Introduction to Creative Writing
Fall 2023 /CRN 12546

COURSE MEETINGS

• MW 1:30 p. m. - 2:50 p. m. (Mountain Standard Time)
• Education Building, Room 108

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, students will be introduced to the study and practice of creative writing in two genres—poetry and fiction. This means we will have fun exploring our creativity and voices, but we will also work hard. Through selected readings and discussions, students will become familiar with the fundamental forms and techniques of poetry and fiction. Students will then practice and develop their craft by engaging in exercises and participating in writing workshops. The main goal of the course is that students end up consolidating a writing project of their own. This course also benefits those interested mainly in practicing their writing and communication skills.

COURSE TOPIC

The Last of Us drama series became a worldwide phenomenon in early 2023. Why was it successful in terms of storytelling? What didn’t actually work but needs to be analyzed in a more critical way through the techniques of fiction?

In this Introduction to Creative Writing course, we are going to study some chapters from this tv show (The Last of Us) to delve deeper into discussions and analysis about characters, archetypes, verisimilitude, narrative pace, and dialogue, while comparing how techniques work in comics, in video games, and in “traditional” writing/reading
materials. Please note that this topic won’t be the total of the course content but only part of it.

PROFESSOR’S CONTACT INFORMATION

Prof. Natasha Rangel
nrangel3@miners.utep.edu

Fall 2023 Office Hours (Zoom)

• Fridays, 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm MST.

BOOKS AND SUPPLIES

Required Readings

This is a zero-cost course, meaning I will supply all readings (essays, and supplemental readings like poems, short stories, interviews, and craft pieces) via downloadable PDF documents or as internet links on Blackboard, or sometimes as physical handouts in class.

Please feel free to bring your own computers/tablets/phones on which to view course documents, or please use UTEP's Mobile Print app or UTEP's other printing resources here if you prefer to bring printed documents for your own use.

ABOUT CHAT GPT AND OTHER AI

Even though I'm not against the use of AI as a tool to improve learning, I do want to encourage you to question and analyze whether this technology in your writing journey might be counterproductive if you still have not managed to develop your own voice and style. AI works with all the data that it has been fed which also means that its “creativity” depends on existent content or mainly imitating preexistent structures. I want you to understand that being a writer is much more than just being the prompter of a machine. In this class, we are going to try to dive into something that’s a form of art. So, I don’t have a problem if you use the AI either to help you correct your grammar or to help you fix something about your text, but for the class, I would rather have you explore and take time to work on your craft before entrusting your creativity to a computer program, okay?
GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will be dependent on your successful completion of the following course requirements:

*Creative Pieces / Workshops of Your Short story and Poem (200 points of your final grade)*

You will write two pieces in the practical study of fiction and poetry techniques.

Through the process of writing each of these pieces, you'll try to master, as all writers at all stages of their careers do, form, linguistic rhythm, imagistic precision, tensions, character development, POV, etc. These fiction and poetry pieces are an opportunity for you to push yourself in ways you may not otherwise try.

We will read, and critique, and through each of our own contexts and our course's context understand your pieces through workshop sessions during our regular course meetings. Please turn in your pieces for each workshop on time to Blackboard, **the week before you are scheduled to workshop**, in the appropriate forum, to ensure a class workshop for your work.

I can't accept late pieces for these workshops out of consideration to your peers, who need time to be able to read them and prepare before workshop.

*Creative Exercises and Class Participation (150 points of your final grade)*

Writing prompts in fiction and poetry will be assigned in class 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 most 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 the 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 in the work instead of on the author).

You’ll receive your points for participation by engaging in class discussions and, of course, attending the majority of our sessions.

Note: You have three unexcused absences for the semester. Use them well. After those are done, please write to me whenever you can’t make it to class so your absence won’t affect your final grade. If the student has more than six absences or the number of absences makes four weeks of the semester, I'll take 300 points of the final grade.

**Workshops of Your Colleagues’ Creative Pieces (200 points of your final grade)**

Your active participation in the class workshops of your peers' work is also part of this course requirement. I ask you to please respond, during class, verbally to each of your classmates' work.

I also ask you to submit at least two paragraphs of typed notes for each of your classmates' pieces by one week after the piece was workshopped.

**Final Creative Portfolio (400 points of your final grade)**

1. **Revisions**

Finally, I'll ask you to revise the two pieces you drafted and workshopped this semester, based on your learning of course concepts and feedback, into a final creative submission. Please turn in those revisions as a creative Final Portfolio at the end of the semester, to the appropriate forum on Blackboard, along with a short statement that could be written on the feedback you received, a particular challenge you assumed on craft, or your thoughts about the results of your piece.

Each of your revisions will be worth 200 pts., for a total of 400 pts.

**Attendance of a Literary or Creative Event (50 points of your final grade)**

We are writers; thus, we are members of community. Please attend any virtual or physical event that centers any form of literature or art
(including the visual arts, music, dance, etc.). As I hear of any events, I'll announce them in class. Please feel free to also let the class know if you know of any literary and/or creative events this fall.

To receive credit for this course requirement, simply email me at the end of the semester to let me know what event you attended.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This Schedule is subject to change according to my discretion as I gauge the ongoing needs of the class. I will only reduce readings or extend deadlines.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Main Readings</th>
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| Week 1 | Aug 28th & Aug 30th | Syllabus and Introductions  
What’s a story? (I)  
- The elements of a story | My friend Janna  
(Emily Carroll)  
Trial by combat  
(Shirley Jackson) |
| | Sept 4th | Labor Day Holiday- University Closed | Please read for  
Sept 6th  
The Nesting  
(Emily Carroll)  
The Feathered Pillow (Horacio Quiroga)  
The Ten Commandments of The Short Story |
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Sept 6th</td>
<td>What's a story? (II)</td>
<td>The Nesting (Emily Carroll)</td>
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<td>Intro - The short story</td>
<td>The Feathered Pillow (Horacio Quiroga)</td>
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<td>The Monster</td>
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<td>Voice and Style</td>
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<td>Symbolism</td>
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<td>The Ten Commandments of the Perfect Storyteller - Horacio Quiroga</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Sept 11th</td>
<td>The elements of a story (I)</td>
<td><a href="https://emcarroll.com/comics/margot/">https://emcarroll.com/comics/margot/</a> (Interactive fiction)</td>
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<td>Sept 13th</td>
<td>The Narrator (POV and focalization)</td>
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<td>Time and place (The Setting)</td>
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<td>I’m just getting to the disturbing part</td>
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<td>- Steven Church</td>
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<td>Blood rites - Daisy Jhonson</td>
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<td>Picturing the personal essay</td>
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<td>Notes on Writing Weird Fiction - H. P. Lovecraft</td>
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<td>Gerard Genette and Structural Narratology</td>
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<td>Homecoming - Ray Bradbury</td>
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<td>Sept 18th</td>
<td>The elements of a story (II)</td>
<td>- Chapter on “The Shapes of Fiction” (Jerome Stern)</td>
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<td>Sept 20th</td>
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<td>- Suzume (movie)</td>
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<td>- The Embodiment - Bora Chung</td>
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<td>- The Doll-Master - Joyce Carol Oates</td>
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<td>Sept 27th</td>
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<td>On Defamiliarization - Charles Baxter</td>
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<td>Story-Functions and Archetypes - Jhon Truby</td>
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<td>Jun Ji Ito - The slug girl</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 2nd</td>
<td>Intro - The novel</td>
<td>The Graveyard Book - Chapter 1 - Neil Gaiman</td>
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<td>Oct 4th</td>
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<td>We Have Always Lived in the Castle - Chapter 1 - Shirley Jackson</td>
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<td>Oct 9th</td>
<td>Fiction Workshops</td>
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<td>Oct 11th</td>
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| Week 8 | Oct 16th-Oct 18th | Poetry - Introduction  
- Awful poems  
- How to read a poem | **Headfirst** - Ocean Vuong  
How to read a poem - Edward Hirsch  
Awful poems (essay) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week 9 | Oct 23rd-Oct 25th | Poetry - Fixed Forms  
- The Sonnet and The Elegy  
- The Lament | **Someone is Writing a Poem**  
- Adrienne Rich  
Poetry selection |
| Week 10 | Oct 30th-Nov 1st | The Haiku  
Prose Poetry (I) | Poetry selection |
| Nov 3rd | | Fall Drop/Withdrawal Deadline  
**Note:** Student-initiated drops are permitted after this date, but the student is not guaranteed a grade of W. The faculty member of record will issue a grade of either W or F. |
| Week 11 | Nov 6th  
Nov 8th | **Prose Poetry (II)**  
Some “endings in poetry” | **Goblin Market** -  
Christina Rossetti  
**The Rejection of Closure** - LYN HEJINIAN |
|---------|-------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Week 12 | Nov 13th  
Nov 15th | **Documentary Poetry**  
**Archive and Interventions** | **Poetry selection** |
| Week 13 | Nov 20th  
Nov 22nd | **Concrete poetry**  
**Code-switching** | **Poetry Selection**  
Laia Sales Merino on  
Code switching  
**Vots de casament** - Laia Sales Merino |
|         | Nov 23rd  
Nov 24th | **Thanksgiving Holiday- University Closed** | |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 14</th>
<th>Nov 27th</th>
<th>Poetry Selection</th>
<th>SERVITUDE AND REST - Luz Machado</th>
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<td>Nov 29th</td>
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<td>Garlic - Luz Machado</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Dec 4th</td>
<td>Poetry workshops and goodbyes</td>
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<td>Dec 6th</td>
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**Final Portfolio**

I am required to submit your grades to UTEP by Dec 20th. In order to give you the most time possible to work on your revisions, please turn in your Final Portfolio into Blackboard, in the appropriate forum, by **Wednesday, December 13th, by 11:59pm MST**.

**GRADING SCALE**

Students can earn a total of 1,000 points in the course:

<table>
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<th>1000-900 = A</th>
<th>899-800 = B</th>
<th>799-700 = C</th>
<th>699-600 = D</th>
<th>599 &amp; below = F</th>
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W- A student will receive this grade if they drop the course before the university's drop deadline for the fall semester--see below.

Please note: All grades will be posted to Blackboard. **It is your responsibility to officially drop from the 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.

TURNING IN WORKS (on Blackboard)

This is a literature course for professional, practicing writers and as such, we’ll be conducting some workshops of your creative work. The pieces that you turn in to workshop should not be your “first” draft of that piece. You should turn in the best possible piece you can write (having worked on that piece considerably, and through multiple drafts and revisions on your own, until you feel you can absolutely do no better) when a creative work is due, because you’ll get more advanced feedback.

When I ask you to turn in a creative piece for workshop, please attach it to the appropriate discussion board in Blackboard as a PDF document. To post your piece, first please create a new thread in the discussion board, using your first and last name(s) and the piece's title as the thread's title (e.g: "Federico García Lorca, "Romance Sonámbulo"). Please write any prefatory contextual comments you'd like for us to know about your work, or anything that you'd like the workshop to address (optional). Then please attach your PDF document to your thread.

When your classmates respond with their notes to your piece, they will reply to your thread.

FORMATTING PIECES

Your work should be typed, double-spaced, and in a single standard font, 12 pt. size, with one-inch margins.

GIVING FEEDBACK

I ask you to take your role as a writer, and as a literary critic, with great care, with seriousness and sensitivity. You have a responsibility as a fellow artist to your colleagues to not only read their work deeply, but to make constructive comments to help them express their art into a compelling aesthetic to a public audience.

Participating in giving feedback to your classmates’ work will help you to read and revise your own work with more fluency and expertise, and there is always something to respond to, technically and formally, in your colleagues' writing: it’s your job as a writer to find it. (It's not helpful just to tell a fellow writer that you love or like everything about their/her/his essay. While that's nice, it isn’t intuitive to the writing process, which demands profound revision.)
EMAIL

When I contact you via email, I will do so by sending an email to your official UTEP student email. To access your email through a phone or tablet, please click here for Mac ios and here for Android ios. If you prefer to receive email through a non-UTEP email account, please set up email forwarding. Please visit UTEP’s Technology Support page for email here.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE COURSE

If you feel that circumstances arise so you cannot be successful in this course this semester, please withdraw from this course officially (on Goldmine) by the university’s course drop deadline of March 30, 2023 so that you can receive a “W” for a grade.

But please do write/talk to me first? I will try my best to find alternative or makeup methods for you for coursework where possible.

NAMES AND PRONOUNS

Many people might go by a name other than their legal name. In this class, we seek to refer to people by the names they choose. Pronouns may affirm someone’s gender identity, but they could also be unrelated to a person’s identity.

In this class, you are invited to share what pronouns you go by, and we seek to respect, and to refer to, people using the pronouns that they share (e.g. “he” or “she” or “they” or “ze” or any form you choose).

CENTER FOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) aspires to provide students with disabilities, accommodations and support services to help them pursue their academic, graduation, and career goals. Please contact CASS at cass@utep.edu or by phone at (915) 747-5148 if you will need any accommodations for this class.

Once you contact CASS, their office will send me a letter of your needs, and I will respect all CASS-mandated accommodations.
Please note that the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) uses a software system called AIM (Accessible Information Management system). This portal provides you with access to letters of notification and the ability to fill out your CASS Alternative Testing Agreement form. This portal is available [here](#).