Course Title: Death to Writer’s Block! Moving Past Fear and Finding Inspiration for Your Writing  
Course Code: EGL 187 WB  
Instructor: Stacey Swann

Course Summary:  
This online course has a dual purpose—to banish the writing fear and resistance you are currently struggling with and to help you generate new work in nonfiction, fiction, and poetry. By the end of our five weeks together, you will have learned more about your blocks, have loosened their hold on your creative work, and have multiple new pieces to continue to work on past the end of the class. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to combating writer’s block. The key understanding that will unlock one writer’s pen may have no effect on another writer. Because of this, we will study the subject from multiple perspectives and with advice from multiple authors. This diversity will allow everyone to find the approach that speaks most directly to their own concerns and their own worldview.

For this course, I have selected one book on conquering fear and resistance (Art & Fear by David Bayles and Ted Orland) and another book (This Word Now by Owen and Jodi Egerton) that will provide additional advice as well as writing prompts. In addition, we will dig into the topics of building habits, the creative process, and how famous writers have fought off their writer’s blocks. In tandem with these works, we will also be reading and getting inspiration from short essays, flash fiction, and poetry from various contemporary writers.

Because this is a large class, there is no formal workshop component to the course. Some students may choose to not take the course for a grade and not share their own creative work. However, for students looking for community, I will post and monitor threads with discussion questions and writing assignments. If you have the time and interest, I encourage you to participate in these threads. Nothing beats back resistance and writer’s block like a community that provides encouraging moral support and enthusiasm for the work you are creating!

Grade Options and Requirements:  
- No Grade Requested (NGR)  
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)  
  - Score will be determined by student attendance and participation. Students who post at least once a week—in either the discussion points or the writing assignments (or both!)—will receive credit.

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions  
365 Lasuen St., Stanford, CA 94305  
continuingstudies@stanford.edu  
650-725-2650
Participation and Instructor Involvement:
This is a high enrollment course, designed to work for students with very different amounts of time to dedicate to it. Unlike our other workshop-based courses, you do not have to engage with your fellow students if you don’t have the time and aren’t interested in conversing online. However, if you are interested, there will be plenty of space and opportunity to share work and engage in discussions. As the instructor, I will read all posts and give brief positive responses to writing assignments, chime in on the discussion point threads, and answer any questions posted. In addition, I will hold a weekly office hour/video chat where we can talk in person about the topics for the week.

Tentative Weekly Outline:

Week One: Introductions and Defining Your Fears
Writing Assignment: Creative Nonfiction

Week Two: From Inner Fears to the Outside World
Writing Assignment: Creative Nonfiction

Week Three: The Study and Science of Habit Building
Writing Assignment: Fiction

Week Four: Thoughts on Process and Finding Your Creative Center
Writing Assignment: Fiction

Week Five: Winning the Battle (Or Simply Rising Above it): Your Future Writing Self
Writing Assignment: Poetry

NOTE: EGL 187 WA has the same objectives as EGL 187WB but has different lectures, writing prompts, and discussion points. Students may register for section WA or WB, or for both.

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