Intro to Creative Writing

CRW 3362 Spring 2022

MW 9:00 – 10:20 | Classroom Building C304

Instructor: Aldo Amparán

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Office Hours: Virtual, by appointment

Course Description & Objectives

To write, a writer must first be a reader and learn to read like a writer. Focusing on poetry and fiction, this course will help you learn the basic elements and essential techniques that compose poetry and short form fiction. This will be achieved through close examination of different examples for each genre, including poetry, flash fiction, and short stories. You will be prompted short creative activities to boost your creativity and help you embark more formal projects in each genre.

By the end of this course, you will recognize literary devices and techniques in poetry and fiction. You’ll be able to apply them to your own work. You’ll complete three formal, advanced drafts (two poems, one short story), and be able to receive and provide professional criticism for your work and the work of your fellow writers.
Required Material

All the readings required for this course will be available through blackboard. Portable devices to read the material are allowed.

Grading Policies

Requirements

100pt | Participation
100pt | Creative Responses
100pt | Poetry & Fiction Exams
200pt | Poetry Workshop
200pt | Fiction Workshop
300pt | Final Portfolio

Grading Scale

A | 1000-900pt
B | 890-800pt
C | 790-700pt
D | 690-600pt
F | 590pt and below.

W | It’s your responsibility to officially drop from this course if you feel you won’t be successful in it, though you can ask me at any time about your current progress. If you do not officially drop but you stop attending, you will receive an F for the course, as I will not drop the course for you.

Assignments Explained

Writing Activities

Creative Responses: I will be assigning prompted creative writing activities designed to get you thinking about form and craft. These activities are meant to be generative, as beginnings and ways to process your poetic or fictional learning. They can be used to inspire your more formal poem or short story drafts. These are to be submitted by 9:00am of the due date (refer to this syllabus).

In Class Assignments: In addition—or as extension—to your homework activities, I will be giving you short creative exercises during class to help familiarize yourself with writing techniques and find inspiration toward your main workshop pieces.
**Poem and Fiction Workshops**

In this course, we examine craft through reading and writing work that aspires to be art. Genre work (horror, fantasy, science fiction, etc.) is discouraged, unless the work seeks to transcend confines and tropes created by genre. Always aspire towards freshness in language and originality of images.

You will submit **one poem** for workshop the **week before** poetry workshop is scheduled (see Syllabus Schedule) through the appropriate Discussion Board on Blackboard. Poems should be **single-spaced** (unless the poem’s form and intent requires otherwise), in a **standard** font like Garamond or Palatino (12pt). Your poems should have a title and include your name, course name, date and assignment name in the upper left corner of the page. For example:

Jane Doe  
CRW 3362  
08/20/19  
Poem 1

You will also submit **one short story or flash fiction piece** (1-8 pages) via Blackboard the week before your fiction workshop is due. Stories should be **double-spaced** & follow the above formatting instructions.

During workshop, it is important to take your role as a literary critic with seriousness and sensitivity. Read your classmates’ work carefully beforehand to be able to make constructive comments to help them express their words and ideas with a compelling aesthetic. Make careful notes on the poem or short story and be vocal during workshop. There is **always** something to critique. It is unacceptable to tell a fellow writer you like everything about his/her poem as this will be unhelpful to your peers at the time of revision. Coming to class not having read your peers’ work will significantly affect your grade.

**Exam on Readings & Literary Terms**

There will be two exams by the end of each section (Poetry and Fiction) which will cover literary terms and techniques from our lectures (multiple choice) and brief fragments of our readings which you’ll be asked to identify (title & author). There will also be a short essay question. Please bring loose leaf paper in case you need more space to writer your answer.

**Final Portfolio**

Great writing is about revision. We workshop your creative work so you can learn to recognize the elements of fiction and poetry that work best to fulfill your intention as a writer, and the ones that need improvement to achieve that.
For your final, you will submit a portfolio made up of revised drafts of your two workshop submissions and a short essay contrasting your own work with one or more of the readings from class.

Attendance Policy

You are allowed two absences for any reason. Each absence above that allotment will lower your final grade by a letter for each unexcused absence unless you contact me beforehand. More than six absences will automatically fail you the course.

If, during your absence, you miss your scheduled workshop, you will not be allowed to reschedule (unless you inform me beforehand and find someone willing to trade their spot with yours). When you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out the work that you’ve missed, including any activities, homework assignments or workshop schedules.

Update: I'm well aware of the hardships that the last few years have brought. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have to be absent after you've spent your two allowed absences.

Academic Dishonesty

By enrolling in this course, you join a community requiring intellectual integrity. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty demonstrate a disrespect of your community and will not be tolerated. Penalties for cheating and plagiarism range from a 0 or F on a particular assignment, through an F for the course and the risk of expulsion. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) copying someone else’s creative or academic work, claiming credit for someone else’s creative or academic work, using unapproved notes during exams, and not properly citing others’ work. Please see the university catalog for details.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

I will make reasonable accommodations for students who need them. If you have a verified need for an academic accommodation or materials in alternate media (i.e.: Braille, large print, electronic text, etc.) per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please contact the Center for Accommodations & Support within the first two weeks of class:

http://sa.utep.edu/cass/

Phone:(915)747-5148

Union Building East Room 106

cass@utep.edu
COVID-19 **Precaution** Statement

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu, so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes.

**Additional Statements**

I may send homework updates and important announcements through email and Blackboard. Blackboard will be a constant tool for the class, as you will be submitting most of the assignments by this means.

Please note this syllabus is subject to the instructor’s discretion according to the needs of this class, including the schedule below. You will be notified, however, of any changes prior to their taking effect.

**Course Schedule**

**Wednesday, January 19: Introduction**

- Icebreaker, Syllabus, Course Introduction.

**Monday, January 24: What is Poetry?**

- Discuss: *Victoria Chang’s “Dear Silence”; Federico Garcia Lorca’s “Goring and Death”; Wyslawa Szymborzka’s “Hitler’s First Photograph”; Natalie Scenters-Zapico’s “At a Party I Tell a Story & Ask:”*

**Wednesday, January 26: Imagery**

- Discuss: *Ted Kooser’s “After Years”; Sasha Pimentel’s “Old Beds and Hollywood”; Ocean Vuong’s “Notebook Fragments”; Nicole Sealey’s “Candelabra with Heads”*

- **Due Monday by 8:00am:** Creative Response 1 prompted in class.

**Monday, January 31: Mechanical Forms**


**Wednesday February 2: Language & Rhythm**
• Discuss: Leila Chatti’s “Intake From”; Patricia Smith’s “Undertaker”; Gwendolyn Brooks’ “We Real Cool”; sam sax’s “LISP”

• Due Monday by 8:00am: Creative Response 2 prompted in class.

Monday February 7: Line & White Space

Discuss: Sasha Pimentel’s “Kastanyas”; Jericho Brown’s “Host”; Layli Long Soldier’s “Obligations 2”; Diana Koi Nguyen’s “Triptych”

Wednesday February 9: Figurative Language

• Discuss: Sharon Olds’ “Feared Drowned”; Emily Dickinson’s “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain”; Anne Sexton’s “For My Lover Returning to His Wife”; Susan Woods’ “If Grief Were a Bird”

• Due Monday by 8:00am: Creative Response 3 prompted in class.

Monday February 14: Poems of Love & Sex

• Discuss: Matthew Olzmann’s “Mountain Dew Commercial Disguised as a Love Poem”; Sharon Olds’ “Sex Without Love”; Diane Seuss’ “[Things feel partial. My love for things is partial. Mikel on his last legs, covered]”; Ocean Vuong’s “Ode to Masturbation”

Wednesday February 16: Poetry Exam

• Due Monday by 8:00am: Creative Response 4 prompted in class.

Monday February 21 - Wednesday March 2: Poetry Workshop

• Click here to sign up for workshop

Monday March 7: The Story’s Center

• Discuss: Carmen Maria Machado’s “Horror Story”; Joe Hill’s “Pop Art”

Wednesday March 9: Character

• Discuss: Joe Hill's "Pop Art" (cont.); Denis Johnson's "Emergency"

• Due Monday 23 by 8:00am: Creative Response 5 prompted in class.

Monday March 14 & Wednesday March 16: SPRING BREAK

Monday March 21: Desire & Conflict (AWP week, work from home)

• Discuss: John Cheever’s “The Swimmer”; Mary Gaitskill’s “The Other Place”

Wednesday March 23: Structure (AWP week, work from home)

• Discuss: Margaret Atwood’s “Happy Endings”; Peter Carey’s “The Last Days of a Famous Mime”, Augusto Monterroso’s “The Dinosaur”, Ernest Hemingway’s “For sale: baby shoes, never worn.”

• Due Monday by 8:00am: Creative Response 6 prompted in class.

Monday March 28: Point of View
• Discuss: Amelia Grey’s “A Contest”; Donald Barthelme’s “The School”; Julio Cortázar’s “Axolotl”

**Wednesday March 30: Setting & Dialogue**

• *Italo Calvino’s “All at One Point”; Ernest Hemingway’s “Hills Like White Elephants”; Maxine Chernoff’s “The Sound”*

• Due **Monday by 8:00am**: Creative Response 7 prompted in class.

**Monday April 4: Chronology**

• Discuss: Dino Buzzati’s “The Falling Girl”, Julio Cortázar’s “The Night Face Up”.

**Wednesday April 6: Fiction Exam**

• Due **Monday by 8:00am**: Creative Response 8 prompted in class.

**Monday April 11 - Wednesday April 27: Fiction Workshop**

• [Click here to sign up for workshop](#)

• Revisions due **Friday, April 29 by Midnight**

**Monday May 2: Group 1 Revision Conference**

**Wednesday May 4: Group 2 Revision Conference**

**Final Portfolio Due Wednesday, May 11 by Midnight**