

# Course Syllabus

Welcome to Creative Writing!

Fall 2022/Eng 71/05

This class meets Mondays & Wednesdays

3:00-4:15 online

**Office Hours 8-10 am Tuesday and  
Thursday and by appointment**

**Zoom Link for Office Hours**

"The more you read, the more you will write. The better the stuff you read, the better the stuff you will write"-- Annie Dillard.

The shortest short story Ernest Hemingway ever wrote is one of his best—and only six words long: "For Sale: Baby shoes, Never Worn."

From the fireside glow of bygone days to our modern living rooms brimming with technology, storytelling keeps us company, helps us understand our worlds, feel our humanity, and travel to far-away places. Since childhood, many of us have imagined stories as an avenue out of our mundane, ordinary world into extraordinary lands and adventures. But how has the art of the story (particularly short stories and their telling) mesmerized us so thoroughly throughout the ages? Why do they matter? What do they tell us about our humanity? Why do we want to create our own stories?

Multi-genre spoken-word Poet Phillip Kaye gives us ideas for storytelling

[here.](#)

# The Class Structure:

The class runs from Monday to Sunday with our meetings on Mondays and Workdays on Wednesdays.

If you see HW in the title of a discussion post or quiz, that assignment is due on Sunday night before the following week starts. I do not accept late work, so I advise that you do the assignment when you have time, rather than waiting until the last possible minute. Everything from the previous week is due by midnight Sunday night.

Monday: Make sure you have read the assigned readings and are ready to discuss them on the day they are listed.

Wednesdays: (scheduled meeting time.) We will complete activities and WRITE, WRITE, WRITE! I will hold Zoom meetings online on both days with the expectation that on Mondays, we discuss readings and on Wednesdays, we WRITE. Yes, during class time. Yes, as a group but individually. Every single week.

**Please make sure you pay attention to deadlines. You need to find a [CLA reading](#) to attend, so don't let that part creep up on you. Keep reading the book of your choosing all semester as well.**

# Course Description

In this course, we will study the main genres of creative writing to prepare you for upper-level creative writing courses. We will also help you develop your figurative language skills to “dress up” your own writing and make it more appealing to others. But, most importantly, we will write--AND READ--a lot!

But, this will be an unusual class in terms of form. We will be starting each week with a focused idea, then reading an assigned reading for discussion on Monday during our Zoom meeting, and on Wednesday, you will write.

All the while, you will be reading one of these books to prepare for your final essay on this book due the last week of class.

## **READINGS: (choose one, but read all for reference)**

Pick one of the following books and spend the semester reading it. Take notes. Practice what you read. Use the techniques, suggestions, and ideas from your chosen author. You will be responsible for a report on it by the end of the semester.

Lamott, Anne. Bird By Bird, Anchor, 1995.

Rich, Adrienne, Arts of the Possible

, Norton, 2002.

King, Stephen, On Writing,

Schriber, 2000.

Hass, Robert. A Little Book on Form

Norton, 2018

Oliver, Mary, A Poetry Handbook

, Schriber, 1994

Burns, Catherine, How to Tell A Story

, Crown, 2022 (From The Moth Radio Hour Podcast)

# Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you should understand the following:

- the basic techniques and terminology of fiction writing
- the basic techniques and terminology of creative nonfiction writing
- the basic techniques and terminology of poetry writing
- critical reading skills for critiquing fiction, essays, and poetry, both one's own and peers
- a workshop method of critiquing creative writing
- the importance of revision within the creative writing process

# ASSIGNMENTS

These objectives will be accomplished and evaluated through the following work:

- 100 pts: examination essay of published works (1 essay) from one of these books of your choice (100 pts). WORK ON READING THIS ALL SEMESTER.
- 50 pts: your report of a [CLA event](#) at SJSU
- 500 pts: ten discussion posts (you have more than 10 assigned--I will count your best 10)
- 50 pts: Midterm Quiz on Literary Devices
- 100 pts: 2 polished, revised pieces ready for publication
- 100 pts: 2 completed, thoughtful peer reviews
- 100 pts: your final Adobe Spark Portfolio: which includes 3 pieces from your work all semester submitted in Adobe Spark as a portfolio
- 50 pts: Create a [Submittable](#) account, Submit one piece. Submit a screenshot for a grade.
- 50 pts: Submit something through Submittable
- 100 pts: Final Essay: Your Self-identity poem compared to one from class discussion

For grades, I will base them on the quality of the work you are handing in, as well as your spoken input during the workshop. I look here for insightful and valuable criticism that goes beyond a simple reaction to the work. Note, too, that if you're not in class, you can't participate in a workshop beyond posting your critique, and you will not receive full credit for that workshop. Attendance can affect this grade as well.

Try to use the "pat/slap" method of critiquing -- your commentary on the work should give both positive as well as negative feedback, and present any negative comments in as positive a manner as possible. I also expect criticism to be concrete and specific: anyone responding "Well, I liked it" or "I didn't like this paragraph" will immediately be asked the question: "Why?"

When you're critiqued, in turn, please remember to take any negative feedback as being intended to help you -- remember that your fellow students are critiquing your work, not you personally.

**ADOBE SPARK PORTFOLIO** (100 points): This is the heart of the class. At the final regular class of the summer, you will turn in a chapbook containing THREE REVISED WORKS FROM YOUR DISCUSSION POSTS. The expectation here is that your 'final' revisions will be more substantial than simple proofing or correcting of spelling/grammatical mistakes. Failure to turn in your portfolio at all will obviously result in 0 points and failure of the course. Grading of the portfolio will be based primarily on the strength of the final revisions against the previous version, but I will also be looking at adherence to proper manuscript form. I want to note that I will *not* be comparing your work to the work of anyone else in the class. I'm looking for the improvement you personally have made from the draft you turned in to the workshop to the final product, as well as seeing you integrate skills and knowledge gleaned from the material presented to you.

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## General Contact Information:

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[su.edu](http://su.edu)

You may text any time between 8 am-5 pm M-F. I appreciate your respect for my time off the clock.

I'm available to you as a resource for this class, and will try to respond to your emails (usually the best way to get hold of me) or phone calls as soon as possible, and, if needed, make time to meet with you at your request. Should you email me, I typically will respond within one working day of receiving the message (and often sooner). *If you do not receive a reply from me, assume that for some reason I did not receive the message and send it again.* The excuse "but I sent you an email about that..." will not be accepted.

I would suggest you obtain the phone number or e-mail address of a few other students in the class so that you can check with them on what was missed during any class that you're unable to attend.

# Class Policies & Expectations:

**Participation:** Please keep up.

What is participation? I expect that each student will engage in our workshop discussions, as well as any additional lecture material. The more you have input into the class, the more we'll all learn. I much prefer not to call on people and force them to respond -- that is *not* class participation. Of course, if you're absent, you can't participate at all. I don't expect everyone to be "on" each and every class day -- we all have our off days -- but I do expect regular participation from each student. THIS MEANS READ what is assigned and be ready to talk about it.

**Late assignments:** Late assignments or failure to bring required material to class will make it difficult for all students. Therefore, stories or assignments turned in late will not be accepted.

**Conduct:** Respect is the key. Your attitude is an important component of participation. Your attitude should not be confrontational, nor should you put down other students' work or opinions, whether through too-aggressive argument or through the use of

humor at other students' expense. Like any critical conversation where participants bring different experiences to their understanding of the issues, ours will undoubtedly generate strong emotions, reactions, questions, affirmations, and disagreements. Healthy dialogue requires careful listening, respect for other people's perspectives, and a willingness to examine our own assumptions. We must feel free to disagree--but disagreement needn't imply dismissal of other perspectives. I encourage you to keep an open and inquisitive mind and realize that intellectual discomfort is not always a negative thing. Our goal is not agreement, but *understanding*. Understanding is a process that may first require some unlearning of old habits and ways of seeing the world.

This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the entire class at any time.