

# **Introduction to Creative Writing**

Course CRW 3362 - CRN 22331

Emiliano Pérez Grovas Zapiain

[Eperezgrov@miners.utep.edu](mailto:Eperezgrov@miners.utep.edu)

"Bad artists imitate, great artists steal."

Pablo Picasso Banksy

## **Course Description**

This course will introduce students to the basic forms and techniques of the main genres of creative writing: fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. Through some selected readings, discussions and examples of creative writing in other outlets, such as film and videogames, we will discover the different components that make a story or poem work effectively. Students will also create their own work and discuss it in writing workshops. In addition, we will focus on various ways of finding inspiration and students will write exercises that acknowledge how other cultural products have an influence on the stories we tell.

## **Course topic**

The idea of the isolated genius has been a constant in contemporary western culture. Through a diverse set of cultural products, we have been taught that, through history, there has existed a set of extraordinary people (mostly men) who have achieved incredible things in their field because they were given the almost divine gift of genius. Mozart are some of the clearest examples of this, but the concept has expanded into practically every field of knowledge, including writing. As a culture, we have converted some of the most renown authors into mythical beings (Hemingway is a great example).

But the reality behind every major creation in our culture is much more complex. There is no such thing as an isolated genius that comes up with an idea from thin air. New ideas are only possible thanks to the accumulation of old ones. That is true both to science and to art. It is also true to creative writing.

In this course, we will discuss how previous stories have a direct impact on the stories we tell today. We will recognize what influences us and we will learn to accept inspiration without being afraid of “stealing” ideas (although we will be very careful with copyright).

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify literary devices and employ them in their writing.
- Write new work which is conscious of what inspired it.
- Draw on knowledge of techniques to create works of poetry and fiction.
- Engage in effective workshop practices with their community of peers.
- Create and submit a final portfolio of their edited work.

### **Required texts & materials**

All required readings will be available on Blackboard (BB), so there is no book to purchase. Assigned texts should be read before coming to class. **Failure to read and engage in class discussions will result in losing points.**

### **Readings**

Readings will be assigned weekly, except during workshop days, when the reading will be another student’s draft. As for the responses, on workshop days this will be a review of another peers’ work. The responses will be 200

words in length and will address an assigned element of a specific reading. Responses will be due on Sundays by midnight.

## **Fiction & poetry exercises**

Writing prompts in fiction and poetry will be assigned and are designed to strengthen the student's understanding of the craft. The exercises are meant to spark your creativity but also to guide your writing process. Since some exercises will be assigned in class, I expect that students will continue to work on the drafts that might come out of these exercises and choose between one of the prompts that could make a full piece for the workshops.

Please remember that this is a creative writing class, which means you should be prepared to receive feedback. Some weeks I'll choose some exercises submitted by you to discuss them during class.

The pieces will be projected on the dashboard anonymously (your name won't be displayed, only the piece. This is so we will focus only on the work instead of on the author).

## **Workshops**

On or about Week 5, we will engage in our first workshop and will do so again a couple times. A workshop is a structured group activity in which the whole class carefully reads, analyzes, and gives feedback on each other's work. It is an opportunity for a writer to learn about their work from various perspectives. Students enjoy this activity and look forward with anticipation and curiosity to their work's reception from their community of fellow writers. Therefore, it is not only courteous that you come to class and actively participate, but it is also expected of you, in your role as a serious writer.

The role of a literary reader, which is what each student will become during the workshop, should be taken 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. While credit will be given for turning in work on time, poor grammar, evident lack of effort, and/or failure to follow guidelines will affect your point allotment. In order to participate in the workshop, each student must do the following:

1. Upload their draft on Blackboard at least one class before their designated workshop date.
2. Carefully read the assigned student's work before the designated workshop day, annotate the draft with observations about the poem or story's strengths/weaknesses, and provide constructive feedback on how the work can be improved.
3. On the day of the workshop, be prepared to comment on each poem or story, cite specific examples within the work, and defend your assertions. When reacting (verbal or written) to someone's writing, address the text, not the student.

Although all students are required to read and comment on overall distributed workshop drafts, each student will be assigned only one piece for the workshop review. (The workshop schedule will be made during class, and each student's session will be timed. If you are absent during a scheduled workshop day and/or fail to submit your piece, you will not earn credit).

During these workshops, we should always keep in mind that our objective is to provide a safe space for students to feel comfortable sharing their work. Our goal as readers is to help each student make their work the best it can be.

## **Portfolio**

Each student is required to produce a final portfolio **which will be due on or before May 2<sup>nd</sup>**. The portfolio will contain all revised fiction and poetry submitted, including the two workshop drafts and their corresponding revised versions. Revising your work in a meaningful way is obligatory, so simplistic corrections (i.e. deleting/inserting a word, changing title, etc.) will affect your point allotment. Please attend the class for detailed instructions.

## **Submitting work**

Late work is not accepted. All work will be submitted to me through our Blackboard course shell or email. Be sure to format each assignment heading in the upper, left-hand corner of the document as follows:

Cosme Fulanito CRW 3362  
Aug 27, 2023 Poetry Exercise 1

Always save your work by naming each assignment with your first initial, last name, and an abbreviation of the assignment. For example, if your name is Cosme Fulanito, this is how you would name your file:

cfulanito—exercise1

cfulanito—poem1—draft

you are required to submit all assignments pdf documents, using a 12-pt. font (Georgia), with one-inch margins and double-spaced, unless directed otherwise.



The Department of Creative Writing at UTEP supports students' right to define their identity in terms of name, pronoun, and mode of address. This class will provide each student the opportunity to let their preference be known, and will support and respect that preference. Should you need to discuss this issue with your instructor in private, you are encouraged to make an appointment early in the semester.

## **Classroom etiquette/netiquette**

- Electronic devices can be very helpful in the classroom whether a smartphone, tablet, or computer. However, if their use does not contribute to the conversation or tasks in the classroom, then I have the right to ask you to put it away or turn it off, even if it is a personal device. • You are expected to demonstrate the utmost respect and courtesy for your peers with different writing styles, viewpoints, and/or experiences. **Sexist, racist, homophobic, or other hateful speech will not be tolerated.**
- As a general rule, always consider the audience, in-class and online. Remember that members of the class and the instructor will be reading your work. **When reacting to someone (verbal or written), address the manuscript/draft, not the person.** All communication, including emails, should be professionally written, using a greeting, body with a clear purpose, and a closing. In short, be courteous and take pride in your work.
- Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space. If students wish to do so, they have the ethical obligation to first request the permission of the writer(s).
- It is ok to eat in the classroom, just be mindful that we are in a closed space. If your lunch is something smelly like tuna, I would rather let you eat it outside.

## **Attendance**

According to The University of Texas at El Paso's catalog: The student is expected to attend all classes and workshop sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of extended absences. (For further information regarding excused absences refer to UTEP's Catalog.)

In the event of an absence, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed by asking your peers.

You may miss 4 classes without a penalty. If you miss a fifth class, you will lose 11 points from your final grade, and each additional absence will discount 2.2 points.

### **Curriculum and classroom policies**

During our class meetings, you are expected to actively participate in discussions and workshops. The class discussions will help you learn to improve your writing, often through the analysis of an assigned chapter, essay, poem, or short story. If you do not read an assigned text, you will not be prepared for class and will be considered absent. If you miss a workshop, it cannot be made up.

### **Academic Integrity**

The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity (<http://www.catalog.utep.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/curriculum-andclassroom-policies/>). Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. 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. /Visit the Office of Dean of Students



(<https://www.utep.edu/studentaffairs/>). Instructors are required to report the suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Affairs.

## **Accommodations**

Your success in this class is important to me. We all learn differently, and if there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together, we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to visit the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) in room 106, Union East Building, or contact them at 747-5148 or [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu). If you need official accommodations, you have a right to have these met. There is also a range of resources on campus, including the Writing Center, Counseling Center, Military Student Success Center and Academic Advising Center.

## **Military students**

Thank you for your service! If you are a military student (veteran, dependent, active) please visit the Military Student Success Center. I also recognize the complexities of being a student veteran. If you are a student veteran, please inform me if you need special accommodations. Drill schedules, call to active duty, complications with GI Bill disbursement, and other unforeseen military and veteran-related developments can complicate your academic life. If you make me aware of a complication, I will do everything I can to assist you or put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you.

## **Artificial Intelligence**

The use of generative AI tools such as Chat GPT are NOT PERMITTED in this course, unless otherwise noted for specific assignments.

## **Important Spring dates**

**Jan 16<sup>th</sup>**, Spring classes begin

Mar 28th, Drop/Withdrawal Deadline

May 2nd, Last day of classes

Please reach out to me if you need to. I look forward to helping you become better writers this Spring!