Course Description

A truly introductory writing course, Creative Expression in Writing above all requires experimentation and risk-taking. The class is divided into five 2-week units, each corresponding to a key poetic theme: Love, Politics, Family, Spirituality, and Death. Exploring these themes through reading, journaling, photography, drafting, and doodling, you will develop a daily creative writing practice. To silence your inner critic and generate new ideas, we will also practice automatic writing, dominant/non-dominant hand dialoguing, pranayama (yogic breathing exercises), photography, meditation, dream recall, and improvisation. Excerpts from books such as Tanya Marie Luhrmann’s *When God Talks Back* and Kelly McGonigal’s *The Willpower Instinct* will guide us as well. Along the way, you will share your writing in supportive workshops whose aim is to encourage creativity rather than nitpick. By the end of the class, you’ll have generated a great deal of new material for your stories, poems, essays, screenplays, and graphic novels, developing a sense of the limitless possibilities that the creative life offers.

Creative Expression in Writing fulfills Stanford’s Ways of Thinking/Ways of Doing Creative Expression Requirement: *The ability to design, create, and perform – each enriches our lives in substantial and meaningful ways. Thinking creatively, giving expressive shape to ideas, and communicating those ideas with imagination and precision are not only indispensable to all artistic endeavors, they also represent broadly applicable skills that strengthen and enhance traditional academic pursuits, stimulate effective problem-solving, and foster originality and innovation in new areas.*
Course Objectives for Creative Expression students:

1. Explore your own potential and produce original creative projects.
2. Engage in artistic collaboration and the creative reinterpretation of art made by others.
3. Take creative risks beyond your comfort zones.
4. Experience what it is to make the unimagined possible and real.
5. Appreciate how experimentation, failure, and revision can play a valuable role in the creation of successful and innovative works.
6. Consider multiple and possibly divergent solutions to a problem.
7. Explore the role of artistic expression in addressing issues that face society.

Required Texts

*Autobiography of Red* (Anne Carson)
*Equus* (Peter Shaffer)
*Don’t Let Me Be Lonely* (Claudia Rankine)

Course Pack with poems (Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, Kiki Petrosino), essays (David Sedaris, Ander Monson, Joan Didion), and stories (Flannery O’Connor, Brad Watson, Kirstin Valdez Quade).

Course Requirements

Class Participation: 15%
Journal: 35%
Final Portfolio: 50%

* The final drafts of the compositions included in the final portfolio must show significant evidence of revision—not just editing—in order to earn full credit.

Attendance and Class Participation

My attendance policies reflect the absolute importance of your physical presence in our classroom. Each absence in excess of 1—and each tardy in excess of 2—lowers your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. (For example, an A- becomes a B+.) 5 or more absences results in a failing grade for the course. **If you do not show up to class the day of your workshop, barring extraordinary circumstances such as hospitalization, your final grade will be dropped 1/3 of a letter grade.**

Your intellectual and emotional presence in the form of class participation—asking thought-provoking questions, answering questions, basically adding to the richness of our class by being prepared and sharing your insights—is also extremely vital. To earn full participation points, please contribute at least one substantive thing to each class discussion. In addition, I ask that
electronic devices—especially cell phones but also laptops and iPads—be turned off for the duration of class. Texting during class is not acceptable. Please do not consume loud, crunchy foods (e.g. apples!) during class.

Assignments

At least four times per week, you will make an entry of at least one page in your journal. An entry should contain at least 50% writing—after all, this is Creative Expression in Writing—though you are welcome create collages, draw, and so forth.

Other than the journal, which must be handwritten, all exercises must be typed.

In the class before a composition of yours is being workshopped, you’ll distribute your work to all of us in hardcopy form. Your work should be stapled, and there should be sufficient copies for everyone, including the instructor.

You’re required to attend three readings, though I encourage you to attend as many University-sponsored writing events as possible. You’ll almost always see me in the audience. Check the Creative Writing Program website (http://creativewriting.stanford.edu/event-list) and “like” Stanford Creative Writing on Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/stanfordcw) for up-to-date information.

Mid-quarter I’ll meet individually with you in a required conference to discuss your overall development—missing this conference or canceling it (or any other meeting with me) at the last minute is not acceptable and will affect your final grade. Again, I’m happy to meet with you during my office hours or at another mutually agreeable time—it’s one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching.

Please do not discard any completed assignments with my feedback on them. At quarter’s end you’ll submit a final portfolio with three exercises (include the drafts with my comments on them); and an extended letter to me of at least 1000 words assessing your revision choices, tracking your growth as a writer during the quarter, providing an overview of future writing possibilities, and summarizing your experiences (using specific details!) at the three readings. If you’d like to get specific feedback on your final portfolio, at the end of the quarter please make an appointment to meet with me after the quarter ends.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice
is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (650-723-1066 or http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae).

Honor Code

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work.

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.
3. 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.
4. 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.

All work must adhere to the University’s policies on academic integrity. Failure to cite work that is not your own constitutes plagiarism, as does the dual submission of work (submitting a piece to this course that you submitted to another).

Preliminary Schedule

Unit I: Love

Week 1: Eros
Week 2: Betrayal

Unit 2: Politics & History

Week 3: Revolution
Week 4: Revision

Unit 3: Family

Week 5: Genealogies
Week 6: Scrapbooking

*Unit 4: Spirituality*

Week 7: Surrender  
Week 8: Devotion

*Unit 5: Death*

Week 9: Deathbed  
Week 10: Afterlife