

Name	Amra Brooks
Department	English
Has your chair sent a letter to the Director of the CTL indicating his or her willingness to find coverage for your course reduction?	No
In which semester would you prefer to participate in the seminar?	Fall
Project Title	Alternatives to the Traditional Creative Writing Workshop Model

Project Proposal (500–750 words, including a rationale, project description, a discussion of the benefit to the Stonehill community, and your "community outreach plan") -- see full requirements on the CTL website.

Alternatives to the Traditional Creative Writing Workshop Model

Traditionally Creative Writing Workshops follow a very similar model that was introduced in Iowa in the 1930s. In an article from 2009 in *The New Yorker*, Louis Menand writes:

The workshop is a process, an unscripted performance space, a regime for forcing people to do two things that are fundamentally contrary to human nature: actually write stuff (as opposed to planning to write stuff very, very soon), and then sit there while strangers tear it apart. There is one person in the room, the instructor, who has (usually) published a poem. But workshop protocol requires the instructor to shepherd the discussion, not to lead it, and in any case the instructor is either a product of the same process—a person with an academic degree in creative writing—or a successful writer who has had no training as a teacher of anything, and who is probably grimly or jovially skeptical of the premise on which the whole enterprise is based: that creative writing is something that can be taught.

I think there are many ways to teach creative writing that break out of the traditional workshop model that can be more effective and innovative than the structure mentioned above. I utilize many alternative approaches in my courses, as well as some traditional ones that seem to still work. Whether or not the key components of traditional workshop model are effective in teaching students how to become better writers has been a subject of controversy for many years now, and I would like to spend some time researching the alternatives as well as the tried and true elements. There is an ongoing debate about whether Creative Writing or any other kind of art making can really be taught, yet it is becoming one of the most popular fields of study for both graduate and undergraduate students. As the Program Director of the new Creative Writing Program at Stonehill, I would love this opportunity to really spend the time researching other pedagogies, programs, and curriculum to make our program strong and competitive, but also a program that provides the students with the best opportunity to explore and learn how to become the best writers they can be. In 2007 I participated in the Bard College Language and Thinking teacher training program where I was given the opportunity to study with Joan Retallack, as well as many others, who really challenged my ideas about teaching and opened my mind to new ways of engaging students in all kinds of writing. I want to spend this time expanding my pedagogy and exploring new ideas about teaching Creative Writing in ways that I haven't had as much time as I would like to do in recent years.

Project description: In my 10 years of teaching creative writing, I have always sought out news ways to engage young writers and to help them tell their story. While relying on some modes that were effective for me as a student, but also engaging in a dialogue with my community of writers to see what methods are helpful for them in terms of critique, prompts and exercises, challenges, and inspiration. As the program director, I would like to use this opportunity to

explore and research more formally the different pedagogies and styles of other respected institutions and writing faculty to help create a more informed dynamic program for our creative writing minors. This would be conducted through research, discussions, and really just a thorough exploration of the most recent literature on the subject of the creative writing workshop.

Benefit: The benefit of this research and study would directly affect the student experience. My goal is to provide them with the most rich and unique learning environment that inspires and challenges them as young writers. There would also be a great benefit to the course offerings and the way the courses are structured for the minor.

Community Outreach Plans: I plan on sharing my findings with the administration and my department as we continue to shape and grow this new and exciting creative writing program. I would also like to continue to be part of the faculty-wide discussion of teaching and learning.