



Mainstreaming Creativity: Creative Writing Enters General Education's Advanced Writing Requirement

John Paul Tassoni

Miami University

tassonjp@miamioh.edu

In today's university, which welcomes a diversity of fields in order to accommodate a shifting popular notion of higher education's purpose, creative writing remains a separatist site of teaching and learning, whose practice and traditions are rooted in a powerful lore that sustains such separation, with negative results for both faculty and students (xii).

-- Kelly Ritter and Stephanie Vanderslice

The challenge for Creative Writing, as an academic discipline and as an institutional site for writers, is to negotiate not only the (metaphorical) demands of the garret and the ivory tower, but also the real institutional conditions of the university and its relationship to the public sphere (*Creative* 20).

--Paul Dawson

INTRODUCTION: ENOUGH GARRET

To extend one of Wendy Bishop's better known calls for pedagogical exchanges between the worlds of composition and creative writing (CW), I argue here that "We need to be crossing the line between [general education programming]¹ and creative writing far more often than we do" (Bishop 221). Like others in the field,² Bishop challenges perceptions of CW's insularity within

¹ The terms "general education" and "liberal education" are used interchangeably in this essay. Liberal education goals, discussed below, reflect aims of well-developed general education programs.

² See, for instance, Amato and Fleisher; Crockett; Dawson, "Towards"; Drew and Yost; Freiman; Hesse; Lardner; Mayers, "Figuring"; Moneyhun; Moxley, "Tearing"; Shelnett; Starkey; Sumpter; Uppal.

English departments. In light of recent exigencies emerging from the corporatization of higher education, not to mention insights that recognize benefits of the field's cross-fertilizations with other disciplines (Davidson and Fraser 1-2), CW proponents have begun to push as well against CW's insularity in relation to the university at large. Through articulation of roles the field might play in terms of broader institutional missions, CW proponents now hope to highlight its cross-disciplinary activities in ways that will make the field more meaningful to the academy, to its creative economy, and to its students (Donnelly, "Reshaping"), and at the same time, less likely to appear as but a fun and expensive elective that develops skills no employer would seek (Hergenrader 2).

In his contribution to the inaugural issue of *Journal of Creative Writing Studies*, Trent Hergenrader, for instance, sees current pressure for accountability as an "opportunity for faculty to explain to administration what their discipline actually *does* and why it's valuable" (2); and, relatedly, he underscores the need for CW to "establish ... itself as a[n] integrated part of a broad educational project" (5). Tim Mayers, in the same issue of *JCWS*, recommends that CW proponents not only "employ Creative Writing Studies as a disruptive and innovative force within English studies, creating a transformed vision and version of the larger field" (3), but also "advocate the interdisciplinary value of creative writing within college and university general education curricula" (4). For Dianne Donnelly, in an article printed in 2012's *Key Issues in Creative Writing*,

Responding as champions of our discipline means that although we may have fewer choices given the direction of the economy and the inevitable changes that impact the academy, we can also focus our attention on the opportunities that exist for creative writing to succeed in our many different academic environments and administrations. (18)

Charting specific routes for CW in the curricular mainstream, I describe in this essay twenty-first century general education reforms that create opportunities for CW proponents to champion their cause to the academy at large, and I argue that we can use the space offered there to negotiate a central role for CW in the core curriculum.

Such negotiations involve confronting beliefs and practices that shape core curricula in ways that curtail views of a centralized CW. While CW scholars like Hergenrader, Donnelly, and Mayers urge CW into corridors outside the garret that has long characterized CW's institutional status (Amato and Fliesher; Brodkey; Dawson, *Creative* 15-20; Ritter and Vanderslice xii), anyone who shares their confidence in the power of CW to disrupt stubborn norms, (re)shape public perceptions, and spur innovation should note that CW's garret existence is not altogether self-imposed. Institutional practices and structures, such as programmatic assessments and the dearth of creative-making courses in traditional general education plans, assume the centrality of other writing genres in ways that situate CW as alternative, not mainstream, business. Additionally, despite the growing presence of

an advanced writing (AW) requirement in liberal education plans, some of which provide entry for CW genres into the core curriculum, AW (like a good deal of CW) scholarship typically concerns itself with interactions among English studies disciplines, not writing university-wide. In short, the architecture of the garret commences at any number of places and through a complex of practices and beliefs that, in light of 21st-century liberal learning goals, no longer apply.

Considering recent general education reforms together with these residual practices and beliefs that maintain the CW garret, this essay explores what can happen when a course like “Introduction to Creative Writing” gets tagged as an AW class in university-wide, liberal education programs: what happens, in other words, when this course leaps, so to speak, not just out of the garret but also into institutions’ core curricular corridors, programs with designs and goals of their own?³ With recent changes to my four-year, public university’s liberal education plan that provide for the inclusion of our ENG 226: “Introduction to Creative Writing” as part of the general education program’s new AW requirement, I find myself in the generative position of asking just such a question, and I think that the answers indicate what an introductory CW course can contribute now to the liberal education of students and suggest additional ways that general education programs (AW requirement and beyond) can view their missions.

Reciprocally, the question also leads to explorations of how liberal education plans and their AW requirement—two places beyond the garret—might impact ways instructors view and teach this popular CW course. Along with other general education reforms nationwide that now include AW courses beyond traditional distribution requirements, the current situation at schools such as mine presents a kairotic moment not only for scrutiny of beliefs and practices that maintain the CW garret, but also for imagining roles for the field in the broader curriculum. The essay below focuses on these places beyond the garret: general education programming; the AW requirement; and the mainstreamed “Introduction to Creative Writing” course itself, each in turn. I draw on existent research in CW pedagogy to make a case for CW as part of the core curriculum. I draw also from scholarship and anecdotes describing new directions in general education and AW at my school as well as colleges and universities nationwide to identify trends that can curtail or facilitate CW’s status as mainstream curricular business.

To date, I have located no scholarship, or even, for that matter, local committees, that bring these sites into direct conversation, certainly not in any way that argues for CW’s centrality within the broad educational mission (or vice versa). While Chad Davidson and Gregory Fraser, in their 2009 essay “Out of the Margins: The Expanding Role of Creative Writing in Today’s College

³ The course in this sense serves as a class that specifically meets the liberal education plan goals, as opposed to being a “free elective,” which counts toward graduation but not toward any specific requirement.

Curriculum,” explore questions similar to those I pose here, answers they present for their overriding question—“[W]here do creative-writing workshops fit into students’ broader curricula?”(1)—remain relational: their answers highlight the value of CW’s cross-fertilizations with other college courses, but their essay does not examine the apparatuses available through 21st-century liberal education plans that could conduct such interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary exchanges. Even at my school, where these apparatuses are now in place, conversations have yet to brew in the English Department regarding the role of its “Introduction to Creative Writing” course within the AW requirement of the university’s Global Plan for Liberal Education (GPLE), the general education program in which that course now fulfills a requirement. The vice versa holds true as well—I’m unaware of any sustained conversations among those administering AW or the GPLE concerning the specific impact of CW.⁴ There has been some participation of the department’s CW faculty in the construction of a rubric, or at least a proposed rubric, that will eventually gauge—for the GPLE—students’ acquisition of writing competencies. At some point, the university intends to deploy this rubric in programmatic assessment of the liberal education plan, if not as a measure of the effectiveness of particular AW courses, like “Introduction to Creative Writing,” then as an assessment of students’ writing competencies as they exit capstone courses, which serve as students’ culminating liberal education experience. What concerns me most at this phase in the development of the AW requirement is that one initial response from the CW program in the face of this looming assessment has been to suggest that all ENG 226 courses should assign book reviews or some other expository genre in order to match criteria highlighted in this rubric (because the rubric focuses on the expository)(Melbye).

This proposed rubric, one might guess, represents an early, if not prevalent, view our university holds of AW’s shape and scope, not to mention an eschewal of CW’s function there in the core curriculum.⁵ These perceptions mirror the dearth of scholarship theorizing links between CW and 21st-century general education goals and structures.

⁴ As I mention below, I was part of the revised liberal education plan’s design team. I currently serve on the committee that advises the Liberal Education Council on the plan’s Advanced Writing component.

⁵ This is not to suggest that anyone, especially CW faculty, is at this point pleased with the rubric in this initial form. One might even point to the lack of explicit references to creative writing in the rubric as an indication as to why faculty in the field often embrace the garret and how the proposed rubric could be seen to represent the consequence to CW when it emerges from the garret. The rubric, however, is still undergoing revision as we speak, which I think indicates more so the necessity for CW faculty to remain in the discussion (and at my school they certainly are) when it comes to institutional reform.

Backgrounding CW features in favor of expository traits, this view of AW affirms practices and beliefs that situate CW at the margins of college writing even as CW begins to appear more eminently in liberal education programs.⁶ To put it another way, expository assignments like that proposed for ENG 226 sidestep the very questions this essay explores. These questions are worth asking, though, not just in regard to my school but across other colleges and universities, anywhere in which AW, CW, and liberal education missions intersect, and, perhaps more importantly for CW studies proponents, anywhere these areas can still come to intersect. Far from viewing the presence of a CW course in a general education program as a “curricular accident” (Welch 120), as English faculty tended to in Nancy Welch’s discussion of a similar circumstance, I am under the impression that these sites—general education, AW, CW—have much to say to one another and that CW studies proponents need to have a stake in these conversations. Doing so, proponents strengthen challenges to notions of CW as garret space and invite consideration of the field in terms of the mainstream business of liberal arts institutions.

LIBERAL EDUCATION: “THE INSTITUTION’S CORE CURRICULAR CORRIDOR”

In the criteria that the proposed rubric for AW comprises and in our CW program’s initial response (“add an expository assignment”), there exists need for an extended dialogue that can leverage the potentials of CW, AW, and liberal learning, rather than sell out their more vital attributes in the cause of easily measured competencies (see Sternberg, “Assessing” 240). As initially drafted, the proposed AW rubric at my school values most those student-composed documents that are “thoughtful and convey ... a nuanced understanding of audience,” that exhibit “[c]ontent and evidence that thoroughly and insightfully support ... message and purpose,” that display clarity and “coherence within and between ideas/sections,” that evidence “fluent, elegant” style and tone and grab an audience’s attention, that contain few, if any errors, and that, if applicable, demonstrate appropriate and insightful design choices and accurate research citations (“Advanced Writing Rubric”). The rubric does not essentially preclude CW texts: insightful design could be applicable to plotlines and multi-modal pieces, for example; and a reviewer could look at metaphorical patterns and other connotative

⁶ The College of William and Mary’s “College Curriculum,” for example, which includes a “Creative and Performing Arts” requirement, allows for creative writing courses to meet this requirement. Southern Illinois University--Carbondale’s “Curriculum 21” program, organized so that students can pursue “intellectual objectives” of liberal education, involves track focused on “understanding and application of the methodologies and practices of research, scholarship, or creative work” (Association, “Curriculum”; emphasis added). Additionally, Williams College’s general education program requires that students complete two writing-intensive courses beyond first-year writing: two courses that meet this requirement focus on playwriting (Williams).

arrangements to gauge the extent to which writers have supported their messages; and certainly any criterion that values nuance could also welcome the efforts of a creative writer.

These forms of assessment are indeed possibilities, but I do not fail to recognize the trouble such forms would bring to the assessment process. Recalibration sessions, especially in relation to university-wide programs, rarely (if ever) provide participants with the training (although it'd be great if these sessions could!) to weigh the deep dark of a burgeoning Emily Dickinson's poem along a scale that values "support [of] message or purpose" or to rate a student's use of temporal distortions, like those that appear in Ishmael Reed's works, in light of a rubric's call for "coherence." CW characteristics such as these surely put stress on the process, but that is precisely the point of leaving the garret: why include CW in the AW requirement if doing so means that CW must assess assignments that are not CW? The dynamic here would not only favor but also institutionalize a hypostatized notion of AW (where CW stays in a garret) rather than one in which the aims of liberal learning and the field of CW (in its role as AW course) might push together at the bounds of what we know, how we create and convey knowledge, and how we can act on that knowledge in civically responsible ways.

While I interrogate here specific ways CW, AW, and general education programs might (at last) inform one another, it serves to remember that the central role of the arts (not to mention creativity) in liberal education does have a tradition of strong support, or, at least, a tradition of people arguing that the arts deserve a more central role. This support, though, infrequently names CW (or other forms of art-making) as a principal requirement in general education programming. Reflecting the emphasis liberal education places on the development of critical thinking (rather than making) skills, Martha Nussbaum, for example, attests to ways "artists ... always ask the imagination [of its viewers, and more specifically, its students] to move beyond its usual confines, to see the world in new ways (23-24); and Helen Vendler, challenging what she sees as the relative neglect of cultural expression in general education programming, argues that "just as art is only half itself without us—its audience, its analysts, its scholars—so we are only half ourselves without it" (13). As David W. Oxtoby points out, arguments in favor of increased emphasis on the arts such as Vendler's and Nussbaum's favor students in the roles of appreciators and analysts of the arts rather than creators: students are the arts' audience and scholars, whose imaginations move beyond their usual confines through the analysis and appreciation of art. "If," Oxtoby writes, "... we regard fostering creativity as one of the core values of education, the arts disciplines can and must play a central role" (Oxtoby); and most relevant to my purposes here, he asks, "Is there a place in a liberal education for creation, and the creation in performance, as well as for analysis and appreciation?" As Oxtoby argues, creative arts "tend to lurk uncomfortably around the edges" in "broad statements about the value of liberal education"; to move fields like CW down from the garret, educators, CW studies advocates in particular, need to stress more effectively ways art-making develops students' "critical intelligence by developing

one's ability to express, imagine, interact with, and reinterpret the world of human experience ...” (Oxtoby). Alongside those other schools now providing spaces for CW in their core curricular corridors, my university's current liberal education program opens the door now to creative making and, as Oxtoby would recommend, to making the argument for its impact on human experience in ways many traditional general education programs still do not invite.⁷

Current general education reforms provide opportunities for creative making—in the form of CW courses—to play a role in core curricula. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the agency which has arguably done more than any other to advance general education in this century,

Liberal Education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. (Association, “What Is”)

The AAC&U definition considers “liberal” both in the sense of “liberatory” (“empowers individuals and prepares them”) and “liberal” in the sense of “a lot” (“broad knowledge of the wider world”). This definition casts liberal education as an engagement with multiple disciplinary perspectives alongside study in a major (“in-depth study in a specific area”) and emphasizes acquisition of transferable skills/competencies that will serve students on the job as well as in their roles as socially responsible citizens (“a sense of social responsibility”). Unlike attitudes and practices that situate CW at the margins of mainstream curricula, liberal education's principal mission, as defined by the AAC&U, spares no room for garret spaces, especially any that would reflect an image of academia in terms of ivory-tower isolation (see Dawson, *Creative* 15-20).

⁷ Williams College, mentioned above as a site in which creative writing courses do meet an advanced writing requirement, is listed by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of 2018's top five liberal arts colleges in the country (*U.S. News*). The other top five institutions listed, however, do not appear to have yet made this invitation: Swarthmore College's general education program includes a three-course writing requirement, but these courses “focus attention explicitly on expository writing” (Swarthmore); Bowdoin College's program includes a requirement in “Visual and Performing Arts,” but I could find no indication that creative writing courses meet this designation (Bowdoin); Amherst College maintains an open curriculum, meaning that students can select creative writing courses, although these courses stand apart from any broad-based curricular narrative (Amherst); and Wellesley College maintains a first-year writing requirement that integrates various disciplines but does not include creative writing in their list of 2017-18 selections (Wellesley).

Along these lines resistant to isolation, the AAC&U articulates a set of 21st-century learning outcomes/competencies, known as the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) outcomes, that higher learning should provide students. Significantly, one of these LEAP learning outcomes is creative thinking; and conveniently, AAC&U has developed a set of rubrics to align with each of their essential learning outcomes. Of course, there is a rubric devoted to creative thinking, and it underscores the value that creativity brings to liberal education plans. The rubric defines creative thinking as "both the capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways and the experience of thinking, reacting, and working in an imaginative way characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking, and risk taking." Reflecting the roles creative thinking might play within and across disciplines, the AAC&U creative thinking rubric continues, "The student must have a strong foundation in the strategies and skills of the domain [course's discipline] in order to make connections and synthesize. While demonstrating solid knowledge of the domain's parameters, the creative thinker, at the highest levels of performance, pushes beyond those boundaries in new, unique, or atypical recombinations, uncovering or critically perceiving new syntheses and using or recognizing creative risk-taking to achieve a solution" (Association, "VALUE"). Creative thinking as cast here is at the heart of what a liberal education should instill in students; and while the AAC&U description headlines "thinking," its emphasis on "the capacity to combine, or synthesize," "strategies and skills," and "performance [that] pushes beyond ... boundaries" invites the very kind of creative making that can manifest in CW courses.

For CW to enter effectively into broad educational projects like general education plans, programmatic assessments of those plans need to reflect CW contributions. When I think about our program's proposed AW rubric in light of the one for creative thinking that the AAC&U has produced, our school's rubric stands out as rather domesticated, even domesticating.⁸ I think it fair to wonder if some of the criteria that stress evidence and correctness, for instance, might give ground in favor of criteria that value/encourage risk-taking, and that maybe divergent thinking could even find a place besides coherence as an assessable attribute. Robert J. Sternberg's work with the Rainbow project, for one, indicates the potentials of a supplementary assessment of creative skills, through which raters evaluated open-ended responses, looking at novelty, among other traits, to augment tests such as the SAT and to predict college performance (Sternberg and The Rainbow, "Rater"; see also Marsen 92). Rather than supplement existing assessments, however, an actual embrace of creative making would instill characteristics such as risk taking and divergent thinking in the AW

⁸ The AAC&U's rubric for "Written Communication" is less restrictive than our proposed Advanced Writing rubric. AAC&U's written communication rubric values student work "appropriate for the discipline and genre of writing" (Association, "VALUE"). Although the rubric highlights no traits specific to creative writing, it does not highlight notions of evidence or cohesion, traits that favor expository forms, in ways the proposed rubric for our Advanced Writing requirement does.

rubric alongside the other characteristics. Assessors could perhaps be asked to rate student writing in regard to a certain number of traits found fitting to specific genres. There might be altogether, say, nine traits (which might include innovation as well as cohesion, for instance) in any given rubric, and raters would be asked to score writing in relation to perhaps only five traits determined by the assessment's administrators to be relevant to the writing under review. In other words, while innovation might not be a trait assessed in every piece of writing, that trait would, nevertheless, always appear in the rubric, instantiating this creative practice as a valued attribute.

CW studies proponents need to stress that any assessment brought to bear on AW courses could and should promote college education's aim to, as Sternberg writes, "produce active citizens and leaders who will make a positive meaningful, and enduring difference to the world." "People who make such a difference," he continues, "are typically creative individuals who find ways in which to change the world to make it a better place" ("Assessing" 239). Efforts at the programmatic assessment level to highlight the contributions of creative making would mark ways that courses like "Introduction to Creative Writing" can inflect and perhaps even drive other components of liberal education programs. Such efforts would signal CW's move in from the margins and locate it as a feature of programs' mainstream business.

Liberal education plans reflect universities' mainstream curricular business; they underscore the skills, knowledge, and attitudes institutions believe will ensure their students' success in their personal, political, and professional lives. The GPL's mainstream business, for example, comprises "foundation" courses that meet a distribution requirement through which students select classes in the fields of composition, humanities, creative arts, social science, biological and physical sciences, and in math, technology, or formal reasoning. Students also meet a global perspectives requirement through study abroad and/or classes specifically designated to enhance their knowledge of global issues. Beyond these distribution requirements, students who do not pursue a minor or second major complete instead a "thematic sequence," typically a series of three courses at multiple course levels in an area outside the student's department of major. Students also complete a capstone, usually (but not necessarily) in their major area of study. With the most recent revisions to our liberal education program, students also complete an experiential learning requirement, an intercultural perspectives requirement, and the AW requirement central to my discussion here. Courses in the AW requirement are expected to promote written communication competencies (not necessarily any others), but I outline the broader program here so that I can better situate the role AW might play in regard to the liberal education mission more generally and the role that CW courses might play specifically in terms of this mission.

ADVANCED WRITING: “A KAIROTIC MOMENT”

Following a traditional trajectory through twenty-first century liberal education requirements like the GPLE’s, students entering their AW courses will have engaged multiple disciplines and contemplated the impact of their studies on real-world problems and in light of global perspectives. Through minors, additional majors, or thematic sequences, AW students will be in the process of enhancing their multidisciplinary strengths and looking ahead to orchestrating those strengths in a culminating liberal education experience. It is with these students in mind that I unpack the potentials of the AW requirement and CW’s role within it. These potentials could, nevertheless, serve as well students from various preparation levels regardless of the chronology students ride through the GPLE or any of the other liberal education plans across the country that now include AW courses beyond traditional distribution requirements (see Jaschik).⁹

In their 2015 College Composition and Communication Conference panel, Indra Mukhopadhyay, James Condon, and David Tompkins referred to AW as “the last best place for liberal education” (Mukhopadhyay, et al.).¹⁰ Beyond their work, however, research in AW has yet to explore its potentials as a liberal education plan requirement and tends to focus instead on AW’s relation to English studies courses and other stand-alone writing majors. Nevertheless, design teams at my school did entertain various ideas for the requirement during our period of general education reform, and forms of AW we imagined can serve as touchstones for what the introductory CW course might contribute to AW. A task force and, later, our Liberal Education Council (LEC) drafted multiple designs toward a new liberal education program. I served as our university’s Director of Liberal Education during this period of reform that eventually instituted our GPLE’s AW requirement, and the proposed plan I liked best exchanged the GPLE’s thematic sequence requirement for what would become university-wide themes focused on pressing global issues, like, say, war, or poverty, or climate change. Students would have taken two courses in any discipline (outside their departments of major) that were approved to meet the concerns of the theme; then, students in their junior or senior years would take a third, culminating AW course in the university-wide theme that would be a “Writing about . . .” course related to the topic—“Writing about War” or “Writing about Climate Change,” for instance.

⁹ Bishop, for example, believed that creative writing should be taught in the first-year. “Students are well prepared,” she writes, “for future academic writing when they explore creativity, authorship, textuality, and so on, *together, all at once*” (*Teaching* 233).

¹⁰ The panelists discuss the theories and practicalities shaping their advanced writing requirement at USC, which features a writing-in-the-disciplines approach to the requirement.

These culminating AW courses we had envisioned would comprise students who had been considering the theme from the perspectives of various disciplines outside their majors (and possibly inside their majors as well). In the culminating AW courses, students would scrutinize the writing in various disciplines relevant to the course themes and, bringing together their various backgrounds in various courses, work across disciplines to solve real-world problems related to the theme. I really liked what I would call “the lib-ed-ishness” of this approach, especially in that it proposed an intentional, integrative space for students to work collaboratively toward applying their knowledge, toward interrogating the forms of writing that constitute that knowledge, and toward developing the rhetorical capacities to intervene in world problems.

While the revised GPLE that resulted does not necessarily secure a place for the integrative, university-wide inquiries that our LEC and the task force had envisioned over several earlier proposals (the guidelines that have been instituted for AW now require only basic frameworks for effective writing instruction),¹¹ several subsequent manifestations of AW courses do represent curricula that could still help situate our GPLE’s AW as “the last best place for liberal education.” My own department, English, for instance, has turned its attention to the revision of a longstanding but infrequently-until-now offered course called, appropriately enough, “Advanced Composition.” In light of the revised GPLE, the department has codified the curriculum for ENG 225: “Advanced Composition,” describing it as a course that “focuses on writing in diverse genres for specific audiences” as students “engage in an in-depth research project across the term, integrating sources from multiple academic disciplines.” Guidelines for the course suggest that instructors “choose an interdisciplinary inquiry theme to focus student research and writing.” Through this framework, “Advanced Composition” helps students develop competencies not only in English methodologies but also in other theoretical and empirical disciplinary perspectives. Additionally, the “Advanced Composition” course develops student learning in terms of genre knowledge, inquiry-driven research, and audience adaptation (“English 225”). In these ways, “Advanced Composition” reflects a high degree of “lib-ed-ishness.” It allows for intentional integration and problem solving, especially in those versions of the course that incorporate interdisciplinary inquiry themes.

As mentioned above, I describe features of the course here so that “Advanced Composition” along with our design teams’ earlier ideas for culminating AW courses might serve as touchstones for what a liberal education program’s AW requirement can provide. More precisely, these touchstones can help gauge what “Introduction to Creative Writing” can be doing as part of a general education plan’s AW component. From what I have encountered in AW scholarship (and similar to what I say above about

¹¹ Guidelines for proposed AW courses specify the amount of class time (50%) that should be devoted to writing instruction and writing activities and a total word count of written projects (7500). The guidelines also stress the significance of teacher feedback and readings and discussions about forms, histories, and processes relevant to the kind of writing that students will be asked to do for the course (“Advanced”).

CW scholarship), conversations rarely travel beyond concerns of the English department; general education reform, on the other hand, now invites us to think about AW and, relevant to calls made by CW studies proponents, “Introduction to Creative Writing” in terms of a broader institutional lens.

Prospects for “Introduction to Creative Writing” in this context extend (beyond the scope of English studies, English departments, or other stand-alone writing majors) debates in the field of composition and rhetoric regarding the form and content of AW curricula. Shamoan et al.’s anthology, *Coming of Age: The Advanced Writing Curriculum*, for instance, collects essays focused on the role AW courses might serve in writing majors (Howard xiv-xv). The editors “recommend”:

That writing faculty who are contemplating the revision or institution of an advanced writing curriculum strive to establish courses that provide writing students with a historical and theoretical awareness of writing as a discipline; that prepare students for careers as writers; and that prepare them for using writing as a means of participating in the public sphere. (Howard xv)

While geared to help teachers and scholars in the field discern directions for AW programming within English studies, Shamoan et al.’s recommendations, nevertheless, hold relevance for university-wide programs as well. Although *Coming of Age* focuses on the field of composition and rhetoric and on the development of writing programs in English departments, courses that the anthology’s editors champion could very well emerge from various disciplines across general education requirements and could very well do so with an eye toward (1) relativizing the generic demands/histories that constitute writing in any given discipline, (2) positioning students as the producers knowledge, and (3) generating assignments that help students to scrutinize the relevance of subject matter in terms of civic considerations and to exercise the rhetorical practices needed to convey that relevance to various audiences (Howard xv)—all outcomes relevant to liberal education aims and highly applicable, as well, to CW courses.

Coming of Age’s one piece that directly considers CW’s potential contributions to such a curriculum, Mary Ann Cain and George Kalamaras’s “Taking the Rhetorical Turn in Advanced Creative Writing,” focuses on the development of programs within a single department; nevertheless, its arguments also could be used to consider how a CW class might generate reciprocal benefits across broader programming. Keying on upper-division writing courses, Cain and Kalamaras

argue that advanced courses in fiction and poetry writing should be reinvented with an eye toward their relationship to other forms and genres, other discourses and contexts for writing—particularly other courses in an advanced English curriculum. Such a reinvention, however, will depend upon not only an integration of rhetorical and literary contexts within creative writing’s poetics but also a reciprocal integration of poetics into other writing, literature, and theory courses within an English studies curriculum ... Upper-division creative writing classes can

be central to an undergraduate writing curriculum. Ideally, they are classes for all students of writing, not just those who want to focus primarily on literary genres. (131)

Consistent with the recommendations forwarded by the volume's editors, Cain and Kalamaras envision courses—notably CW courses—that integrate the concerns of other selections in an AW program and, reciprocally, inflect these other selections with CW theories and practices. Along with the anthology's calls for scrutiny of writing's various roles, for situating students as meaning makers, and for civic participation, Cain and Kalamaras's work applies to my inquiries here concerning the role of "Introduction to Creative Writing" within university-wide curricula, particularly as I consider how CW can resonate with and be responsive to other forms of writing in the broader curriculum, not just in English studies.

CREATIVE WRITING: "MAINSTREAM BUSINESS"

Far from espousing virtues of garret spaces, scholarship devoted to CW pedagogy attributes to the field a broad set of transferable skills and traits highly applicable to general education reform—skills and traits that help make the case for the CW's centrality in broad educational projects. Reflective of those attributes evident in the AAC&U's descriptions of creative thinking, Martha C. Pennington, for example, describes the "creative writing mindset" as

one which has a high tolerance for ambiguity and risk, one which resists premature closure and is comfortable remaining in an indeterminate and fluid state for long periods of time, and one which seeks out novelty and enjoys playing with language and ideas. (21)

Such qualities, which Marcelle Freiman sees nurtured through "the chaotic, circular, fragmented, and irrational creative process," provide access to the "unknowable" in ways unavailable to frameworks that situate "reading and writing as coherent, measurable skills" (Freiman), like those frameworks evident in the rubric proposed to gauge writing competencies for our GPLE. For Pennington and Frieman, CW curricula spur forms of thinking and writing that, Freiman argues, resist "the hierarchical achievement and socialising agenda of education" and "work ... against the forces of social control" (Freiman). In short, alongside (and, to some extent, as a result of) matters of craft that enhance students' awareness of language and form, CW courses represent sites through which students develop capacities in critical thought and writing as a way to intervene in and reimagine conventional practices inside and outside the academy (see Green 154), as a way to (re)make self and (re)make culture (Stephens 11-12). This scholarship does not abandon the commitment to craft that often characterizes introductory CW courses; it commits craft to an interrogation of socio-cultural concerns.

While they do not directly address liberal education programming, James Engelhardt and Jeremy Schraffenberger articulate a role for creative writing that can underscore its critical capacities in contexts beyond the house of English studies. In “Ecological Creative Writing,” the authors attribute qualities to CW that can highlight ways that the field and AW requirements might together serve as the last best places for liberal education. They write:

Creative writing as a discipline is in a unique, somewhat marginal, but, to our minds, particularly advantageous position in the university. Like a trickster, it can easily traverse seemingly rigid disciplinary boundaries, revealing the inherent connections we sometimes, to our detriment, ignore. . . . The true “subject” of creative writing is always brought to the classroom by students themselves, carried in their memories, their experiences, and their imagination. We can, therefore, take advantage of this inherently interdisciplinary position by asking students to think ecologically, directing their attention to the memories, experiences, and images they carry of the place(s) around them. (274)

Given the diversity of disciplines and preparation levels, not to mention cultural backgrounds, of general education students that our “Introduction to Creative Writing” courses comprise, Engelhardt and Schraffenberger’s ecological view of CW situates the field in a way that at once capitalizes on its “somewhat marginal” status and at the same time highlights features that position it as a cornerstone to liberal learning. In this view, we can consider ways that the CW class might serve as:

an *ecotone*, the region where two distinct ecosystems meet. . . . Because they are transitional areas or “between” places, ecotones are in a state of dynamic tension. . . . Because ecotones are places of natural tension, the classroom can also become a site of great creative foment as ideas and practices are explored and executed. . . . Writing born of this ecotone compels students to weigh words against world. (272-273)

“Ecotone” here can apply to early conceptions that curriculum designers had for our GPL’s AW requirement where students would bring ecosystems, in the forms of disciplinary knowledge (as well as their individual backgrounds, interests, and concerns) into the space of AW to solve real-world problems, “to weigh words against world.” These “tricksterish” qualities uniquely position “Introduction to Creative Writing” courses as an AW site that teaches students how to engage diverse perspectives toward troubling received forms of knowledge, and, in this wake, how to explore creative ways of thinking and writing about their world as an integral part of the school’s mainstream curriculum.

As an ecotone situated in the center of the university’s core curricular corridor, the liberal education’s (not just the English department’s) “Introduction to Creative Writing” serves more as a gathering place and launching pad than garret space, as students are taught to use skills, knowledge, and attitudes developed there to resonate against the thinking/writing assigned to them across the

curriculum. As a course in general education's AW requirement, the CW class helps the field move even further beyond what Joe Amato and H. Kassia Fleisher would see as a simple concession that "writing of any sort ... constitutes a profound critical engagement with (at least) some writing and reading processes" and more toward actually manifesting "the [CW] classroom [as] a place in which to pursue this engagement with due consideration for other arts, other disciplines, and other everyday practices ..." (Amato and Fleisher). In this context, the weigh-words-against-world and word-shapes-world pedagogies already evident in CW scholarship emerge less as novel crossovers among English studies concentrations and more as central to the work of CW in the university's core curriculum.

This view embraces a notion of CW as a disruption to stubborn norms; however, this mainstreamed view of CW is undergirded by specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes that shape CW as an academic field, not just alterity or Archimedean point (or even garret) that resists demystification (see Welch 121). This undergirding notion troubles the centrality of other forms of writing (and CW's at the same time, for that matter): if the discipline of CW is mainstream business too, then it works in tandem with other forms of writing there to represent the academy and advance the liberal education of students. In this schema, no form of writing is alone central to the academy; each form of writing explores and conveys reality in its own viable and challengeable ways. Each to some degree demystifies the other, helped along (ideally) by the various perspectives of students from various majors who pulse through general education courses.

Viewing "Introduction to Creative Writing" as mainstream university business, it is easy to understand Chris Green's goal to "construct a [CW classroom] workshop where the class readership acts to represent the rhetorical circumstances of interpretive communities outside the university" (154) as integral to "Introduction to Creative Writing" rather than an alternative to standard practice. We can understand, as well, Pamela Annas and Joyce Peseroff's feminist approach to CW pedagogy, one that "invite[s] writers to explore the raw material of their lives in the context of their experiences as parents or on the battlefield, their historically specific memories of the racial or ethnic, working-class or professional-class neighborhood(s) in which they grew up, their gender specialization and choices, their cultural and religious traditions, the food they eat, the Internet sites they visit, the ways they have been and are situated in a multilayered and socially complex world—and of course, their intimate relation with language, perhaps with more than one" (78), in terms of a university-wide class that now necessarily (rather than optionally) connects students' creative writing to other disciplinary concerns to help writers explore in depth the material of their lives. Other conceptualizations of the CW course, as well, like Steve Healey's creative literacy approach, Smitherman and Vanderslices' incorporation of service-learning activities, Nancy Welch's "sideshadowing" exercises, and Marcelle Frieman's post-colonial approach focus on the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that call into question any persisting vestiges of that scene of writing (see Brodkey), inside or outside of English departments, that rarefies CW.

Carrying the ideas of CW scholarship into the place provided for it now in general education curricula, it is easy to imagine “Introduction to Creative Writing” classes where students bring their writings from other disciplines to examine their conventions and to recast insights from these earlier works in the form of fiction or poetry. “It is quite easy to imagine,” Engelhardt and Schraffenberger might add, “a poem ... about quantum physics, a short story informed by Darwinian evolution, [and] a lyrical essay meditating on some mathematical principle or other” (274). I can imagine as well a unit in the course that would enhance students’ information literacies through research assignments that they complete before (or even after) composing stories that reflect upon some historical event or social issue. Students might also undertake additional writing (in any genre) that reflects upon distinctions in research methodologies, examining what might be won and lost as writers move between CW methodologies and those of other disciplines (see Bizzaro 301-304). Such an activity might frame an ENG 226 unit in which students, following Alexandria Peary’s ideas for creative writing across the curriculum, “[w]rite a text in the voice of an anatomy cadaver, a poem that uses [the pi sign] as an organizational device, a short story that depicts [the student] on the job ten years in the future ... , a one-act play on an advice column that explores a psychological concept, [or] a business memo from the perspective of an adopted persona ... ” (194).¹² It is also easy for me to imagine, because my CW colleague Eric Melbye already has, a unit in the course where members study creativity as a subject, participate in various and transferrable activities that encourage creative thinking and vision (like written observations and freewriting), and compose reflective projects (in any genre) focusing on how creativity and innovation might apply to their academic and career goals. Taking into account the aims and possibilities of AW spaces like those provided now in many general education plans, what is hard to imagine anymore is “Introduction to Creative Writing” as somehow *just* a CW course, whatever that might be.¹³

¹² Peary’s focus is on ways creative writing might play a role in courses across the curriculum, not just in an advanced writing requirement. The incorporation of creative writing activities that could cross multiple courses, not only in the AW requirement but across other requirements, would prove valuable to mainstreaming creative writing. Other works, like Sandra Young’s “Beyond ‘Hot Lips’ and ‘Big Nurse,’” discuss the ways courses designed for specific majors could incorporate creative writing. My essay focuses on a single creative writing course that would involve students from across majors in integrative work reflective of liberal education goals (see Hanstedt); however, Peary’s and Young’s ideas indicate additional places for creative writing inside the curricular mainstream. Donnelly’s “Reshaping Creative Writing” also describes multiple instances of partnerships that creative writing has developed in/across other disciplines.

¹³ Thanks to Eric Melbye for this idea.

OF ALL PLACES

Surely, enough research testifies to the social relevance of CW courses, the pedagogical approaches that can highlight this relevance, and the ways in which they can intersect the concerns of other disciplines. If the CW pedagogies I have referred to here are any indication, there also are more than enough CW faculty already defying the garret image, at least any such image that denudes the critical and socially transformative dimensions of their field; and certainly, there are good numbers of students (at the regional campuses where I teach, 300-plus students in a division of just over 4700 from summer 2017 through spring 2018) from a range of areas (over the same period, students from majors including psychology, small business management, middle childhood education, integrative studies, liberal studies, geography, international studies, nutrition, nursing, and political science, among others) enrolling in this increasingly popular course (see Donnelly, “Reshaping”).

If anything, liberal education reforms that invite CW into core curricula effectively shift the question away from how CW might come out from the garret to make a case for itself as part of a broad educational project (because places are there now to accommodate CW) to the question as to whether “Introduction to Creative Writing” should ever really be *just* a CW course, if there could ever be any viability in its being so, and what institutional practices remain to want it that way. Such questions should not only lead us to resist those forces that position CW at the margins of college writing but also lead us to forge even more locations that invite CW to engage with and reverberate across multiple sites within the academy.

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