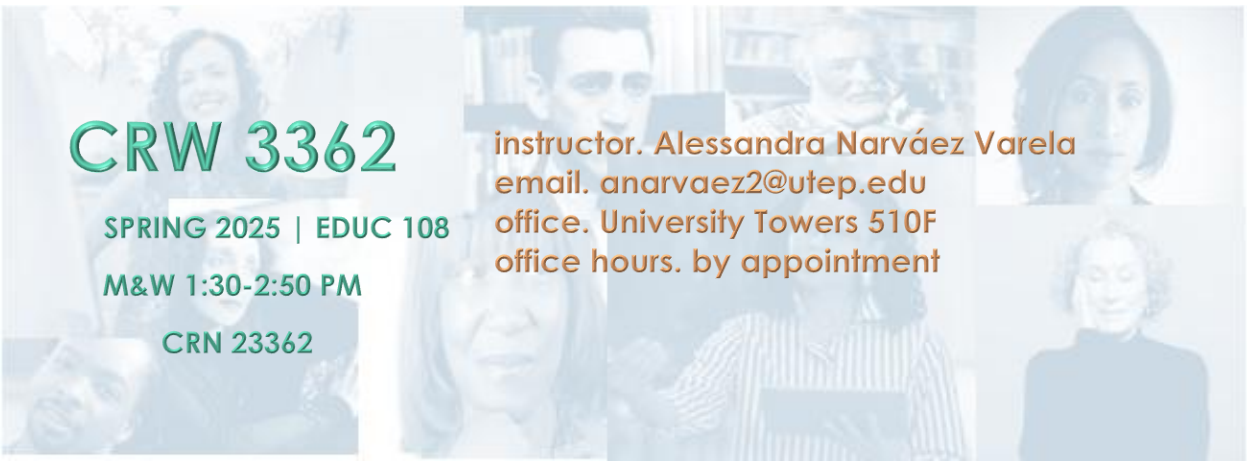


Catalog Entry

Introduction to Creative Writing (3-0) Study and practice of essential techniques of creative writing in at least two genres. This course satisfies your liberal arts block elective or functions as a gateway course along with CRW 3363 for majors and minors.

Course Description

To respond to the call to write creatively, writers must learn the basic elements that inform their chosen medium—poetry or fiction—and read the work of authors that have mastered their craft. This course spearheads the knowledge that will be gradually acquired and developed by creative writing majors, assist non-majors in their understanding of creative writing techniques, and provide every student, regardless of academic path, with a more comprehensive appreciation of creative work as lifetime readers of poetry and fiction. The course will feature lecture, class discussions, and workshop components.

Learning Outcomes

Throughout this course, students will:

- Recognize literary devices used in poetry and fiction and apply them to their own work.
- Provide and receive professional criticism of peers' poetry or short story submissions.
- Produce a final portfolio with a critical preface and revised versions of a poem and short story.

Course Delivery

The course will be delivered face-to-face and it will make use of Blackboard. For this purpose, students must have access to a computer and the internet. This is not a self-paced class; the course is organized by weeks with corresponding assignments and deadlines.

Course Materials & Technology Requirements

No textbook required; all course materials are available via the internet through Blackboard.

Ensure your UTEP email account is working and that you have internet access and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser. You will need to have access to a computer/laptop.

The following software is recommended: Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat Reader. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course. If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about Microsoft Office 365 and follow the instructions.

If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please avoid contacting me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

Course Assignments

CRW 3362 is graded on a scale of 0-1000. The course assignments are outlined below. Please note that specific instructions will be provided on Blackboard.

Grade Distribution

1000-900 = A

899-800 = B

799 -700 = C

699- 600 = D

599 and below = F

Syllabus Scavenger Quiz: You will complete a quiz testing your knowledge about the course requirements and the design of your Blackboard shell. This activity ensures you read the syllabus carefully—instead of going over it during the hectic first week of class— and navigate Blackboard at your own pace. Due date: Monday, January 27 by 1:30 pm. *30 points*

Reading Journals (RJ): The purpose of this weekly assignment is to process the material by yourself to then engage in conversation with your classmates and instructor. To write mindful reading journals please read the materials carefully before class, think about what you read and how it made you feel, then answer the prompts as best as you can—there are no right or wrong answers (only unsubstantiated and underdeveloped ones!). There are two types of RJs:

> **RJ BB (Blackboard)** due on Mondays by 1:30 pm and to be posted on Blackboard; RJ BBs also include responding to one of your classmates' posts.
>
> **RJ TK (Talk)** due orally during class on Monday or Wednesday; to account for your participation on these weeks, you should sign the RJ TK Participation Tracker sheet by the end of class.

Participating during class regardless of RJ TKs also ensures the class is dynamic. *Ongoing, poor class participation* when RJ TKs are due will result in requiring all RJs be posted to Blackboard. *140 points/ 7 RJs= 20 points each*

Creative Exercises (CEs): You will address specific prompts provided by the instructor. The purpose of these exercises is to apply/test concepts related to the writing of poetry or short stories, and to generate material that will be workshopped and included in your final portfolio. Due dates vary. *225 points/ 9 CEs=25 points each*

Individual Conferences: You will participate in a one-on-one conversation on Week 6 and Week 13 with the instructor or teaching assistant during which you will discuss your poem and short story. *200 points/ 100 each*

Small Group Workshop: You will participate in a small group workshop on Week 7 and Week 14 where you'll share a poem (1-2 pages) and a short story (5-8 pages) and follow a workshop prompt provided by the instructor. *200 points/ 100 each*

Poetry Factory: You will participate in a public reading I organize for my students at the end of the semester (date & location TBA). Alternatively, you can submit an individual video/audio clip that features you reading your poem out loud, due Monday, May 12 by 11:59 pm.*40 points*

Final Portfolio: You will produce a final portfolio that contains a critical preface, and the poem and short story submitted during workshop. Due date: Monday, May 12 by 11:59 pm.*165 points*

Classroom Policies

Attendance: Attending class is mandatory, and it will be recorded through a sign-in sheet distributed in class, starting Week 2. Students are allowed to miss 4 classes without penalty; every additional absence will lower the final grade by one letter grade. If more than 4 classes are missed without communicating with the instructor, the student might be dropped from the course. Please **plan to attend small group workshop during Week 7 and Week 14**; absent students will incur a point penalty, unless documented extenuating circumstances are shared promptly with the instructor. Students are responsible for signing in and keeping track of their absences. *Please notify me as soon as possible* if you encounter extraordinary circumstances that affect your ability to attend class.

Communication: Maintaining constant, open lines of communication between students and instructors is key to a productive and enjoyable learning experience. For this reason, it is vital that you communicate with me as soon as possible about extenuating circumstances that affect your performance. I'm committed to help you navigate the course and succeed, but you must reach out and keep me updated.

There are several ways in which communication will take place:

> **Email:** Contact me at **anarvaez2@utep.edu** using your UTEP email. My response time for emails sent Monday through Thursday 12-5pm is 48 hours. I will not be available on Fridays. For emails sent on weekends, I will respond until the next day of business (i.e. Monday). Please **do not use Blackboard messages**. Note: As a UTEP alumna, I used to have a student email with the domain @miners.utep.edu,

which was recently erased; however, to prevent any issues, the first time you write to me, please type my email as given and don't rely on the automatic feature of the electronic directory.

Announcements: I will send weekly communications through the Announcement tool in Blackboard. Please check your UTEP email often for that is where Blackboard announcements are sent instantly. You can also read my announcements by going to "Announcements" on Blackboard's left-side menu.

Office Hours: I will be available by appointment, virtually or in-person. Please email me with at least one week of notice to set up a meeting (you may also approach me after class 😉).

Blackboard comments: I will provide you with personalized commentary—written or recorded—on selected assignments, so make sure you look for a dialogue icon in "My Grades." My response time for grading and feedback is within 1 week for short assignments and up to 2 weeks for longer assignments.

Late Work: I do not accept late work, unless there are extenuating circumstances, and only if the student contacts me through email within 48 hours before or after the assignment deadline.

Please keep in mind that technology is fallible. For this reason, avoid posting or uploading assignments at the last minute. As stated previously, if you encounter technological issues, please contact UTEP's Help Desk as soon as possible. If the issue is not fixed, then **email the assignment** as an attachment to anarvaez2@utep.edu to protect your grade.

Withdrawals: Each semester has a drop date beyond which an instructor can no longer drop a student with a "W." Students who fail to fulfill assignments after the drop date must necessarily receive an "F." However, in the event of exceptional circumstances, and with the approval of the instructor of the course and the academic dean, a grade of "W" may be obtained. The student is responsible for supplying written documentation to support the request for a "W." Acceptable reasons for a "W" include: personal or family emergencies, death of a family member, military leave, or an exceptional work schedule that prevents you from completing the course. Before you decide to withdraw from the course, please contact your academic advisor to discuss this option, and don't hesitate to contact me as well for input.

The responsibility to withdraw from the course is yours; I will not automatically withdraw you if your performance is unsatisfactory. Please notify me as soon as possible if you encounter extraordinary circumstances that affect your ability to attend class. **Course drop deadline is Friday, April 4, 2025.**

Format: All assignments will be turned in through Blackboard in 12-point Times New Roman or a font of similar size with your name on the upper left margin. For the poem, you may use single or double space; for the short story, it must be double spaced with page numbers. When naming files, I suggest you follow the following to keep track of your assignments: First name_CRW 3362_Assignment Name. For example: Alessandra_CRW3362_RJ 1.

Please note that while assignments will be submitted electronically to Blackboard, I will also request a print copy of some CEs to ease physical discomforts associated with the use of the computer screen and keyboard. I ask for your understanding. In turn, I know printing credits are limited (more importantly, our tree population is being decimated), so I will limit this request as much as possible. There will be a combination of icons—🖶📌—at the bottom of CEs to notify you of this requirement.

Quality: While this is a writing class where creative pieces are produced, and credit is given for turning assignments on time, (unjustified) poor grammar, evident lack of effort, and/or failure to follow guidelines will affect your grade.

Netiquette: Your conduct during class should always be respectful and professional towards your instructor and classmates alike. For that reason, a professional tone should extend to *all* the writing you do for this class (posts and emails included). Therefore, please consider the template below when addressing me or your classmates through email or Blackboard, and don't forget to include a subject when writing an email.

Hello or Dear [name of recipient; address me as Alessandra, Professor/Ms. Narváez Varela],

Write the content of your email here. Make sure you proofread for proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Try to use formal, professional language.

Sincerely or Best [the sign off is up to you as long as you signal it is the end of your message],

Your name

For more suggestions to communicate successfully and professionally in an online setting, please go to Blackboard>Weeks>Week 1>Netiquette.

Workshop Etiquette: You should take the literary critic role seriously, as your classmates' poems and short stories are highly personal pieces that deserve your careful reading, time and respect. If these are observed, then the critique of your work should never be taken personally. I will keep an eye on overly negative, aggressive critique, which is quite a rare occurrence, so please enjoy sharing your work and receiving feedback.

Tech Etiquette: As a courtesy to your classmates and instructor, please refrain from using cell phones, tablets, laptops, etc. for recreational purposes while class is ongoing. Creative writing courses are taught in small classrooms, not in large auditoriums where non-academic use of technology goes unnoticed.

COVID-19 Precautions: 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 result to covidaction@utep.edu so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID-19 testing.

University Policies and Services

University Writing Center (UWC): I encourage you to make use of the UWC during the planning, drafting, and/or revising phases of writing any assignment in this class. The trained writing consultants can help give you a fresh perspective on ideas and help you with things like correctness, formatting, etc. The UWC is located on the main floor of the library, to the right of the elevators and computer lab. This is *especially important for the short story section*, thus, if you know you struggle with grammar, please get help before sharing your work, so we can focus on the content of the story, not its grammatical mistakes.

Academic Integrity: An act of plagiarism (or other form of academic dishonesty) will result in an 'F' for the course, and may include other University disciplinary action, such as suspension or expulsion. You should become familiar with the ethical guidelines for conduct spelled out in the Student Affairs section of the Handbook for Operating Procedures. Additionally, please be aware that you may not submit work for this class that was produced for another class. You must produce your own original work in this class and appropriately identify and portion of your work which is collaborative with others, borrowed from others, or which is your own work from other contexts. Always cite your information. If you have doubts as to whether or not you are using your own or others' work legally and ethically, ask me or stop by the UTEP Writing Center. Follow this primary principle: Be upfront and honest.

> **ChatGPT Use:** Because of the rapid pace of change represented by ChatGPT and similar programs, it is necessary to set clear standards regarding their use in a creative writing class: *all* assignment submissions *must* constitute original pieces of writing composed by the student-author *without* the assistance of AI text generators. I recognize ChatGPT can be a valuable generative tool, if a writer is experienced, and has a clear idea of how to use it to further their creative goals. At the undergraduate level, however, it's vital for creative writing students to rely on their original ideas and processes to generate work. The same policy applies to reading journals. Use of ChatGPT and similar programs **will affect your grade and result in a report** to the Office of Community Standards

ADA: The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations & Support Services (CASS) at (915)747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu.or or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal. The CASS office is located in Room 106, Union East. Students are responsible for presenting the instructor with any CASS accommodation letters and instructions.

Military Student Success Center: If you are a military student (veteran, dependent, active), consider visiting the Military Success Center at Library Room 205 or online at https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/mssc/. Please inform me if you need special accommodations. If you make me aware of a complication, I will work to assist you or put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you.

Creative Writing Undergraduate Advising and Resources Webpage: Click here to find information about registration, advising, Wellness and Support Services, as well as Health and Covid-Related Services.

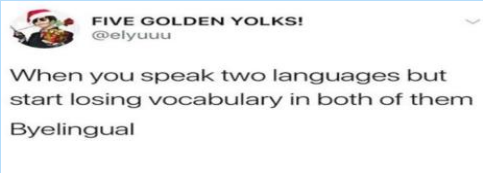
Calendar

This calendar is subject to change so please check your email and Blackboard often. I will notify you about changes with enough notice, except for family or health emergencies that affect my ability to communicate with you promptly.

Week 1	
Introductions, Syllabus and Reading Poetry	
Wed 1/22	Introductions & Course Highlights **Read** Syllabus **Explore** Blackboard
Week 2	
"Awful" poems and Imagery	
Due by Mon 1/27 @ 1:30 pm on Bb	○ **RJ1 BB (Blackboard):** Go to Blackboard> Weeks>Week 2> RJ1 BB + Response (For the following RJ BBs go to the corresponding week). ○ **Syllabus Scavenger Quiz:** Go to Blackboard> Weeks> Week 2>Syllabus Scavenger Quiz
Mon 1/27	**Read** "How to Read a Poem" (Edward Hirsch) "Introduction to Poetry" (Billy Collins) **Due By End of Day on Bb** CE 1 Go to Blackboard>Weeks> Week 1> CE 1. (For the following CEs go to the corresponding week).
Wed 1/29	**Read** "Awful Poems" (Steve Kowit)
Week 3	
Imagery cont'd	
Due by Mon 2/3 @ 1:30 pm on Bb	○ CE 2 ○ RJ 2 BB

Mon 2/3	**Read** "Images" (Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux) "Dim Lady" (Harryette Mullen) "Elliptical" (Harryette Mullen)
Wed 2/5	**Read** "Negative" (Kevin Young) "Gate C-22" (Ellen Bass)
Week 4	
Mapping + Prosody	
Due by Mon 2/10 @ 1:30 pm on Bb	**CE 3**
Due on M or W	**RJ3 TK (Talk):** Participate in class, no BB post due. Sign RJ TK sheet by the end of class to account for your participation.
Mon 2/10	**Read** **Read** "Beneath Me" (Jericho Brown) "Family Stories" (Dorianne Laux) "Salvador" (Tim Z. Hernandez) "Nani" (Alberto Ríos) "The Terrorist Shaved His Beard" (Christopher Soto) "The Colonel" (Carolyn Forché "Luke and the Frog:…"(Jasminne Mendez)
Wed 2/12	**Read** Prosody handout "Line Breaks" (Steve Kowit) "Paramour" (Rosa Alcalá)
Week 5	
Prosody (cont'd) + Introduction to Conferences & Workshop	
Due by Mon 2/17 @ 1:30 pm on Bb	**Extra Credit RJ**
Due on M or W	**RJ4 TK**
Mon 2/17	**Read** "Rhumba" (Rita Dove) "The Sawgrass Women Make Me Nervous" (Lauren Berry)
Due by Wed 2/19 @ 1:30 pm	**CE 4 (Bb + physical copy)**
Wed 2/19	**Read** "(Citizen) (Illegal)" (José Olivarez) "September 14, 2013…" (Patricia Smith) Introduction to Individual Conferences & Workshop: Etiquette & Guidelines ❗ **Attendance important**: After class discussion, I will share the dynamics of the next 2 weeks & you will meet with your small group.
Week 6	
Individual Conferences (Poetry)	

Mon 2/24	**Individual Conferences:** 11 students **Due by end of day on Bb** **CE 5**
Wed 2/26	**Individual Conferences:** 10 students **Due by end of day on Bb** **CE 5**
Fri 2/28 @ 5 pm on Bb	**Poem** for Small Group Poetry Workshop
Week 7	
Small Group Workshop (Poetry)	
Mon 3/3	**Small Group Workshop**
Due by Wed 3/5 @ 1:30 pm on Bb	**Feedback**
Wed 3/5	**Read** "Poetry in Action" (*NY Times*) "Shitty First Drafts" (Anne Lamott) "Murder Your Darlings" (Seth Fried)
Spring Break: March 10-March 14	
Week 8	
Character + Setting	
Due by Mon 3/17 @ 1:30 pm on Bb	**RJ5 BB**
Mon 3/17	**Read** "The Moths" (Helena Maria Viramontes)
Wed 3/19	**Read** "The Flowers" (Alice Walker) "My Tocaya" (Sandra Cisneros) "Disappearing" (Monica Wood) "El Gordo" (Jaime Cortez) "Yaiza" (Brenda Peynado) "Don't Pass Me By" (Eric Gainsworth)
Week 9	
Time+ Unreliable Narrators + Structure	
Due by Mon 3/24 @ 1:30 pm on Bb	○ **CE 6 Part I** ○ **Extra Credit CE**
Mon 3/24	**Read** "The Currents" (Hannah Bottomy Voskuil) "Bigfoot Stole My Wife" (Ron Carlson)
Wed 3/26	In-Class Writing
Week 10	
Point of View	
Due by Mon 3/31 @	○ **CE 6 Part II**

1:30 pm on Bb	○ **RJ6 BB**
Mon 3/31	**Read** "All at One Point" (Italo Calvino) "Hills Like White Elephants" (Ernest Hemingway) "Blackberries" (Leslie Norris)
Wed 4/2	**Read** "Girl" (Jamaica Kincaid) "Powder Puff" (Estella Gonzalez)
Course Drop Deadline: Friday, April 4, 2024	
Week 11	
Dialogue	
Due by Mon 4/7 @ 1:30 pm on Bb	○ **CE 7** ○ **Dialogue Rules Quiz** ○ **Extra Credit RJ**
Due on M or W	**RJ7 TK**
Mon 4/7	**Read** "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been" (Joyce Carol Oates) "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" (J.D. Salinger)
Wed 4/9	**Read** Dialogue Rules Handout Dialogue Clinic
Week 12	
Verisimilitude, Deus Ex Machina & Suspension of Disbelief	
Mon 4/14	**Read** "Corzo" (Brenna Gomez)
Due by Wed 4/16 @ 1:30 pm	**CE 8 (Bb + physical copy)**
Wed 4/16	❗ **Attendance important**: You will meet with your small group.
Week 13	
Individual Conferences (Short Story)	
Mon 4/21	**Individual Conferences:** 11 students **Due by end of day on Bb** **CE 9**
Wed 4/23	**Individual Conferences:** 10 students **Due by end of day on Bb** **CE 9**
Fri 4/25 @ 5pm on Bb	**Short story** for Small Group Fiction Workshop
Week 14	
Small Group Workshop (Fiction)	

Mon 4/28	**Small Group Workshop**
Due by Wed 4/30 @ 1:30 pm on Bb	**Feedback**
Wed 4/30	Discussion of Final Portfolio Requirements & Guidelines **Read** "And Furthermore, Part I: Door Shut, Door Open" (Stephen King)
Week 15	
Final Portfolio & Poetry Factory	
Mon 5/5	Class Review Activity (Bring your class notes!) **Poetry Factory** (Location/ Date TBA)
Week 16	
Finals Week	
Due by Mon 5/12 @ midnight	○ **Final Portfolio** ○ **Poetry Factory Video** (individual)
Congratulations! You read this far ☺ 	**For Syllabus Scavenger Quiz's Last Question due Mon 1/27 by start of class:**