Introduction to Creative Writing
Course CRW 3362 - CRN 22541
Spring Semester

Monsters? Do they look like monsters to you?
-Vicent Smith (Silent Hill)

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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. It is important to point out that although the main topic of this course is “horror” we will also have readings that involve other subjects and themes.

Course topic
How can we use horror as a resource to build powerful stories? Horror as a “poetics” to create deep characters and events? Is it possible? Fear is a primary emotion: the one that keeps us safe when we encounter any danger. So, horror and fear are much more than “jump scares” in a movie or the story of someone helping a ghost to fulfill a last wish. Fear and horror are a way to connect with the human condition on another level, to see beyond the “social mask” that disguises our secret desires. What use does this have in a fiction piece? In this course, we will try to respond to some of the previous questions and apply them to our writing process.

Disclaimer: Some reading materials might be triggering for users. If the student prefers to skip a specific reading or revise another material instead, please talk to the instructor.

Learning outcomes
At the end of this course, students will be able to:
• Identify literary devices and employ them in their writing.
• Draw on knowledge of techniques to create works of poetry and fiction.
• Explore the creative process through writing.
• 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.** For workshop participation, students will be required to bring printed copies of their drafts to distribute to everyone in the class. A journal/notebook is required for note-keeping and drafting of poetry and fiction exercises.

**Readings & responses**
Readings will be assigned daily, 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. We will have two extra responses related to specific readings and these will be submitted through Blackboard. The responses will be 200 words in length and will address an assigned element of craft, according to the program. Please consult the program schedule for due dates and topics.

**Fiction & poetry exercises**
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).

Workshops
On or about Week 5, we will engage in our first workshop and will do so again in Weeks 6, 10, and 11. What is a workshop, you might ask? 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 critic, 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. Print and distribute copies of their poetry or fiction pieces to all participants during the designed distribution day.

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. (I will explain this more in-depth during class.) 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.

**Portfolio**

Each student is required to produce a final portfolio **which will be due on or before May 10th**. 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, including the workshop drafts you will distribute to your classmates, will be submitted to me through our Blackboard course shell or email. Since the Blackboard comment and grade function works best with Microsoft Word, you are required to submit all assignments as Microsoft Word or pdf documents, using a 12-pt. font (Georgia), with one-inch margins and double-spaced, unless directed otherwise. I will not accept assignments any other way. Be sure to format each assignment heading in the upper, left-hand corner of the document as follows:

Sandra Cisneros  
CRW 3362  
Aug 27, 2019  
Poetry Exercise 1

A suggestion: 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 Sandra Cisneros, this is how you would name your file:

scisneros—exercise1
GRADE DISTRIBUTION BY POINTS
Students can earn a total of 1,000 points in the course:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>1000-900</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>899-800</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>799-700</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>699-600</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>599 &amp; below</td>
<td>F</td>
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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.

Grading Policy
- 2 Reading Responses 100 pts
- Presentation 200 pts
- 2 Workshops 200 pts
- 5 Fiction Exercises (drafts from the prompts posted on Blackboard) 100 pts
- 5 Poetry Exercises (drafts from the prompts posted on Blackboard) 100 pts
- 1 Portfolio 300 pts

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).

**Attendance**
According to The University of Texas at El Paso’s catalog: The student is expected to attend all classes and laboratory 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.** Persistent tardiness and early exits will count as absences.

**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/](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. 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.

Important Spring dates

Jan 17th  Spring classes begin
Mar 13th-17th Spring Break
May 4th     Spring – Last day of classes

Class Calendar
**Week 1**
What’s a story?

**Week 2**
Figures of Speech

**Week 3**
Symbol, motif and atmosphere

**Week 4**
Diction and tone | POV

**Week 5**
The Setting | The Character Web

**Week 6**
Workshop

**Week 7**
Workshop and Archetypes

**Week 8**
Story Functions

**Week 9**
Flashback, Flash forward | Scene Wave

**Week 10**
The Uncanny

**Week 11**
A little peek into comics and How to read a poem

**Week 12**
Awful Poems | Sonnet, Elegy and Free Verse

**Week 13**
The Haiku
**Week 14**
Workshop

**Week 15**
Workshop and final portfolio

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