**SYLLABUS  |  English 285: Writers on Writing                 Winter 2019**

**Professor:** Maya Sonenberg (mayas@uw.edu)

**Place/Time**: Denny 303, TTh 12:30-2:20 p.m.

**Office Hours**: TTh 10:00-11:30 am and by appointment, Padelford B-431

**Course Description**

Have you ever wondered how your favorite poem came into being or what in the world your favorite writer was thinking when they developed that fascinating essay about bugs or that heartrending exploration of coming to terms with a family trauma? Have you ever wondered how the intricate plots and subplots of your favorite novel were woven together? Have you ever wondered how your favorite writer constructed the most beautiful sentence you’ve ever read? This class may help dispel some of those mysteries.

Through lectures and readings, this class will introduce you to the creative processes of working prose writers and poets. Through numerous short writing assignments (both in class and at home), you will have the chance to write about writing and to create your own works. You’ll be approaching writing in a variety of ways, from the jottings of a writer’s journal to more formal creative writing exercises and a paper. Online discussion groups will allow you to share your writing with classmates and receive feedback.

**Learning Goals**

* Learn what inspires and excites a wide variety of creative writers
* Read a wide variety of contemporary poems, short stories, personal essays, and essays about the writing process
* Listen to speakers and learn from them
* Practice different kinds of writing
* Create your own poems, stories and creative essays
* Ponder and write a paper about why writers write

**Course Requirements**

Students will:

* Attend all lectures and readings.
* Read poems, stories, literary essays, and craft essays about writing by working writers.
* Keep a writer’s journal.
* Take quizzes on the readers and talks.
* Write four creative writing exercises (yes, you may use and build on any in-class writings or notes in your writer’s journal).
* Write one paper
* Participate in class discussion and comment on classmate’s creative writing

**Necessary Materials**

* An active UW email address. Course assignments will be posted on Canvas (including most readings), and you will turn in your written work (except for your writer’s journal) on Canvas as well.
* A portable notebook in which to keep your writer’s journal and take notes during class. Choose one that excites you to write in it. Choose one that gives you room to write but is also easy to carry with you. Choose a pen that makes you happy when you hold it.
* *Light the Dark: Writers on Creativity, Inspiration, and the Artistic Process*, edited by Joe Fassler (Penguin Books, 2017). Available at University Bookstore.
* *Last Days of the Microsaurs* by Kelsie Hahn (The Cupboard Pamphlet, 2017). Available at University Bookstore.

**Assignments**

As you’ll see, there are many assignments in this class (lots of reading and lots of writing)—and many different kinds of assignments. I believe students benefit from practicing reading and writing on an on-going basis and from discovering which kinds of writing they excel at. No one assignment is huge, however. Since the stakes for any one assignment (in terms of the final grade) are quite low, I hope students will take risks and try new things.

* Readings: due in preparation for every class meeting.
* Writer’s Journal: these will be collected twice (on Tuesday and returned to you on Thursday) on a rotating basis and again at the end of the term. You will be told your individual due dates. These are not personal diaries. They should include  
  -ALL your notes for class   
  -any in-class writing assigned  
  -at least one “Getting Started” each time it’s turned in   
  -at least 3 other entries per week, a combination of the following: observations about the world around you (descriptions that appeal to one or more of your senses, overheard conversations); writerly responses to anything you’re reading (sentences that grab you and why); stories you make up about strangers you see; new words you encounter, with a definition from the dictionary and a sentence you make up using the word; responses to or ideas about any art you encounter (literary, music, visual, movies, etc).
* 13 Quizzes: available for 46 hours after the end of class on Canvas. You will have 90 minutes to complete each quiz. Half of each quiz will consist of multiple choice, true/false, or fill-in-the-blank questions about the reading. The other half will consist of short answer questions based on the lecture. I’ll drop the lowest 3 grades so you may miss 3 without penalty.
* Creative Writing Exercises: every two weeks you will respond to a choice of prompts, setting you off on a path to writing short bursts of poetry, fiction, and/or literary nonfiction. Due Mondays by 10:00 am on Canvas. Rough drafts will be peer reviewed. Grading rubrics will be provided for all of these assignments.
* Paper: reflecting on why writers write. Due Wednesday of Finals Week on Canvas
* Participation: based on participation in class discussions and other in-class activities, and written comments on classmates’ writing.
* Extra Credit—Memorization: for a possible 20 points of extra credit, you may memorize at least fourteen lines of poetry or 125 words of prose and recite them to me during office hours by the end of the quarter. Please email me to secure a time.
* There is NO midterm and NO final

**Grading**

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|  |  | Total Points |
| Writer’s Journal | 30 pts each submission | 90 pts |
| 13 Quizzes | 10 pts each | 100 pts (I’ll drop the lowest 3 grades so you may miss 3 w/out penalty) |
| 4 Creative Writing Exercises | 30 or 35 pts each | 130 pts |
| Paper | 40 pts | 40 pts |
| Participation | 40 pts | 40 pts |
| Extra Credit—Memorization | possible 20 pts | possible 20 pts |
| TOTAL |  | 400 pts |

**Formatting Requirements**

* You will submit your creative writing exercises and paper on Canvas. These must be submitted as .doc or .docx files. Standard formatting requirements will be mandatory for all class assignments.
* For each creative writing exercise, you will have a choice of prompts. In the upper left corner of the first page of your writing, you MUST include the title of the prompt you are responding to. It will be impossible for your peers to review your work or for us to grade it if you fail to do this.
* All exercises and the paper must have a title. Titles should be left-justified, either in bold or all caps.
* Assignments must be in a standard font (Times New Roman, Garamond, Helvetica, or Arial), size 12, and left-justified.
* Poems must be single-spaced. Prose assignments must be double-spaced. In prose, the first line of each paragraph should be indented.
* Include page numbers.
* Assignments must be fully punctuated, with standard capitalizations, unless the student makes a stylistic choice to do otherwise for a particular reason.

*These requirements are not meant to stifle creativity, simply to make your work physically easy to read. If alternative formatting will help convey your intentions for your writing, you may deviate from these requirements but we will expect those choices to make sense for the particular piece of writing*.

**Course Policies**

*Deadlines:*

We will not provide written feedback on late assignments. Late work will be docked 1 point for every day it’s late. Of course, we all have true emergencies at times (serious illness, family crisis, etc.). If this applies to you, please email me BEFORE the assignment is due if at all possible. For extended absences and very late work, I may ask for a doctor’s note or something comparable.

*Conferences & Office Hours:*

I do not require conferences. However, I will always be happy to meet with you to discuss your writing or any other aspects of the class. Although you may simply drop by during office hours, it’s a good idea to secure a time slot by emailing me ahead of time. If you have class or work during my office hours, please email me and we will find another time to meet.

*Academic Integrity:*

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else’s ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people’s thoughts and writing—as long as you cite them. While I whole-heartedly agree that great writers “steal” from the work of others, they do NOT do this word for word, line for line.   If I find that you have been using another writer’s (including another student writer’s) words without attribution, we will need to have a serious chat and you run the risk of failing this class. I will also expect that ALL the writing you do for this class will be produced for this class. In other words, please don't "plagiarize" yourself by turning in writing you've done for other classes, either in the past or during this quarter. Please see Student Governance Policy, Chapter 209, Section 7.C for more details about plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct. As a matter of policy, any student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be immediately reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review.

*Attendance:*

I will expect you to be in class every day. Although part of each class will be devoted to a lecture, class time will also be spent on interactive and group activities. In addition, it will be impossible to complete the short answer part of each quiz without having heard the lecture, and it will be difficult to complete the creative writing exercises without having attended the class linked to each assignment.

*Screens:*

This will be almost entirely a screen-free classroom. I will expect you to keep all computers, tablets, and cell phones in your bags during class, and have those phones turned off or silenced—not just turned to vibrate. Class is short—we’ll be able to return those calls and texts when it’s over! I’ll expect you to take class notes and complete in-class writing assignments in your Writer’s Journal, so choose a pen you love to write with. If you have established accommodations which makes taking notes and doing other writing on a computer necessary (or think you might need these), please see the next section.

*Access and Accommodations:*

Your experience in this class is important to me. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or [uwdrs@uw.edu](mailto:uwdrs@uw.edu) or [disability.uw.edu.](http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/)DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions.  Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS.  It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

**And last but not at all least….**

**Department of English Statement of Values**

* The UW English Department aims to help students become more incisive thinkers, effective communicators, and imaginative writers by acknowledging that language and its use is powerful and holds the potential to empower individuals and communities; to provide the means to engage in meaningful conversation and collaboration across differences and with those with whom we disagree; and to offer methods for exploring, understanding, problem solving, and responding to the many pressing collective issues we face in our world—skills that align with and support the University of Washington’s mission to educate “a diverse student body to become responsible global citizens and future leaders through a challenging learning environment informed by cutting-edge scholarship.”
* As a department, we begin with the conviction that language and texts play crucial roles in the constitution of cultures and communities.  Our disciplinary commitments to the study of language, literature, and culture require of us a willingness to engage openly and critically with questions of power and difference. As such, in our teaching, service, and scholarship we frequently initiate and encourage conversations about topics such as race, immigration, gender, sexuality, and class.  These topics are fundamental to the inquiry we pursue.  We are proud of this fact, and we are committed to creating an environment in which our faculty and students can do so confidently and securely, knowing that they have the backing of the department.
* Towards that aim, we value the inherent dignity and uniqueness of individuals and communities. We aspire to be a place where human rights are respected and where any of us can seek support. This includes people of all ethnicities, faiths, genders, national origins, political views, and citizenship status; LGBQTIA+; those with disabilities; veterans; and anyone who has been targeted, abused, or disenfranchised.