# ENGL 2100, Introduction to Creative Writing

# Instructor: Parul Kaushik

# Time and Room: Lang 305, Mon & Wed 2-3:20 PM

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# Office Hours: By appointment

# Course Description

# “If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot.” –Stephen King.

# This course begins by examining the nature of creative writing and how different genres—poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction—shape storytelling. Through reading both theoretical texts and works by established authors, we will analyze how writers create vivid worlds, develop distinctive voices, and use language to transform ideas into engaging stories and imagery.

# Students will practice writing across genres, producing short stories, essays, and poems. For fiction and creative nonfiction, the focus will be on crafting flash pieces between 750 and 1500 words.

# Throughout the course, we will use craft terminology to understand the components of effective writing better. Activities include submitting work for workshops, participating in weekly assignments inspired by assigned prompts and readings, and providing constructive feedback to peers.

# Mastering craft is essential to creative writing—it serves as the foundation that breaks down complex works into manageable elements we can study and apply. Craft equips us with the tools to build our own original and meaningful creative projects.

# Course Grade Breakdown:

# • 20% - Weekly Assignments

# • 10% - Poetry submission

# • 10% - Fiction submission

# • 10% - CNF submission

# • 25% - Workshop responses

# • 25% - Final Portfolio

# Grading Scale:

# A: 100-90

# B: 89-80

# C: 70-79

# D: 60-69

# F: < 60

# Assigned Reading: Reading material will be provided on Canvas

# Course Expectations and Goals: Creative writing demands considerable time and dedication. As a student in this course, you will be expected to carefully read assigned texts before class, actively participate in discussions, and complete weekly writing prompts focused on genre-specific techniques. You will share your work with classmates, offer thoughtful written feedback on their writing, and engage in workshop discussions. This course involves substantial reading, writing, and articulating your ideas during class. To grow as a creative writer and produce high-quality work, you’ll need to invest time reflecting on your writing and thoughtfully applying craft elements in your poems and prose.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

* Engage with representative works of prose and poetry across genres.
* Identify and articulate fundamental terms, craft elements, and conventions in fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry.
* Apply genre-specific techniques through targeted writing prompts.
* Submit creative work—including two poems, one essay, and one short story—for peer review in workshop settings.
* Understand and practice the protocols and etiquette of a constructive workshop environment.
* Critique peers’ work thoughtfully and constructively using the workshop method.
* Incorporate feedback from critiques to revise and strengthen their own writing.
* Produce a final portfolio featuring revised pieces accompanied by a reflective analysis of their writing and revision process.
* Explore and connect with active literary communities to foster ongoing engagement with the craft.

# Policies and Expectations

**Attendance:** Regular attendance is essential for the success of workshop-based learning. Students are expected to be punctual, prepared, and actively participate in all class sessions. Attendance is mandatory on workshop days, both when submitting your own work and when serving as a peer reviewer.

If you anticipate being absent on your scheduled workshop day, you must notify me as soon as possible.

More than **three unexcused absences** will result in a reduction of your grade. Accumulating more than **five unexcused absences** during the semester will result in failure of the course.

Please be advised that if you arrive more than 10 minutes late or leave more than 10 minutes early, you will be marked absent.

**Zoom**: Though this is an in-person class, we may occasionally move a session to Zoom if needed. If you anticipate that you will be unable to participate in a Zoom class due to technology, access, or other reasons, please notify the instructor as soon as possible so we can make arrangements.

**Material for Class:** Make sure to have the assigned reading accessible during class, either in print or on a device. You should also bring something to write with—either a laptop/tablet or paper and pen—for in-class writing and activities.

**Cell Phone/Tech Policy**: Cell phone use is not permitted during class. If you need to use your phone, please step outside to avoid disturbing others. Laptops and tablets are allowed only for accessing notes, readings, class materials, or composing an in-class assignment. Headphones, AirPods, or any other audio device must be put away during class time.

**Late Work**: Because this course depends on timely participation from all students, late submissions will not be accepted, and make-up work is not permitted.

Workshop pieces must be uploaded to Canvas at least one week before your scheduled workshop date to allow your classmates sufficient time to read and provide feedback.

If you need to change your submission date, you must coordinate directly with your classmates to arrange an exchange or alternative plan.

Final portfolios must be submitted by the semester deadline. Extensions will not be granted.

**Respect and Courtesy**: Creative writing often involves exploring personal and subjective material, so all students must maintain a respectful and supportive environment. Thoughtful disagreement is welcome and can be productive, but it must be expressed with courtesy and consideration.

During workshop sessions, it is important to stay fully present and attentive to the writer’s work. Distractions such as cell phone use, off-topic conversations, or any disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who engage in such behavior may be asked to leave, lose attendance credit for the day, and receive a zero for that workshop session.

**Plagiarism**: Creative writing relies on your unique voice and ideas. While it’s natural to draw influence from other writers—their style, themes, or structure—your work must be entirely your own. Submitting material that was written by someone else, in whole or in part, as if it were your own, is considered plagiarism.

All assignments must reflect original creative effort. Any instance of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Use of AI, Grammarly, GPT3, and other AI tools**: This course is designed to support the development of your own creative voice and writing process. While the use of artificial intelligence in artistic work is an evolving and exciting area, the focus of this class is on writing created solely by you. To meet the learning goals of this course, all submitted work must be entirely your own. Any writing generated or assisted by AI will be considered ineligible for credit and will receive a failing grade.

**Communication**: The instructor will respond to emails within **24 hours on weekdays only**. Emails sent over the weekend may not receive a response until Monday.

Before reaching out, please check the syllabus to ensure your question hasn’t already been addressed. Emails asking about material covered in a missed class will not receive a reply; it is your responsibility to catch up by consulting a classmate.

Students are expected to check their **student email account daily** and must use their official university email when communicating for reasons of privacy and record-keeping.

All emails should be written in a **courteous and professional** tone, including an appropriate greeting, a clear subject line, and your full name and class section if applicable.

**Sensitive/Trigger Content**: Some assigned texts and student work may explore sensitive or potentially triggering topics, including personal or traumatic experiences. These materials are presented for literary and educational purposes and do not reflect the personal views of the instructor or the university.

If you find any content difficult to engage with, please don’t hesitate to reach out to the instructor to discuss your concerns or explore possible accommodation.

**Syllabus Changes**: The instructor may revise the syllabus, including due dates, readings, and other course components, as needed throughout the semester. Any changes will be communicated in advance and will be made with the students' best interests in mind.

# Assignments and Activities

**Weekly Assignments:** Throughout the semester, we will explore various genre-specific techniques and craft elements. Students will apply these skills by completing weekly writing prompts assigned during class and submitted via Canvas.

To receive full credit, prompts must be submitted on time and meet the outlined requirements.

**Workshop Submissions:** After each unit, students will submit creative pieces for the class to read and workshop.

* For the poetry unit: submit two poems totaling between 300 and 1000 words.
* For the fiction unit: submit one short story between 750 and 1500 words.
* For the creative nonfiction unit: submit one essay between 750 and 1500 words.

Workshop submissions will earn completion credit. While the quality of the work is not graded, submitting your best effort will help you receive more meaningful feedback.

**Formatting Guidelines:**  
Please submit your work as a Word document, double-spaced, on standard 8.5 x 11-inch pages with one-inch margins. Use 12-point Times New Roman or a similar font. Number all pages, and include your name, the professor’s name, the course number, and the submission date in the upper left corner of the first page.

**Workshop Feedback:** Students must review their classmates’ workshop submissions carefully and post their feedback before the workshop session. Any feedback submitted after the workshop will not be accepted for credit. Each critique should be at least 200-250 words and provide thoughtful analysis. Full credit requires both submitting written feedback and attending the workshop in person.

**Final Portfolio Requirements:**  
At the end of the semester, students will compile a portfolio consisting of:

* Significantly revised versions of the short story, creative nonfiction essay, and two poems that were originally submitted for workshop, reflecting the input of peers and the instructor.
* The original, unedited drafts of these pieces for comparison.
* A 500-750-word reflection essay that covers the revision process for each piece in the portfolio, how the feedback from classmates and the instructor influenced those revisions, and your plans or aspirations for the future direction of the works.

**Extra Credit: TBD**

# Critiquing:

Giving feedback on creative writing can feel quite different from the typical way you might analyze literature. Instead of focusing on finding hidden meanings or dissecting symbols, your role here is to share your genuine response as a reader. Pay attention to the parts of the piece that catch your interest or move you emotionally. Maybe it’s a vivid image, a striking line, or a character’s gesture that stays with you after reading. Highlight these moments and explain what makes them stand out.

It’s also essential to think about how the writer uses different techniques — the way they structure a scene, develop a character, or use language to create mood. Identify what is working well and where you feel the writing could be more precise or stronger. When pointing out areas that didn’t quite work for you, try to understand why that might be. Reflect on how these moments affected your reading experience and share your thoughts thoughtfully.

# Workshop Etiquette:

During the critique, the writer will listen quietly and take notes without responding right away. First, everyone shares positive feedback, focusing on what they liked and what resonated. Then the group moves on to constructive suggestions, considering how the piece might be improved, what could be clearer, or where more detail is needed. When giving feedback, use the terms and ideas we’ve discussed in class to help the writer understand your points.

Everyone must read each piece carefully beforehand so they can participate fully. Feedback should feel like a conversation — if you agree with someone else’s comment, say so. If you have a different view, share it respectfully.

At the end of the workshop, the writer has the chance to ask questions to clarify any feedback. This is a space for constructive, respectful critique, where we help each other improve and find our voices.

**UNT POLICIES:**

**ADA Accommodations Statement**

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

**Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences**

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

The decision of the instructor will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity, which is responsible for maintaining student conduct records. The incident may result in an official disciplinary record for the student(s).

Academic integrity violations can include copying a passage from a source verbatim, but they can also include improper or misleading citations. Please note that all source material must be acknowledged, even if the material is paraphrased. Be careful to always acknowledge the work of other writers and take the time to work out your thoughts and arguments without copying the work of others. (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049>)

**Emergency Notification and Procedures**

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

**Sexual Assault Prevention**

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648

**Retention of Student Records**

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student’s records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University’s policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

# COURSE SCHEDULE

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week | Day | Topic | Reading Due  (read before class) | Assignments |
| 1 | Monday  Aug. 18 | Syllabus, Introductions, and Genres of Creative Writing | None |  |
|  | Wednesday  Aug. 20 | Why Do We Write? What Defines Creative Writing? Discover the Vital Connection Between Reading and Writing | Williams: “Why I Write”; Stafford: “A Way of Writing”; Zagajewski: “Young Poets, Please Read Everything” and “Self-Portrait” | Assignment #1 (due on Sunday, 8/24) |
| 2 | Monday.  Aug. 25 | Defining Poetry? Clarity, Ambiguity, Story Telling. Brevity and Compression | Collins: “Intro to Poetry”; Zapruder: “Understanding Poetry…” Cisneros: “My Wicked Wicked Ways”; Hales, “Power” |  |
|  | Wednesday  Aug. 27 | Memory & Experience;  Sound & Language | Hugo, “Writing off the Subject”; Carver, “After-Glow”; Brooks, “Cynthia in the Snow”; Tretheway, “History Lesson”; Olivares, “Ode to Tortillas” | Assignment #2 (due on Sunday, 8/31) |
| 3 | Monday  Sept. 1 | Labor Day/ No Classes |  |  |
|  | Wednesday  Sept. 3 | Imagery, Metaphor & Simile | Hazelton, “Learning about Figurative Language”; Laux, “The Girl in the Doorway”; Plath, “Metaphors”; Williams, “The Red Wheelbarrow,” Bishop, “The Fish.” | Assignment #3 (due on Sunday, 9/7) |
| 4 | Monday  Sept. 8 | Speaker, Voice, Syntax | Brooks, “We Real Cool”; De la Paz, “In Defense of Small Towns”; Williams, “This is Just to Say”; Francisco, “Along the East River”; Dickinson, “I’m Nobody” | Poem Submissions due on Friday, Sept 12 |
|  | Wednesday  Sept. 10 | Form and Line | Gioia, “13 Ways to Think about the Poetic Line”; Simic, “Essay on the Prose Poem”; Sharif, “Reaching Guantanamo”; Voung, “Of Thee I Sing.”  **Review** |  |
| 5 | Monday  Sept. 15 | Poetry Workshop 1 | Student Poems | Peer-Review Feedback due before Monday's class |
|  | Wednesday  Sept. 17 | Poetry Workshop 2 | Student Poems |  |
| 6 | Monday  Sept. 22 | Introduction to Short Story | O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find”; Carver, “Cathedral” |  |
|  | Wednesday  Sept. 24 | Character | Reissenweber, “Character”; Chekhov, “The Lady with the Dog”; Carver, “Cathedral” | Assignment #4 (due on Sunday, 9/28) |
| 7 | Monday  Sept. 29 | Setting/Pacing | Gussoff “Setting and Pacing.”; Jhumpa Lahiri, “A Temporary Matter” |  |
|  | Wednesday  Oct. 1 | POV | Vogrin, “Point of View”; Chekhov, “The Lady with the Dog”; Carver, “Cathedral”; Joyce, “Araby”; Lahiri, “Interpreter of Maladies”  Kincaid, “Girl” | Assignment #5 (due on Sunday, 10/5) |
| 8 | Monday  Oct. 6 | Plot/Structure | Ebenbach, “Plot”; Carver, “Cathedral” Updike, “A&P” |  |
|  | Wednesday  Oct. 8 | Dialogue | Amend, “Dialogue”; Hemingway, “Hills like White Elephants”; Carver, “What we Talk about When We Talk about Love” | Assignment #6 (due on Sunday, 10/12) |
| 9 | Monday  Oct. 13 | Voice/Syntax | Griffin, “Voice”; Dybek, “We Didn’t”; Bambara, “The Lesson” | Story Submissions due on Friday, Oct 17 |
|  | Wednesday  Oct. 15 | Beyond Realism | Kafka, “Metamorphosis”; Arimah, “Who will Greet You at Home”  Review |  |
| 10 | Monday  Oct. 20 | Fiction Workshop 1 | Student Stories | Peer-Review Feedback due before Monday's class |
|  | Wednesday  Oct. 22 | Fiction Workshop 2 | Student Stories |  |
| 11 | Monday  Oct. 27 | Introduction to NF/Essay Writing | Lopate, “The State of Nonfiction Today.” and “The Personal Essay in the Age of Facebook”; Gabbert, “The Essay as Realm” |  |
|  | Wednesday  Oct. 29 | Flash/Brief Essays | Doyle, “Joyas Voladoras”; Christman, “The Sloth”; Church, “Lag Time”; Kothari, “Listen” | Assignment #7 (due on Sunday,11/2) |
| 12 | Monday  Nov. 3 | Creating Persona | Lopate, “On the Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character”; Klaus, “Your Self in Writing”; Gabbert, “Second Selves”; Sedaris, “Me Talk Pretty One Day” |  |
|  | Wednesday  Nov. 5 | Reflection | Lopate, “Reflection and Retrospection”; Didion, “Goodbye to All That”; White, “Once More to the Lake” | Assignment #8 (due on Sunday, 11/9) |
| 13 | Monday  Nov. 10 | Memory & Thinking on the Page. | Gabbert, “The Little Room (Unreality of Memory)” and “Somethingness (Why Write)”; Fajardo, “What Didn’t Happen”; Woolf, “Street Haunting” | Essay Submissions due on Friday, Nov 14 |
|  | Wednesday  Nov. 12 | Research & Essays in Cultural Context | Lopate “Research and Personal Writing; Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”; Baldwin, “Notes of a Native Son”; Biss, “White Debt”  Review |  |
| 14 | Monday  Nov. 17 | CNF Workshop 1 | Student Essays | Peer-Review Feedback due before Monday's class |
|  | Wednesday  Nov. 19 | CNF Workshop 2 | Student Essays |  |
| 16 | Monday  Dec. 1 | Extra Credit/TBD |  |  |
|  | Wednesday  Dec. 3 | No Class |  |  |
| 17 | Monday  Dec. 8 | No Class |  |  |
|  | Wednesday  Dec. 10 | No Class |  | Final Portfolio Due on Dec. 7 at 11:59 pm |