

Literary Magazine 2020-2021
Miss Swank
mswank@asd20.org
Room 3431

"We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for." - John Keating

This course is designed as an introduction to expressive, or creative writing, exploring your interest and abilities in the various genres of fiction and poetry, culminating in the publication of a new, school-wide literary magazine. The hope is that you will discover the pleasure of expressing yourself creatively in writing, whether in poetry or prose, while examining the writing processes of the great writers of the past and present. This course, then, will not be only one of writing and publishing, but of reading and experiencing literature.

While you will be free to write whatever you wish, there is some structure to the course. First, you will need to complete writing activities as they are assigned. **There will be some sort of written assignment due nearly every week, though not of great length.** It may be an exercise we began in class, a follow-up assignment, or a journal entry based on a reading. **Failure to submit an assignment on time will affect the semester grades.**

Second, when reading is assigned, you will be expected to come prepared to discuss the reading, not just from the point of view of "what happened," but from a writer's viewpoint: what makes this story / poem good? How does the author use diction (the words), images, dialogue, structure, to make this worth reading and rereading? And finally, what can we learn from this writer to apply to our writing? When we are reading a chapter or a work of fiction, I will usually try to provide some time for work in class.

In addition to the exercise-type assignments, and reading / class discussion, you will be expected to turn in your journals and a portfolio for each quarter, with 3-5 examples of your best work for that period. Please see additional details and necessary assignments should we have a literary magazine this year.

Workshop format:

- The class will be run as a workshop, with participants reading (or hearing) other's writing, and giving affirmation and constructive input.
- Privacy is permitted; students will have the option of keeping some pieces from public view (maximum—1 piece / semester; however, not private from the instructor). A substantial part of the course grade is based on sharing and editing one another's work. **If you do not share your work, we cannot help you improve your work. Courage, friends!**

Assignment Format

- double-spaced and typed (fonts Arial size 11 or Times New Roman size 12) unless they were handwritten in class.
- headed in the MLA format (the date particularly is helpful for organizing/tracking!)
- title of the piece should be centered on a line after the heading, and followed by a blank line before the work begins. Take care with the title; each piece of writing submitted should carry a title, which relates to the piece (that is, something original, not simply "Homework" or "Place Poem.") The creation of a title is part of the writing assignment, and will contribute to the overall impact of the piece (and the grade!). If you're stuck, ask for help.
- **You must be prepared to enter our shared class google drive in order to write your comments on other student's papers. You will need access to a computer either during a study hall or at home in order to do this. This will follow from our in-class critiques. You are more than welcome to bring personal tech from home for writing purposes only.**

Grading

Individual assignments will not be graded. Your grade for the course will be determined by the completion of **all** assignments on time, on the amount of effort you put into your written work, the level of your class participation, and your portfolio pieces. There are no tests.

Materials

Please purchase a journal of your choosing . . . something that makes you feel inspired!

Each student will have a copy of the class texts to reference as needed, *The Creative Writer's Craft*, and *How to Build a Long-Lasting Fire*. A good dictionary and thesaurus are also strongly recommended. Pencil may be used, or blue or black ink pens.

Literary Magazine – Proposed Course Syllabus (may change due to time constraints and unforeseen circumstances)

Semester 1: Prose - Creative Non-Fiction, Memoirs and Short Stories

Major Project/Grade: Short story, 6 pages in length (min.)

Production of Literary Magazine - early January (please see COVID contingency below)

Semester 2: Poetry

Major Project/Grade: Final prose or poetry

Production of Literary Magazine - early Spring

Publishing / Contests

There are several publishing opportunities and contests available throughout the year. Students are strongly encouraged to submit their work, and **must** submit at least one piece to an outside source sometime during each semester. This is great practice in building your confidence as a writer!

You will also be expected to submit at least two pieces to the literary magazine, and participate in the editing and publication process of the literary magazine.

Grades

- assignments / journals = 25%; portfolio = 30%; participation (conversation) = 25%; magazine work = 10%; submissions = 10% of semester grade

COVID Contingency Plans

As we will talk more about on our first day together, we live in unprecedented times. While I desire this class to be challenging, I also desire for this class to be enjoyable and an opportunity for each of us to relax, take a deep breath, and just be creative. We will make a decision within the first couple days on our plan for this year. As with everything in a COVID world, this class may look a little different this year . . . and that's okay! Here are the options we'll talk through on the first day of school:

1. Nothing changes, literary magazine put out in Fall and Spring regardless of online or in-person learning
2. No literary magazine put out first semester, larger publication put out in Spring, focus more on honing creative writing process
3. No literary magazine publication this year, focus on honing creative writing process

As we make these decisions as a class, please note that some of the grading, assignments, etc. listed above may, or more likely, will change. Regardless of what this year looks like, this class is going to be an amazing opportunity to grow our creativity, and as John Keating would suggest, become more human.

