

CRW 4932 Honors Creative Writing Seminar (3 credits)

Course Syllabus

Professor Becka McKay

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Office: CU 320

Office Hours:

Course Description

This course is designed to facilitate the completion of your honors thesis and expand your understanding of the craft of writing. In addition to workshopping drafts, you will also be reading (and writing about) important works in all three genres of creative writing along with advanced craft essays. We will also spend time discussing professional development—the next steps you might take with your writing.

Course Prerequisites

CRW 3010 and at least two 4000-level creating writing workshops, one of which must be in the genre you are working in for your thesis.

Required Texts

Gregory Orr and Ellen Bryan Voight (eds), *Poets Teaching Poets*

Dante's *Inferno* (various translators; edited by David Halperin)

Richard Hugo, *The Triggering Town*

Flannery O'Connor, *The Complete Short Stories*

Course packet of craft essays on nonfiction (print this out from Blackboard)

Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

Schedule (Please come to class prepared to discuss the reading listed for that day):

Week 1: Introductions. What is the honors thesis? What is the introduction to the honors thesis?

Week 2: Read: Boruch, Dennis, and Williamson in *Poets Teaching Poets*.

Write: Two discussion questions for each essay.

Week 2: Read: *Inferno*, Cantos 1-16; Wilner in *Poets Teaching Poets*.

Write: Summary/analysis of your assigned canto.

Week 3: Read: *Inferno*, Cantos 16-33; McHugh in *Poets Teaching Poets*.

Write: Imitations of your assigned canto.

Week 4: Workshop. Students assigned to be workshopped must post their drafts no later than Monday.

Week 5: Read: *The Triggering Town*.

Write: Create your own place-based writing exercise.

Week 6: Read: The first ten stories in O'Connor.

Write: A one-page response to O'Connor's use of language/dialogue, plot, or character.

Week 7: Read: The second ten stories in O'Connor.

Write: A one-page response to O'Connor's use of language/dialogue, plot, or character. (Choose a different aspect than in your previous response.)

Week 8: Workshop. Students assigned to be workshopped must post their drafts no later than Monday.

Week 9: Read: the final eleven stories in O'Connor.

Write: A one-page response to O'Connor's use of language/dialogue, plot, or character. (Choose a different aspect than in your previous two responses.)

Week 10: Read: Gornick and Hampl (from course packet) on the craft of creative nonfiction.

Write: Two discussion questions; revised first paragraphs.

Week 11: Read: Part I of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

Write: Two discussion questions.

Week 12: Read: Parts II & III of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

Write: First paragraphs of your introductory essays.

Week 13: Read: Wolfe and Lopate (from course packet) on the craft of creative nonfiction.

Write: Two discussion questions.

Week 14: Workshop (thesis or introduction—your choice). Drafts must be posted no later than Monday.

Week 15: Workshop (thesis or introduction—your choice). Drafts must be posted no later than Monday.

Week 16: Workshop (thesis or introduction—your choice). Drafts must be posted no later than Monday.

Our final exam period is Monday, December 3 at 4:00.

Grading/Assignments

- 15% **Attendance and participation.** Attendance for the course is required. You are allowed a maximum of three excused absences. **More than three absences, for any reason, will result in a penalty in your final grade.** To receive credit for attendance, you must be **in class, with that day's assignment completed, and the assigned text with you (whether it is a book or printed out PDF).** If you do not have a hard copy of that day's assigned reading with you, you will be assigned half an absence. Any session in which the student attends less than the full 50 minutes will count as half an absence. Texting or surfing the internet in class is not acceptable; **if you are using a cell phone during class, you will be asked to leave class and you will be assigned half an absence for that session.** Your final grade will be penalized one letter for each absence beyond the first three (that is, if your average is a B in the course but you have 4 absences, you will receive a B- as your final grade; if your average is a B but you have 5 absences, you will receive a C+). Students with more than six absences will receive an F for the course.
- 15% **Discussion questions.** Discussion questions must be turned in on Blackboard no later than 5:00 the evening before class. A good discussion question calls attention to a particularly difficult or confusing moment in the text, or encourages us to more deeply explore specific themes or details.
- 20% **One-page responses (3).** These short response papers are not meant to be summaries of the reading—they are opportunities for you to explore a theme, idea, character, or other feature of the reading in some detail. As a way to begin a response paper, you might think of a question or two you have about the reading and some different ways you could answer those questions. If you would like to add a creative aspect to your response paper, feel free. For example, the paper could take the form of a letter to the author, a letter to a character, a letter from one character to another, etc. Each response must be formatted like a regular paper—typed and double-spaced with your name, the date, and the name of the class in the upper corner. I will grade these responses based on the clarity and originality of your ideas. Spelling and grammar count, so please proofread your work carefully. Your response papers are *always* due (on Blackboard) the day before class by 5:00 p.m.—no exceptions. If you miss this deadline, you will receive an F on that paper. Please bring a hard copy to class as well to make discussion easier.
- 25% **Thesis.** Fiction and creative nonfiction theses should be approximately 40 pages; poetry theses should consist of at least 20 poems. Half of the thesis can be revised work from previous classes.
- 25% **Introductory essay.** These reflective essays should focus on a particular aspect or aspects of craft that you feel are particularly important/influential in your creative process and should be approximately 10-15 pages in length.

Americans with Disabilities Act Notice

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodation due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) -- in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880); in Davie, MOD 1 (954-236-1222); in Jupiter, SR 117 (561-799-8585); or at the Treasure Coast, CO 128 (772-873-3305) – and follow all OSD procedures.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism in any form, and from any source (whether oral, printed, electronic, etc.) is unacceptable, and is a serious breach of the academic honor code. ***If you plagiarize or “cheat” in any way, you will receive an F for this course.*** Plagiarism includes copying information off of internet websites. If you have any questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, discuss your concerns with me.

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001 at http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001_Code_of_Academic_Integrity.pdf.