

ENG 90V: Intro to Fiction Writing

Rose Whitmore

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Office Hours: By appointment

We are important and our lives are important, magnificent really, and their details are worthy to be recorded. This is how writers must think, this is how we must sit down with pen in hand. We are here; we are human beings; this is how we lived. Let it be known, the earth passed before us. Our details are important. Otherwise, if they are not, we can drop a bomb and it doesn't matter.

-Natalie Goldberg

Don't be nervous. Work calmly, joyously, recklessly on whatever is in hand.

-Henry Miller

Course Description

As writers, it is our duty to interrogate our own histories and perspectives and write—as Mark Twain says—with a pen warmed up in hell. To do this requires bravery, dedication, enthusiasm, and attention. This course will focus on art and craft of fiction writing, focusing on short stories. While the class will be focused primarily on your creative writing, it will also help you explore and challenge your creative aesthetics. We will do this through:

- reading a wide array of other writers and styles
- completing in-class assignments aimed at generating creative ideas
- engaging in lively discussions about fiction
- deconstructing the choices other writers have made

The aim of this class is to learn new skills, enhance your craft, and participate in a working creative community. Our focus will be on intuitive writing that allows you to 1) generate many pages and possible story starts and 2) discover your story through first drafting. This class is all about writing—and we will be doing a lot of it, reading and discussing each other's work throughout the quarter.

Over the ten weeks of the quarter, you will:

- write short exercises in and out of class
- read and discuss published stories and essays by fiction writers on their craft
- write your own full-length short story
- participate in a writer's workshop

Writing inevitably explores love, hate, trauma, violence, sexuality, identity, and injustice. The pieces in our course reader explore and may contain very upsetting material, unlikeable characters, bad language, and physical and sexual violence. Please be in touch with me directly if you would like more specific warnings for particular pieces. We will also encounter these subjects in our shared writing. My expectation is that the class will approach all these readings with maturity and empathy.

Zoom Information

My sections of English 90 are incredibly fun. You will love this class; it is highly engaging, and I'm really looking forward to teaching it with you online via Zoom this term. Having the zoom app is required for this class because I will make use of all the features during our sessions. I will communicate in-person via Zoom. I will hold appointments via Zoom. During class, please use the Gallery View feature of Zoom, so that we can all see each other. This will help to create a classroom environment and facilitate you getting to know one another. **Links to all class sessions are on canvas under "Zoom."**

Classes will be held at class time (M/W 3:30-5:20 California time) via zoom. You must attend these sessions in order to be enrolled in the class. I will not be recording sessions because much of the class will be graded and based on active participation regarding readings, discussion questions, shared writing, and engaging in games with the class. In other words, the class is "live" and cannot be attended outside of the hours above.

Texts and Materials:

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- 1) All readings and other documents for the class are posted on canvas. Readings for each specific class can be found on the schedule. All the readings for week 1 will be in the "Week 1 Readings" folder, etc.
- 2) A journal or notebook for taking notes and completing in-class writing exercises. You may use your laptop if that is easier. We will write nearly every class, so please be prepared.
- 3) Consider using a file folder or binder to keep track of writing prompts, assignments, and any other materials you generate "offline." Do not discard any of your work during the quarter.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (50%)

I will do my best to foster an exciting, supportive, and inquisitive environment, but the class will succeed best if you are all in. Your participation grade will be based on the following criteria:

- Attend class and arrive on time.
- Participate fully in class discussions—at least one to two contributions per class. Each class (15 classes) is worth 2 points of participation. If you don't add to discussion you don't get your participation points for the day.
- Complete feedback on at least 6 peer's writing exercises. Comments are due 6/29, 7/13, and 7/20 by midnight. Each of these comments is worth 5 points, so 15 points total.
- Read the assigned materials, and when time, your classmate's stories.
- Write detailed response letters to other students about their stories when the time comes.
- Help create a thoughtful, supportive environment for sharing work.
- Treat your classmate's writing with interest and respect.

Your Creative Work (50%)

This class includes:

- two short writing assignments 5% each = 10%
- letters of feedback to every one of your peers (1 page) (15%)
- one short story (5-12 pages) we will workshop as a class (25%)

Finally: Your grade depends on your ability to complete all your creative work on time and to put real thought and energy into your drafts, readings, and assignments. *I would like you to strive for creativity in this class and therefore will grade based on effort while encouraging you to take risks.*

Attendance

You may miss up to **two classes** without penalty, no questions asked. After that, each class missed reduces your final grade one grade increment (from A to A minus, for example).

I start class on time and expect you to be on time. Chronic lateness will count against your grade.

Distributing Work to Each Other

You will post your short stories and any work up for discussion to canvas. If you are posting a writing prompt, you can copy and paste it into the appropriate discussion thread. Stories should be posted in .pdf format. You can create .PDF files very easily from MSWord, Pages, Google Docs, etc.

Formatting: All exercises and the short story should be double-spaced in 12-point normal black font with normal-size margins. Include your name and the page number on every page. Please spell-check and proofread. Failure to follow these guidelines will impact your grade.

Office hours and conferences: I am very happy to set up an appointment. I love to discuss any questions you have about the class, your work, your workshop, or just to talk about writing and books.

Email: I check email once or twice a day, so please consult the syllabus and other class materials for answers before sending an email as it might take time for a reply. Please make sure to check your email before every class. If there is an emergency, that is how I will get in touch with you.

Miscellaneous: In each case, if you foresee that you'll be unable to meet your obligations, let me know as soon as possible. I may or may not be able to make an accommodation for you, but it's always better to ask.

Honor Code

1. The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:
 1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
 2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.
2. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.

3. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work."

To read more details visit <https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/policies-and-guidance/honor-code>. Stanford's definition of plagiarism is also helpful: <https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/policies-and-guidance/what-plagiarism>.

Access and Accommodations

Stanford is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for disabled students. Disabled students are a valued and essential part of the Stanford community. We welcome you to our class.

If you experience disability, please register with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate your needs, support appropriate and reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Academic Accommodation Letter for faculty. To get started, or to re-initiate services, please visit oae.stanford.edu.

If you already have an Academic Accommodation Letter, we invite you to share your letter with us. Academic Accommodation Letters should be shared at the earliest possible opportunity so we may partner with you and OAE to identify any barriers to access and inclusion that might be encountered in your experience of this course."

You'll find very helpful information regarding academic accommodations here: <https://oae.stanford.edu/faculty-staff> and <https://oae.stanford.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-teaching-staff/faculty-teaching-staff-role/faculty-faqs>.

Course Material Support

Stanford University and its faculty are committed to ensuring that all courses are financially accessible to all students. If you are an undergraduate who needs assistance with the cost of course textbooks, supplies, materials and/or fees, you are welcome to ask the Diversity & First-Gen Office for assistance by completing their questionnaire on course textbooks & supplies: <http://tinyurl.com/jpqbarn> or by contacting Joseph Brown, the Associate Director of the Diversity and First-Gen Office (jlbrown@stanford.edu; Old Union Room 207). Dr. Brown is available to connect you with resources and support while ensuring your privacy.