

Course Overview

Look, this is just going to be a *normal* creative writing class. What I mean is *no frills*. We're gonna read good stuff- the classics. We're gonna get down to the nitty-gritty, I'm talking about *fundamentals*. What are fundamentals? Basically this: word choice. Having an idea and gently pulling it into existence from out of an infinite field of possibilities. It's all about winnowing down your myriad wrong words to get to the *correct* word. If you can find the right word once, great- good for you, twice, OK maybe we're working with something here-- but really what you need to learn how to do is pull the right word out of your little hat *over and over again*. This is a very neat trick, and one that's not at all easy to pull off. But, if you can learn how to do it you will be more than on your way, and I will have done my job.

This class will be primarily about boiling language down to its essentials, with the idea that, once you can develop a true voice the art will all come out of that. We'll read poetry, prose, non-fiction, whatever- it's all about word choice.

Workshop

Workshop, again, will be very *normal*. When it's your turn, you submit your piece, we all read it, we write you a short response as well mark up a physical copy, and then discuss the pieces in class. We'll discuss the readings at the beginning of every class before beginning workshopping. I, as your teacher, will naturally be given to *extemporaneously expounding* on different topics I feel will benefit you, my pupils. However, this class will mostly be about all of you, writing as much and as well as you can, before the semester is over. Please give your classmates the diligence and attention you would like them to pay you and write thorough responses and line edits to their pieces.

At the end of the semester you will make a final portfolio of your best work, which should include both original drafts alongside the final, edited portions.

So, this will essentially be the weekly workload:

- Short response to the assigned reading
- In-depth responses to your classmate's work

Grading

Attendance and Participation: 50%

Weekly Responses: 20%

Final Portfolio: 30%

Attendance and Participation

A & P, the cornerstone of every good class. You must turn up to class. Unexcused absences will result in your grade being docked. You also shouldn't be late. This is a 9:30 AM class, so I want

everyone fed, caffeinated, and alert the moment the bell rings. As for participation: you should be doing it. This class isn't a lecture. It's about what you all bring in, and as such should be a living, thriving-- let's say *bustling* marketplace of ideas.

Final Portfolio

We want to see all the ways you've improved over the semester, and we want you to have the satisfaction of compiling all the good work you've done. This portfolio should reflect your ability to read your own writing truthfully and make the hard decisions that are required. Again, this class is all about winnowing out the possibilities to find the correct series of words. This requires you being able to read your own work with the same harsh eye you read others, and then making the necessary adjustment. This portfolio is a large part of your grade as it's really the only way I can tell whether or not this is a skill you're learning.

Office Hours

Let's hang out! Just kidding, let's get serious. You don't have to come in all the time, but I would like to see you at least once though so we can talk about what you're writing and I can get a feel for what you want to get out of the class. This will help me give better feedback, and can make the class more relaxed.

Readings

- The Sisters, James Joyce
- Fragments of Sappho, Anne Carson
- CivilWarLand in Bad Decline, George Saunders
- A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again, David Foster Wallace
- Selections from Elizabeth Bishop
- Selections from Sylvia Plath
- The School, Donald Barthelme
- Krapp's Last Tape, Samuel Beckett
- Selections from James Baldwin
- A Good Man is Hard to Find, Flannery O'Connor
- The Wasteland, TS Eliot