Introduction to Creative Writing
Dr. Janelle Adsit

Course Information
Office Hours: XX:XX – XX:XX
Contact Information
Office Location: XXX

Course Description
This section of Introduction to Creative Writing focuses on the process and craft of writing literary short stories, creative nonfiction, and poetry. We’ll reflect on and complicate our definitions of these genres. Both reading- and writing-intensive, this course explores a variety of forms, approaches, techniques, and theories of creative writing. By the end of this semester you should have a better sense of the expanding possibilities of your craft and tools to launch you forward in your writing career.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, you will be able...
• To experience writing as a meaning-making activity.
• To continue the habit of writing, relying on a variety of methods, processes, craft techniques, and heuristics for generating and revising texts.
• To continue the habit of reading, finding an ever-increasing range of material to borrow and imitate.
• To draw upon a variety sources in your writing; to not only “write what you know” but also “write to know.”
• To recognize form as inextricable from content; to put the “message in the means.”
• To read literature as a practitioner; to read closely and employ vocabulary that creative writers use to talk about craft.
• To identify rhetorical and craft choices in your writing and to consider their effects.
• To analyze some of the controversies associated with creative writing—the contingencies of literary value and issues of ethics.
• To foster creative thinking, using studies in creativity.
• To consider options for circulating work and changing publication practices.

Required Textbooks
4. Course packet (pdfs will be posted on Blackboard/Canvas/Moodle)

Course Policies and Expectations (Attendance, Plagiarism, Community Expectations, etc.)
See separate sheet.
Grading

Your grade will be determined by the cumulative points earned on the following assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Major Assignment / Project</th>
<th>% of Total Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Craft Analysis</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Meta-Writing</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Poem/Story/Essay and Invented Prompt</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Revised Poems/Essay/Story &amp; Review</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Post-Workshop Polished Manuscript &amp; Reflective Essay</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Workshop Preparation &amp; Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>In-Class Writing Assignments and Exercises</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Course Overview

The following provides an overview of the organization of the course. A day-by-day schedule with assignment due dates will be provided at the beginning of each unit. All assignments will include a detailed checklist of criteria that will be used in evaluating your work. Note that daily in-class writing assignments and exercises will make up 30% of your final grade. These assignments draw upon your knowledge of the assigned readings.

UNIT 1: READING AS A WRITER & DEVELOPING A VOCABULARY FOR CRAFT

Class Time: Exercises

- Reading and Discussion of Larry Levis’s “The Poem You Asked For”
- Profile Assignment: Who Are You as a Writer?
- Reflection: What Are Your Writing Goals? What Are Your Goals for This Course?
- Agreements: What Kind of Writing Community Do You Want?
- Identifying Preconceptions
- Sharing Your Favorite Piece of Creative Writing
- Treasure Hunt Exercise: Identifying Craft Choices in Your Favorite Piece of Writing
- A Lexicon for Prose and Poetry: Partner Work
- In-Class Writing: Using Some of Your Literary Tools
- The “Message is in the Means”: Form and Content
- Craft Analysis Discussions of Student-Selected Texts

Readings

- Raymond Carver, “Cathedral” (in On Writing Short Stories) and Tess Gallagher, “Rain Flooding Your Campfire” (handout).
- “Sound in Poetry Packet” (handout).
- “The Poem on the Page’ Packet” (handout).
- The Texts Your Colleagues Choose for the Craft Analysis Assignment

Major Assignments

- **Craft Analysis (10% of final grade):** Use the lexicon we have developed in Unit 1 to write an analytical article about a short example of creative writing—a favorite poem, a short children’s story, or an example of your own writing (e.g., one of your in-class writing assignments). Your craft analysis should integrate quotes from the text to demonstrate that you are reading closely. Explain what each literary tool does for the piece as a whole. Ask yourself the following two questions as you read each line of the piece of creative writing: What craft choices is the author making here? And
what are the effects of these craft choices? Submit your analysis with the example text you are analyzing. You’ll present your analysis to the class to prompt our class discussion of the text you chose.

UNIT 2: WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT GENRE

Class Time: Exercises
• The Not-So-Simple Matter of Nonfiction vs. Fiction
• The Vagaries of Memory: Exercise to Test Your Memory
• What Does it Mean to Tell the “Truth”? 
• The Lyric Essay and the Lyric Poem
• The Short-Short Story and The Prose Poem
• Browsing Literary Journals: Genre as an Organizing Category
• 10 Theses on Genre: Think-Pair-Share Exercise
• Meta-Writing

Readings
• Raymond Carver, “Errand” (course packet).
• Floyd Skloot, “Gray Area: Thinking with a Damaged Brain” (In Fact)
• Gerald Callahan, “Chimera” (In Fact)
• This Art: Poems about Poetry

Major Assignments
• Meta-Writing (10% of the final grade): Write an essay, story, or poem that calls attention to the questions of genre that we discuss in Unit 2. There are several ways of approaching this task. Some examples: The essay, story, or poem can question its own status as an essay, story, or poem. It can explicitly blur the supposed divisions between these genre categories. It can question definitions of “truth” and the possibility of writing something that is solely nonfiction or solely fiction. You can write in the mode of the ars poetica, like the writing we find in The Art. There are many other possibilities. Be creative in your approach.

UNIT 3: PROCESSES OF WRITING & GENERATIVE TOOLS

Class Time: Exercises
• What You Do When You Are Writing
• Group Composing & Observation Activity
• Speculating about How Each of our Readings Began
• Class Brainstorm: Interesting Starting Places
• Don’t Just Write What You Know, Write to Know More: Writing as Research
• Creative Thinking: Kit-Kat Bar Exercise
• Group Reports: Studies of Creative Activity
• Using Fixed Forms to Keep You Writing: Why Are Constraints Helpful?
• Inventing Forms (Collaborative Exercise)
• Imitation: How Does It Work?
Readings

• Anne Lamott, “Shitty First Drafts” (in course packet).
• Donald M. Murray, “The Essential Delay: When Writer’s Block Isn’t” (in course packet).
• Excerpt from Edward Hirsch, “How to Read a Poem” (course packet).
• “Sonnet / Sestina /Pantoum Packet” (course packet).
• Susan Minot’s “Lust” (in On Writing Short Stories) and “List Poem Packet” (course packet).
• Tobias Wolff’s “Bullet in the Brain” (in On Writing Short Stories).

Major Assignments

• Poem/Story/Essay and Invented Prompt (10% of the final grade): For this assignment, invent a prompt for yourself and write a piece that is generated by that prompt. We’ll collect all of the class prompts onto a website, so you’ll have the collection to use as a resource to keep you writing for the rest of the semester and in years to come. (Note: there will be a prize for the prompt that is voted most inventive!)

UNIT 4: HOW IS LITERATURE EVALUATED? AESTHETIC DEBATES

Class Time: Exercises

• Survey: Where Do You Position Yourself in Aesthetic Debates?
• Group Timeline Exercise: A Brief Survey of the Aesthetic Tradition
• Responses to Our Readings: Imagining Alternative Recommendations
• Considering Some Research: What Are Literary Critics Looking For?
• T-Chart Group Work: Risks and Possibilities of Identified Craft Choices
• Rhetoric and Aesthetics, Literature as Argument
• Considering Ethics

Readings

• Steve Kowit, “Awful Poems” (handout).
• Minimalist Narrative Packet (Carver, Chekhov, and Hemingway’s Recommendations for Story Writers) with Ernest Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants” (in On Writing Short Stories).
• Debates about Plot: Janet Burroway’s chapter on plot with Alice Munro’s “Half a Grapefruit” and “What Is Real?”
• Debates about Political Writing: Excerpts from Stephen Dobyns, Best Words, Best Order and Edwidge Danticat, Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work (in course packet).
• Leslie Marmon Silko, “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective” and “Yellow Woman” (in course packet).
• Terry Tempest Williams, “Prayer Dogs” (In Fact).
• Alice Walker, “Everyday Use” (course packet).
• Lauren Slater, “Three Spheres” (In Fact).

Major Assignments

• Revised Poems/Essay/Story & Review (10% of the final grade): In preparation for workshop, write a review of one of your own texts—a series of poems, an essay, or a story that you’ve written this semester, in class or for homework. Your review should cite, in a substantive way, at least two of the pieces that we read and discuss in Unit 4. Make significant links between your poems/essay/story and the ideas that we discuss in class. Your review should be accompanied by the revised poems/essay/story that you wish to submit for a peer workshop. During the workshop, your review will serve as a preface that will help the class know your intentions and aims for the text.
UNIT 5: REVISION & WORKSHOP

Class Time: Exercises
- Collaborative Brainstorm: What Makes for a Productive Workshop?
- Workshops: Identifying Craft Choices and Examining Alternatives
- Partner Work: Examining Your Own Revisions
- Using iBooks Author
- Submitting Your Work for Publication: A Brief Tutorial on Cover Letters, Literary & Little Journals, and Other Considerations

Readings
- Your Colleagues’ Writing (in preparation for workshop)

Major Assignments
- Post-Workshop Polished Manuscript & Reflective Essay (10% of the final grade): Make use of the feedback you received in workshop to complete a global revision of the poems/essay/story you submitted for workshop. Submit a polished, publication-ready version of your poems/essay/story as a final assignment. (If you wish, you can format your work in iBooks Author or another application to create a chapbook.) Preface your polished text with a reflective essay that describes your revision process, and answer all of the following questions: How did you decide what elements of your manuscript to revise? What risks and possibilities did you weigh as you made your craft choices? How did you use the process techniques that we have discussed and practiced in class this semester as you revised your manuscript?