas help and tutorials](#)

- [Online Student Handbook](#)

[Counseling](#) offers assistance to students who need professional counseling services such as crisis counseling.

Learning Resource Center includes the following resources for students

- [Academic Support Center](#) for instructional support, tutoring, learning resources, and proctored exams. Includes the Math Lab & Drop-in Writing Center
- [Library Services](#) promote information literacy and provide organized information resources.
- [Multicultural & Diversity Center](#)

Special programs are also available for eligible students, include

- [Extended Opportunity Programs & Services \(EOPS\)](#) provides services to eligible income disadvantaged students, including textbook award, career academic and personal counseling, school supplies, transportation assistance, tutoring, laptop, calculator and textbook loans, priority registration, graduation cap and gown, workshops, and more!
- The TRiO Student Success Program provides eligible students with a variety of services, including trips to 4-year universities, career assessments, and peer mentoring. Students can apply for the program in [Eureka](#) or in [Del Norte](#)
- The [Veteran's Resource Center](#) supports and facilitates academic success for Active Duty Military, Veterans, and Dependents attending CR through relational advising, mentorship, transitional assistance, and coordination of military and Veteran-specific resources.
- Klamath-Trinity students can contact the CR KT Office for specific information about student support services at 530-625-4821

This syllabus is subject to change

Week	Lecture Topics, Readings & Workshops
1	What Makes Good Storytelling? Fish Cheeks by Amy Tan Shitty First Drafts by Anne Lamott
2	Memoir The Truth Twixt Writer and Reader by Mary Karr Me Talk Pretty One Day by David Sedaris
3	The Power of Images Creating with Images by Heather Sellers My Family's Slave by Alex Tizon
4	Adding Energy and Managing Feedback On Giving Feedback by Peter Biello Writing Groups by Anne Lamott Tonight We Dash by Ruth Rhodes Writing Workshop 1 (Practice)
5	Characters in Conflict On Receiving Feedback by Peter Biello Mastering Conflict in Fiction by Gina Edwards Neighbors by Raymond Carver Writing Workshop 2
6	Narrative Voice Tips on Handling the Omniscient POV in Fiction by Jack Smith Everyday Use by Alice Walker
7	Dialogue How To Write Great Dialogue by The Closer Look Hills Like White Elephants by Ernest Hemingway
8	Plot "Short Assignments" by Anne Lamott (in lecture text) Premium Harmony by Stephen King
9	Language On the Many Different Engines that Power a Story by Lincoln Michael 1937 by Edwidge Danticot Writing Workshop 3
10	Insight Finding Your Themes and Using Them to Drive Your Creativity , by Pat Aitchenson Gift of the Magi by O. Henry
11	Mood, Tone and Style Tone, Mood, and Style by Beth Hill The Colonel by Carolyn Forché

	Writing Workshop 4
12	Revision 12 Contemporary Writers on How They Revise by Emily Temple Fixed Income, Honor Society and Valediction by Sherman Alexie Writing Workshop 5
13	Working Through Fear and Doubt How to Edit Your Story Like a New York Publisher by Pamela Hodges (optional) “Listen to Your Broccoli,” by Anne Lamott (in lecture text) "The Ugly Truth about Self-Doubt As a Writer," by Ruthanne Reid
14	Finals Week / Portfolio Due Wednesday, December 14 Class Canvas shell closes Friday, December 16