

Creative Writing: Intro to Fiction & Poetry

Dates/Time: M & W 12.30-1.45pm, 9/6/17 – 12/13/17

Instructor: Ryan J Ouimet

Course #: CRWRI-UA.815.002

Location: East 14th Street, University Hall, Room CO2A

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Course Overview:

This will, first and foremost, be a writing workshop. We will be doing some reading. We will pull some successful stories and poems apart to examine what they are made of. But this class will be about you exploring your voice and style by writing. By its conclusion you should be more comfortable with sharing and discussing your work than you were at the start. The only way improve is to practice and to fail. Our main objective over the semester will be to become comfortable sharing our attempts, and discovering in what ways we've succeeded, and in what ways we can improve. This class should be a fun one, but come ready to work.

“Start writing, no matter what. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on.”

— Louis L'Amour

“What is most personal, is most universal”

— Carl Rogers

How it All Works:

Craft:

At the start of each class we will discuss the assigned readings. **For each piece that we read I will expect you to come to class with three sentences/lines that you either loved or hated.** We will use your selections to try and generate a consensus about each writer's strengths (or weaknesses). My intention is to focus on shorter pieces. As I've stated above, this is not a lit course. We will be looking at each reading not to determine whether we liked the piece (though you should always be honest about your tastes), but to see what they can teach us about creating.

Writing Prompts:

Every Monday we will start our week with a short writing exercise. **You will keep these in a notebook and turn them in at the end of the semester.** This will be an excellent tool to help you begin new stories and poems. Quality will not be graded, simply completing this assignment will count for 5% of your total grade.

Workshop:

Workshopping your classmates writing will take up the bulk of our class-time. Be prepared to submit **2 short stories, and 2 poems** during the semester.

In workshop we'll discuss, compliment, and critique the work of our fellow writers. In addition to your spoken feedback, you are required to **write a short response containing constructive feedback on the work of each of your peers**, to be given to them after their workshop. You will **bring two copies** of this response to class, one for your classmate and one for me. You should also mark up their papers as you read.

In-class discussions and written feedback should always remain civil and helpful. The best writing tends to come from an emotionally honest and personal place. I ask that we all show respect and discretion when discussing one another's work. An ideal workshop is one that is open, relaxed and supportive. Tearing someone down will not help your classmate, it will not help your own writing, and will certainly not help your grade.

NOTE: We will set a submission schedule during our first class. **If you are being workshopped on a Monday, please email your work to your classmates and I by the Thursday before your workshop. For those workshopped on Wednesdays, please email it by the Saturday before.**

Grading:

Here is the break-down of your grade:

- **40% - Writing Assignments** – Your writing is the most important part of your grade.
- **20% - Final Portfolio** – You will be expected to turn in a portfolio on the final day of classes. That portfolio will contain all your writing for the semester and **a revision of at least 1 short story and 1 poem.**
- **20% Participation** – You are expected to participate in both the workshop and craft portion of class. Sitting quietly will make the class a real bore.

- **15% Attendance** – Be on time, come to class and submit your work and this will be the easiest 15% you earn. If you need to miss a class, please let me know in advance; if there is an emergency discuss it with me when you're able.
- **5% Prompt Journals** - An pretty easy 5. Just do the exercises, take them seriously and turn it in.

Office Hours:

I will hold office hours by appointment only. **You will be required to make an appointment after at least one of your workshops.** Feel free to reach out anytime about your writing, reading, or whatever else comes up in class.

Plagiarism:

Not cool. Don't do it. Writing is hard work, taking someone's work isn't cheating, it's stealing. It's also grounds for failing the course, and even expulsion. More importantly: this is a place for you to explore *your own* voice. What could be more tiresome than sitting there while we all comment on someone else's?

Schedule:

(Likely to Change but Here's a 1st Crack at it)

9/6 (W) – Introductions; Go over syllabus; Set Workshop Schedule; Discuss Workshop Etiquette. Writing Prompt # 1

Fiction (Part One):

9/11 (M)

Reading: Hemingway "*A Clean Well Lighted Place*"; Carver "*Cathedral*"
Writing Prompt #2

9/13 (W)"

Reading: Cynthia Ozick "*The Shawl*"

9/18 (M)

Reading: Lorrie Moore "*People Like That Are the Only People Here*"; "*How To Become a Writer*"
Writing Prompt# 3

9/20 (W)

Reading: Barthelme "*The School*"; "*Game*"

9/25 (M)

Reading: Brad Watson "*Eykelboom*"

Writing Prompt #4

9/27 (W)

Reading: Chabon "*The Little Knife*"

Poetry (Part One):

10/2 (M)

Reading: Ginsburg "*A Supermarket in California*"

Writing Prompt # 5

10/4 (W)

Reading: Olds "*Ode to A Tampon*"; Bishop "*The Fish*"; Simic "*Stone*"; Collins "*To a Stranger Born*"

Writing Prompt #6

10/9 (M)

NO CLASS

10/11 (W)

Reading: Komunyakka "*Thanks*"; Simpson "*The Suburbs*"; Simic "*Used Bookstore*"

10/16 (M)

Reading: Bukowski "*I met a genius*"; William Carlos Williams "*This is Just To Say*"; "*The Red Wheel Barrow*"; Pound "*In the Station of the Metro*"

Writing Prompt # 7

10/18 (W)

Reading: : Bukowski "*The Genius of the Crowd*"; Plath "*Fever 103*";

10/23 (M)

Reading: Soto "*Oranges*"; Plath "*Daddy*"; Lawrence "*Discord in Childhood*"; Heaney "*Blackberry Picking*"

Writing Prompt # 8

Fiction (Part Two):

10/25 (W)

Reading: Vonnegut "*Harrison Bergeron*"; "*Breakfast of Champions*" (excerpted)

10/30 (M)

Reading: George Saunders "*Pastoralia*"; Diane Cook "*Moving On*"
Writing Prompt # 9

11/1 (W)

Reading: Ray Bradbury "*There Will Come Soft Rains*"

11/6 (M)

Reading: ZZ Packer "*Brownies*"
Writing Prompt # 10

11/8 (W)

Reading: David Foster Wallace "*Good Old Neon*"

11/13 (M)

Reading: Margaret Atwood "*Happy Endings*"; Stuart Dybeck "*Paper Lantern*"
Writing Prompt # 11

Poetry (Part Two)

11/15 (W)

Reading: Whitman "*I Sing the Body Electric*"; Landau "*The Uses of The Body*"; Komunyakka "*Anodyne*";

11/20 (M)

Reading: Spangle "*Directions for a Caesarean*"; Plath "*Morning Song*"; Roethke "*My Fathers Waltz*"; Kunitz "*The Portrait*";
Writing Prompt # 12

11/27 (M)

Reading: Sorely "*When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead*"; Turner "*Here, Bullet*"
Writing Prompt #13

11/29 (W)

Reading: Bishop "*I Am in Need of Music*"; Hughes "*The Weary Blues*"; Yeats "*Sweet Dancer*"; Dickman, "*Slow Dance*"; Stevens "*The Man with the Blue Guitar*"

12/4 (M)

Reading: Lee, *"This Room and Everything in it"*; Kunitz, *"Touch Me"*; Walcott, *"The Fist"*;
Neruda, *"Tonight..."*

Writing Prompt #14

12/6 (W)

Reading: Olds *"I Go Back to May 1937"*

Final Week:

12/11 (M)

Reading: David Foster Wallace *"A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again"*; Jamaica Kincaid
"The Tourist"

Writing Prompt #15

12/13 (W)

Barrett *"WFM: Allergic to Pine-Sol, Am I the Only One"*; Seely *"The Unknown"*; Reznikoff
"Domestic Scenes" Turn in Portfolios; Fond Farewells