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English 412: Senior Workshop in Creative Writing
Block 6 2016 Van Etten-Lacey House

Welcome to ENG 412, the second half of the capstone experience for students completing the creative writing concentration. This workshop is designed to focus on your own work and life as advanced creative writers. Rare on the block plan, this workshop will give you the time to complete work you've started and to define who you are as an artist. We will also consider your lives as writers beyond college, including discussions on the submission and publication process, graduate school, and careers in writing. You will have a chance to speak with professional writers about their work, their process, and their career paths.

This course will be conducted as a combination of workshop and independent study. The goal is to produce work suitable for publication and/or public performance and to write an artist's statement to accompany your work that explores the artistic traditions you call home. To that end, you will also work with me to create, complete, and discuss a reading list relevant to your project.

Such time to devote to your work – and within a supporting community – is rare in the writer's life. Make the most of it! Plan to work *at the very least* 40 hours a week and make the most of your time, recognizing that reading is very much part of the writing process and that every writer has good days and bad days. One thing that separates productive writers from writers with piles of unfinished drafts is how they handle the bad days. Class readings and discussion will include strategies for overcoming obstacles, but artists must be internally-motivated. Seek help when you need it – from me, your classmates, and the Writing Studio – and make the most of resources (such as the “non-required” readings on our Moodle page).

Course Learning Objectives:

- To produce a body of literary work of significance and of publishable quality. Doing so requires you to think and act creatively and independently and to develop disciplinary perspective, which includes considering your work within the bodies of literature you have studied as a major. While your project's scope may be larger, each of you should aim for 20-30 pages of polished, publishable work to be completed by the end of the block. Eligible students will have their work considered for Honors in the major.
- To build a constructive workshop group through speaking clearly, listening actively, and engaging with others in productive dialogue. This workshop also requires you to collaborate with others. In reading works by published authors and by your classmates, you will connect with diverse ideas and with experiences that differ from your own.
- To develop your skills at presenting your work to the public and to understand the process by which work is prepared and submitted for public venues.
- To think deeply about the place of writing in your life, both personally and professionally, and to prepare for the range of opportunities and challenges that await you beyond college.

Required Texts:

Writing Past Dark: Envy, Fear, Distraction, and Other Dilemmas in the Writer's Life by Bonnie Friedman
Readings on Moodle (designated with “M”)

ASSIGNMENTS:

- **Artistic Statement**

During the block, you will write an artist's statement: a description of your art and your goals as an artist. This piece will be a theoretically-informed discussion of where your work falls within artistic traditions, what your goals are as an artist, and larger questions about why you write. This document will be useful in the future for applying for grants, fellowships, or graduate programs – and for discussing your work with other writers. Your reading list should help inform this piece, and we will look at drafts of your statement during the block. *See further guidelines on Moodle.*

- **Reading List and Reading Log**

Early in the class, I will meet with each of you individually to discuss your prospectus and your working bibliography. We will develop a plan of reading for the block, deciding what seems most valuable to your own work to read or re-read, thinking particularly about texts that will help you with your artistic statement, texts that help you think about your influences, and texts that will situate your writing in an artistic tradition. Your reading list should include more than one genre. Your reading log should be a way for you to engage deeply with the reading. It is, simply, a log of what you've read (label everything clearly for my sake); but it also should show me how you're reacting to what you're reading and integrating it with your own writing practice. You may also respond to joint class readings and writers' visits in your reading log.

- **"The Writer's Life": Shared Thoughts**

Each of you will contribute to the class's consideration of writing, publishing, and the writing life throughout the block. You may do so in a variety of ways, listed below. Although you are only "required" to contribute in one of these ways, you are certainly invited to participate more broadly. *I have set aside some times for these activities in class, but if you would like to share at a certain time, let me know a day in advance so I can schedule you in.*

- **Publication Venues:** Research a couple of possible venues to which you might submit your work and share your findings to the class in a shared document. Include an explanation of any aesthetic sensibilities you see in the editorial decisions (what kind of work seems to fit into this journal?) and the guidelines for submitting work. We will follow up on this shared information in class.
- **Writing Exercises:** create a writing exercise you think would be useful for the class; it can be a twist on an exercise you've encountered before or it can be something brand new. The exercise should be introduced with clear instructions, and your classmates should write for about 5-10 minutes. You should explain the purposes behind the exercise as an introduction or follow-up (or both).
- **Recommended Readings:** Our Moodle page has an extensive list of recommended readings, and we also have multiple books on reserve. A few times during the block I may ask the class to choose a recommended reading to read; in addition, you may read further in the list and share the ideas of the piece and some reactions with the class.

- **Participation**

This is a senior-level workshop. Everyone's participation is essential to making this a productive experience. You learn by articulating your ideas and by listening actively. I expect you to attend class and to be fully prepared for in-depth discussion. Individual conferences are essential to the course and also require your full preparation and participation.

- **Workshops**

A good portion of our block will be spent in in-depth workshop of in-process manuscripts. We will be conducting two types of workshop: one in which you as the author lead discussion around where you are with the piece, and one in which you will lead the discussion about another student's work. For the first, manuscripts will be about 7 pages, and discussions will last about 30 minutes; you will open discussion by telling us about the work's genesis, evolution, and vision – including what you think is going well and the problems or issues you want to discuss with the class. For the second type of workshop, manuscripts will be about 15 pages, and discussions will last about an hour; I will expect you to have read your author's manuscript particularly closely and be ready to discuss the work in-depth. You will open the discussion by giving a roughly 10-minute reaction to the work: what the writer's intentions seem to be, what the writer does particularly well, strategies you think the writer might experiment with, etc. Then you will pose a few opening questions for the class to discuss that will lead to an open-ended discussion of the work. Careful preparation is especially important for the workshop process; read the material several times and be ready to dig into the work in discussion.

- **Final Portfolio**

The final day of class you will be submitting a portfolio of your polished work. We will discuss the goals for this portfolio throughout the block, as the portfolio may look a bit different for each student. You will include a brief paper discussing where you think the material stands at this point, your final artist's statement, and your reading log.

You are now advanced creative writing students, and I will treat you as such. I will evaluate your block holistically, considering all components in relation to you as individuals; I will be evaluating you on the quality of your written work, your engagement with the class material and your peers' writing, and the effort you put forth throughout. I will give you a grade at the end of the block. Please speak with me at any point during the block to discuss your progress.

POLICIES:

Keeping in Touch:

At times I will communicate with the whole class or individual students by email. I am expecting you to read my emails carefully and respond promptly when necessary. Email is considered an official mode of communication at Cornell; you are all expected to check your account at least once a day. I am almost always available Mondays and Wednesdays after class, but I am also happy to set up other appointments with you.

Technology:

Laptops and tablets are allowed in class and individual meetings provided you are using them *only* for the task at hand. Phones should be put away and silenced during all class meetings.

Academic Honesty:

Cornell College expects all members of the community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, the work may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The

procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in *The Compass*, our student handbook, under the heading “Academic Policies – Honesty in Academic Work.” Creative work sometimes includes allusion, pastiche, and various uses of other writers’ work; please speak with me if you are unsure of how to handle these situations while also adhering to standards of academic honesty.

Students with disabilities:

Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml

Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the disabilities services coordinator as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. Ideally, this meeting would take place well before the start of classes. The student must notify the instructor within the first three days of the term of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course.

SCHEDULE:

- Our schedule is subject to change depending on the needs of the class as projects develop; please take note of changes and be flexible.
- Readings are listed on the days they are due.
- We will meet 12-3 unless otherwise noted below.

WEEK ONE

M 2/8 Class meets at **9:00 a.m.**

Bring a hard copy of your prospectus and reading list from Senior Seminar

T 2/9 Individual meetings

Bring a new draft of your reading list. We will be discussing your prospectus, including any plans to deviate from your proposed project. Be prepared to discuss your work in its current state and your goals for the block, including how those play out in your new reading list. *You should also be getting started on your writing project today: establish the habit of writing every day!*

W 2/10

Friedman, *Writing Past Dark* (chapters 1-4) and Rubinstein, “Not Weird About Brooklyn” (M)

Class visitor: Helen Rubinstein

Th 2/11

Friedman, *Writing Past Dark* (chapters 5-8)

Due by midnight to Moodle: prospectus update

F 2/12 Writing Day

WEEK TWO

M 2/15

Browse Patrick Rosal’s website (M)

The Writer’s Life: exercises, discussions, etc.

T 2/16

Draft exchange: bring 11 copies, stapled

W 2/17

Author-led Workshops

Th 2/18

Author-led Workshops

F 2/19 Writing Day

Sunday, 2/21 Due by noon to Moodle: drafts of artist statements

WEEK THREE: This week's schedule may be modified depending on progress of projects; we will be holding hour-long workshops of each of your projects this week. Some "Writer's Life" discussions and exercises might break up workshop nicely; let me know if you would like me to schedule you in this week.

M 2/22 Class meets at 2:00

Draft exchange: bring 11 copies, stapled

T 2/23

Peer-led Workshops 9-11 and 1-3

W 2/24

Peer-led Workshops 9-11 and 1-3

Th 2/25

Peer-led Workshops 9-11 and 1-3

F 2/26 Individual conferences

WEEK FOUR

M 2/29

The Writer's Life: exercises and discussions. Also bring any questions about publishing, grad school, etc.

Class visitors TBA

T 3/1 Individual conferences

W 3/2 Class meets at 9:00

Class reading and final portfolios due