

B.A. in Liberal Studies: Sample Creative Writing Courses

LIT 365: Subversive Pleasures: Literature as an Act of Cultural Resistance

3 units

This course considers literature as a radical, subversive act of cultural resistance against authority and oppression in its innumerable forms and guises. Through reading, lecture, dialogue and writing investigations, students will become familiar with both literary and social models of resistance offered by a diverse selection of writers and thinkers, including Kathy Acker, Reinaldo Arenas, Helene Cixous and Nawal El Saadawi. Particular attention will be given to the connection between radical politics and radical aesthetics, the literature of sexual and social transgression, and not just the writer's text, but the writer's body as the tool of rebellion. Using Gloria Anzaldua's concept of auto-theoria-historia, students will reflect on their own lives to create their own aesthetics and stories of resistance.

ENG 365: Genre Mongrels and Unfixed Forms

3 units

This creative writing course explores multi-generic and experimental writing, writing beyond and between genres and fixed forms. We will push and subvert the traditional boundaries of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and drama, as well as invent unheard of new forms of our own. Students stretch their writing voices and strengthen their individual styles in imaginative new ways, taking our words into the twenty-first century. Expect an experimental laboratory like space, with numerous class and home writing exercises, work-shopping of pieces and in-class textual analyses, all designed to clarify and deepen our understanding of cross-genre writing, as well as to enable us to create our own dazzling genre mongrels. No writing prerequisite.

ENG 490 Mixed Genre In Creative Writing

3 units

Issues as style, voice, ability to view one's work critically, and definition of one's professional aims, including potential for graduate study, are reviewed and assessed. This reflection is performed in a small group setting. Students support and critique each other's writing.

LIT 336 Lyric and Narrative, History and Imagination in Contemporary Literature

3 units

This course explores the way many contemporary writers have begun to combine, juxtapose, or weave, historical events, memoir, personal experience, various kinds and degrees of poetic language (lyric), and imaginative turns, into new, inviting, sometimes puzzling genres of literature. Students observe how poems combine lyric and narrative (i.e. telling a story) to varying degrees, and then move to the use of lyric, poetic language and stylistics by novel writers in their works of fiction. The course also tackles metafiction, the historiographic novel, and the uses of history, to see how and why writers have developed this relatively new form.

LIT 335/SCI 335 Environmental Landscapes: Literature & Science

3 units

While conducting observations of the natural world as found in an urban landscape, students study an American literary tradition that runs back beyond Thoreau and forward through John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Annie Dillard, Edward Abby, to the emergence of urban nature writers such as Jenny Price and John Tallmadge. Using the Ballona Wetlands--its social and natural history as well as its status as a present day biotic community--as a case study, students seek a greater understanding of our relationship to the natural world; some of the scientific methodologies employed in the investigation of the natural world; and advocacy for the restoration, preservation and protection of the natural world. Through an examination of the literary tradition in nature writing, students acquire an understanding of the through-line from observation, to understanding, to authorship, to audience, to advocacy and back again.

LIT 338 Based on a True Story: Where Memory and Make Believe Meet

3 units

We've all seen that simple line, in movies, on book jackets, even on album covers: Based on a True Story. But what does "based on a true story" really mean? By reading a number of short fiction and nonfiction narratives, students examine elements of story (setting, characters, dialogue, metaphor, etc.) as well as works that do not seem—at least at first glance—driven by narrative. Students discover the ways in which memory informs story as well as the role of imagination, both in essays and fictional works. Throughout the course, students engage these issues both as critics and as creators. Students write reader responses and analyses as well as their own original fiction or nonfiction narratives.

