**INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING**

**ENGL 2513-65029**

**Fall 2021**

MWF 12:30-1:20 PM

ATRC 102

Instructor: Sara Gilbert

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Office: Morrill Hall 406

Office hours: MW 1:30-3:00 pm (both in person or online)

\*\*e-mail is the best way to reach me—I will try to respond within 24 hours, but sometimes it may take longer (especially during my Qualifying Exam weekend in October—we’ll talk more about that later). E-mail me early if you ever have any questions.\*\*

*“You can, you should, and if you’re brave enough to start, you will. Writing is magic, as much the water of life as any other creative art. The water is free so drink. Drink and be filled up.”*

*-*Stephen King

*“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”*

-Maya Angelou

**Course Description:**

First and foremost, my goal for this semester is to make sure each of you writes well and often. I want you to be able to use language, imagery, and storytelling to move your readers. I want you to leave this class as better creative writers. Throughout the semester, I aim to create a classroom that feels comfortable and productive. It will be a space to ask questions and grow. We’ll discuss assigned readings, craft, insights, ideas, and, most of all, write. You will be discovering what pieces you want to write for your Portfolio. The best stories, essays, and poems will come from a place close to you.

**Course Outcomes:**

Students who successfully complete ENGL 2513 will:

-Develop artistic skills and techniques in creative writing including knowledge of and careful attention to the craft and process of writing.

-Understand, appreciate, and recognize the discipline necessary to produce creative writing—one that can be improved with practice.

-Enhance personal creativity and self-expression.

-Learn about literary forms and traditions that shape your own creative writing.

**MATERIALS:**

**Required Texts:**

*Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories (CASS)*, ed. Wolff

*Contemporary American Poetry (CAP)*, ed. Poulin and Waters

*Short Takes: Brief Encounters with Contemporary Nonfiction (ST),* ed. Kitchen

\*Additional essays, fiction, and poetry will be accessible through either links in emails, PDFs on Canvas, or handouts\*

**Other materials:**

-One **notebook** for in-class writing

-One **2-pocket plastic folder or binder** to store comments from myself and your peers

-**Daily access to Canvas** (I suggest the smartphone app)

-The ability to **check emails daily** to see if I have sent any reminders or clarifications about assignments

**Weekly Coursework:**

-Free writes:

-Most classes will start with a 5 minute free write. These are nonjudgmental writings on a topic, form, or genre I assign. If you arrive late, you miss out. You will keep all of these free writes in a journal or notebook; make sure to bring this journal or notebook to class every day. Hopefully, these journals will give you ideas for your workshop pieces, so it’s important to remember them! I will be checking these for completion at the end of the semester (as part of your final grade).

-Writings:

-You will have THREE different workshops throughout the semester and THREE REVISION workshops—so, basically, you’ll go once every two weeks. That’s a lot, I know. But the most important part of this class is to write and revise constantly! These will receive feedback from both myself and your classmates. You should be open to constructive criticism—we are readers explaining what does and does not work in a given poem/essay/story—it is a unique situation, but the experience is worth it. \*Note: all feedback is given to make the work better, not to criticize mistakes. \* For these workshops, you can write in either prose or poetry, but I would suggest you have one of each throughout the semester. This class pushes boundaries—that’s what makes better writers.

Revision Workshops:

-Halfway through the semester, there will be three rounds of revision workshops. For these, you must revise your work and resubmit for workshop. These workshops will be looking for new praises and criticisms: how did the changes work? Did they make the piece clearer? Did other things jump out as confusing? Are there lower order concerns (i.e. tense issues, setting unclear, etc). They do not have to be in order—for example, story 1 does not have to be submitted for revision round 1—but you must revise all 3!

-Workshop Letters:

-150-300 word letters will be due for your peer and myself (either in print or emailed to both myself and your peer) in which you will comment on your peers’ work. These should comment on specific elements of crafts, what you thought the piece was about, and what you suggest may be improved. Always make sure to end on a genuinely thoughtful and kind note. We will discuss this more during Week 1. These are minor grades, but they are EXTREMELY important for revision: if you don’t give someone thoughtful feedback, they probably won’t give you thoughtful feedback, either.

-Discussions:

-We will have class discussions about weekly readings every Friday. It is important that you come to class having read—pick out things you liked or didn’t, why or why not, what could have made you like things more, etc. Each of these readings, even if you don’t like them, will have something to teach you. It’s okay to be opinionated, and it’s even okay to disagree.

-Homework:

-All homework will be turned in using MLA formatting. One inch margins, double spaced, Times New Roman, size 12 font. Always create an **original creative** **title** for every assignment, especially your essays, poems, and stories. For the header, (top left corner) type the following in this order:

Your name

Gilbert

ENGL 2513

Date

Keep track of the daily assigned homework from creative activities, worksheets, and other miscellaneous items that may be assigned to help you grow as creative writers.

**\*\*REMINDER: SAVE ALL WORK\*\*** Create a folder on your hard drive or computer for this class! At the end of the semester, you will be turning in a digital portfolio showcasing your best work of prose and poetry. This will be titled as your **Final Portfolio**—and who knows, maybe you can publish some of this work (submittable is a great place to look for literary magazines and journals that are searching for work from new writers, but we’ll talk about that later)!

**NOTE: Genre fiction is not acceptable for workshop submissions for this course.** We are studying the conventions of literary fiction which is significantly different than genre fiction. Also, nursery rhymes or love poems should also not be turned into this course—although these forms may be cute and fun, they are not considered literary.

**Classroom Conduct:**

I expect common courtesy and mutual respect in the classroom. Treat everyone the way you want to be treated. Speak kindly and patiently. Rudeness, disrespect, and hateful comments toward anyone in the class will not be tolerated. Also, this class is a safe space: nothing shared within the course can be repeated elsewhere. Writing is deeply personal, so you need to respect each other’s works and feelings regarding these subjects.

**Grading:**

Most of your work will be graded on completion rather than content. However, I will be grading your final portfolio for **quality**. At the end of the semester, I will be looking at your **growth** as a writer since that is the ultimate goal of the course. If you are unsure of where you stand in this curse, feel free to talk with me during office hours, but I will not discuss grades through email.

**Grade Breakdown:**

**Final Portfolio: 50%**

-This will consist of revised (and revised revised) workshop pieces. Approximately 10-15 pages writing.

**Homework and in-class writings: 25%**

-This includes workshop drafts, pop quizzes, and written workshop letters to your classmates.

**Participation: 20%**

**Free writes: 5%**

\*\*NOTE: showing up, trying your best, being courteous, engaging in class discussion, doing the work, and working on revisions are the best way to succeed!\*\*

**Expectations:**

**Participation:**

I understand writing may not be everyone’s passion, but each class member is expected to participate. It is worth it to communicate, be vulnerable, engage in thoughtful, respectful dialogue with your peers and myself. Participation is 20% of your final grade, so make sure you are talking in every class meeting. If there are any reasons you cannot share in class, please let me know on the first day of class.

**Preparedness:**

Do your assignments, bring necessary materials to class, post to Canvas on time, keep up with your readings, and give your 100%.

**Email Etiquette:**

I will communicate with you over email regularly (almost daily). Make sure you are checking your OSU and Canvas emails multiple times a day. If possible, I recommend setting up your email notifications on your phone. When you email me, please write in a professional tone—include a subject, salutation, and your name as a signature.

**Punctuality:**

Come to class on time. We’ll be on a pretty strict schedule and being late will mean that you miss writing activities or workshops. If there is an emergency, get in contact with me as soon as possible. I understand life can happen in ways we don’t expect (especially post-pandemic). If you’re sick, literally just let me know via email.

\*\*If you think you could have Covid/have been exposed to it: **DO NOT COME TO CLASS**. Simply email me and we’ll figure it out, but everyone reacts to the virus differently and I don’t want anyone to get sick because of my class.\*\*

**Technology:**

**No texting, tweeting, snapchatting, instagraming, tiktoking, etc. That means no laptops or phones out unless otherwise specified.** Having your phone out will lower your participation grade by 5% each time. However, if you feel more equipped to use technology, please let me know on the first day. I understand everyone has different learning needs (I, personally, write better on a laptop, so I get it).

**Office Hours:**

Come visit me during my office hours! I’m here for you and want you to succeed and grow as a writer. We can chat about writing or life or whatever. My first creative writing class changed my life, and I would love if it had the same effect on one of you.

\*\*This syllabus is subject to change at my discretion\*\*

**Schedule**

\*\*NOTE: all workshop pieces are due online by the FRIDAY BEFORE your workshop\*\*

Week 1: INTRO

Monday, August 16: Introduction: review syllabus and class introductions

Wednesday, August 18: How to Workshop (part I): example workshop letters

\*\*Friday, August 20: How to Workshop (part II): practice!

Week 2: WORKSHOP ROUND 1

Monday, August 23: Workshop

Wednesday, August 25: Workshop

\*\*Friday, August 27: Discussion (*CASS*, Allison; *ST*, Perillo)

Week 3: WORKSHOP ROUND 1 CONT.

Monday, August 30: Workshop

Wednesday, September 1: Workshop

\*\*Friday, September 3: Discussion (*CAP*, Brooks; *CASS,* Dubus*; ST*, Kuusisto)

Week 4: WORKSHOP ROUND 2

Monday, September 6: LABOR DAY—NO CLASS

Wednesday, September 8: Workshop

\*\*Friday, September 10: Workshop

Week 5: WORKSHOP ROUND 2 CONT.

Monday, September 13: Workshop

Wednesday, September 15: Workshop

\*\*Friday, September 17: Discussion (*CASS*, Carver; *ST*, Daum)

Week 6: WORKSHOP ROUND 3

Monday, September 20: Workshop

Wednesday, September 22: Workshop

\*\*Friday, September 24: Discussion (*CAP*, Justice; *CASS*, Kincaid)

Week 7: WORKSHOP ROUND 3 CONT.

Monday, September 27: Workshop

Wednesday, September 29: Workshop

Friday, October 1: Discussion (*ST*, Barnes; *CAP*, Komunyakaa)

Week 8: CRAFT

Monday, October 4: Fiction

Wednesday, October 6: Nonfiction

Friday, October 8: Discussion (*CASS*, Johnson; *ST*, Kitchen)

Week 9: CRAFT

Monday, October 11: Poetry

Wednesday, October 13: Practice/Questions/Writing Day

\*\*Friday, October 15: Discussion (*CAP*, Lee; *CASS*, Jones)

Week 10: REVISION WORKSHOP 1

Monday, October 18: Workshop

Wednesday, October 20: Workshop

\*\*Friday, October 22: Discussion (*CASS*, Wideman; *ST*, Saner)

Week 11: REVISION WORKSHOP 1

Monday, October 25: Workshop

Wednesday, October 27: Workshop

\*\*Friday, October 29: Discussion (*ST*, Berman; *CAP*, Levertov)

Week 12: REVISION WORKSHOP 2

Monday, November 1: Workshop

Wednesday, November 3: Workshop

\*\*Friday, November 5: Discussion (*CASS*, Olmstead; *ST*, Antonetta)

Week 13: REVISION WORKSHOP 2

Monday, November 8: Workshop

Wednesday, November 10: Workshop

\*\*Friday, November 12: Discussion (*CAP*, Glück; *CASS*, Tan)

Week 14: REVISION WORKSHOP 3

Monday, November 15: Workshop

Wednesday, November 17: Workshop

\*\*Friday, November 19: Discussion (*ST*, Pancake; *CAP*, Lowell)

Week 15: THANKSGIVING WEEK—NO CLASS

Week 16: REVISION WORKSHOP 3

Monday, November 29: Workshop

Wednesday, December 1: Workshop

Friday, December 3: Class wrap-up

Week 17: FINALS WEEK—NO CLASS

\*\*PORTFOLIOS DUE BY **FRIDAY DECEMBER 10** BY 11:59 PM\*\*