English 210W: Introduction To Creative Writing

Fall 2025

Course Details

INSTRUCTOR Richard Prins
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OFFICE HOURS Monday/Wednesday 12:30-1:30 in Klapper 347
CLASS TIME Monday/Wednesday 10:45-12:00
LOCATION Klapper 304

Everything in this syllabus is subject to change, if we as a class decide to change it. We will discuss the syllabus on the first day, and review it in the middle of the semester, with a critical eye toward improving your experience in this class.

Course Overview & Goals

In this introductory course, we will begin with the assumption that trying new things and taking risks will make us better writers. (As a bonus, it will probably make us better humans, too!) We will read some texts that clearly identify themselves as belonging to a specific genre (i.e. poem, essay, play, short story), and some texts that combine genres or defy the very concept of genre. By exposing ourselves to a wide array of approaches, we will seek to expand the possibilities of our own creative practice. We will write every time we meet – always with an eye toward how experimentation might inspire or transform our own work. At multiple points in the semester, students will receive feedback on their writing in small group and workshop settings. At the end of the semester, each student will workshop an intensively-revised final project.

By the end of this course, you will:

1. Become familiar with a wide variety of creative writing styles, approaches, and techniques, and many of the writers who have mastered them
2. Experiment with writing in these diverse modes, and focus on identifying which approaches are most productive and appealing to you personally
3. Develop your writing process and explore your identity as a writer
4. Give and receive feedback on creative writing with partners, small groups, and full-class workshops
5. Revise multiple pieces of creative writing and consider what it means to develop a writing project
6. Take ownership of your work and gain an understanding of your own voice, style, and strengths.

This course is a prerequisite for the workshops in fiction (301W), playwriting (302), and poetry (304). This course is a Writing Intensive (W) course and fulfills one Writing Intensive requirement. W classes include a significant portion of time devoted to writing instruction. This may include things such as revision workshops, discussions of rhetorical strategies, or reflective writing about writing assignments.

Required Texts and Materials

All readings will be provided to you via Brightspace. You may print them or read them electronically. You must either have a device or a hardcopy of the reading in class. If you do not have regular access

to a computer or the Internet or are unsure of availability here at QC, please come speak to me.
**Please note, some of our readings and materials not only deal with controversial and sensitive topics but also contain explicit language.

Course Policies

- **Attendance & Participation** Your presence and participation in class is not only crucial to your benefitting from this course, but crucial to the success of our entire class community. If you must miss class, contact a classmate (not me) for any material you've missed. (This means get a classmate's number/email on the first day!) Please let me know in advance if any unforeseen circumstances will cause you to miss multiple classes so that we can make a plan for you to stay on top of your coursework.
- **Materials** Bring the readings and course materials to class every day. If you use an electronic device to take notes or access the readings in class, you are expected to remain in the relevant windows only and wait to respond to messages until the class session is over.
- **Reading** There will be reading assignments for every class meeting. I hope many of them will move you and inspire your writing; I bet others will leave you scratching your head. I don't expect you to come to class fully understanding the reading, but I do want you to engage with the text and have thoughtful questions about it.
- **Assignments**, unless otherwise specified, are due on Brightspace *before* the class meeting they are due; reading responses are due *at least an hour* before class so that students have a chance to read or respond to them.
- **Communication & Email** All communication that happens outside of class will be through email. Make sure that you receive emails from Brightspace at an address you check regularly, at least 3-4 times a week, as I cannot dictate which email address Brightspace uses.
- **Classroom Behavior** Students are encouraged to question, critique, and challenge the readings, the instructor, and even each other within the classroom context. However, communication in this context must adhere to a certain standard of respect for others. Each student (and the instructor!) is expected to listen with an open mind and communicate dissent or disagreement with clarity and consideration. One can disagree with an idea but not with a person in and of themselves. You are encouraged to reach out to me if you encounter disrespectful or offensive treatment in the classroom.
- **Artificial Intelligence** Let's have a class discussion and see if we can come to a group consensus about the use of artificial intelligence in this course.

Assignments & Grading

I believe that if you show up and do the work, you deserve an "A".

So if you are present on the first day of class and reading this document, right now you have an "A".

I will commit to informing if you are at risk of receiving a grade less than an A. It is your responsibility to either correct the issue or speak to me about how you might address it. Examples of issues that might need to be addressed include failure to prepare or participate meaningfully in class, failure to submit and revise assignments, failure to engage with your colleagues' workshop submissions, or missing the dates of your workshop and/or presentations.

As such, I do not give letter grades on individual assignments, which are as follows:

Presentation: You will each be responsible for one presentation this semester. *Please avoid absences on your presentation dates; they are difficult to reschedule, and your classmates do not deserve to be deprived of your insights!* You have the option of presenting about the reading for that day's class, or introducing the class to a different creative text that is not on our reading list, but which you find compelling and think we ought to know about. You may interpret the word "presentation" as creatively as you want. The floor is yours for ~10 minutes, and the goal is simply to get the class talking and thinking about whatever text you are presenting. Options to consider are providing some background on the author, asking some provocative questions about the text, or giving us a writing exercise inspired by the reading.

3 Reading Responses: Over the course of the semester, you will be responsible for (3) reading responses. These do not need to be longer than a single paragraph, but please do more than just summarize the reading. (I've already read it, so I'm much more interested in what it made you think and feel!) Reading responses will be submitted to Discussions on Brightspace to help inform our class discussion – which is why they are due *at least an hour* before class begins. You are encouraged to comment on others' reading responses. We will sign up for reading responses on the first day of class.

In-Class Writing: We will complete writing exercises in all of our class meetings. These are not meant to be finished pieces. They are meant for brainstorming and trying out different approaches and techniques. Hopefully they will inspire your workshop submissions – so please save this writing somewhere you can keep track of over the semester! Anytime we write in class, I might ask you to share in groups or with the class – but that does not mean you have to read what you wrote; you can also just talk about what the experience of writing it was like for you. I will occasionally ask you to submit in-class writing to Discussions on Brightspace so that we can all get a glimpse of each other's writing, but for the most part, in-class writing is strictly for yourself.

3 Workshop Submissions: We will have three workshops over the course of the semester. The first (September 29) will be with groups of two (partners), the second (November 3) will be in small groups of four or five, and the last (December) will be with the whole class. You will submit a draft (due a few days before workshop), receive comments from your workshop members and from me, and submit a revised draft (usually due one week after the workshop). There is no length requirement, but if you submit something *very* short, please realize that does raise the bar for how much the piece should accomplish with its style, concept, and deployment of language. *Please avoid absences on workshop days, as they cannot be rescheduled, and your classmates do not deserve to be deprived of your work!*

Final Workshop Comments: For our final set of workshops, you will write at least a paragraph of commentary for each submitted project, and send it to me and the student being workshopped.

Final Project: The final workshop is meant as a workshop for your final project. The final project is meant to be more expansive than a draft of a single piece you wrote in a classroom exercise, but more focused than a portfolio of every single thing you wrote over the course of the semester. You might find yourself interested in expanding one piece or combining multiple pieces from the first two workshops into a larger project, or you might strike out on something new. You will have a lot more time to revise this piece, so you are encouraged to develop a project that will sustain your interest in working on it over the course of multiple weeks. The important thing is to think expansively about the possibilities of your own work, and how you would distill your creative achievements in this class into a holistic project.

Course Schedule

Schedule below is subject to change. Any modifications will be announced in class. All readings and assignments are listed under the day they are *due* and should be completed before class or by the time listed when assignments are due on non-class days. I will provide you with an updated syllabus after we sign up for presentations and reading responses. Please read carefully and check in with me if there is any confusion.

W 27 Aug	First Day	**Reading:** Syllabus in-class: "How To Write About Africa" - Binyavanga Wainaina **Homework:** Post "How To ___" to Discussions
M 1 Sept	**College Closed – Labor Day**	
W 3 Sept	Old Forms: Diary	**Reading:** Joe Brainard – from *I Remember* Ross Gay – from *The Book of Delights* Joe Wenderoeth – from *Letters to Wendys* **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
M 8 Sept	Old Forms: Poetry	**Reading:** Elizabeth Bishop "One Art" (villanelle) Ciara Shuttleworth: "Sestina" Eduardo Corral - "Border Triptych" (sonnets) Natalie Diaz - "My Brother at 3 A.M." (pantoum) **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
W 10 Sept	Old Form as New Form: The Hermit Crab Essay	**Reading:** Fatimah Asghar - "Microaggression Bingo" Leila Chatti - "Mad" C.A. Ekhelar - "Anecdotes on the Use of Cable-Knit Sweaters For Resurrection" **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
M 15 Sept	The List	**Reading:** Gwen E. Kirby - "Shit Cassandra Saw That She Didn't Tell the Trojans Because At That Point Fuck Them Anyway" Carmen Maria Machado - "Inventory"

		Presenter: **Reading Responses:**
W 17 Sept	The Play	**Reading:** Christopher Durang – *Business Lunch at the Russian Tea Room* **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
M 22 Sept	**College Closed – No Class**	**Reading**:
W 24 Sept	**College Closed – No Class**	**Reading**: **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
M 29 Sept	**Workshop #1 – partners**	
W 1 Oct	**College Closed – No Class**	
M 6 Oct	Writing From a Personal Place: America	**Reading**: Claudia Rankine - from *Citizen* **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
W 8 Oct	Writing From a Personal Place: Grief	**Reading:** Michelle Zauner - "Crying in H Mart" **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
M 13 Oct	**College Closed – No Class**	
T 14 Oct	**Follows Monday Schedule** *One on One Conferences*	
W 15 Oct	First-Person Narratives	**Reading:** Junot Diaz - "Nilda" **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
M 20 Oct	**No Classes Scheduled**	
W 22 Oct	First-Person Narratives	**Reading:** Sherman Alexie - "What You Pawn I Will Redeem"

		Presenter: **Reading Responses:**
F 24 Oct	**Follows Monday Schedule**	**Reading:** Rick Moody - "A Guide To Revision"
M 27 Oct	Writing Travel	**Reading:** David Foster Wallace - "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again" **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
W 29 Oct	Writing Home	**Reading:** Colson Whitehead – from *The Colossus of New York* **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:** **Submission:** Email your workshop submission to your group and the instructor
M 3 Nov	Workshop #2	Reading: Read the submissions from your group
W 5 Nov	Graphic Novel	**Reading:** Ellen Forney – from *Marbles* Malaka Gharib – from *I Was Their American Dream* Scott McCloud – from *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
M 10 Nov	Post-Workshop Conferences	One-on-one meeting with instructor to discuss workshopped piece and review course progress

W 12 Nov	Character Portraits	**Reading:** Joseph Mitchell - "Professor Seagull" **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
M 17 Nov	Person & Perspective	**Reading:** Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie "The Thing Around Your Neck" Daphne Palasi Andreades – from *Brown Girls* **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
W 19 Nov	Persona & Perspective	**Reading:** Franz Kafka - "The Metamorphosis" and "A Report To an Academy" Fatimah Asghar - "Pluto Shits on the Universe" Sylvia Plath - "Mirror" **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
M 24 Nov	Folklore	**Reading:** Jean D'Amerique - "Poem For Children With Trouble Sleeping" Haryette Mullen - "European Folk Tale Variant" Lydia Davis "In the Garment District" Chana Bloch - "Mrs. Humpty" Andrea Cohen - "Fable" **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
W 26 Nov	Meta	**Reading:** Violet Allen - "The Venus Effect" **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
M 1 Dec	Translation	**Reading:** Rainer Maria Rilke - "The Archaic Torso of Apollo" from *Into Translation* Catullus - "Odi et Amo" **Presenter:** **Reading Responses:**
W 3 Dec	Final Project Workshop	**Reading:** Student workshop submissions **Write**: At least one paragraph commenting on each submission to be shared with student and

		instructor Submission: Email your workshop submission to the class at least 4 days before your workshop date.
M 8 Dec	Final Project Workshop	**Reading:** Student workshop submissions **Write:** At least one paragraph commenting on each submission to be shared with student and instructor Submission: Email your workshop submission to the class at least 4 days before your workshop date.
W 10 Dec	Final Project Workshop	**Reading:** Student workshop submissions **Write:** At least one paragraph commenting on each submission to be shared with student and instructor Submission: Email your workshop submission to the class at least 4 days before your workshop date.
M 15 Dec	Wrapping Up	**Final Project** will be due on our exam day, which will probably be around December 19 (about a week after class)

Course Resources

Office Hours: I encourage all of you to come to my office hours – that time is for you – and it is the best way to discuss your writing with me one-on-one.

The Writing Center: Located in Kiely Hall 229, tutors there are trained to help you revise your writing at various stages. If you believe you need additional help with your writing, or if I ask you to set up a regular meeting with a tutor, you should make an appointment at least one week prior to when an assignment is due. You can also get online help by visiting their website at https://www.qc.cuny.edu/academics/wc/.

Special Accommodations: If you have any condition that requires accommodation in this class—for example, a medical condition, or a difficulty with your cognition or psychology—please let me know. You should also contact the Office of Special Services in 171 Kiely Hall at 718-997-5870. That office supports the college's mission to help students gain access to a good education even when they need extra support.

Academic Integrity:
Writing is supposed to be an expression of your views and, therefore, your writing must be your own and the words and ideas of others must be ethically and accurately incorporated whenever you include them. Failing to do so constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty, which include but are not limited to:

1. Submitting writing or portions of writing written by other people, including well-intentioned friends and family.
2. Failing to document paraphrases, ideas, or verbatim phrases taken from outside sources.
3. Collaborating on an assignment without the explicit permission of the professor.
4. Submitting an essay written for one course to another course without the explicit permission of

both professors.
5. Submitting work as one's own that has been purchased or copied from a paper preparation service or web site.

This is the college-wide policy: Any work submitted to me that has been plagiarized will receive a failing grade and will be reported to the dean. This is a writing class and author integrity is crucial to the mission of the course, so any event of plagiarism will most likely result in a failing course grade. Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion as provided at https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-procedures/academic-integrity-policy/.

We will talk extensively in class about how to properly use sources and cite so you don't mistakenly plagiarize. You are also encouraged to meet with me during the office hours and schedule an appointment with the Writing Center if you have questions about citing sources ethically and accurately. The class assignments are unique to this class, which will make it difficult to plagiarize unless you are directly copying from a classmate or paying someone to do your assignments. Please don't do this.

Writing Resources (links in digital syllabus on Blackboard):

- Tutoring provided by the Writing Center, including regular one-on-one sessions, drop-in sessions, and e-tutoring
- Revisions: A Zine on Student Writing
- Goals for Student Writing at Queens College."
- The QC Tutoring Center offers Content and Reading Tutoring as well as Conversation Groups and Pronunciation Groups for "ESL students"
- CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity
- Online writing and reference websites like Purdue OWL
- Quick guides such as How to Email a Professor