

Creative Writing Course Overview
Blocks G2 and G4 (Wed. and Fri).
Rm. 2201
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I came to explore the wreck.
The words are purposes.
The words are maps.
I came to see the damage that was done
and the treasures that prevail.
I stroke the beam of my lamp
slowly along the flank
of something more permanent
than fish or weed

-- Adrienne Rich (1929-2012)

Welcome to Creative Writing, The Elective!

If you're in the room, it's because you already enjoy writing short stories, memoirs, creative non-fiction, poetry, plays, or prose poems or because you want to learn more about writing them. I'm so glad you're here.

About the course:

My goal is to give you lots of **practice** in a wide variety of skills you'll be able to apply across genres. What you learn about dialogue and detail when we work on short stories will help with non-fiction and playwriting. **Practice** is actually what makes you a writer, really. It's like yoga, painting, or swimming. To do it is to invoke a vocation. In this course, you are all writers.

Each term will focus on a different genre study:

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Flash Fiction & The Short Story Economy of Language	Poetry Prose poetry Slam poetry Writers Café	Creative Non-fiction Personal Essay	Playwriting Independent study Portfolio Revision Writers Café

Each class, every class, will begin (on time!) with a FREE WRITE with a specific prompt that may or may not be connected to that day's work.

Every two weeks or so, we'll focus on an individual skill, observe that skill in a piece or pieces of published writing, and do a few exercises that allow you to practice that skill.

You'll then have a few classes to take one of your practice pieces to develop into a longer piece. Once you have something you like, we'll workshop it. (See Syllabus for detailed overview of work-shopping).

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Homework

This is a tricky thing. On the one hand, this is an elective class, and not intended to be burdensome. On the other, there will be times when I'll need to you to finish something we start in class at home, and/or read a longer piece of writing at home. I will not assign homework every night, but I do expect it to be done when I do assign it. If you feel like I'm assigning too much, or too little, please let me know and we can talk about it.

Grading:

Your grade in this class will derive from

- Participation in workshops; both as a presenter (your work) and as a peer (your feedback). **(You must have at least 1 piece work-shopped per term, and attend one student-teacher conference during J block per term).**
- Completion of one polished piece and a reflection at midterm each quarter, and a final portfolio piece and reflection at the end of each term.
- A note: I am more interested in freeing you up to create interesting pieces than trying to calculate a 'grade'. I will use rubrics to help you see what works in your writing, and what doesn't, because that's useful.

About me:

I went to my first writing workshop when I was fifteen, at the University of Virginia, and it changed my life. I wrote and wrote and wrote, and wrote some more; my poetry and short fiction has appeared in journals in the US and the UK. When I'm not grading or reading, you'll find me baking banana bread with my two year old.

What you will need:

- a flash drive (USB) to save work
- a googledocs account (you all have this)
- A notebook or journal for free writes, class notes, etc.
- A binder for photocopied stories and work (your classmates', and others)
- Pens, pencils, highlighters, sticky notes: all good things.
- Willingness to live on the edge.

Some general rules. These were given to me by a writing teacher when I was in high school. They are important.

RULE ONE: Find a place you trust, and then try trusting it for a while.

RULE TWO: General duties of a student — pull everything out of your teacher; pull everything out of your fellow students.

RULE THREE: General duties of a teacher — pull everything out of your students.

RULE FOUR: Consider everything an experiment.

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RULE FIVE: Be self-disciplined — this means finding someone wise or smart and choosing to follow them. To be disciplined is to follow in a good way. To be self-disciplined is to follow in a better way.

RULE SIX: Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail, there's only make.

RULE SEVEN: The only rule is work. If you work it will lead to something. It's the people who do all of the work all of the time who eventually catch on to things.

RULE EIGHT: Don't try to create and analyze at the same time. They're different processes.

RULE NINE: Be happy whenever you can manage it. Enjoy yourself. It's lighter than you think.

RULE TEN: "We're breaking all the rules. Even our own rules. And how do we do that? By leaving plenty of room for X quantities." (John Cage)

HINTS: Always be around. Come or go to everything. Always go to classes. Read anything you can get your hands on. Save everything — it might come in handy later.

We'll look at more specific guidelines for work-shopping and feedback once we're there.

Welcome aboard.
RB

