

Introduction to Creative Writing

Instructor: Jude Russo

TTh 2-3:15pm

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Office hours: Tuesday 1-2pm or by appointment

Overview, objectives, and the like

This class is exactly what it says on the tin. We're going to read, write, workshop, and revise with an eye to growing the creative lumps in our skulls into the properly muscular entities their teleology demands.

In concrete terms, the goal is to recognize and analyze the formal aspects fiction and poetry, and then to go on to identify and apply those formal aspects in our own writing. This class isn't just about becoming a better writer, because there's no such thing as "just a good writer." It's also about becoming a better critic and editor, and, I think, if we're all doing our jobs properly, it's really about becoming a better person. At any rate, I hope nobody becomes a *worse* person in this class.

Materials

Walter M. Miller, Jr. *A Canticle for Leibowitz*

Yukio Mishima, *Runaway Horses*

Handouts to be supplied on the website

Grading

Attendance and participation: 50%

Final portfolios: 25%

Workshop comments: 15%

In-class reading quizzes: 10%

You've got to attend all the classes. That's really the bottom line. If you're sick or have jury duty or some other insuperable interference with attending class, talk to me and we'll figure out what's to be done. Every unexcused absence will result in the deduction of a third of a letter grade. Being more than 15 minutes late for class will be counted as an absence.

Workshops will be held on Thursday afternoons. Submissions should be e-mailed to me and the rest of the class no later than noon Friday. You should have two copies of your comments on a story: the original for the author and a photocopy for me. *Bring actual honest-to-God paper copies.*

We won't start workshops until the second week of class, at which point we'll have a pretty stable headcount on which to base our rotations. Workshop submissions should not exceed 25 pages of double-spaced prose or three poems.

We'll go over expectations for workshop comments in more detail once we're all together in person, but the underlying point is to help your comrades. This isn't a competition, so you should never hold back from a comment that is helpful. If your comment is *not* helpful—if it's about showing off, or making someone feel small, or is otherwise expressive of a vicious motivation—I'm going to punish you in the ol' class participation column and do my best to shame you as a class traitor.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be punished harshly and impartially. This is a creative writing course, so there are no excuses for this particular variety of scumbaggery.

Laptop and cellphone use will not be generally permitted.

Schedule

Every class is different and has different interests and needs. As a result, I've built some flexibility into this schedule—the law is made for man, not man for the law, and I'm not terribly interested in punishing you (and myself!) with stringent observation for stringent observation's sake. If for some reason the following schema isn't working for the class, we'll figure out what to do about it.

Week 1

T: Intro to the class, to each other; discussion of this syllabus

Th: "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

Week 2

T: "Fiat Homo" section of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (hence *ACL* in this syllabus)

Th: Workshop

Week 3

T: "Fiat Lux" section of *ACL*

Th: Workshop

Week 4

T: "Fiat Voluntas Tua" section of *ACL*

Th: Workshop

Week 5

T: "Theme for English B," "Archaic Torso of Apollo"

Th: Workshop

Week 6

T: "Ulysses," "The Collar"

Th: Workshop

Week 7

T: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Th: Workshop

Week 8

T: 1-100 of *Runaway Horses* (hence RH)

Th: Workshop

Week 9

T: 101-200 RH

Th: Workshop

Week 10

T: 201-300 RH

Th: Workshop

Week 11

T: 301ff. RH

Th: Workshop

Week 12

T: “MMXIV,” “Gerontion”

Th: Workshop

Week 13

T: “Archaeopteryx, an Elegy,” “The Second Coming”

Th: Workshop

Week 14

T: “Beasts Bounding Through Time,” “High Windows”

Th: Workshop

Week 15

T: “Flön, Uqbar, and Orbis Tertius”

Th: Workshop