

Syllabus

English 205 - Introduction to Creative Writing

Course Description:

This course is a practical and workshop class that introduces writers to the elements of poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and drama, prerequisite for all advanced workshops. Class work will include reading the work of established writers in four different genres, studying the craft of writing, and it will involve considerable creative writing in those genres.

Students in this course will participate in a variety of activities, including but not limited to: in-class writing, workshop, reading and group discussion, and more. These activities are meant to support the purpose of the class, which is to familiarize the student with the techniques of writing poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and drama.

Required Texts:

Heather Sellers, *The Practice of Creative Writing: A Guide for Students*

Stephen Minot, *Three Genres*

Online literary journals as assigned

Course Requirements:

Your performance in this class is based on regular attendance and the following assignments. For detailed instructions, see Blackboard.

Evaluation:

Writing Portfolio	50%
Close-Reading Responses	10%
Acts of Literary Citizenship	10%
Craft Exercises and Drafts	10%
Workshop Comments	10%
Participation and Professionalism	10%

I. Writing Portfolio - 50%

At the end of the semester you will submit a portfolio of one short story, one personal essay, a one-act play, and three poems. All are to be revised significantly, and your portfolio must include the earlier drafts with my comments. I will evaluate the portfolio based on the following elements: revision, imagery, concrete language, clarity, complexity, grammar and syntax, form, use of literary devices, and language.

While I won't assign your creative work a letter grade until final exam week, you should have a good idea of how well you're doing by reading my comments and listening to my feedback during workshop. If you are anxious or in doubt about your progress at any point during the semester, make an appointment to discuss your concerns with me.

II. Close-Reading Responses - 10%

Writers are readers. In this course we will be reading as much as we will be writing. I've selected the reading in this class based on two assumptions: first, that by close analysis of literary texts we learn more about how writing works; second, that reading inspires writing by keeping literary language moving through the brain.

We will spend time both close reading our course texts and discussing their impact on us as writers. Therefore, all reading is required reading. One time for each genre you will be required to post a close-reading of a work on Blackboard and respond to two of your peers' readings.

III. Acts of Literary Citizenship – 10%

In order to be a good member of your writing community, you must nurture not only your own projects but also those of others. You are required to engage in 5 acts of literary citizenship (such as attending a public reading or reading a literary journal) throughout the semester and post a 300-word digital report. Your report should include a summary of the act and an evaluation of its outcome (usefulness/success/participant's reactions). Though you will submit 5 reports over the course of the semester, I will not accept more than one report in a given week (translation: do not wait until the end of the semester).

III. Writing Exercises and Drafts – 10%

Both in class and at home, we will complete a number of invention exercises. You will develop many of these into creative works. Of these, you will submit drafts for me. (Depending on time, two or three of these drafts will also be workshopped in class.) I will not assign letter grades to craft exercises or drafts, but you will receive credit for completion, effort, and following instructions.

IV. Workshop Comments – 10%

A significant portion of this course involves workshopping. You are responsible for posting your workshop pieces to Blackboard on time; printing the works of others and bringing them to class; reading your classmates' work before class and typing 250-word (minimum) responses on Blackboard; and arriving prepared to discuss your classmates' work. Short, general, or disrespectful comments will lower your grade. Should you miss a class, you are still responsible for posting comments before class.

V. Participation – 10%

Part of your work for this course is to be fully present, fully prepared, and fully participatory. In addition to the fact of your presence, which is foundational, the quality of your presence is also important. You are expected to be a positive and cooperative presence in the classroom. Credit is given for prepared, engaged, polite, thoughtful, non-monopolizing, helpful, generative, appropriate participation during class discussion and workshop.

In order to participate constructively, you must be current on all reading assignments and homework; occasionally, there will be pop quizzes. Bring your homework and reading materials (including hard copies of workshop poems) to every class. I expect you to have a comment or question prepared for every assigned poem and essay, and I will randomly call on people to share their comments and ask or answer questions.

Attendance:

If you have more than 5 unexcused absences your grade will be lowered 2% for each unexcused absence over that number. Repeated lateness is inconsiderate and distracting; for this reason each tardy beyond 2 counts as 1 absence.

Excused absences include documented illness, death in the immediate family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. In any case, students remain responsible for submitting timely work and for all missed content.

One-on-one Conferences:

Once during the semester you are required to meet with me during office hours (or at another arranged time) to discuss one of your pieces not workshopped in class. You are responsible for choosing the work, scheduling the conference, and bringing two hard copies to our meeting. This is an informal way for us to discuss at length any concerns you might have about your own work. Come with questions.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is unacceptable. Deliberate plagiarism on any scale will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly for the course.

Americans with Disabilities Act:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

About Your Instructor:

Author of *Romeo Bones* (Steel Toe Books, 2013), Ron Paul Salutsky is a poet, scholar, fiction writer, and Spanish Translator. Find more at www.salutsky.com.