This is a writing class that explores daily creative practice through readings, prompted exercises, collaboration, workshop, and revision. We’ll practice becoming more alert to the world, responding creatively to the things that interest and move us, taking risks, and seeing opportunities in failure. You will investigate the forces that shape your writing voice, discover how you see the world, and find new wellsprings of inspiration for your creative work.

This is an introductory course, recommended for students who have never taken a creative writing class before. It is a safe space in which to take risks and fail. You’ll walk out with dozens of pages of new material and increased awareness of your creative process.

Material Requirements

- Course reader. Readers will be for sale by the printer, CopyAmerica, in the lobby of Thornton Center (379 Santa Teresa Street), from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the first ten school days of the quarter. Thereafter, readers will be available at CopyAmerica, 344 South California Avenue, Palo Alto.
- Dedicated notebook, to be used for journaling.

Graded Assignments

1. **Written Exercises.** You will complete a variety of written creative exercises, both in class and out. These will include imitations, flash fiction, poems and prose poems, observations, and more. You will keep a daily creativity notebook. You will revise one prose piece and one poem.

2. **Collaboration.** You will select a writer you admire and dream up an assignment for yourself inspired by a craft element or strategy in their work. Your result should be 5-7 single-spaced pages of poetry or 9-12 double-spaced pages of fiction, or some combination thereof. A collaboration proposal will be due by Week 7, and you’ll present a selection to the class in Week 10. At the end of the quarter, you'll submit your completed collaboration to me, plus a short paper about your writing process. **Your collaboration and process paper are due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, March 24.** No work will be accepted after that time.

Other Expectations

1. **Reading.** The great writer Frank Conroy said, “You read, you read, you read, you read, you read, and then you begin to write.” For this class, I expect you to do your very best reading: to come to every piece in a spirit of curiosity and intellectual engagement, and to remain attentive even if you find the piece stylistically or emotionally challenging.
2. **Class Participation.** You will receive full credit for class participation when you:
   - Come to every class, on time.
   - Offer your thoughts in class discussion.
   - Listen carefully and open-mindedly to your peers and to me.
   - Participate in various group activities.
   - Are a good citizen of the writing workshop (see below).

3. **Good Workshop Citizenship.** When we come together in workshop, we become part of a community of and for writers. To be a good workshop citizen is to take others’ work as seriously as you take your own. Engage respectfully and rigorously with the work of your peers. Be committed to supporting and challenging them. Take responsibility for making the room feel safe and fun.

4. **Creative Writing Program Event Attendance.** You must attend at least three events sponsored by the Creative Writing Program, and write a one-paragraph response to each. There are many events from which to choose, including readings by great writers, conversations with great writers, and workshops in poetry and fiction. See the event calendar on the CWP website: [http://creativewriting.stanford.edu/event-list](http://creativewriting.stanford.edu/event-list). While any event sponsored by the CWP/English Department will fulfill this requirement, there are many other acceptable arts events happening on campus. Check with me first if you’re planning to attend a non-CWP event. Plan ahead and don’t wait until the end of the quarter! You may turn in your three one-paragraph responses with your collaboration and process paper.

**Grading**

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration &amp; Process Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative Writing Program Event Attendance</td>
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**Policies**

- **Canvas.** As soon as the course roster is finalized, I will add you to our Canvas site. I will post all assignments on Canvas ([https://classes.stanford.edu/](https://classes.stanford.edu/)).
- **Attendance.** I take attendance at the beginning of class. If you’re late, it’s up to you to remind me at the end of class to record your presence. I will subtract 5 points from your final grade for each unexcused absence. If you’re absent four times, you fail the course. If you must miss class (due to illness or athletic commitments, for example) and you believe your absence should be excused, contact me as soon as you know you will be absent, not five minutes before class. Remember to check Canvas for handouts distributed or work assigned in your absence.
- **Punctuality.** Being on time to class shows respect for me, your peers, and the craft we are studying together. If, after the first day, you are more than ten minutes late to class (or leave early without my prior permission), it’ll count as an absence. If there’s a valid reason why you may sometimes be late—e.g. a class immediately before on the other side of campus—let me know.
- **Electronic Devices.** No laptops or tablets, please. Phones must not make sounds.
- **Late Assignments.** A late writing exercise will receive a maximum grade of B. If your collaboration is late, it will receive a maximum grade of B-.
- **Office Hours and Conferences.** Please come to my office hours—they’re for you! They do get crowded as the quarter goes on, so making an appointment is best. In addition, I expect that you’ll sit down with me for an individual midterm conference.
- **Communication with Me.** Email is the best way to reach me. I check email every day and respond as promptly as I am able. I will address all communications to your Stanford email and expect you to check it at least daily.
• **Plagiarism.** The Board on Judicial Affairs says: “For purposes of the Stanford University Honor Code, plagiarism is defined as the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person’s original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s).” If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism in the context of this course or a particular assignment, ask me.

**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), providing all required documentation. Professional staff will evaluate the request, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter. 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 (voice: 723-1066, TTY: 723-1067, [http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae](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.

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.
ABRIDGED CALENDAR

subject to change, depending on the needs of the class

**Week 1: CREATIVITY, VISION, AND VOICE**
--Where does inspiration come from? Where does your writing voice come from? How do you see the world?

Readings:
- Wislawa Szymborska, “Possibilities”
- Christopher Smart, from *Jubilate Agno*
- Katherine Mansfield, “Sun and Moon”
- Maxine Hong Kingston, “No Name Woman”
- Stephen Kuusisto, “Night Song”

**Week 2: BECOMING A PERSON ON WHOM NOTHING IS LOST**
--How can we become observers of our internal and external worlds? How can concrete details deliver a profound emotional experience for the reader?

Readings:
- Annie Dillard, Chapters 1 and 2 of *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
- E. M. Forster, “My Wood”
- Pablo Neruda, “Ode to My Socks”
- Harry Crews, “The Car”
- Terrance Hayes, “Shafro”

**Week 3: THE LAND OF THE FIGURATIVE**
--How do art and writing transcend the “real”? The “real” vs. the “true.”

Readings:
- Aimee Bender, “The Girl in the Flammable Skirt”
- Jack Gilbert, “Michiko Dead”
- Jean Toomer, “Portrait in Georgia”
- Miroslav Holub, “Man Cursing the Sea”
- Brenda Shaughnessy, “Our Andromeda”

**Week 4: ACCIDENTS, FAILING BETTER & PLAYING WITH FORM**
--What are we afraid of in our creative practices? How can trial and error, accidents, and failure (both artistic and personal), be productive? How can we learn to fail better?

Readings:
*Failing Better:*
- Lynda Barry, “Two Questions”

*Playing with Forms:*
- Margaret Atwood, “Happy Endings”
- Justin Torres, “Reverting to a Wild State”
- Hannah Bottomy, “Currents”
- Lydia Davis, “Letter to a Funeral Parlor”
- Anne Carson, “Short Talks”
Week 5: WORD GAMES
--How might “play” influence our creative work? How might rules offer us useful constraints?

Readings:
Abecedarian:
    Dinty W. Moore, “Son of Mr. Green Jeans”
Anagrams:
    Terrance Hayes: “Nuclear,” “Overseas,” “Masculine”
    Kevin McFadden, “I.e.”
Palindrome:
    James Lindon, “Doppelganger”
    Randell Mann, “Order”
Sestinas:
    Elizabeth Bishop, “Sestina”
    Mark Strand, “Chekhov: A Sestina”
    Anton Chekhov, excerpt from The Notebooks of Anton Chekhov
    (Koteliansky/Woolf, trans.)
    Sestina spiral diagram, courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Pantoums:
    Donald Justice, “Pantoum of the Great Depression”
    Peter Meinke, “Atomic Pantoum”
    Natasha Trethewey, “Incident”
    Natalie Diaz, “My Brother at 3 A.M.”

Week 6: WITNESS & CHANGE
--How does art comment on the larger world? Can art change the world? How does a viewer’s experience of the work change the writer/artist?

Readings:
    Carolyn Forché, “The Colonel”
    Naomi Shihab Nye, “For Mohammed Zeid of Gaza, Age 15”
    Solmaz Sharif, “Look”
    Susan Sontag, “The Way We Live Now”

Week 7: STEGNER FELLOW VISIT AND REVISION
--What is the writer’s life? How do we re-see our pieces to make productive changes? Why might we want to revise at all? How can we complicate and enrich our pieces and push deeper into their mystery?

Guest author and readings TBA

Week 8: ART AS CONVERSATION

Class field trip and readings TBA
**Week 9: PAST, FUTURE, AND THE ELASTIC MOMENT: EXPERIMENTS IN TIME**

--What does time/timeliness/timelessness have to do with art? How do we effectively use/play with/understand/subvert time in our writing? How does art serve to stop/suspend time? How can our memories and hopes/fears for the future fuel our work? How can we make the reader experience a moment that no longer exists?

Readings:

- Tatiana Tolstaya, “White Walls”
- John Struloeff, “The Man I Was Supposed to Be”
- Tobias Wolff, “Bullet in the Brain”
- Ambrose Bierce, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”
- John Cheever, “The Swimmer”

**Week 10: CELEBRATING & CONTINUING THE CREATIVE JOURNEY**

---Where do we go from here? Presentation to the class of a selection from your collaboration.

Readings:

- Lorrie Moore, “How to Become a Writer”