

Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction and Poetry
CRWRI-UA.815.005
Fall 2017, Mondays and Wednesdays: 2:00 PM to 3:15PM

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Office Hours: TBD

Objective

The goal of this class is to write. While I personally believe that writing is a subjective art and any style or technique can work as long as it is properly implemented, a grounded understanding of structure, aesthetic, and the depths of a single sentence in both fiction and poetry is a necessary basis upon which experimentation can begin. You will be reading a selection of works as well as writing your own stories and poems in a structured setting that will allow you to learn techniques and foster a greater understanding of the writing set before you. These skills and knowledge will in turn allow you to more fully realize the stories and characters that are already floating around in your head, driving you mad.

Expectations

- 1) Attendance: You are allowed one absence, no questions asked. After that point, if you miss a class, you will lose one full letter grade from your attendance grade. Two instances of tardiness (being more than ten minutes late to class) will be equated to one absence. If you are fifteen minutes late to class, it will be counted as an absence. Excused absences will be tolerated in cases of serious illness (I will need to see a doctor's note) or family emergency. If you must miss a class due to familial obligation, religious reasons, or civic duties, you must e-mail me about said absence a week in advance. Absences for other reasons will not be considered excusable. Missing a day in which you are to be workshopped will result in a 10% cut to your entire grade as well as a full letter grade reduction to your attendance grade. If you know you will miss a day that you are scheduled to be workshopped, please contact me and we will reschedule.
- 2) Technology: No technology will be necessary for this class. All technology must be silenced and put away during the class period (unless under special circumstances that you must discuss with me beforehand). Bring a notebook and print out your assignments. Be engaged and present.
- 3) Reading Assignments: Mondays will be the day of our craft lessons. For each class, complete the readings/viewings assigned for that day. All reading material will be given to you, either in class or through a collective e-mail thread that we share. You will have to find the movies (whether legally or illegally is up to you). Bring printed copies of each day's reading to class. **Each week you will be required to note down three lines you found particularly interesting in that week's readings and write two to three sentences as to why the sentence sparked your interest. These must be typed and printed out. They will be due at the beginning of each Monday class.**

- 4) Workshop Submissions: On Wednesdays we will have workshop. Students will submit manuscripts for their peers to review. **You will be required to submit two short stories and at least two poems during the semester.** Poems can be as long as you wish. Short stories should be between 10 and 20 pages in length. **Writers will bring a copy for every person in class (students and myself) the Wednesday before you are to be workshopped.** This is to ensure that your peers have a week to fully digest and review your work before we come together.
 - a. Formatting: Times New Roman, twelve point font size, double-spaced for fiction, any spacing for poetry. Students will be required to number their pages with their name and e-mail address at the top left header of each page.

- 5) Workshop Responses: Students who are not being workshopped will be required to write a one-page letter to the writer of each submission with thoughtful feedback on the piece as well as annotate their physical copy of the manuscript with their thoughts and edits. Feedback must be thoughtful and constructive. If something in a piece does not work for you, you must analyze why it does not work and form a coherent reason as to why. “It just didn’t work for me” is not a proper constructive thought and will not be tolerated in workshop. **You will be required to bring two copies of your letter, typed and printed, to class: one for the writer and one for me.**
 - a. Recommendation: You should read each piece twice: Once as a reader and the second time as a writer

- 6) Workshop Etiquette: The point of workshop is to help writers sharpen their skills. To this end, we will begin the workshop with a small amount of time discussing what the piece was about. This can range from its plot to a deeper understanding of how the piece speaks to us as readers. As writers, both positive feedback and critical analysis are necessary. What did the writer do well? What caught you? What did you feel worked the best in the piece? Pinpointing what a writer does well is just as important as understanding what they must work on. After positive feedback notes, we will begin with critiques of the piece. Students are expected to speak in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

If you are the person being workshopped, you must take notes on what your peers are saying. Please refrain from speaking unless asked a question. If you have a question to ask your peers, you will be given time for it at the end of your workshop session. During your workshop, you may feel the need to defend your piece from criticism. This is an important time for you to hear how others are interpreting your work. You may find that they have uncovered something of interest that you did not see before that you would like to pursue or you may find that your intentions for the piece must be refined in order to evaluate that intention better. Both are good for your development, so hear what they have to say before making a decision.

- 7) Final Portfolio: Students will submit a portfolio comprised of revised versions of their work from the semester. Further requirements will be explained half-way through the semester.

- 8) Late Work: As mentioned before, writers must give a printed copy to each of their peers and myself on the Wednesday before they are to be workshopped. No late submission for these will be tolerated.

For your line assignments every week: If you submit the assignment within 24 hours of the class in which it was due, you will only lose half a letter grade on that assignment. Each day the assignment is late after that 24-hour period, will result in you losing a full letter grade on the assignment in addition to the half-letter-grade loss from the first 24-hour period.

- 9) Plagiarism: This should be obvious to the point that a plagiarism section is unnecessary, but here it is anyway. Under no circumstances will plagiarism be tolerated. All work you submit for this class must be your own. Instances of plagiarism will be reported to the department and disciplinary action of a mysterious and severe nature will be levied upon you.

Grade Breakdown

- 1) Submissions (40%)
- 2) Class Participation and Written Responses (30%)
- 3) Attendance (10%)
- 4) Final Portfolio (20%)

Provisional Reading List

Fiction

James Baldwin – Sonny’s Blues

Tobias Wolff – Bullet in the Brain

Raymond Carver – What We Talk About When We Talk About Love

Donald Barthelme – Me and Miss Mandible, Kierkegaard Unfair to Schlegel, The Sandman, A Shower of Gold

Can Xue – Vertical Motion, A Village in the Big City

Ray Bradbury – Excerpts from The Martian Chronicles

Leo Tolstoy – The Death of Ivan Ilyich

James Joyce – Araby, The Dead

Ursula K. LeGuin – The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas

Denis Johnson – Excerpts from Jesus’ Son

Flannery O’Connor – A Good Man is Hard to Find

Elmore Leonard – 3:10 to Yuma, Fire in the Hole

Poetry

John Keats – On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer

W. B. Yeats – Byzantium, A Meditation in Time of War, The Realists, A Dialogue of Self and Soul, The Second Coming

Pablo Neruda – Leviathan, Ode to Broken Things, Ode to Tomatoes

Sharon Olds – On the Subway

T.S. Eliot – The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Li-Young Lee – Immigrant Blues, Station, Persimmons
Yusef Komunyakaa – Facing It
Robert Lowell – Skunk Hour
Terrance Hayes – Wind in a Box
Paul Celan – Death Fugue
Elizabeth Bishop – The Fish
Juan Felipe Herrera – Exiles, Enter the Void
Mary Oliver – Wild Geese

Essays

E. L. Doctorow – False Documents
Chuck Wachtel – Behind the Mask: Narrative Voice in Fiction
Vladimir Nabokov – Good Readers and Good Writers
Zadie Smith – That Crafty Feeling

Films

Shin Godzilla – Written by: Hideaki Anno, Directors: Hideaki Anno and Shinji Higuchi
The Hateful Eight – Writer and Director: Quentin Tarentino
The Lobster – Written by: Efthimis Filippou and Yorgos Lanthimos, Director: Yorgos Lanthimos

“You Fail Only if You Stop Writing.” – Ray Bradbury