

Ms. Sara Martin
Intro to Creative Writing
CRWRI-UA.815.007
Schedule: TR: 12:30 PM - 1:45 PM
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Office Hours: TBD

Intro to Creative Writing Syllabus

“Writing or making anything—a poem, a bird feeder, a chocolate-cake has self-respect in it. You’re working. You’re trying. You’re not lying down on the ground, having given up.”

-Sharon Olds

“Writing, if nothing else, is a bridge between two people, a bridge made of language. And language belongs to all of us. If I enjoy a poem, that just means I am recognizing within it something of myself, something I must already possess. Therefore, to love a poem is to love a part of myself revealed to me by another person...”

-Ocean Vuong

About the Class

Introduction to Creative Writing is a class where we will explore the techniques used by writers in both poetry and fiction! This class is going to be driven by the student’s engagement in the classroom and participation in group discussions. Each student will get a chance to write in class from writing prompts and writing exercises provided at the time. Every week we will be workshopping either Group A or Group B on what they have written. Each week students will do their necessary reading assignment and will come ready to discuss in class which will further their understanding of the craft and the process of the genres. By the end of the semester the students will hand in a portfolio (minimum of 10 pages) consisting of poetry, short story fiction, or both.

TEXTS AND MATERIALS: These are all available on amazon. If you have any complications getting them, please let me know and we can work something out.

Mandatory Reads During the Semester:

Curious Attractions: Essays on Fiction Writing by Debra Spark
Ordinary Genius: A Guide for the Poet Within by Kim Adonizio
(Class handouts I will print out and bring in)

COURSE STRUCTURE AND GRADING

Workshops- 40%

Workshops are the best place to learn about your peers work and work in an open environment. Workshops are a place of open communication and I will not tolerate any outright judgement or discrimination of any kind towards someone’s work. Please be responsible in giving critique and receiving it. We will go over this more during class.

-Submissions 20%

Each week you will submit a piece of writing on the Sunday before class at 12pm. If you are submitting a short story of fiction, the maximum length is 4-5 pages.

-Critique 20%

We will have Group A and Group B in the class. These will be decided on the first day. Group A will workshop the first week and then Group B the next. If it is Group A's week of workshop and you are in Group B, you have to print out 16 copies of your piece to be workshopped for next week. If we have time at the end, we will read some of Group B's without workshopping. You will print out **everyone's** writing piece and annotate it before class and give it to them so that everyone in class will receive a critique regardless if they are up for workshop or not.

Attendance 20%

Attendance is mandatory since our classes are mostly discussion and workshop based so we need everyone in the class, supporting one another and learning from one another. All excused absences will need the appropriate documentation.

Readings 20%

This semester we will be reading some great books so it's very important that you come to class and discuss the reading. This will be the first thing we do once class begins. All of our readings apply to what we will be doing during class that day so if you don't read you will be behind. If you like to read in advance, I'd suggest making some notes that you'd like to bring up during our discussion that you made while reading. Our reading discussions will be a more in-depth way of understanding the material as well as an appreciation. Reading these selective texts will also make you a better writer.

Portfolio- 20%

The portfolio at the end of the semester is a perfect representation of all the hard work you have done! The portfolio is the most rewarding part because you get to see the writing come together. All of the materials in the portfolio has to be work that you have brought into class. This will show that you **revised** the material which is crucial in strengthening as a writer. The portfolio will be graded by the amount of revision you have put into it. The first two pages of the portfolio are going to be a summary of *Ordinary Genius* and *Curious Attractions*. If you find yourself more interested in fiction, it can be a collection of short stories/flash fiction or one large piece. If you find yourself drawn to poetry, it can be all poems. If you cannot decide, feel free to put both in. It is extremely important that you enjoy what you are doing and are proud of your material at the end of the semester, so I want this portfolio to be up to you. The length of the portfolio will be 10-15 pages excluding the summary of the books. For poems, please make them single spaced and one poem per page. If you have any questions about this, free to come to my office hours or email me at any time.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1

Tuesday, Sep 4th: Introductions and going over the syllabus.

Handouts: W.B Yeats and Sylvia Plath.

Thursday, Sep 6th: Discuss the handouts and do in-class free write.

Homework: Read pg. 13-32 of *Ordinary Genius*.

Week 2

Tuesday, Sep 10th: Discuss reading with writing exercise and workshop Group A.

Handouts and Homework: Warsan Shire and Sharon Olds and critique Group B.

Thursday Sep 12th: Discuss handouts and workshop Group B.

Homework: Read pg. 32-55 of *Ordinary Genius* and critique Group A.

Week 3

Tuesday, Sep. 17: Discuss reading with writing exercise and workshop Group A.

Handouts & Homework: Mira Gonzalez and Patricia Lockwood and critique Group B.

Thursday, Sep. 19: Discuss handouts and workshop Group B.

Homework: Read pg. 55-81 of *Ordinary Genius* and critique Group A.

Week 4

Tuesday, Sep. 24th: Discuss reading with writing exercise and workshop Group A.

Handouts and Homework: Danez Smith and Kaveh Akbar and critique Group B.

Thursday, Sep. 26th: Discuss handouts and workshop Group B.

Homework: Read pg. 81-109 of *Ordinary Genius* and critique Group A.

Week 5

Tuesday, Oct. 1st: Discuss reading with writing exercise and workshop Group A.

Handouts and Homework: Yusef Komunyakaa and Ada Limon and critique Group B.

Thursday, Oct. 3rd: Discuss handouts and workshop Group B.

Homework: Read pg. 109-127 of *Ordinary Genius* and critique Group A.

Week 6

Tuesday, Oct 8th: Discuss reading with writing exercise and workshop Group A.

Handouts and Homework: CA Conrad and Wendy Cope and critique Group B.

Thursday, Oct 10th: Discuss handouts and workshop Group B.

Homework: Read pg. 127-148 of *Ordinary Genius*. Next class is the beginning of our fiction portion.

Please read first chapter "The Trigger" in *Casual Attractions*.

Week 7

FICTION BEGINS.

Tuesday, Oct. 15th: Discuss first reading of *Casual Attractions*. Establish new groups for workshop which will now be flash fiction or a continuous story in workshop. Workshop submission cannot exceed 5 pages, double spaced and 12pt font.

Handouts and Homework: William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf and Group A will bring in the first pieces for workshop.

Thursday, Oct 17th: Discuss handouts and workshop Group A.

Homework: Read 2nd chapter “Getting In and Getting Out” in *Casual Attractions* and critique Group B.

Week 8

Tuesday, Oct. 22nd: Discuss reading with writing exercise and workshop Group B.

Handouts and Homework: James Baldwin and Michael Cunningham and critique Group A.

Thursday, Oct. 24th: Discuss handouts and workshop Group A.

Homework: Read 3rd chapter “Speaking of Style” in *Casual Attractions* and critique Group B.

Week 9

Tuesday, Oct. 29th: Discuss reading with writing exercise and workshop Group B.

Handouts and Homework: Lydia Davis and George Saunders and critique Group A.

Thursday, Oct. 31st: Discuss handouts and workshop Group A.

Homework: Read 4th chapter “Cry, Cry, Cry” in *Casual Attractions* and critique Group B.

Week 10

Tuesday, Nov. 5th: Discuss reading with writing exercise and workshop Group B. Discuss progress of portfolio.

Handouts and Homework: Yukiko Motoya and A.M Homes and critique Group A.

Thursday, Nov. 7th: Discuss handouts and workshop Group A.

Homework: Read 5th chapter “Curious Attractions” in *Casual Attractions* and critique Group B.

Week 11

Tuesday, Nov. 12th: Discuss the reading with writing exercise and workshop Group B. Discuss progress of portfolio.

Handouts and Homework: Zadie Smith and Miranda July and critique Group A.

Thursday, Nov 14th: Discuss the handouts and workshop Group A.

Homework: Read 6th chapter “Aspects of the Short Novel” in *Casual Attractions* and critique Group B.

****SCHEDULE MEETING WITH ME ON PROGRESS OF PORTFOLIO****

Week 12

Tuesday, Nov. 19th: Discuss the reading with writing exercise and workshop **Group B.**

Handouts and Homework: Carmen Machado and Ramona Ausubel and critique Group A.

Thursday, Nov 21st: **THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS!**

Week 13

Tuesday, Nov. 26th: Discuss the handouts and workshop Group A. Discuss progress of portfolio.

Homework: Read 7th chapter “Border Guard” in *Casual Attractions* and critique Group B.

Thursday, Nov. 28th: Discuss the reading with writing exercise and workshop Group B.

Handouts and Homework: Roxane Gay and Margaret Atwood and critique Group A.

Week 14

Tuesday, Dec. 3rd: Discuss the handouts and workshop Group A.

Homework: Read 8th chapter “Stand Back” in *Casual Attractions* and critique Group B.

Thursday, Dec. 5th: Discuss the reading with writing exercise and workshop Group B.

Handouts and Homework: Nick White and Danielle Lazarin and critique Group A.

Week 15 *LAST WEEK OF CLASSES. PORTFOLIO DUE*

Tuesday, Dec. 10th: Discuss handouts and workshop Group A. Discuss progress of portfolio.

Homework: Read last chapter “Cheer Up-Why Don’t You?” in *Casual Attractions*. Keep working on portfolio.

Thursday, Dec. 12th: Each student will present their portfolio to showcase their work in class!