Introduction to Creative Writing

Description: This class is for beginning writers of fiction, poetry, and drama. We’ll read and write in a wide range of forms, styles, and voices, and even if this is your first attempt at writing creatively, your words are welcome here. You might not realize it, but you already have a good understanding of the three genres, because fiction looks like real life stories, poetry is similar to contemporary music, and plays are a lot like television and movies. Class time will be devoted to in-class writing exercises, discussion of fictional, poetic, and dramatic techniques, and the workshopping of your writing. It’s simple: the more you read and write, the more you learn about writing.

Texts: Steve Kowit, *In the Palm of Your Hand: The Poet’s Portable Workshop*
Eric Lane and Nina Shengold, *Take Ten: New 10-Minute Plays*
Novakovich, Josip, *Fiction Writer’s Workshop*

Goals: • Students will learn about the elements of poetry, fiction, and drama and use them in writing.
• Students will learn to develop a writing practice and strategies for tapping into creative energies.
• Students will learn to use literary concepts to analyze selected texts.
• Students will learn to critique the work of others constructively and productively.
• Students will learn to revise manuscripts based on feedback received in workshop.

Requirements: • Reading Responses – Weekly assignment due by Monday 10:00 p.m. You will write a 150-300 word response to the reading assignment (I’ll provide questions to use as prompts) and post it to the class website (http://creativewriting.qwriting.org/) by each Monday, 10:00 p.m. sharp. Being punctual is part of the assignment.
• Craft Exercises – Writing exercises will be due in class each week. All work must be typed, paginated, and carefully proofread for errors.
• Portfolio – The culmination of your best work from the semester – 10 pages of carefully and beautifully revised work, with at least two genres represented. Include the original drafts with my comments and also a 1-2 page paper describing your creative process, your artistic intention and revision process. Due May 22 by 2 p.m. in my office.
Grades: Participation (including attendance and punctuality) — 20%
       Reading Responses — 25%
       Craft Exercises — 25%
       Final Portfolio — 30%

Final Notes and Policies

• I will not accept emailed copies of reading responses, craft exercises or any creative work that is due to be workshopped. You must print those out and bring them to class.

• Plagiarism will result in an immediate zero for the class. Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person’s ideas, research or writings as your own. The following are some examples of plagiarism, but by no means is an exhaustive list:
  - Copying another person’s actual words without the use of quotation marks and footnotes attributing the words to their source.
  - Presenting another person’s ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging the source.
  - Using information that is not common knowledge without acknowledging the source.
  - Failing to acknowledge collaborators on homework and laboratory assignments.

Internet plagiarism includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the internet without citing the source, and “cutting & pasting” from various sources without proper attribution.

• The use of laptops is also prohibited during class. Turn off all cell phones or anything that beeps before coming into class (putting your phone on vibrate does not count). Failure to do so will affect your final participation grade.

• Please inform me before class if sickness, emergency, et cetera, will prevent you from attending. You are responsible for the reading even if absent.

• Any late assignments will receive a grade reduction.

Class Schedule

Section One: Poetry

Week 3

Tuesday, Feb. 14  Post short analysis of one poem by Monday, 10:00 p.m.
                  William Butler Yeats, “He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven”

Thursday, Feb. 16 Sound and Metaphor: In the Palm of Your Hand (Chapters 7, 9, 10, 14)
• Poem due: Poem 18, In the Palm of Your Hand, p. 92. Also turn in one revision of an earlier poem (bring copies)

Week 4

Tuesday, Feb. 21:
NO CLASSES

Thursday, Feb. 23 Form and Meter: In the Palm of Your Hand (Chapters 17-21)

Week 5

Tuesday, Feb. 28 Post short analysis of one poem by Monday, 10:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 01 • Poem due: revision of an earlier poem (bring copies)
• Poem due: Turn in a villanelle, sonnet or ghazal (bring copies)

Section Two: Drama

Week 6

Tuesday, March 06 Introduction to Drama
Creating Characters
In-class exercises
Mary Gallagher, “Brother” (Take Ten)
Eric Lane, “A Bowl of Soup”

Thursday, March 08 Conflict:
Joe Pintauro, “Two Eclairs”
Mary Sue Price, “That Midnight Rodeo”

Week 7

Tuesday, March 13 Post your Reading Report by Monday, 10:00 p.m.
David Mamet, “A Sermon”
Jane Martin, “Shasta Rue”

Thursday, March 15 Monologue:
José Rivera, “Gas”
Diana Son, “R.A.W.”
August Wilson, “The Janitor”
• Part One of short scene due (bring copies)
**Week 8**

Tuesday, March 20  
Post your Reading Report by Monday, 10:00 p.m.  
David Ives, “The Philadelphia”

Thursday, March 22  
Experiment:  
Chiori Miyagawa, “Yesterday’s Window”  
• Complete draft of short scene due (bring copies)

**Week 9**

Tuesday, March 27  
Post your Reading Report by Monday, 10:00 p.m.  
Sybil Rosen, “Duet for Bear and Dog”  
Fiction workshop groups sign-up sheets

Thursday, March 29  
No classes: Student Conferences

*Section Three: Fiction*

**Week 10**

Tuesday, April 03  
Post your Reading Report by Monday, 10:00 p.m.  
Telling Stories: *Fiction Writer’s Workshop* (Introduction-Chapter 1)  
“Continuity of Parks”, Julio Cortazar  
“The Hen” and “The Smallest Woman in the World”, Clarice Lispector  
Edwidge Danticat, “The Book of the Dead”  
• Craft exercise due: Exercise 2, *Fiction Writer Workshop*, p. 20

Thursday, April 05  
Setting and Character: *Fiction Writer’s Workshop* (Chapter 2-3 and “The Monkey Garden”, p. 310)  
Joyce Carol Oates, “Where are you Going, Where have you Been?”  
• Craft Exercise due: Exercise 2 (p.39) and Exercise 3 (p.59), *Fiction Writer Workshop*

**Week 11**

Tuesday, April 10:  
NO CLASSES

Thursday, April 12:  
NO CLASSES

**Week 12**

Post your Reading Report by Monday, 10:00 p.m.

Tuesday, April 17  
Raymond Carver “A Small, Good Thing”  
Michael Faber, “Bye-Bye Natalia”  
Group A short stories due
Thursday, April 19  Plot: *Fiction Writer’s Workshop* (Chapter 4)  Raymond Carver, “Cathedral”  John Cheever, “Reunion”  Daniel Alarcon, “The Bridge”

• **Craft Exercise due:** Exercise 1, *Fiction Writer Workshop*, p. 80

Group B short stories due

**Week 13**

Tuesday, April 24  Post your Reading Report by Monday, 10:00 p.m.

Flannery O’Connor, “Everything That Rises Must Converge”

Workshop Group A stories

Group C short stories due

Thursday, April 26  Point of View: *Fiction Writer’s Workshop* (Chapter 5)

• **Craft Exercise due:** Exercise 9, *Fiction Writer Workshop*, p. 106

Workshop Group B stories

Group D short stories due

**Week 14**

Tuesday, May 01  Post your Reading Report by Monday, 10:00 p.m.


Workshop Group C short stories

Group E short stories due

Thursday, May 03  Description: *Fiction Writer’s Workshop* (Chapter 8)

Jhumpa Lahiri, “This Blessed House”

• **Craft Exercise due:** Exercises 5 and 6, *Fiction Writer Workshop*, p. 166

Workshop Group D short stories

Group F short stories due

**Week 15**

Tuesday, May 08  Post your Reading Report by Monday, 10:00 p.m.

Workshop Group E stories  Junot Diaz, “How to Date a Browngirl…”

Thursday, May 10  Voice: *Fiction Writer’s Workshop* (Chapter 9)

Eudora Welty, “Where is the Voice Coming From?”
• Craft Exercise due: Exercise 1 (p. 185) or Exercise 2 (p. 186), Fiction Writer Workshop, p. 80

Workshop Group F stories

**Week 16**

**Tuesday, May 15**

Conferences for Final Portfolio

*Portfolios due Tuesday, May 22 by 2 p.m.*