

Spring 2016 Comment Report

GLENN LESTER

Course Sections

A EN EN106 (SPHOD): First Yr Wrtnng Seminar II:Academic Research & Writing

B EN EN411 (SPHO): Advanced Creative Writing

C HN HN304 (SPHOZ): Honors Scholarship II

Do you wish to make any further comment on the course and/or instructor -

- A**
- Honestly probably the best and most effective professors I've had here. I would say he probably ties for the best professor I've had thus far in my first year at Park. He used Canvas very effectively and presented us with more knowledge and organization than any of my other professors. He gave us constructive criticism and was very fair in his grading process.
 - in general, pretty good teaching methods are utilized by Prof Lester. I feel identified with his manners and the way he wraps and sets his classes
 - I really liked Mr. Lester. He was really helpful in improving my writing skills. I thought he did a great job.
 - Great class! Lester always showed up with a big smile to class, and encourage his student to work hard. He helped me a lot to improve my writing skills, and it was a pleasure being in class! Thanks
 - I'd say this has so far been the best English class I've ever taken. This was the only English class I've ever taken to explain the reason behind citing sources, using rhetorical analysis, how to actually summarize and paraphrase, etc. for me to learn this. Nobody has done this in the correct way for me except Professor Lester.
 - A lot of the work we did was just looked as, as busy work.
 - One of the best professors I have ever had. His witty humor is not that bad and his attitude towards teaching encourages learning. Would always respond to emails in a timely manner and would give clear explanations on the subject matter. Overall a great professor and would definitely take another course with him.
 - He's very consistent, always energetic and positive even when we show how incredibly dumb we can be. I remember on the first day when we did the activity where every one adds a word to a sentence we collectively create our sentence made no sense and was grammatically incorrect. I believe it went something like "the room is very hot how to for why is the room so hot? " If I was a teacher I probably would have died laughing, but he was calm and said everyone made a good effort. That stuck with me.
- B**
- In this class we had three writing workshops, but I think that two would have been enough. Having only two writing workshops would encourage students to submit their best work and allow more time for valuable lectures. At some points students did not give each other feedback. Professor Lester was conscious of this problem and handled it graciously. Professor Lester is personally committed to ensuring that his students get the best education possible. He is diligent, insightful, and willing to go the extra mile to make his students better writers. I developed creative writing skills in his class that I will use for the rest of my life.
 - I absolutely loved my time in this course! I'm so glad I was able to take it this semester with this professor, as he made creative writing that much more fun and enjoyable to do and discuss in class. The assignments we did challenged me and made me step out of my comfort zone with my writing. I feel like a much more accomplished writer because of this course and this professor!
 - Professor Lester led the class with great grace through all circumstances and taught this class far beyond my expectations.
- C**
- Given the circumstance of this course, I attempted to answer this appropriately. Thank you for a good semester, and for guiding this research project flexibly. Your input and aid was necessary for bringing my goals to actuality.

What was most challenging in this class? (E.g., readings, workload, concepts discussed, etc.) -**A**

- Textbook readings are always tedious but instructive nonetheless
- Workload
- The expectations for assignments
- concepts
- Workload.
- workload
- Workload
- Readings
- The last writing sequence. There was a lot of work to do in a short amount of time
- Losing points that can really hurt your grade if you missed a class
- Making the journals be at least 250 words in length.
- I'd say the research. It's just hard finding and sorting through sources to make sure they're reliable and that they support what you're trying to say. It's not that it's hard, it's that it's a very tedious and time consuming task.
- Summarizing sources
- workload

The next time I teach Advanced Creative Writing, I may cut down on the number of full-class workshops -- in order to make more time for writing prompts, revision activities, and discussions of outside texts. I'm looking for feedback on this idea. What value do you find in full-class workshop discussions? What do you learn from workshop? What would be lost by holding only one or two full-class workshops? -**B**

- I think this idea is valid, and if you don't eliminate a workshop, I'd recommend cutting out the WL of reading journals. This was the least helpful WL, I think, and might allow for the full three workshops. If one workshop is cut, it's hard to come back to pieces / continue pieces from previous workshops. The biggest aid for me during workshop was being able to see the gaps in my writing-- what I assumed upon the reader.
- While I certainly enjoyed being able to participate in full-class workshop discussions, I feel that we needed more time in between each workshop. Perhaps doing one in the second month of class, one right around fall/spring break, and one the month before classes finish for the semester, that way they are spread out. I learned that workshop is not as easy as it sounds, especially when you can't immediately answer the questions from others because of the use of the "gag rule." It's also difficult at times to have others analyze and critique your writing, especially when it's a piece you are completely proud of and don't want to change and others are saying it's not your best or that it needs more to it. Two workshops would be best rather than one, because more in-depth discussions begin to happen when workshops are continued throughout the semester compared to if just one occurred.
- I think three workshops are nice. I would just start the first workshop earlier than it was this semester.
- I answered this on a previous page, but I think two writing workshops would work well. There were pieces in the second and third workshop that felt a little rushed. I also would have liked having those days available for other things that the class provided. One of the best things about workshop is just getting to share your piece. With my first workshop I got a lot of great feedback on what I can do to make my characters more real. With my second workshop I learned what my piece says about me and what my audience is. With my third workshop I got great advice on what to do with a piece I was unsure about. Overall, I think workshopping literary pieces gives the author a sense of how they succeeded and how they didn't. I think asking readers questions and having the readers answer them (in letters) might be one of the most effective parts of the workshop. If at any time I was having trouble giving someone feedback, I could look to their questions for guidance.
- I think the same number of workshops would be great; I wouldn't change that as it was probably one of my favorite things about the class. However, I would change the spacing of the workshops to at least once a month. While I don't necessarily like writing the letters to classmates, I do like the in-class discussions we have each time. This time allows for the development of new ideas and further dissection of the pieces.

How can I improve as a teacher of creative writers? What feedback, advice, critique, or suggestions can you offer? I know that I'm far from perfect -- how can I help you and your fellow student writers learn and grow? What do you wish we would have done in class this semester? -

B

- Poetry prompts in class would be interesting.
- I would have liked another discussion on why we write and what we can do with our writing. I think you should tell students that you are going to ask them to explain themselves when they speak up in a workshop. It totally makes sense, and it's a good practice, but it definitely caught me off guard the first few times. I think this is because I hadn't truly considered why a given piece had affected me in the way it did. So again, I'm not faulting you for it, I would just suggest that you say something like, "If you think something is good or bad I'll want to know why." That will start getting everyone into that (great) frame of mind.
- Overall, I was highly impressed with your teaching style for a class of creative writers! I learned so much from taking the class with you, versus if I had maybe taken it with another professor. You have great knowledge about how to help us improve and strengthen our writing skills. You also gave some of the best feedback I have ever received on my writing. What I think you could maybe work on is having fewer assignments in the course. While I learned a lot from each assignment we did, I feel that we did too much a lot of the time. The workshops taught me the most, and if the chapbook is going to be the biggest result of our progress and work through the entire semester, I feel more energy and focus needs to be placed on assignments dedicated to the chapbook.
- I really don't know what to suggest. I learned so much and you performed your job with grace and professionalism.
- I can honestly say that you are the best professor I have had at Park. There are not any changes I can currently think of to offer. Specifically, you were amazing at encouraging feedback.

Which assignment this semester was most helpful to your writing? -

A

- Research paper
- Academic research paper for my community
- writing sequence 2
- I think they all had their place and were of equal importance.
- The journals were actually really helpful for planning out big assignments
- WAS1 as a whole
- Report & Recommendation Assignment
- Writing to the community
- Academic research paper
- source summaries
- Source Summaries and Paraphrasing
- finding sources
- Can't think of any off the top of my head
- the research paper
- Student engagement

Which assignment did you feel most engaged by? In other words, which assignment was the most interesting for you to work on? -**A**

- Public writing assignment
- Second writing assignment sequence
- Public Writing Assignment
- letter to my community
- None
- writer's journals
- Writing Academic Sequence 2. All of it
- the last writing assignment sequence
- Letter to the Editor
- Public writing
- Both writing sequences were interesting
- Research paper for WAS2
- The letters!
- Probably the letter to the community
- writing sequence 2

What other feedback can you offer your professor on any aspect of the class? -**B**

- I liked the freedom; freedom to write poetry, or prose, or really whatever we desired to write. This was very different from 311, and I think both were good and necessary, but this was a good strategy that we might produce what we enjoy and not what's "required." Thanks for a great semester!
- Other than maybe considering fewer assignments in the class, require more one-on-one meetings between you and each student. That was where I felt most comfortable asking for your advice on my pieces. Not that I didn't feel comfortable asking questions in class, but the meetings were focused specifically on just each student's work. That was incredibly helpful for me.
- You picked a good text. I enjoyed reading it. Thank you for being kind to me and encouraging me to succeed.
- Keep a judgement free-zone. Of any place someone should be about to express themselves this is the class. Allow one opt-out per workshop round in case someone feels uncomfortable with a certain subject matter. This is also allow the writer a chance to workshop instead of passing it over.

What about that assignment was engaging or interesting? -**A**

- writing sequence 2
- Getting to use a lot of fun vocabulary and play around with my tone!
- It was just personal, and I got to talk about an issue I cared about.
- Just that I picked a topic that I felt very strongly about.
- They made me use new skills and improve on skills I already had
- The fact that it is an issue that many of my brothers in arms face every day.
- Persuading a certain audience.
- I was interested in my topic
- I was allowed to talk about a problem that affected not only me at park, that coined to my passion. I also was allowed to pretty much find hardcore evidence to help me debate the evidence. I also made a cheesy video on the topic, which was really fun.
- Free-style
- There wasn't any
- I was feeling really confident
- It was engaging because it was all about what was important to me as a person.
- I chose topic myself and it was very interesting to me

What suggestions for improvement can you offer your professor? -**A**

- None
- Don't take out half points for assignments if student had a reasonable reason to miss the class.
- nothing at all, solid ways he has!
- Explain assignments in class more clearly
- Find a balance within the workload needed to get the point across, and wear more wacky ties.
- Lessen the workload
- Keep teaching the same way
- For some reason bowties suit you better than normal ties and encourage more learn. You should wear them more often.
- Maybe more 1-1 with professor as well as peer-review workshops
- I think it's very inviting to see when my teacher is frustrated with something. If there's something going on like your computer isn't working or someone almost hit you while you were driving tell us about it. It's very relatable to joke about and openly be mad at stupid little things and makes teacher student relationships much more casual.
- I really don't have any.
- None really you do a good job catering to each students unique situation.

What are your thoughts about peer review? What aspects of peer review are useful? What aspects are not? How could peer review be improved? -

A

- No one actually wants to do it, but if you can get a group of people that actually does it, and it can be super helpful.
- I liked the peer review, helped get a better understanding of what you need to fix.
- I'm not really sure how I feel about peer review. I honestly didn't gain a lot from it. I don't really think the other class mates cared about reviewing anything. So they just made up a bunch of stuff and sent it to me in a letter. Plus they might not be a decent writer so how can I trust their word when it comes to writing a paper for a grade? I don't know. I don't really feel like peer review is a solid form of editing. I'd rather have professional help with it over at the ASC.
- I think this class had the best peer review sessions compared to my past classes. I think having things to specifically discuss that were open ended (your prompts) made it very successful.
- It's good because it gives you the perspective of your class so they may have new idea that you didn't think of to begin with
- Peer review was very helpful. We usually dont catch out own mistakes but our peers will.
- In all honesty, peer review for me was pretty helpful, however on days like where we had to write a letter to each member discussing the draft seemed to be hard for me due to having other assignments. Maybe hold off on that? I'd say list the things instead of putting them in a letter possibly.
- Pretty much not
- Would be better if some of my peer review partners actually gave me their work, lost points because of that.
- i really like this activity because i get to enhance my works. Pretty useful in regard to the support we give to each other.
- Peer review was very useful. I would like to get more comments and ideas for my paper during peer review
- Peer reviews were really helpful.
- It's helpful and interesting to see the points of view of my classmates and it's a great way to get to know and meet all of my classmates with whom otherwise would never talk to outside of class.