EGL 197: The Writing Mind: A Course For First-Time Writers

Instructor: Rusty Dolleman

Requirements for Grade Options:

Credit/No Credit: Consistent class attendance is required to receive credit.

Letter Grade: Students will receive an A if they have no more than two absences and submit the majority of the take-home writing assignments.

In-Class Writing: One of the main obstacles Continuing Studies students encounter in establishing a consistent writing practice is the constant demand placed on their time by work, family, and other elements of outside life. Because of this, we will be making a considerable amount of time for the actual practice of writing during our course sessions. Students should plan to spend twenty minutes or so at the beginning and end of every class meeting engaged in active writing based either on specific prompts I’ll be handing out, or an ongoing project they’re currently engaged with.

Take-Home Assignments: In the first half of the class, students will have the opportunity to hand in 2-5 double spaced pages of fiction or non-fiction prose each week for instructor comment. This can either be writing that has been developed from the in-class prompts, or some other work you’ve been doing.

Workshop: In the second half of the class, each student will have the option to share his or her work with the larger group, and we’ll spend part of the first class meeting drawing up a submission schedule. The reasons for this are threefold:

a) Learning how to integrate different opinions on your work is an important part of the drafting process.

b) Learning how to make useful comments about other people’s work helps us define and improve our own writing.

c) The respectful interchange of ideas/approaches/techniques produced by a workshop is both energizing and educational for all involved.

The pieces you share can be either fiction or non-fiction, and although they can most certainly be a revision of one of your exercise responses, they don’t have to be (I do ask that your submission be something you’ve never submitted for review before, however). Submissions can be up to ten double spaced pages, and in addition to discussing the pieces in class the week after they’re handed in, each student will be responsible for writing a paragraph of comments on his/her classmates’ work. The process for both submitting and commenting on workshop pieces will be addressed more fully on a separate handout.

Syllabus:

Week One: Conflict

Week Two: Character
Week Three: Voice and Point-of-View

Week Four: Scene and Dialogue

Week Five: Story, Plot, + Structure

Week Six: Workshop #1
Week Seven Workshop #2
Week Eight: Workshop #3
Week Nine: Workshop #4
Week Ten: Workshop #5