

Prof. Sasha Roque Pimentel
The Department of Creative Writing
The University of Texas at El Paso

CRW5382: STUDIES IN FORM The Personal Essay

Spring 2023 /CRN 25159

COURSE MEETINGS

- Wednesdays, 3:00pm - 5:50pm (Mountain Standard Time)
- College of Business Administration, Room 330

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The personal essay, written through the first-person, asks a writer to think of them/her/himself as multiple selves: as a craftsperson of narrative, one who chooses how and what one reveals, and one who keeps silences in service of pace and tension; as a possibly redeemable, faulty, or culpable character; as a hopefully reliable narrator; and as a human being who has experienced and experiences, a person who thinks and feels. These multiple selves can conflict in life and on the page, and the forms of narrative we choose will privilege one self over another.

How does the personal essayist create, from what is most intimate, a text that can compel, and offer something true to a stranger? How do we deal with the problem of memory, and how we enter, re-enter, and thus reconstruct our own autobiographies? How do we plumb the subjects of body, family, community, and place, and from those specificities, leap to greater insights? How do we write out from the in, and write from lived experience without claustrophobia? How do we find form, and choose details from the mass of matter that is the messiness of living?

In this graduate course, we'll read the works of many contemporary essayists, and write our own personal essays for workshop throughout the semester. We'll discuss how to deal with difficult subjects that matter deeply to us while balancing technical issues like temporal tenses, sequence and spacing, perspective, narrative time, rhythm, dialogue, setting, character, etc. Through the personal essay form in the genre of creative nonfiction, we will negotiate public acts of vulnerability in service of what is important to write and say.

PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

Prof. Sasha Roque Pimentel
srpimentel@utep.edu

(915) 747-6810 (for voicemail, or during at-office hours only, please see below)

Spring 2023 Office Hours

- Mondays, 12:00pm - 1:00pm MST (Education Building, 9th floor, suite 901-B), the department will be closed for lunch, but I'll be there. Please just knock on the department door. And by appointment through Zoom.
- Please use this meeting link and password for Zoom appointments only:
 - *Meeting link:*
<https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/85610289456?pwd=V1RrLzVVSm80RjEvTmпуVlF2SWN1UT09>
 - *Meeting password:*
Poetry1!

Please note that I'll use the "waiting room" feature in Zoom, so if I don't answer your attendance right away, it's because I'm with another student, but I'll conference with you and let you into the conference room as soon as I'm done with my other meeting.

BOOKS AND SUPPLIES

Required Readings

This is a zero-cost course, meaning I will supply all readings (essays, and supplemental readings like poems, interviews, 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.

Required Software/Applications

In addition, you'll need to use the following free software/applications to read course readings, and to upload your own creative work for workshop:

- A PDF reader:
You'll use this to view course materials. If you don't have one already, you can download Adobe Reader for free: <http://get.adobe.com/reader>.
- A PDF writer.
Most word processing programs can save documents directly to PDF format (save as > PDF). But if you don't have one already, you can download Primo PDF for free: http://download.cnet.com/PrimoPDF/3000-18497_4-10264577.html?part=dl-10264577&subj=dl&tag=button

GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS

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

Essays / Workshops of Your Essays (35% of your final grade)

You will write two essays in the practical study of the personal essay form in Creative Nonfiction.

Through the process of writing each of these essays, you 'll try to master, as all writers at all stages of their career do, form, linguistic rhythm, imagistic precision, tensions, etc. These essays 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 essays through workshop sessions during our regular course meetings. Please turn in your essays 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 essays for these workshops out of consideration to your peers, who need time to be able to read them and prepare before workshop. If at any point you miss a class workshop of your essays however, whether due to absence or tardiness in turning in your work, I will always gladly privately workshop your poem during my office hours.

Each essay will be graded as simply: "Satisfactory" (100 pts), "Pass" (70 pts., for essays that do not meet the minimum word requirement or that go substantially over the word limit) or "Fail" (0 pts), for a semester total of 200 pts. If you turn in a draft on time and within word limits, you will receive full credit for that essay.

Workshops of Your Colleagues' Essays (20% 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 three paragraphs** of typed notes **for each of your classmates' essays by one week after the essay was workshopped**.

I will grade your weekly responses as: "Satisfactory" (100 pts, i.e., you contributed to the workshop discussion, and you submitted notes to all your peers on time), "Pass" (70 pts., i.e.: you were late responding to your peers on Blackboard, the responses were there on time but did not meet minimum standards, you responded only to one of your peers, etc.) or "Fail" (0 pts).

Midterm Conference (5% of your final grade)

I ask you to meet with me one-on-one for a midterm conference, for 30 minutes. I just want to be able to check in with you, privately, about how you feel about your writing. This won't

be a workshop session, but rather, a chance to talk, writer to writer. We can talk about your course work, or your larger project goals like your theses, or about anything in your career or the profession, or your needs as a student in our MFA program.

We'll schedule these conferences in person or through Zoom near the middle of the semester.

Final Creative Portfolio & A Statement of Reflection (35% of your final grade)

I. Revisions

Finally, I'll ask you to revise the two essays 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.

Please turn in both your final drafts and the original drafts that you submitted to workshop. Your revisions should reflect your practical understanding of central concepts from class.

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

II. Statement of Reflection

In addition, I will also ask you to turn a formal Statement of Reflection, worth 100 pts.

This statement is intended to give you a chance to construct a first draft of your aesthetics and writing process for the kind of work you will be asked to do in a career in professional writing, and for your MFA thesis. More importantly, it's an opportunity for you to define your developing aesthetics in creative writing, as artistry should be a deliberate, careful and conscious venture. I am also asking you to consider how, as artists, you "take place" in larger and ongoing literary and artistic conversations.

This should be a carefully constructed text of **10-15 pages**, in a standard 11-12 pt. font, double-spaced. Please use MLA Style for in-text citations and for your Works Cited page.

Your Statement of Reflection should include, but need not be limited to:

- a thoughtful and sustained reflection of what was, and what is, important to you to in *writing* these essays, and why
- a discussion of how your process, and how you are approaching your subjects, has changed throughout your writing process this semester.
- a reflection of how you have wrestled the difficulties of nonfiction, such as: 1) writing about your experience as narrator, character and author; 2) the limitations of memory you experienced in writing, 3) the risks you asked yourself to take in your pieces, from the technical to the emotional, 4) the risks you sight you may yet still need to take in writing each piece, but perhaps are not ready for yet right now, and 5) further work or research that you need to do for each piece

a thoughtful proposal and discussion of what is important to you to in *creative nonfiction*, specifically, and why

- an analysis of how your own writing and your aesthetics are grounded in the philosophies and practices-of-craft of published writers (you must include some of the nonfiction writers we discussed in class), philosophers and other artists
- a thoughtful proposal and discussion on the relationship between form and language
- an analysis of the kind of writing you have been producing, or trying to produce with regards to your larger aesthetic goals (please include as examples work you've specifically produced in this class)

For each of your major discussion points, you should also include:

- examples from your own essays that show growth in revision, comparing and contrasting between the workshop draft and the final draft,
- or selections from your own or others' work that exemplify a point you are making about a point of craft, technique, philosophy or process.

This portfolio will be due as a PDF document at the end of the semester.

Attendance of a Literary or Creative Event (5% 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; I will never move up deadlines or add more required work than is listed in this Syllabus and Schedule. In the event of any changes to the Schedule, I will either announce those in class, or through email.

Spring 2023

- All readings will be available through Blackboard the week before it needs to be read.
- You should be prepared to discuss readings by the beginning of each class.
- Except for the very first two essays, and for the essays meant for workshop the week after Spring Break, all essays meant for workshop should be turned into the appropriate forum

one week before we will workshop it, meaning, the Wednesday BEFORE your scheduled workshop, by 11:59pm MST. The first two essays up for workshop will have a different deadline, since those writers were the most brave to go up first, and have the least time in the semester to get out their first essays. The essays meant for workshop the week after Spring Break should turn in their essays to the class the week *before* Spring Break, so your peers don't have to use their Spring Break time to read and prepare for your essay. **Please be aware of your workshop submission deadline;** so that your peers can have enough time to read, and to prepare for workshop over your piece, I cannot accept late submissions for class workshops. **If you turn in your essay for workshop late, we will not be able to workshop it in class.**

- All responses to peer workshops are due **one week after the piece is workshopped, meaning, by the Wednesday after, by 11:59pm MST.**

Date		Weekly Work	Deadlines	
Week 1	Wednesday, January 18	Wrestling a Form of Intimacy, and Arriving at the "There-There." Please see readings for this week (on Blackboard, and emailed to you on January 12).		
Week 2	Wednesday, January 25	The Personal Essay as Literary Form, and Lifting Tension Through Language and Image. Please see readings for this week on Blackboard.		
Week 3	Wednesday, February 1	Writing About Family and Culture, please see readings for this week on Blackboard.	Essays meant to be workshopped on Feb. 8 are due to Blackboard by Friday, Feb 3 by 11:59pm	
Week 4	Wednesday, February 8	Writing About History and Culture, please see readings for this week on Blackboard. Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____	Essays meant to be workshopped on Feb. 15 are due to Blackboard today by 11:59pm	
Week 5	Wednesday, February 15	Writing Through the Faultiness of Memory, please see readings for this week on Blackboard. Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____	Essays meant to be workshopped on Feb. 22 are due to Blackboard today by 11:59pm	Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Feb 8 are due today by 11:59pm

Week 6	Wednesday, February 22	Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____ Please see any supplemental readings on Blackboard. In case of any readings for this week, I will announce it.	Essays meant to be workshopped on Mar 1 are due to Blackboard today by 11:59pm	Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Feb 15 are due today by 11:59pm
Week 7	Wednesday, March 1	Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____ Conference schedule distributed this week. Please see any supplemental readings on Blackboard. In case of any readings for this week, I will announce it.	Essays meant to be workshopped on Mar 8 are due to Blackboard today by 11:59pm	Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Feb 22 are due today by 11:59pm
Week 8	Wednesday, March 8	Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____ Private conferences with Prof. Pimentel (pls. see the conference schedule). Please see any supplemental readings on Blackboard. In case of any readings for this week, I will announce it.	Essays meant to be workshopped on Mar 22 are due to Blackboard today by 11:59pm.	Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Mar 1 are due today by 11:59pm
Week 9	Wednesday, March 15	<i>No class, Spring Break.</i>		
Week 10	Wednesday, March 22	Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____ Private conferences with Prof. Pimentel (pls. see the conference schedule). Please see any supplemental readings on Blackboard. In case of any readings for this week, I will announce it.	Essays meant to be workshopped on Mar 29 are due to Blackboard today by 11:59pm	Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Mar 8 are due today by 11:59pm
Week 11	Wednesday, March 29	Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____	Essays meant to be workshopped on Apr 5 are due to Blackboard today by 11:59pm	Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Mar 22 are due today by 11:59pm

		Please see any supplemental readings on Blackboard. In case of any readings for this week, I will announce it.		
Week 12	Wednesday, April 5	Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____ ◇ _____ Please see any supplemental readings on Blackboard. In case of any readings for this week, I will announce it.	Essays meant to be workshopped on Apr 12 are due to Blackboard today by 11:59pm	Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Mar 29 are due today by 11:59pm
Week 13	Wednesday, April 12	Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____ ◇ _____ Please see any supplemental readings on Blackboard. In case of any readings for this week, I will announce it.	Essays meant to be workshopped on Apr 19 are due to Blackboard today by 11:59pm	Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Apr 5 are due today by 11:59pm
Week 14	Wednesday, April 19	Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____ ◇ _____ Please see any supplemental readings on Blackboard. In case of any readings for this week, I will announce it.	Essays meant to be workshopped on Apr 26 are due to Blackboard today by 11:59pm	Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Apr 12 are due today by 11:59pm
Week 15	Wednesday, April 26	Workshop essays by: ◇ _____ ◇ _____ ◇ _____ Please see any supplemental readings on Blackboard. In case of any readings for this week, I will announce it.		Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Apr 19 are due today by 11:59pm
Week 16	Wednesday, May 4	No class, work on your Final Revisions and your final Statement of Reflection.		Your peer responses to essays workshopped on Apr 26 are due today by 11:59pm
Finals Week	Wednesday, May	No final, work on your Final Revisions and your final Statement of Reflection.		

	8-12		
Final Portfolio	<p>I am required to submit your grades to UTEP by May 17th.</p> <p>In order to give you the most time possible to work on your revisions and your Statement of Reflection, please turn in your Final Portfolio into Blackboard, in the appropriate forum, by <u>Sunday, May 14th, by 11:59pm MST.</u></p>		

GRADING SCALE

- A: 90-100%
- B: 89-80%
- C: 79-70%
- D: 69-60%
- F: 59% and below

TURNING IN ESSAYS (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 essay 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. As in any form of artistry, the harder you work at each stage of the writing process, the faster and better you will learn your craft.

When I ask you to turn in a essay for workshop, please attach it to the appropriate discussion board in Blackboard as a PDF document. Please do not use Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or other formats, as not everyone has the same computer operating system; please only use the PDF format because our class is composed of writers from all over the world who are working on different electronic devices, and a PDF document ensures compatibility so that all of your colleagues can read your work, whether they are working off PCs, Macbooks, tablets, smartphones, etc.

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 ESSAYS

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

Please turn in only one essay that is between 3,000 - 7,000 words, per workshop. Because we have to have the time to discuss course readings and to discuss your peers' work too, we simply cannot workshop multiple essays from a single writer per workshop session, and we do not have the time to workshop more than 7,000 word essays.

I'm also asking you to limit your draft's word count because in the publishing field I know (of personal essays in Creative Nonfiction in literary journals in the United States), it is extraordinarily rare to publish any essay over 7,000 words for unsolicited pieces. The length that most Creative Nonfiction editors accept is generally between 3,000 - 5,000 words. (The general ideal length for many literary journals is closer to 3,500 words.) The longer your essay is, the more it would cost a publisher to print it (each page costing money), and each genre editor only has a set number of pages to give to writers. So the longer your essay is, the more you are asking an editor to consider those economics before they even read a single word of your essay, which can put your essay on a back foot: i.e.: *should I publish this one piece, or three other pieces by three other writers?* In our industry, each and every word has to matter; there can be no "fat," or it will be rejected from publication.

Similarly, editors in the profession only accept work in a standard font (Times New Roman, Garamond, Georgia, etc., and in standard font size, almost always 12 pt. font). Please include the following header for each essay, which uses the standardized U.S. version for prose submissions:

Example of a first page:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
cngozieadichie@miners.utep.edu

← *author's information justified to the left*

"To Write a Title"
2,357 words

← *when submitting to journals in the U.S., put your address and phone number between your name and email address (but no need to put in your address for class)*

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet. Ea eveniet dolores et eveniet
dolor ut quod dolor. A voluptatum impedit et maxime fuga qui
omnis optio At dolorem perferendis est internos quos. Cum sunt
totam quo labore iste et omnis architecto 33 consequatur rerum.

← *include two line spaces between the header and the title of your essay.*

Sit unde quas eos quod minima vel sint nihil eum
repudiandae aperiam.

← *title center-justified, and in quotations. Place your essay's title in quotation marks, because that indicates a manuscript available for consideration, rather than italics, which would indicate an already published piece.*

← *always place a correct word count.*

Vel mollitia nemo aut nesciunt galisum rem commodi quis aut
 magni alias ut nostrum quia. Sed omnis nobis rem molestias
 repudiandae et exercitationem commodi.

⇐ *include two line spaces between the title and the text*

⇐ *left-justify the text of your essay. Use tabs to indicate new paragraphs, and only use line spaces to indicate new sections in the essay)*

Vel mollitia nemo aut nesciunt galisum rem commodi quis aut
 magni alias ut nostrum quia.

Example of every page after the first page:

Ngozi Adichie 2

⇐ *for every page after the first page, include a right-justified header with the last name(s) and the page number. (If submitting to a journal that only uses blind submissions, or anonymous submissions, replace the last name with the essay's title in this header, and remove the author's information from the first page, and any other instance)*

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet. Ea eveniet dolores et eveniet
 dolor ut quod dolor. A voluptatum impedit et maxime fuga qui
 omnis optio At dolorem perferendis est internos quos. Cum sunt
 totam quo labore iste et omnis architecto 33 consequatur rerum.

Sit unde quas eos quod minima vel sint nihil eum
 repudiandae aperiam.

Vel mollitia nemo aut nesciunt galisum rem commodi quis aut
 magni alias ut nostrum quia. Sed omnis nobis rem molestias
 repudiandae et exercitationem commodi. Vel mollitia nemo aut
 nesciunt galisum rem commodi quis aut magni alias ut nostrum
 quia.

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.)

On the other hand, because we are working in the field of Creative Nonfiction, which stems from all authors' autobiographies, and especially because we are writing personal essays, please practice care with how you talk about subjects during our workshops, especially if the topics seem sensitive. While as writers we work on the technical aspects of form, we may not always be wholly prepared for the emotions that accompany the experiences from where we are writing. While I ask you as writers to try your best to listen to the craft that your peers are recommending, as readers, I ask you to remember that behind each written piece is a human being who has experienced that essay's content, and sometimes those experiences have been, and continue to be, painful.

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).

UTEP'S COVID-19 TESTING CENTERS

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community, UTEP is offering two convenient options for free COVID-19 testing on campus.

The University offers free COVID-19 PCR testing through a kiosk located at the UTEP Testing Site at 3333 N. Mesa. The kiosk is located outside the building’s entrance.

Current UTEP students also have access to free, on-campus testing in the UTEP Student Health and Wellness Center located in Union Building East, first floor.

Please refer to UTEP's COVID-19 Testing [site](#) for more information.

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](#).

THE DEPARTMENT OF CREATIVE WRITING'S STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY AGAINST RACIAL VIOLENCE (June 15, 2020)

The Department of Creative Writing at the University of Texas at El Paso stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and issues the following statement:

In April 1963, during the eleven days of solitary confinement for protesting for civil rights in Alabama, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, 34, began writing in the margins of a newspaper what would later be known as his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." He continued on paper towels, scraps of yellow paper, and, eventually, a writing pad his lawyers were allowed to leave with him.

"Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait.'" Dr. King Jr. wrote, "[b]ut when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and

drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television . . . and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking: 'Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?'; . . . when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of 'nobodiness' — then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait."

Released just days ago, through the fisheye lens of a shaky body camera worn by the police officer who chased him, we see in Oklahoma on May 20, 2019, Mr. Derrick Scott, 42, imploring the limbs choking him, "I can't breathe, I can't breathe, please!" *Give me your hand*, a voice says, as multiple knees pin him to the grass, *don't resist, you're fine*, before he dies in their custody.

On May 25, 2020 in Minnesota, Mr. George Floyd, 46, is asking for his own breath on East 38th Street and Chicago Avenue. "Please, please, please, I can't breathe. Please, man," he asks. He is being murdered by a police officer whose knee is on Floyd's neck for five minutes while a bystander begs him and the other three officers there, "No, bro, look at him, he's not responsive right now." The word bro, brother, is an invocation of kinship, that one man on a street can be tied to another man on that street, but the murderer keeps pressing his knee against Mr. Floyd, who is restrained, unarmed and unconscious, for another three minutes and 46 seconds.

In Kentucky on March 13, 2020, Ms. Breonna Taylor, 26, is sleeping in her own apartment between shifts as an EMT when police batter her front-door with a no-knock warrant after midnight, searching for two people who were already in their custody. Ms. Taylor, in her bed, unarmed, is shot eight times. They never find the drugs for which their warrant was signed, though they charge Ms. Taylor's boyfriend, Mr. Kenneth Walker, who, woken from his sleep, thinking the plainclothes officers were criminals, tried to defend himself from his bed with his licensed firearm. The officers charge him with first-degree assault and the attempted murder of a police officer. They fire over 20 shots. Ms. Taylor was studying to be a nurse while a pandemic surged across the globe, everywhere people's lungs filling with fluid, swelling for air. She was hoping to help them breathe.

On February 23, 2020, Mr. Ahmaud Arbery, 25, is jogging in a t-shirt and shorts, unarmed. He is exercising in his own neighborhood when the angle of the camera closes in on the long, grey curve of the road, then another truck and Mr. Arbery. The camera whizzes and shakes, but we can see a father and son raise their shotgun, handgun, and voices while Mr. Arbery struggles against his murderers, fighting not to be felled.

In our own Juárez-El Paso, on August 4, 2019, one summer ago, a man drives across the whole of Texas with a semi-automatic rifle. He leaves a manifesto saying he is shooting us by the rhetoric and command of the U.S. nation-state. Mr. Leonardo Campos Jr, 41; Mrs. Maribel Campos, 56; Mr. David Alvah Johnson, 63; Mr. Ivan Filiberto Manzano, newly 41; Mrs. Jordan Anchondo, 25; Mr. Andre Pablo Anchondo, 23; Mr. Arturo Benavidez, 59; Mr. Javier Amir Rodriguez, 15; Ms. Sara Esther Regalado Moriel, 66; Mr. Adolfo Cerros Hernández, 68; Ms. Gloria Irma Márquez, 61; Mrs.

María Eugenia Legarreta Rothe, 60; Mrs. Elsa Mendoza de la Mora Márquez, 57; Mr. Juan de Dios Velázquez Chairez, 77; Mrs. Maria Flores, 77; Mr. Raul Flores, 83; Ms. Margie Reckard, 63; Mr. Alexander Gerhard Hoffman, 66; Ms. Teresa Sanchez, 82; Ms. Angelina Silva Englisbee, 86; Mr. Jorge Calvillo García, 61; and Mr. Luis Alfonzo Juarez, 90 die shopping for a wheelchair, composition books, loose-leaf paper, highlighters, bread, beans, soap. On April 25, 2020, Mr. Guillermo Garcia, 36, who had been at Walmart to raise money for his daughter's soccer team, dies after fighting to breathe in the hospital for nine months. On May 25, 2020, Paul Gilbert Anchondo, whose parents Jordan and Andre had shielded him, turns one year old.

The Department of Creative Writing at the University of Texas at El Paso sees the loss of these lives—as well as those lives lost who are not yet known—as extrajudicial killings of systemic racial violence. These are deaths caused enforcing a border, shooting a gun, pressing a knee, executing a policy, uttering language, by someone who feels entitled to it, whether it be an official, officer, or a citizen. We condemn these murders; we name them among the tyrannies of the caging of our own from across the Americas who seek and have sought refuge here; of the disproportional deaths, for lack of healthcare or economic access, of communities of color across the Americas from COVID-19; of the documented femicides of hundreds of our daughters; of the ICE raids across our streets, our high schools, and our university campus; and of the theft of the unceded territory of our Indigenous Tigua and Mescalero peoples; among other acts, visible and hidden, wrought from the racism of our countries, rended and founded in genocide, slavery and imperialism.

We stand in solidarity with the African American Studies Program and our Black own in this profound Black Lives Matter movement, who dignify those who have fought and died, who are still fighting; and with the Chicano Studies Program and the Institute of Oral History, who surface the lived experiences of, and in so doing, call dignity to, our Indigenous and Latinx own. We are aware of the very many for whom the cause of equality has already been their lives' work, and we pledge to see it, attend to it, and to continue the cause ourselves in our own teaching, community service, and in the poems, stories, essays, memoirs and novels we will write.

We will scrutinize the ways that racial, ethnic and LGBTQIA+ discrimination persists in our department, from our students and our faculty to our programmatic goals, and each of our projects, and we commit and recommit to dismantling the inequities of Black, AfroLatinx, Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ representation in our department.

We will continue to teach our students a writing that is informed by a rich multitude of literatures driven by, and not just tokenly inclusive of, the stories and verses of traditionally underrepresented communities. We will examine where we lack that, and we will correct it. We refuse to perpetuate a white, heteronormative, monolingual or patriarchal literary canon. We are a bilingual department and a multilingual community; our students and faculty are from Juárez-El Paso and from across the globe. So we acknowledge the veracity of each of our students' cultural knowledge, and that ours is a collectively-constructed and living literature: one which knows and speaks of rivers, can reimagine dreams from what dreams have been deferred.

We renew our perspective that the term "America" is the *Americas* for our students, staff and faculty, that our identities and our missions cross borders and oceans. We commit to cry out, again and again in language, the power of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's words, 57 years ago, when he beckons us to be "cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states." We still grasp for, through our communal sorrow, his wisdom that "[i]njustice anywhere is a threat to justice

everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."

We stand in solidarity for true civil rights, and we ask you too, to name now through the power of language our terrors and our loves swirling around us, what is our history flooding our present. We ask you to help us to uncover, with clarity: a promise—on newspapers, paper towels, all your scraps of paper—of our collective ache for a social change that can succor and sustain.

En abril de 1963, durante los once días de confinamiento por protestar por los derechos civiles en Alabama, el reverendo Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, entonces de 34 años, comenzó a escribir al margen de un periódico lo que luego se conocería como su "Carta de la cárcel de Birmingham ". Continuó escribiendo en toallas de papel, hojas amarillas y, finalmente, en el bloc de notas que sus abogados pudieron dejarle.

"Tal vez sea fácil para aquellos que nunca han sentido los punzantes dardos de la segregación decir: " Esperen ". El Dr. King Jr. escribió:" [b] pero cuando has visto a turbas salvajes linchar a tus madres y padres por voluntad propia y ahogar a tus hermanas y hermanos a su antojo; cuando has visto a policías llenos de odio maldecir, patear e incluso matar a tus hermanos y hermanas negros; cuando ves a la gran mayoría de tus veinte millones de hermanos negros asfixiados en la hermética jaula de la pobreza en medio de una sociedad acomodada; cuando de repente tu lengua titubea y tartamudea al intentar explicarle a tu hija de seis años por qué no puede ir al parque de diversiones público que acaba de anunciarse en la televisión. . . y observas las ominosas nubes de inferioridad que comienzan a formarse en su pequeño cielo mental, y observas que comienza a distorsionarse su personalidad y a desarrollar una amargura inconsciente hacia los blancos; cuando tienes que inventar una respuesta para tu hijo de cinco años que pregunta: "Papi, ¿por qué las personas blancas tratan a las personas de color tan mal?"; . . .cuando te acosan de día y te atormentan de noche por el hecho de ser negro, cuando vives constantemente de puntillas, sin saber exactamente qué esperar a continuación, y plagado de miedos internos y resentimientos externos; cuando siempre luchas contra una sensación de degeneración de 'no-cuerpo', entonces entenderás por qué nos resulta difícil esperar ".

Compartido hace poco, vemos a través del lente de la inestable cámara que llevaba en su cuerpo el oficial de policía que lo persigue, cómo en Oklahoma el 20 de mayo de 2019, el Sr. Derrick Scott, de 42 años, implora a las piernas que lo ahogan, "No puedo respirar, no puedo respirar, por favor!" *Dame tu mano*, dice una voz, mientras varias rodillas lo sujetan al pasto, *no te resistas, estás bien*, le dicen antes de que muera bajo su custodia.

El 25 de mayo de 2020 en Minnesota, George Floyd, de 46 años, está pidiendo su propio aliento en la calle 38th y la avenida Chicago. "Por favor, por favor, por favor, no puedo respirar. Por favor, hombre", ruega. Está siendo asesinado por un oficial de policía cuya rodilla se mantiene en el cuello de Floyd durante cinco minutos, mientras que un espectador le ruega a él y a los otros tres oficiales allí: "No, mano, míralo, ya no responde ". La palabra mano, hermano, es una invocación de parentesco, una palabra que nos dice que cualquier hombre puede estar ligado a otro hombre en esa calle, pero el asesino sigue presionando su rodilla contra el Sr. Floyd, quien está inmóvil, desarmado e inconsciente, por otros tres minutos y 46 segundos.

En Kentucky, el 13 de marzo de 2020, la Sra. Breonna Taylor, de 26 años, está durmiendo en su propio apartamento entre sus turnos de EMT cuando la policía golpea su puerta con una orden de

no tocar después de la medianoche, en busca de dos personas que ya estaban en su custodia. La Sra. Taylor, en su cama, desarmada, recibe ocho disparos. Nunca encuentran las drogas por las cuales se firmó su orden judicial, aunque acusan al novio de la Sra. Taylor, el Sr. Kenneth Walker, quien, arrancado de su sueño, pensó que los oficiales vestidos de civiles eran criminales, trató de defenderse de su cama con su arma de fuego autorizada. Los oficiales lo acusan por asalto en primer grado y por el intento de asesinato a un oficial de policía. Disparan más de 20 veces. La Sra. Taylor estaba estudiando para ser enfermera mientras una pandemia se extendía por todo el mundo, mientras los pulmones de las personas se llenaban de líquido y se hinchaban por aire, ella anhelaba poderlos ayudar a respirar.

El 23 de febrero de 2020, el Sr. Ahmaud Arbery, de 25 años, corre vestido con una camiseta y pantalones cortos, desarmado. Está haciendo ejercicio en su propio vecindario cuando el ángulo de la cámara se acerca a la curva larga y gris de la carretera, luego se ve otro camión y al Sr. Arbery. La cámara zumba y tiembla, pero podemos ver a un padre y a su hijo levantar escopeta, pistola y sus voces mientras que el Sr. Arbery lucha contra sus asesinos, luchando por no ser derribado.

En nuestra propia frontera Juárez-El Paso, el 4 de agosto de 2019, hace apenas un verano, un hombre maneja por todo Texas con un rifle semiautomático. Él comparte un manifiesto en el que plantea que nos dispara por la retórica y el comando del estado-nación de EE. UU. Mueren así: Leonardo Campos Jr, de 41 años. Maribel Campos, de 56; David Alvah Johnson, de 63; Ivan Filiberto Manzano, quien recién cumplía 41; Jordan Anchondo, de 25 años; Andre Pablo Anchondo, de 23; Arturo Benavidez, de 59; Javier Amir Rodríguez, de 15 años; Sara Esther Regalado Moriel, de 66; Adolfo Cerros Hernández, de 68; Gloria Irma Márquez, de 61; María Eugenia Legarreta Rothe, de 60; dElsa Mendoza de la Mora Márquez, de 57; Juan de Dios Velázquez Chairez, de 77; María Flores, de 77; Raúl Flores, de 83; Margie Reckard, de 63; Alexander Gerhard Hoffman, de 66; Teresa Sánchez, de 82; Angelina Silva Englisbee, de 86; Jorge Calvillo García, de 61; y Luis Alfonzo Juárez, de 90. Todos ellos murieron comprando una silla de ruedas, cuadernos, papel de hojas sueltas, marcadores, pan, frijoles, jabón. El 25 de abril de 2020, Guillermo García, de 36 años, quien había estado en Walmart recaudando dinero para el equipo de fútbol de su hija, muere en el hospital después de pasar nueve meses tratando de volver a respirar. El 25 de mayo de 2020, Paul Gilbert Anchondo, cuyos padres Jordan y Andre murieron protegiéndolo, cumple un año.

El Departamento de Escritura Creativa de la Universidad de Texas en El Paso reconoce estas vidas como nuestras, como parte de esos reconocidos—dentro de los cuales hay quienes han muerto y aún lo ignoramos—asesinatos y asaltos extrajudiciales de violencia racial sistémica. Estas son muertes ejercidas por fronteras, armas, rodillas, hisopos, políticas, idiomas, por funcionarios, oficiales o ciudadanos. Nosotros condenamos estos asesinatos; los nombramos entre las tiranías de enjaular a los nuestros que vienen de todo el continente americano y que buscan y han buscado refugio aquí; condenamos el número desproporcionado de muertes que por falta de atención médica o de recursos económicos han enfrentado las comunidades de color en todo el continente americano por COVID-19; condenamos los feminicidios documentados de cientos de nuestras hijas; de las redadas de ICE en nuestras calles, en nuestras escuelas secundarias y en nuestro campus universitario; y condenamos el robo de Tigua y Mescalero territorio de nuestros pueblos Indígenas; entre otros actos que, visibles y ocultos, son el resultado del racismo de países concebidos y fundados desde el genocidio, la esclavitud y el imperialismo.

Nos solidarizamos con el Programa de Estudios Afroamericanos y con la profundidad del movimiento Black Lives Matter, que dignifica a quienes han luchado y muerto, y que todavía están

luchando; también con el Programa de Estudios Chicanos y el Instituto de Historia Oral, que muestran las experiencias vividas y, al hacerlo, dignifican a nuestros Indígenas y latinos. Somos conscientes de todos aquellos que han hecho de la igualdad su causa y el trabajo de sus vidas, y nos comprometemos a verla, atenderla y alimentar esta causa nosotros mismos en nuestra práctica docente, servicio comunitario y en los poemas, cuentos, ensayos, memorias y novelas que escribiremos.

Examinaremos las formas en que la discriminación racial, étnica y LGBTQIA + persiste en nuestro departamento, desde nuestros estudiantes y nuestra facultad hasta nuestros objetivos programáticos y cada uno de nuestros proyectos, y nos comprometemos y volveremos a comprometer en desmantelar las desigualdades de representación de negros, Afrolatinos, Indígenas y de la comunidad LGBTQIA + en nuestro departamento.

Continuaremos enseñando a nuestros estudiantes a construir una escritura informada desde la rica diversidad de literatura impulsada por, y no solo simbólicamente inclusiva, las historias y versos de comunidades tradicionalmente subrepresentadas. Examinaremos qué es lo que nos ha faltado y lo corregiremos. Nos negamos a perpetuar un canon literario blanco, heteronormativo, monolingüe o patriarcal. Somos un departamento bilingüe y una comunidad multilingüe; Nuestros estudiantes y profesores son de Juárez-El Paso y de todo el mundo. Por lo tanto, reconocemos la veracidad del conocimiento cultural de cada uno de nuestros estudiantes y que la nuestra es una literatura viva y construida colectivamente: una literatura que sabe y habla de ríos, que puede reimaginar esos sueños desde los sueños que se han aplazado.

Renovamos nuestra perspectiva de que el término "América" es Las Américas en honor a nuestros estudiantes, personal y facultad, porque nuestras identidades y nuestras misiones cruzan fronteras y océanos. Nos comprometemos a gritar y a demandar, a través del lenguaje, el poder de las palabras del reverendo Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, hace 57 años, cuando nos llamaba a ser "conscientes de la interrelación de todas las comunidades y estados". Aún entendemos, a través de nuestra tristeza colectiva, su sabiduría de que "[la] injusticia en cualquier lugar es una amenaza para la justicia en todas partes. Estamos atrapados en una inevitable red de mutualidad, atados en una sola prenda de destino".

Nos solidarizamos con los verdaderos derechos civiles y te pedimos también que señales a través del poder del lenguaje esos terrores y pasiones que nos rodean, lo que llamamos nuestra historia y que inunda nuestro presente. Te pedimos que nos ayudes a descubrir, con claridad: una promesa, en periódicos, toallas de papel, en todo trozo de papel, nuestro llamado colectivo por un cambio social que nos socorra y sostenga.