



ENGL 306 WL: CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

Mon./Wed. 3:30 - 5:00 PM

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Course Description & Requirements

This course is a creative writing workshop thematically keyed to, but not restricted to, exploring the experience of living and traveling abroad through writing about our experiences in Italy and Europe. Along with weekly writing workshops, we will read and discuss texts that focus on Italy and Europe from both the native and foreign perspectives, noting particularly the literary techniques and strategies that various writers have used to express their experiences of Italy as a place, its people, or as a literary trope. Our class sessions will be divided almost equally between these two activities. One of our two weekly sessions will be devoted to the examination of a text dealing with various American, English, Austrian, French, and Italian authors' experiences of Italy. These texts will provide us with a forum for discussing the literary expression of place and one's relationship to those places as well as showcasing various literary forms, genres, and techniques that we might find useful in the formulation of our own texts. The readings will also provide us with models for weekly writing assignments that will ward off any writer's block. In these classes we will also listen to various authors reading their texts aloud and consider the aesthetics of literary performance.

The other weekly class session will function as a writer's workshop: each student will present their own textual productions orally (accompanied by copies for everyone uploaded to a shared Google drive folder) to the group for reactions, critique, and suggestions for revision. The weekly writing assignments will be particularly useful for beginners but should also help more experienced writers in an attempt to goad them into trying new techniques based on the weekly readings. You will of course be absolutely free to write about things other than the foreign experience for the workshops—especially if you have a particular project in mind. Our ultimate goal will be, by semester's end, to produce a finalized, substantial text—or series of short texts—suitable for performance and/or publication in the literary world beyond this course.

Your final grade will represent the median of three separate grades for three different categories of textual production, amelioration, and overall participation in this course. 1.) You will be graded on the texts that you produce—those presented during the workshop sessions, anything you hand in to me privately, as well as the weekly assignments—not only on their overall number but how well they reflect a consistent effort to move ahead with your writing, to improve and diversify it. 2.) You will be graded on how well you use and participate in both the workshop and reading sessions—how many texts you present, how well you give and take criticism, the success of your re-writes and your contribution to the discussions on others' texts. This grade will also include your overall course attendance. And, 3.) You will be graded on your final project—its quality, polish and overall success.

NOTE: I will not be able to give a passing grade to students who fail to participate regularly in the workshops, produce considerably fewer texts than the class average, or are absent 5 or more times (as per Sant'Anna Institute regulations).

Measurable Course Outcome

Rather than a strict, one-size-fits-all measurable outcome of literary quality, this workshop-based course will rather seek, through practice and revision, peer and instructor feedback, and the reading and discussions of various forms, genres, and techniques of fiction and verse, to improve your knowledge and practice of creative writing.

Grading Scale

95-100	A	80-82	B-	67-69	D+
90-94	A-	77-79	C+	63-66	D
87-89	B+	73-76	C	60-62	D-
83-86	B	70-72	C-	60-0	F

Attendance Policy

Both by school policy and Italian law attendance at all classes is required of all students. (Yes, your student visa is dependent on perfect attendance.) Even so, I will reward students (round a borderline grade up) for perfect or very good attendance, but I am also forced by school policy to penalize students who accrue more than two unexcused absences, so please do your very best to be here and engaged when you are here. Students are expected to arrive at class on time, having completed the readings and written assignments due that day (see schedule below), in order to receive a passing (C or better) grade.

Since our texts are provided in electronic form, you will have a laptop in front of you during our class sessions, both the literary discussions and the workshops. Having lived for some years in a world free of such devices, I can tell you from experience that your laptop is *not* your friend, that it has already damaged your ability to concentrate and made it far more difficult for you to stay focused and benefit from classroom education than those of us lucky enough to have studied before this very tempting distraction-machine was invented. Serious psychological studies have demonstrated again and again that the laptop (and the myth of “multi-tasking”) is seriously detrimental to human information retention, that taking notes on a computer is a far less effective memory jog than notes written on paper, and that the distractions that computers offer (social media, online shopping, games, etc.) are the greatest impediments to your education at the present moment. Please do your best to defeat these temptations and use the laptop only to refer to the text under discussion and, if you must, to take notes and jot down thoughts, interpretations, and possible paper topics. For 1.5 hours twice a week, please try your best to leave the buzz of the cyber world behind, to stay with us and live “in the moment.” This is your only hope.

Contesting a Grade

If students wish to contest a grade they must make an appointment to do so in person. The student will have to contact the instructor with any concerns within **one** week of receiving the grade that they feel is unjust. The student must demonstrate that they have read the comments accompanying the grade by presenting a brief written statement specifying why the grade does not reflect, in their opinion, the quality of the work. It is at the discretion of

the instructor to decide whether the work and the student's request warrant a change of grade. Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments and feedback (in case of loss) and should also keep all of their marked assignments.

Accommodation Policy

In order to be eligible for accommodations (i.e. extended time on exams and tests) you are required to present an official letter from your home institution indicating that you may receive support. The letter which normally comes from one's home campus Center for Academic Support must be presented to the administration prior to the drop/add deadline. A note provided by a home physician or counselor will not suffice. Any information provided will be treated as private and confidential.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is *not* tolerated in this course. Academic honesty is not only an ethical issue but also the foundation of scholarship. Cheating and plagiarism are therefore serious breaches of academic as well as personal integrity. If you refer to someone else's work, appropriate references and citations must be provided.

Calendar

1/17: Course introduction.

Self-presentations.

Listening: Allen Ginsberg reading "Europe! Europe!"

Assignment: First impressions of Italy in any form.

1/22: Round robin reading: Any piece of writing.

1/24: Reading discussion: Mark Twain on Florence and Italy from *The Innocents Abroad*:
Satirizing the self and the other.

Assignment: Write about your awkwardness in Italy and/or Italian awkwardness
in your eyes in prose.

1/29: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

1/31: Reading discussion: Selected poems from Rainer Maria Rilke's *New Poems*: The
objective correlative.

Listening: Henry Miller reading from *The Colossus of Maurussi*.

Assignment: Describe two things you have seen in Sorrento as objective correlatives
in either verse or prose.

2/5: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

2/7: Reading Discussion: Ernest Hemingway's "Che ti dice la patria?": The politics of
scenery.

Assignment: Describe an event from in your life in Sorrento that seemed to
symbolically represent Italy or Italians in prose or verse.

2/12: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

2/14: Reading: Pier Paolo Pasolini's "Apennine": Cognitive mapping.

Listening: Pier Paolo Pasolini reads with music by Ennio Moricone.

Assignment: Describe the place which you are most familiar (with characters and an
event if possible) in either prose or verse.

2/19: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

2/21: Reading: Malcolm Lowry's short story "Present Estate of Pompeii": Tourist fiction.

Assignment: Write a short story or a poem about your travels around Italy/Europe.

2/26: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

2/28: Reading: Excerpt from Germaine de Stael's novel *Corinne, or Italy*: Italy as a woman.

Assignment: If Italy and the USA were persons what would they be like? How
would they interact?

3/4: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

3/6: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

3/11-3/15: SPRING BREAK

3/18: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

3/20 Reading: Angela Carter's "The Tiger's Bride": Italy as a backdrop.

Assignment: Write a short narrative (can be in verse) using an Italian setting.

3/25: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

3/27: Reading: F. T. Marinetti's Manifesto of Futurist Writing and Words-in-Freedom:
freeing words of sense, grammar, and the printing press.

Listening: Kurt Schwitters "Sonata in Urlauten."

Assignment: Write a text in which you try to free your words of sense, grammar
and/or the confines of the printing press.

4/1: Easter Monday, holiday.

4/3: Reading: Patti Smith's "Italy (The Round)": Italy and the American avant-garde.

Reading: Excerpt from Kathy Acker's novel *My Death My Life* by Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Listening: Patti Smith reading with and without music: Place as transcendence.

Assignment: Describe an imaginative, second-hand Italy culled from books, films,
conversations, etc.

4/8: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

4/10: Reading and Listening: Ezra Pound's "Canto III": The landscape of memory.

Assignment: Write a first person memory along with whatever associations it
provokes in you in either verse or prose.

4/15: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

4/17: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

4/22: Presentation of students' work and discussion.

4/24: Presentation of semester projects pt. I

4/29: Presentation of semester projects pt. II (If necessary)

Date and time TBA ~ Spoken Words: Readings by Sant'Anna Institute's Creative Writing
Students.

All reading assignments will be emailed to students as a single pdf file.