

Kresge 65W-02: Creative Writing Lab

Summer Session 1

Wednesdays 5:30-8:30 in Hum & Soc Sci 350

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Office Hours: Wednesdays from 3-4 and by appt.

Course Description

This course is meant to spark your curiosity, even—and especially—if you don't have much experience with creative writing. It is not a traditional creative writing class that focuses broadly on fiction, poetry, and non-fiction. Instead, we will read and write mostly in a variety of poetic forms and styles, which will allow you to expand your sense of what writing can do and what it means to write "creatively." The readings and weekly exercises will help us explore the types of things that writers rely on to create certain kinds of experiences for readers such as: metaphor, imagery, rhythm, line breaks, and repetition. We'll do close readings of poems and other imaginative pieces every week in order to find out how a piece of writing "works," and to get a sense of how we might use various techniques. We'll also be doing regular writing both in class and for homework. Each student will also have a chance to share work a few times in a workshop format with peers.

Course Assignments:

Writing Exercises

You will be required to submit exercises every week to canvas. The assignments will be posted on canvas at least one week in advance and will be based on the assigned reading for the week just completed or an in-class exercise that I will ask you to revise and expand. These assignments do not have to be perfectly polished or brilliant, but they should be thoughtfully composed and reflect your curiosity and engagement with the material and with the creative process.

Weekly workshops

I am hoping to make time during class for each student to share work once with the whole group, but as the class progresses, we can negotiate the best way that workshop will work for us. For now, expect to share work at least once with the entire class and three times in small groups. For small groups, you will be required to bring 4 copies of a piece to share. For the large class workshop, you will need to make enough copies for everyone, or let me know ahead of time what you want to share, and I will make the copies for you.

During these workshops you will receive feedback on your own writing and comment on your peers' works in progress. I know some of you will have very little

experience with this type of workshop, but don't worry! We will practice on published material first, and I will provide you with lots of guidelines and ideas for the types of comments and feedback that will be constructive.

Final Project

This final assignment will allow you to take what you have learned over the course of the quarter and make use of those techniques in a way that satisfies your own interests as a writer. Since this class is mostly poetry-based and I understand that some of you may have more interest in writing fiction, consider this final assignment an opportunity to take what you have learned about writing and apply it to a different genre or form or to expand one of the pieces you wrote for the course into a much longer piece. The only requirements for this assignment are the length (10 -20 pages) and due date (Sunday, July 28).

Course policies and grading

The success of this course relies on timely completion of readings and written work. Please show up for all five classes and please be on time! If you are more than fifteen minutes late to class, you will be considered absent and an absence will negatively affect your grade. Be present, attentive, engaged and curious, put cell phones away and out of reach (both mentally and physically), and submit all work on time.

If you complete all the coursework on time and with attention and effort and approach your peers and yourself with respect and empathy, you can expect an A. If you fall behind in one or more areas, show up late to class or miss a class, or regard your peers' work without respect or effort, you can expect a lower grade.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

All readings are available as pdfs on canvas or as handouts provided in class. See canvas course site for more details on weekly assignments and exercises. All exercises are due the Tuesday before class by midnight.

Week One: June 26

Agenda: Syllabus and introductions, workshop schedule, discussion on reading and writing practices and inspiration

In-class reading and discussion: Frank O'Hara, Harriette Mullen, and walking poems

Writing exercise due on Canvas by Tuesday, July 2 at midnight. (Remember to bring 4 copies to class for small group workshop.)

Week Two: July 3

Agenda: Figurative Language, Imagery, Metaphor, Repetition

View: Stephen Burt's Ted Talk "Why People Need Poetry"

Reading: poems by Elizabeth Hughey, Garrett Hongo, Joe Brainard, and Lisa Jarnot

Student workshop: two-three volunteers

Writing exercise due on Canvas by Tuesday, July 9 at midnight. (Remember to bring 4 copies to class for small group workshop.)

Week Three: July 10

Agenda: Line-breaks, fragments, and sentences

Reading: Eileen Myles, M. Nourbese Philip, John Ashbery, Elizabeth Willis

Student workshop: three-four volunteers

Writing exercise due on Canvas by Tuesday, July 16 at midnight. (Remember to bring 4 copies to class for small group workshop.)

Week Four: July 17

Agenda: Hybrid Prose Experiments

Reading: Lydia Davis and Claudia Rankine

Student workshop: three-four volunteers

Writing exercise due on Canvas by Tuesday, July 23 at midnight.

Week Five: July 24

Course conclusion, final workshop, revising strategies, in-class collaborative writing, what to do next.

Reading: in-class handouts

Student workshop: remaining volunteers