

## **CRW 3362. Intro to Creative Writing**

**CRN** 10760

**Department:** Creative Writing

**Fall 2024**

**Meeting hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays from 12pm to 1:20pm

**Place:** EDUC 108

**Professor:** Mariana Riestra

**Office:** University Towers (1900 N Oregon St), 5th floor, suite 510

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 12pm to 2pm by appointment

**E-mail:** mriestraahuma@miners.utep.edu

### **Course Description**

This is a foundational undergraduate-level course in Creative Writing. During the first half of the semester, we will go over an introduction to literary terms, such as voice, setting, characters, point of view, and plot, as well as a study of storytelling. By the end of the first segment of the semester, you will have learnt how to craft a cohesive story with a solid plot and rounded characters: these stories will be workshopped in-class. Afterwards, during the second half of our course, we will study the forms of poetry and imagery, going over essential terminology that will allow you to read, analyze, enjoy, and write poetry. Then, we will hold a second round of workshops, now with poetic texts. Lastly, by the end of the semester, the student will be expected to hand in a portfolio of either narrative or poetry as their final assignment.

### **Course Objectives**

One of the course's main purposes is to introduce students to the concept of creative writing as a discipline as well as a skill that can be enjoyable and advantageous for their professional development. Moreover, the course will reinforce students' capacity to analyze texts and other cultural products, which will lead to becoming more skillful readers and writers.

### **Books and Supplies**

This is intended to be a cost-free course, which means that students are not expected to purchase any books to make their readings, as all the book chapters, essays, poems, and short stories will be provided by the professor of the course via Blackboard. Because of this, students are welcome to bring their electronic devices to read course texts as needed in class if they prefer not to print out the material.

### **UTEP Laptop Rentals**

In the case students may need a computer, they can check out a UTEP laptop for the entire semester. To loan one, go to the library, Room 300, with your UTEP ID. Just know that there are limited supplies, so, if you need one, be sure to get it as early as classes start.

## **Grading**

Your final grade will depend on your overall progress throughout the semester. To make the most of the course, you should complete the following course requirements:

### *Writing Prompts in Class*

10%

Students are meant to participate in in-class writing prompt exercises. To do so, students must bring a journal or notebook throughout the semester in which they will produce poems or paragraphs that will work as catalysts for their submitted material and final projects. Although these exercises will not be graded, the teacher may ask students to share their work with the class. Students are expected to post their writing prompts as Homework assignments on Blackboard.

### *Presentation*

20%

Students will be assigned a group to work together with to present a basic literary term that will serve as a foundation for the class' development. They will analyze how said literary term is displayed in one of the week's main readings. Students are expected to prepare thoroughly and to offer clear examples of the literary term assigned to them. The presentations should last around 15 minutes.

### *Workshop Drafts*

20%

No late submissions are accepted for workshops. Be considered with our schedule, as we all need to read the work ahead of time to best comment on your work. Each piece will be graded as simply "PASSED" or "NOT PASSED": if the piece meets the word count and is turned in on time, you will receive full credit for it.

### *Final Project*

20%

The final project for this course will consist of a revised version of either the fiction or poetry material presented during the class's workshop sessions. For this, students will have to prove an understanding of the literary terms learned through the semester and apply it to their creative pieces. Moreover, students will have worked on their pieces, and their writing will have evolved as part of their growth as readers and authors throughout the semester.

### *Informal Statement of Reflection*

10%

Students must hand in an informal reflection that goes over the reasoning behind the stylistic and thematic choices of the pieces of your final project. This should work as a preface to your narrative or poetic work.

### *Participation*

20%

Students are not only welcomed but expected to be active during class discussions. Students must come to class prepared and willing to address the readings mindfully. As such, students are invited to bring in annotations, questions, and observations on the readings. Be aware that if it becomes apparent that a student is not reading the material ahead of time and participating adequately, this will take a toll on this percentage of the final grade. Additionally, students are required to participate in their peers' workshops making respectful and helpful comments on their classmates' work.

## Attendance

More than 2 unexcused absences and constant tardiness will affect participation grade. More than 3 unexcused absences will affect final grade. Starting with the third unexcused absence, every time the student is missing from class that is not excused by illness or a personal necessity, will subtract 5 points of final grade.

## Workshops and Giving Feedback

The workshops will make an essential segment of this course. For this, you are expected to carefully read your classmates' work and make respectful and helpful comments that will allow the text to be as effective as possible. You will have to provide comments on Blackboard to your classmates' pieces and to participate during the discussions of the creative texts.

## Submissions

The texts that you will hand in for the workshops and for your final portfolio and informal paper should be submitted in PDF format and uploaded to the Blackboard platform. Please use a margin of 1.5 inches all around, and a serif typeface at 12 points such as Georgia, Garamond, Baskerville or Times New Roman. Name your PDF file with your name, last name, and the title of your creative piece.

## Course schedule

This schedule is subject to changes according to the needs of the course and the classroom. However, no change will be retroactive. Thus, if readings are changed, reduced or due dates are extended, you will be notified with time.

Date		Weekly Work	Material
Week 1	August 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Syllabus and course introduction</li><li>• Student introductions</li><li>• Class exercise: <i>Students will reflect on the colloquial yet crucial aspect of stories by sharing the reason that they enrolled in the course with the rest of the class</i></li><li>• Homework assignment: <i>Students will write a short paragraph telling the story of how they met their closest friend</i></li></ul>	Class syllabus

	August 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of homework assignment</li> <li>• What is a story?</li> <li>• Character and characterization: how do we make what is on the page feel meatier?</li> <li>• Class presentation taught by teacher as a sample for students: How are the characters in Karla Suárez’s “The Collector” characterized?</li> <li>• Class exercise: <i>We all have our own peculiar obsessions. Write a short piece about a character who has fallen obsessed for a particular yet quirky item. What does the character look like? How does the character relate to the world around them?</i></li> </ul>	<p>“<u>The Collector</u>” by Karla Suárez</p>
Week 2	Sept 2	Labor Day Holiday—University closed	
	Sept 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of class assignment from the previous lecture</li> <li>• Voice: how does a story become affected by the tone and perspective?</li> </ul>	<p>“<u>What is a Narrator?</u>” By J.T. Bushnell</p> <p>“<u>Katy</u>” by Bryan Washington</p>
Week 3	Sept 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class presentation: What does the voice sound like in “Father Christmas Spends the Night” by Samantha Schweblin?</li> <li>• Class exercise: <i>Think of a tale as old as time: Cinderella, Snow White, the Little Mermaid, or any other classic character’s story that has been told and retold: change the typical voice (tone, and point of view) of it.</i></li> </ul>	<p>“<u>What is Point of View?</u>” By John Larison</p> <p>“<u>Father Christmas Spends The Night</u>” by Samantha Schweblin</p>
	Sept 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of class assignment from the previous lecture</li> <li>• Setting: how does the environment affect the story? How do we create an atmosphere?</li> </ul>	<p>“<u>What is a Setting?</u>” by Raymond Malewitz</p> <p>“<u>The UFO, The Beach, And The Dead</u>” by Fernanda Melchor</p>

Week 4	Sept 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class presentation: What does the setting look like in “A House in the Burbs” by Valeria Correa Fix? How is it achieved?</li> <li>• Class exercise: <i>In The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Lucy is fascinated to discover a world beyond an old closet. Think of a character, whomever it may be, how would a world out of the ordinary look for them? How do they react to this? With wonder? Fear?</i></li> </ul>	<u>“A House in the Burbs”</u> by Valeria Correa Fix
	Sept 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of class assignment from the previous lecture</li> <li>• Dialogue: how do your characters speak? Do they have specific word choices? How do we make dialogue believable?</li> </ul>	<u>“What is dialogue?”</u> As compiled by Clark University  Watch <i>Cronos</i> by Guillermo Del Toro
Week 5	Sept 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class presentation: How is the dialogue represented and how are each character’s voices made different in “Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway?</li> <li>• Class exercise: <i>Let’s think conflict! Write a scene where two characters, perhaps a parent and a child, are having a discussion. How do they talk? How are each of their voices distinct?</i></li> </ul>	“Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway
	Sept 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of class assignment from the previous lecture</li> <li>• Plot vs Story: what is the most effective way to tell a story? Should we always start at the beginning?</li> <li>• Class exercise: <i>Think of the “Yep, that’s me. You’re probably wondering how I ended up in this situation” cliché audio on TikTok and Reels. Begin to write a story that starts at the middle or close to the end.</i></li> </ul>	<u>“What Are the Mechanics of Story and Plot?”</u> As compiled by Milne Library
Week 6	Sept 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class presentation: How is the plot developed in “House Taken Over” by Julio Cortázar?</li> <li>• Workshop</li> </ul>	“House Taken Over” by Julio Cortázar
	Oct 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is poetry?</li> <li>• Why should we write breaking down the lines? What are the possibilities of lyric?</li> <li>• Definitions of stanza and line</li> <li>• Poetic voice: what it is and how it is different from the author</li> </ul>	<u>“American Arithmetic”</u> by Natalie Diaz
Week 7	Oct 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop</li> </ul>	Classmates’ work
	Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop</li> </ul>	Classmates’ work

Week 8	Oct 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop</li> </ul>	Classmates' work
	Oct 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imagery</li> <li>• Appealing to the senses: how do we create vivid pictures with words?</li> <li>• Class exercise: <i>Think of a movie or TV show that you particularly enjoy or hate. Write from the voice of the main character: what do they see, smell, feel, taste? How do the images build up the poem?</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>"What is Imagery?"</u> by Raymond Malewitz</p> <p><u>"Water Picture"</u> by May Swenson</p>
Week 9	Oct 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of class assignment from the previous lecture</li> <li>• Class presentation: How is the room described in Sylvia Plath's "Tulips"? How does this affect the experience for the poetic voice and for the reader?</li> </ul>	"Tulips" by Sylvia Plath
	Oct 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound &amp; rhythm</li> <li>• Why is rhythm all the rage in poetry?</li> <li>• Class exercise: <i>Walk around the classroom: first slow, then fast, jump, run in one place. How does your bodily experience change? Is your breathing different? Write a piece taking this as inspiration.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>"On Sound and Rhythm"</u> by Jack Collom</p> <p><u>"The Raven"</u> by Edgar Allan Poe</p>
Week 10	Oct 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of class assignment from the previous lecture</li> <li>• Class presentation: How does the rhythm persist in Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise"? What does the sound provoke on the reader?</li> </ul>	"Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou
	Oct 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice &amp; style</li> <li>• Appealing to an honest poetic voice, how do we create a distinct voice and style for our poems?</li> <li>• Class exercise: <i>Think of your favorite song that tells a story. Who is speaking? How do they speak? Write a piece that follows up on the experience of the poetic voice. Tell us what happens next.</i></li> </ul>	<p>"Voice" as explored in Poets.org</p> <p><u>"Little Red Cap"</u> by Carol Ann Duffy</p>
Week 11	Nov 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of class assignment from the previous lecture</li> <li>• Class presentation: Who do you imagine is talking in this poem? What does the voice sound like?</li> <li>• Class exercise: <i>What would Richard respond? Write it.</i></li> </ul>	<u>"One Last Poem for Richard"</u> By Sandra Cisneros
	Nov 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of class assignment from the previous lecture</li> <li>• Poetic form: caged forms of the lyric</li> <li>• Is poetry even supposed to rhyme?</li> <li>• Let's talk about the sonnet and other fixed forms of the lyric: what are their possibilities and limitations?</li> </ul>	<p><u>"What is a Metaphor?"</u> by Tim Jensen</p> <p>"Sonnet 130" by William Shakespeare</p>

Week 12	Nov 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poetic form: free verse</li> <li>What do we make about all the blank verses and the words pushing through the page?</li> <li>Class exercise: <i>Write a poem in either a fixed form of the lyric or free verse.</i></li> </ul>	<p>“Mexican American Sonnet” by Iliana Rocha</p> <p><u>“23 Reasons Why Mexicanos Can Still Be Found in a Walmart”</u> by Alessandra Narváez Varela</p>
	Nov 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revision of class assignment from the previous lecture</li> <li>Simile and metaphor</li> <li>What are the effects and possibilities of beautiful wordings in the written page?</li> </ul>	<p><u>“What is a Simile?”</u> by Peter Betjemann</p> <p><u>“Harlem”</u> by Langston Hughes</p>
Week 13	Nov 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class presentation: Talk about the use of simile and metaphor in Mary Oliver’s “When Death Comes.” How do the literary figures assist the poem?</li> </ul>	<u>“When Death Comes”</u> by Mary Oliver
	Nov 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshop</li> </ul>	
Week 14	Nov 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshop</li> </ul>	
	Nov 27	Thanksgiving Holiday	
Week 15	Dec 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshop</li> </ul>	
	Dec 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshop</li> </ul>	
Week 16	Dec 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work on your final projects</li> </ul>	
	Dec 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final Portfolio and Informal Statement of Reflection are due by midnight</li> </ul>	

### Grading scale

A: 90-100%

B: 89-80%

C: 79-70%

D: 69-60%

F: 59% and below

## **Plagiarism and Use of AI**

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense that undermines the principles of integrity and honesty in education. Students are reminded of the importance of citing sources properly and providing credit to the original authors of the work they reference. It is imperative to uphold ethical standards and avoid the temptation of copying or paraphrasing others' ideas without acknowledgement. Academic success is not measured by the quantity of information one can reproduce but rather by the quality of one's original thoughts and analysis. **If suspected, the violation will be reported** to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more about this subject, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

Moreover, you must remember that **this is a Creative Writing course and, as such, you are expected to create original pieces**. Because of this, the use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT or DALL-E, is forbidden for assignments. Your pieces will be checked to verify that they did not come from an automated tool, if it is suspected that it does, this will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

## **Use of Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

Students are requested to refrain from using laptops, cellphones, or any other electronic devices in class for activities unrelated to reading or class activities, such as taking notes. It is essential to respect the learning environment and give full attention to the material being presented by the instructor. Using electronic devices for personal reasons not only distracts the individual but also disrupts the flow of the class for others. If seen doing otherwise, the student will be asked to leave and will be counted as absent for the day.

## **Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS)**

CASS at UTEP aims to offer students with functional diversities the accommodations and support services they need to pursue their career objectives. If you require any accommodations for this class, please get in touch with CASS at [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu) or by calling (915) 747-5148. Once you reach out to them, they will provide me with a letter detailing your needs, and I will adhere to the accommodations specified by CASS.

## **The Department of Creative Writing's Policy on Names and Preferred Pronouns**

Remember this first and foremost: Words matter. And, as such, during this course and in this space, we will respect the pronouns in which every individual in the classroom identifies with. This is a LGBTQIA+/allied space. The Creative Writing Department supports students' right to define their identities and to be addressed with their preferred name. In case you need to discuss this further, know that, as an instructor, I will make accommodations necessary for your safety and integrity.

## **Illness Precautions**

If you are experiencing symptoms of a contagious illness or have tested positive for COVID-19, it is important to stay at home. Please inform me promptly if you feel unwell



or receive a positive test result so that we can arrange suitable accommodations. I believe that the Student Health Center is still offering COVID-19 testing services.

### **Course Drop Policy**

While frequent absences or lack of participation will have an impact on your participation grade and, as such, on your final grade, I will not withdraw you from the class. If you believe that you are unable to successfully complete the course due to excessive absences, not submitting important assignments, or any other reason, please speak with me first. If, after our discussion, you still think dropping the course is the best option, inform me and then contact the Registrar's Office to begin the withdrawal process. If you fail to do so, you run the risk of receiving a grade of "F" for the course.

### **Academic Resources**

- [UTEP Library](#)
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#)
- [UTEP Technology Support](#)
- [Purdue University Online Writing Lab](#)
- [CRW Department Undergraduate Advising and Resources](#)

### **Other Individual Resources**

- [Military Student Success Center](#)
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#)
- [Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy](#)