

Creative Writing: Short Fiction, Comedy Writing, and Dramatic Screenwriting

“Every secret of a writer’s soul, every experience of [her] life, every quality of [her] mind, is written large in [her] works.”
- Virginia Woolf

Course Overview

This is an introductory course on the fundamentals of creative fiction writing, translated through three distinct mediums: short fiction, comedy/live performance, and dramatic screenwriting.

Course Objective

1. Learn skills and tools needed for creative writing, including:
 - a. the basic techniques and terminology of fiction writing
 - b. critical reading skills for critiquing fiction, essays, and poetry, both one’s own and peers’
 - c. a workshop method of critiquing creative writing
 - d. the importance of revision within the creative writing process
2. Learn the structures of creative writing in different genres and mediums.
3. Use writing as a tool for empowerment and self-expression.

Course Format

Class meetings will include short lectures followed by exercises and discussions. This is a workshop based course, and students should be prepared to share their work and opinions, as well as give and accept constructive feedback. The semester will be broken into three units – short fiction, comedy/live performance, and dramatic screenwriting. Over each unit, students will be completing a corresponding project which will be presented to the class on the final day before moving on to the next unit. These projects will be largely self-directed and worked on outside of class, besides scheduled review/edit days.

If you complete a project or exercise in which you would like your writing to be kept private, please inform us ahead of time. This course is intended to be interactive and engaging; we welcome feedback as to which activities and assignments you find most effective so that we can adjust the course to best serve your needs!

Course Expectations

1. Participate actively in discussion, exercises, and critiques.
2. Be respectful and considerate to your peers. Writing can be very personal and derogatory feedback will not be tolerated.
3. Make an effort on your outside-class work.

Course Policies

This course will involve the sharing of writing samples and live performance. We ask that all students are respectful of their classmates and foster a positive, safe learning space. Please focus on sharing constructive feedback: If you point out something that should be revised, brainstorm how revisions should be made. Feel free to disagree and to debate, but do so respectfully and with a focus on substance. Active participation will ensure that you get the most out of your time in the classroom.

Course Certificates

Although this course is non-credit and students will not receive grades, this class still demands equivalent effort and time. In place of adhering to a typical A-E grading scale, students can attain certificates of completion. The scale follows:

- Certificate of Completion: 70% of classes attended and work completed
- Passed with Distinction: 80% of classes attended and work completed
- Passed with Honors: 90% of classes attended and work completed
- Passed with High Honors: 100% of classes attended and work completed

Course Texts and Media (subject to change) – PLEASE NOTE: IF IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO SHOW VIDEO CLIPS PER PRISON POLICY, WE CAN BRING IN TEXT COPIES OF DESIRED CLIPS

- *Creative Writing: Four Genres in Brief* by David Starkey (textbook, excerpts)
- Various SNL skits (video clip)
- *Up* (2009) intro montage (video clip)
- *Rear Window* (1954) opening scene (video clip)
- *Gone Girl* (2014), Desi/Nick scene (video clip)
- *Juno* (2007), multiple scenes (video clip)
- Speeches of Mark Twain
- Regina Barreca C-Span talk: *Women Laughter Power*

Course Timeline

Please note that the following schedule is a rough outline, and it may shift depending on how the class flows. Any schedule changes will be announced in class.

Week & Date	Topic/Activity	Assignment Due
Week 1 – Aug. 25	Review Syllabus Introduction to Creative Writing In-class exercise	
Week 2 – Sept. 1	Unit 1: Structure and design In-class exercise	
Week 3 – Sept. 8	Unit 1: Characters and point of view	Short-fiction piece workshop day
Week 4 – Sept. 15	Unit 1: Dialogue, tone, and style In-class exercise	
Week 5 – Sept. 22	Final Day Unit 1	Short-fiction piece final for peer presentation
Week 6 – Sept. 29	Unit 2: Mark Twain's speeches (excerpts)	

Week 7 – Oct. 6	Unit 2: Regina Barreca's <i>Women Laughter Power</i>	Comedy performance piece workshop day
Week 8 – Oct. 13	Unit 2: The Skit (SNL)	
Week 9 – Oct. 20	Final Day Unit 2	Comedy performance piece final
Week 10 – Oct. 27	Introduction to film Unit 3: Screenplay structure and plot In-class exercise	
Week 11 – Nov. 3	Unit 3: Action In-class exercise	Short-film workshop day
Week 12 – Nov. 17	Unit 3: Character/dialogue In-class exercise	
Week 13 – Dec. 1	Final Day Unit 3	Short-film final draft presentation day
Week 14 – Dec. 8 (optional)		