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Intro to Creative Writing

Location: ENG-231
Time: M/T/W/Th 10 – 11:55 a.m.

The writer and the reader stand at either end of a pond. The writer drops a pebble in and the ripples reach the reader...

In other words, they're in connection.

These days, it's easy to feel that we've fallen out of connection with one another and with the earth and with reason and with love. I mean: we have. But to read, to write, is to say that we still believe in, at least, the possibility of connection.

— George Saunders, from *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain*

Course Description:

What is the power of creative writing? And what modalities does it offer us to better know our communities, our world, and ourselves?

Introduction to Creative Writing is a multi-genre course divided into three sections: poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. Each unit will consist of reading assignments, discussions, in-class writing exercises, creative projects, and workshops exploring the craft, technique, and applications of each genre.

At the end of the course, students will have a written portfolio that may serve as the creative portion of the application of the Creative Writing Minor.

Course Objectives:

- Students will identify the creative forms and their elements presented in each unit: poetry, fiction, and nonfiction.
- Students will locate craft techniques in the assigned readings and analyze how they support the choice of form and the meaning of a text.
- Students will demonstrate comprehension of forms and craft techniques by creating their own original writings in all three genres.
- Students will demonstrate their understanding of editing techniques by turning in a portfolio of assignment revisions at the end of the semester.

Required Materials:

All readings will be provided on Canvas or handed out in class.

Recommended: a blank journal.

Evaluation:

Attendance, participation: 50%

Poetry project: 10%

Fiction project: 10%

Nonfictions project: 10%

Final Portfolio: 20%

Content Warnings

An important aspect of this class is to help you get a sense of creative writing as a wide and diverse tradition. This course, and its texts, may include sensitive material. Our required readings may include, explicitly or thematically, issues of loss, sex, race, misogyny, violence, death, difficult family dynamics, illness, infidelity, etc. If you are interested in seeing the applicable content warnings for each required reading, please reach out to me directly. I also request that we use content warnings when sharing our own work in workshop.

If you are concerned about a particular reading, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Participation and Attendance: (*Course Objectives 1 and 3*)

- Because this class depends on the intimate collection of bonds between class members, attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted 3 unexcused absences—**without penalty, no questions asked**—before this portion of grade is impacted. Every unexcused absence thereafter will have a negative impact on overall final grade, at the rate of one-half letter grade deduction per absence. To ensure that your absence is marked as excused, simply let me know before class in person or via email that you will be unable to attend. Two late arrivals, or leaving class early without permission, equal one absence. If you foresee any problems with this policy, please talk to me at the beginning of the semester.
- Attendance is not equivalent to class participation, which requires responsibility and thoughtfulness both inside and outside the classroom. All students are required to contribute to class discussions and activities in a consistent, deliberate, and respectful manner, making specific and accurate reference to readings and assignments. Students must engage as a learning community, acknowledging differing experiences and perspectives.

- Participation entails **workshop comments, completion of assignments, and engagement in discussions and in-class activities** (there may be occasional reading checks—see below).
 - If you have trouble participating verbally in class—whether because you are reserved, you find the material challenging, or for some other reason—please speak to me early in the semester. There is no shame in this; we will work together to find a mutually agreeable solution.
 - Students must come to class prepared with pen/pencil, journal, or writing device, the given week’s assignments and/or workshop materials, and required reading.
- This is a reading-intensive course. It should go without saying, but my expectation is that students will come to every class having read, and reflected on, each assigned reading and/or workshop piece. **When possible, read each selection twice before in-class discussions.**
 - To ensure that students have completed the required readings for each class period, reading checks may be implemented at the beginning of class.
 - There may be some optional readings intended to supplement our discussions.
 - Students whose participation does not meet these criteria will not earn full credit.

General assignment requirements:

- Formatting: Work should be double-spaced, paginated, and written in standard 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Hardcopies must be collated and stapled. Please do not add extra space between paragraphs. Please label your work with the date, the assignment name, and a creative title. Your name should be on EACH page of the assignment. If you have any difficulty with formatting or are unfamiliar with word- processing tools, please contact me at the beginning of the semester for assistance.
- All work should be proofread in advance for errors.
- If you would like to discuss your writing with me prior to the due date for each paper, please feel free to make an appointment with me or visit my office hours.

Course Policies:

I strive to create an inclusive learning environment for all. I am invested in your success in this class and at Rutgers- Newark, so please feel free to let me know if anything is standing in the way of your doing your best work (disclosure is, of course, never required). This might include your own relative learning strengths, any classroom dynamics that you find uncomfortable, financial difficulties, ESL issues, disability or chronic illness, and/or personal issues that impinge on your work. I will make every effort to present reasonable adaptations and to open further channels of access should you request them.

Disability Policy: I assume that all of us have different ways of learning due to our different backgrounds, and that the organization of any course will accommodate each student differently. For example, you may prefer to process information by speaking and listening, so that some of the handouts I provide may be difficult to absorb. Please communicate with me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs and how this course can best accommodate them.

Device Usage: Because participation is an integral component of this course, cell phones may not be used in class at any time. Laptops and tablet devices may be used in certain classes, as specified. At any time, I may subpoena all notes taken electronically. If I suspect that you are using your laptop or tablet for purposes unrelated to our class, I will either subpoena your notes for the day or simply deduct from your participation grade. Should this happen more than twice during the semester, you will no longer be permitted to use any electronic device in the classroom. Also, recording in the class is not permitted.

Late Work: I expect you to make every effort to complete your work by the given deadline. To request an extension, you must email or ask in person; I will consider your request and, if granted, we will agree upon an extended due date. In general, I will make an effort to grant an extension, no questions asked, if the request is made at least 48 hours before the assignment's due date. If you do not request an extension within this time period or do not stick to the new deadline, grade reductions apply. In some cases, I may be unable to grant an extension, as a late submission may affect your peers' abilities to read and comment on your work in a timely manner.

Religious Holidays: Please provide timely notification about necessary absences for religious observances. Students are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule.

Course Content: Our classroom is a safe space. I expect students to exercise consistent sensitivity, maturity, deliberation, and acuity, both in writing and revising their own works and in discussing the works of predecessors and of peers. Displays of unkindness or disrespect of any variety will not be tolerated. When participating in workshop, keep in mind that your peers may come from backgrounds different from your own. Workshop the story, not the author, and respect the distance between author and narrator. Do not share the work of your peers outside of class without their consent.

This course, and its texts, may include sensitive material. As with many pieces of great literature, our required readings may include, explicitly or thematically, issues of loss, sex, race, difficult family dynamics, illness, infidelity, etc.

If you are interested in seeing the applicable content / trigger warnings for each required reading, please take a look at the "Content Warnings" document on Canvas. If necessary, you may request that your classmates use trigger warnings when sharing their own work; please contact me if this is the case and I will inform the class.

Course Updates: This syllabus may be modified based on students' progress and interests. If I make any changes to the syllabus or the course schedule, I will update students in class or via email.

Resources:

Please feel free to contact me at any time for further resources and recommendations.

Disability Services: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must complete and submit the Registration Form, schedule and complete an intake meeting, and submit appropriate documentation. If your request for reasonable accommodations is approved, you will receive a Letter of Accommodations (LOA), which you should present privately to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. Accommodations are not retroactive and are effective only upon submission of the LOA to the instructor. Please begin the process by completing and submitting the Registration Form, Applying for Services, available at the website below.

- Applying for Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services>
- Documentation Guidelines: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>
- Letter of Accommodations (LOA): <https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations/letter-of-accommodations>
- Office of Disability Services (ODS)
Suite 219, Paul Robeson Campus Center (973) 353-5315
odsnewark@rutgers.edu
- Further information: <https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/disability-services>

Learning Resources: The Writing Center is an excellent resource for writers of all levels, providing assistance with all aspects of writing— including but not limited to brainstorming, organization, thesis formation, and revision. In addition, the writing center offers access to computers and B&W printing. You can make appointments for tutoring sessions and find more information about the Writing Center on their website, provided below:

- Room 126, Conklin Hall
- (973) 353-5847
- nwc@rutgers.edu
- <https://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter>
For general academic support, please visit the Learning Center:
- Room 140, Bradley Hall
- (973) 353-5608
- <http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/rlc>

International Student Academic Center: If you are an international student for whom English is a second language, I encourage you to take advantage of the resources that RU-N makes available at the Program in American Language Studies, located in Conklin 226. Tutoring, workshops, and groups to practice English conversation and other skills are available. For more information, please visit: <https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/oiss> and <http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/pals>.

Counseling Services: Free counseling services and support are available from the RU-N Counseling Center. To make an appointment, visit the counseling office in Blumenthal Hall 100 to begin paperwork (Phone: 973-353-5805). This can be an invaluable resource when stress makes your work more challenging than it ought to be.

Academic Integrity:

Your work must be original and written by you alone. You are not to collaborate on the writing of any assignment unless you're directed to do so. You may brainstorm with one another and share responses to work, but the work you turn in must be completely your own. You may not adapt existing work of any kind in any way without explicit permission to do so.

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. Students are responsible for understanding the principles of academic integrity and abiding by them in all aspects of their work at the University. Students are also encouraged to help educate fellow students about academic integrity and to bring all alleged violations of academic integrity they encounter to the attention of the appropriate authorities. To view the Academic Integrity Policy, please visit: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy>.