**Creative Writing for Women Syllabus**

**June 24 –August 26, 2015**

**Instructors:**

**Course Description:**

This class will meet every Wednesday from 5:30-7:30 pm for ten (10) weeks.

In this course we will read a variety of short stories and try our hand at writing one. We will develop the practice of free writing as a way to develop our own themes and materials for writing stories. We will talk about the process of writing as well as the process of revision to develop confidence in our voice and narratives. You don’t need any prior experience in writing, but you must be open to exploring a variety of texts and writing exercises.

Objectives - You will:

- Develop a habit of writing regularly

- Read published writing critically, with a focus on discovering other artists’ strategies

- Develop technical vocabulary necessary to discuss fiction.

- Attempt a wide variety of writing exercises designed to help inspire your writing.

Readings will include short stories written by authors like James Baldwin, Edgar P. Jones, Jamaica Kincaid, and short essays about techniques of fiction. In class we will discuss the craft and content of each story. We will also write each week in and out of class.

Because we cannot accommodate all students who want to take this course, it is important

that you take advantage of the opportunity. Please be advised that you *will not* be allowed

to continue the course if you do not complete the assignments and do the reading.

**Certificate of Completion.** You will not receive formal academic credit for this course. However, you can receive a *Certificate of Completion* if you attend all classes and submit all writing assignments. Because things happen, you are allowed one excused absence.

**Requirements and Expectations:**

*Materials* - At the beginning of the course every student will receive a dictionary, a pad of writing paper, a composition notebook, a pencil and flex pen, a folder for your writing and an accordion folder for your reading assignments. You will also receive photocopies of all weekly readings. We cannot provide replacements.

*Readings* - We will spend time in and out of class reading the work of authors that came before us, thinking about and discussing their craft. You are not expected to make complete sense of everything; it takes more than a lifetime to understand some stories completely. You are expected to read everything and make your best effort. Share your difficulties. Bring questions.

*Reading Responses* - Each week you will write at least a paragraph about your response to the stories assigned. The purpose of the reading response is twofold: first, it ensures that you’ve done your reading. Second it provides you with something to talk about during class. A reading response can respond to anything in the story: the decision of a character, a line you particularly like, or what the story is driving at thematically. Did you like or dislike the story? Why or why not?

*Freewriting Assignments (outside of class) –* Each week you will do three freewriting assignments of a minimum of two (2) pages each, i.e. the front and back of one page in your composition notebook. Although these will not be collected, we will check to make sure you have done them. Read a chapter from **Writing Down the Bones** by Natalie Goldberg before each session. After the first week, try to write for longer periods. Observe how your writing changes as you write longer. Observe how your breathing changes, whether your body relaxes. Observe.

*Writing Assignments* *(to be completed outside of class)* – In addition to freewriting, you will also be required to complete the weekly writing assignments listed below. These will be due the following week and should demonstrate sincere time and effort. I will take these writing assignments home, make comments, and return them to you.

*Final Project* - By the end of the course, each of you will write your own complete short story using techniques and craft we have discovered and discussed throughout the class. We will read and comment on them and bring them back the final week. We will leave time for you to share and discuss your short stories with the class (sharing is not mandatory). These projects should demonstrate various storytelling strategies we’ve discussed in class.

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| **Week** | **Concepts** | **Stories** | **Writing Assignments** | **Grammar** | **Essays** |
| **Every Week** | **Word of the Week** |  | 1) Write a response to the readings;  2) Complete three freewriting sessions of at least two pages. On week 3 increase these sessions to four pages each. |  | **Always** read **Writing Down the Bones** before writing |
| **1** | **What is a Story?**  **Plot, Conflict** |  |  | What is a sentence? Punctuation | **Writing Down the Bones** Chaps 1-3 |
| **2** | **Point of View** | *Virgins* by Danielle Evans;  *Fleur* by Louise Erdreich;  *Happy Endings* by Margaret Atwood | Write a 3+ page story from a single point of view. Be prepared to explain your choice. | Quotation marks, paragraphs | **Elements of Fiction**:  pp. 1044-1048,  1051-55  **Bones,** Chaps 4-6 |
| **3** | **Character** | *Old Boys, Old Girls* by Edward P. Jones;  **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings***, excerpts* by Maya Angelou |  | Homonyms, Antonyms,  Synonyms | **Bones,** Chaps 7-9 |
| **4** | **Dialogue**  **“Zooming Out”** | *When the Women Come Out to Dance* and *Tonto Woman* by Elmore Leonard | Write a 3+ page story featuring dialogue. Think of the way a specific person you know talks, listen to the people around you, and try to recreate the way they speak. | Agreement of Verb and Noun | **Elements:**  pp. 1048-1051 **Bones,** Chaps 8-12 |
| **5** | **The Power of Detail** | *The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien;  **Resolute**, *excerpt, by* Martin W. Sandler; *Sonny’s Blues*by James Baldwin; | Write a 3 + page description of a person, real or imagined. Provide all the detail you can think of: what they look like, where they were born, what they are good at, how they talk, what their favorite things are, how they dress, etc. | Objective Pronoun | **Bones**, Chaps 13-15 |
| **6** | **Atmosphere, Place, Setting** | *A Christmas Memory* by Truman Capote; | Write a 5+ page description of the place where you grew up. What did it look like, smell like, sound like, who lived there, etc. | Active Voice, Passive Voice | **Elements:**  pp. 1050-1051  **Bones**, Chaps 16-18 |
| **7** | **Epistolary**  **Fiction** | **Overqualified** by Joey Comeau; **Dracula** by Bram Stoker | Write a 5+ page story in the form of letters or diary entries |  | **Bones,** Chaps 19-21 |
| **8** | **Oral History** | Excerpts: **The Odyssey** by Homer; **My Soul Is Rested** by Howell Raines; **All God’s Dangers** by Theodore Rosengarten; **An Old Woman’s Reflections** by Peig [of the Blaskets] | Interview someone and write down a 5+ page story that they tell you. Use the first person. | Complex Sentences, Pendant Phrases | **Bones,** Chaps 22-24 |
| **9** | **Narrators, Unreliable and Otherwise** | *Jealous Parrot Returns in Form of Husband* by Robert Olen Butler; *The Jilting of Granny Weatherall* by Katherine Ann Porter | Write a 10+ page story, using the techniques you have learned in this class. |  | **Elements:**  pp. 1055-59  **Bones**, Chaps 25-27 |

**Extra Credit:** In order to receive a paperback book of your choice

1. Dofive consecutive free writings during one weekon a **single subject,** perhaps something that troubles you, or a question you are trying to decide. Every day you should write about ***this same subject.*** Examples: 1) Should you return to the same living situation when you get out; 2) Forgiveness.
2. **Or**, write a ten-page story starting with the sentence, “the last camel died at noon on Wednesday.”