

English 418/001
Creative Writing Capstone
Tuesday/Thursday 1:00 - 2:15
Woodburn Hall - Room 110

Professor: Glenn Taylor and MFA mentors
Office: G13 Colson Hall
Hours: T/TH 10:00-11:30 and by appointment
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Course Description

The Creative Writing Capstone Course will be taught as both a traditional class and as a one-on-one independent study. You should see it as a culmination of the creative writing sequence in which you can work in poetry, literary fiction, or literary nonfiction. You will come up with a project proposal (due) to be reviewed and approved by the instructor and mentor. Class time will involve both the study of student and published work. We'll also discuss what constitutes a "writing life" and hear from graduate students about pursuing further study. For a semester, you will have the opportunity to feel about your writing projects the way Joe Gould (one of Joseph Mitchell's subjects) felt about his own:

"The Oral History has been my rope and my scaffold, my bed and my board, my wife and my floozy, my wound and the salt on it, my whiskey and my aspirin, and my rock and my salvation. It is the only thing that matters a damn to me. All else is dross."

Books/ Materials

- **The Art of the Story*, Daniel Halpern, Editor (fiction)
- **Up in the Old Hotel* by Joseph Mitchell (non-fiction)
- * *The Interrogative Mood* by Padgett Powell (fiction or non-fiction?)
- **Head Off & Split* by Nikky Finney (poetry)
- **Ashland* by Gil Adamson (poetry?)
- *Pocket binder or folder
- *Copy costs and material

Requirements

- *Project proposal
- *Two original, typed, proofread, and mass copied works, of roughly 20-40 pages (total count for semester, dependent upon genre), turned in on time for workshop schedule
- *Typed or written comments on other students' workshop submissions
- *Attendance of class and mentoring sessions
- *Six critical responses to the assigned readings (roughly two pages each; two responses per genre)
- *One craft talk response (one page)
- *Critical Preface for the final project (as well as revised 20 to 40 page final project itself, of course)
- *Final reading

Evaluation

Your grade will be determined by me and by your graduate student mentor. Thus, final grades will reflect your work in class sessions as well as one-on-one mentoring. All work must be completed on time (see course calendar). Please note that participation and professionalism are also a factor in a class such as this.

Attendance Policy

*Because this class is discussion-based, with in-class planning and writing, regular attendance is essential. I expect you to attend every class meeting. If you accumulate more than four absences, I will begin lowering your final grade. You also need to attend all meetings with your mentor. Missing these meetings will inevitably impact your grade.

Important Guidelines

*Not only must your work for workshop be turned in **on time** and with a copy for each class member, it must also be typed, proofread, double-spaced, and page numbered.

*Comments written or typed on other students' manuscripts must be clear, readable, and substantial (including notes and roughly one page of end comments). Participation in class discussion must be based on respect for difference in taste, interest, and skill level. Mean-spirited attacks on other student work will not be allowed.

COURSE CALENDAR

*This calendar is tentative. I will announce revisions as needed.

WEEK 1

8/21: Introductions to the course and each other; sign up for workshop; meet mentors/set up meetings
Assigned for next class: Project Proposals (bring three copies)

8/23: **PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE**

Discuss proposals

Begin NON-FICTION readings

Assigned for next class: Mitchell's *Up in the Old Hotel* ix – xix (Introduction & Author's Note) and 52-70 ("Professor Seagull")

WEEK 2

8/28: Discuss readings

In class writing

Workshop student story

Assigned for next class: Mitchell 622-676 (first half of "Joe Gould's Secret")

8/30: Discuss readings

Workshop student story

Assigned for next class: Mitchell 676-716 (second half of "Joe Gould's Secret")

Complete Critical Response #1

WEEK 3

9/4 **Critical Response #1 due**

Discuss readings

Workshop student story

Assigned for next class: Powell's *The Interrogative Mood* 1-80

9/6 Discuss readings

In class writing

Workshop student story

Assigned for next class: Powell 81- end

Complete Critical Response #2

WEEK 4

9/11 **Critical Response #2 due**

Discuss readings

Workshop student story

Assigned for next class: Find and bring in an example of literary non-fiction about which you feel strongly. Type up a one page explanation for why this piece of writing matters. Be sure to highlight your favorite passage from the work itself.

9/13 Discuss students' non-fiction choices

Workshop student story

Begin POETRY readings

Assigned for next class: Finney's *Head Off & Split* 1-40

WEEK 5

9/18 Discuss readings

Workshop student story

Assigned for next class: Finney 41-59

9/20 Discuss readings

Workshop student story

Assigned for next class: Finney 61-97

Complete Critical Response #3

WEEK 6

9/25 **Critical Response #3 Due**

Discuss readings

Workshop student story

Assigned for next class: Adamson's *Ashland* 1-54

9/27 Discuss readings

Workshop student story

Assigned for next class: Adamson 55-end

Complete Critical Response #4

WEEK 7

10/2 **Critical Response #4 Due**

Discuss readings

Workshop student story

Assigned for next class: Find and bring in an example of poetry about which you feel strongly.

Type up a one page explanation for why this piece of writing matters. Be sure to highlight your favorite passage from the work itself.

10/4 Discuss students' poetry choices

Workshop student story

Begin FICTION readings

Assigned for next class: *Art of the Story* 62-68 (Banks), 179-188 (Cisneros), 196-198 (Danticat), 199-202 (Davis)

WEEK 8

- 10/9 Discuss readings
Workshop student story
Assigned for next class: *AOS* 211-219 (Diaz), 279-290 (Ford), 291-294 (Galeano)
- 10/11 Discuss readings
Workshop student story
Assigned for next class: *AOS* 307-315 (Hannah), 387-392 (McCann), 477-480 (Okri), 602-607 (Wideman)
Complete Critical Response #5

WEEK 9

- 10/16 **Critical Response #5 Due**
Discuss readings
Workshop student story
Assigned for next class: Choose a story of your liking from *AOS* and complete Critical Response
- 10/18 **Critical Response #6 Due**
Workshop student story
Assigned for next class: Find and bring in an example of literary fiction about which you feel strongly. Type up a one page explanation for why this piece of writing matters. Be sure to highlight your favorite passage from the work itself.

WEEK 10

- 10/23 Discuss students' fiction choices
Workshop student story
Assigned for next class: To Be Announced
- 10/25 Discuss readings
Workshop student story
Assigned for next class: To Be Announced
- *REMEMBER TO GO TO JAIMY GORDON READING ON MONDAY***

WEEK 11

- 10/30 Discuss readings
Workshop student story
CRAFT TALK
Assigned for next class: TBA
- 11/1 Discuss readings
Workshop student story
CRAFT TALK
Assigned for next class: TBA

WEEK 12

- 11/6 **NO CLASS – ELECTION DAY – EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE**
- 11/8 Discuss readings
CRAFT TALK
Workshop student story
Assigned for next class: TBA

WEEK 13

- 11/13 Discuss readings
CRAFT TALK
Help with Critical Preface
Assigned for next class: Begin work on Critical Preface
Complete one page response to Craft Talks
- 11/15 Discuss prefaces, project progress as a whole
Assigned for next class: Complete draft of Critical Preface and bring three copies to next class

WEEK 14: NO CLASS -- THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 15

- 11/27 Discuss prefaces
Discuss format of final project and revision strategies
Sign up for individual conferences

11/29 Individual conferences

WEEK 16

- 12/4 Individual conferences
- 12/6 CLASS READING: Thursday, Dec. 6th in 130 Colson Hall. Time: 1:00
Your final project is due at the time of the reading. Please bring two copies: one for your mentor and one for me. Please also remember to keep a copy for yourself.