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SW 595.01: Special Topics - Creative Writing and Social Work

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CREATIVE WRITING AND SOCIAL WORK

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Syllabus

Course Description:

In this class, we will discuss the craft of creative writing and its applications in the practice of social work. We will explore narrative therapy and will read and analyze examples of professional creative writing. I hope that the end product of the class will be personal writing that reflects both the principles of creative writing and narrative therapy.

Course Requirements:

- Keep a writing journal. Write 5 entries per week. Punctuation, grammar, mechanics don't matter. This should simply be a daily written reflection of your thoughts and feelings regarding writing in general and class assignments and discussions. Journal will be due last day of class.
- One of the last entries in your journal will be a one-page assessment of your writing in this class.
- Three pages of creative work: story or poetry or creative reflection (or some combination) in which you challenge preconceptions/a dominant cultural point of view, and then re-write your story.
- Participation in class discussion and offering your writing for group critique is expected.

"A lifetime of writing is a slow, accumulative way of accepting one's life as valid." -- Richard Hugo

September 4

- Introduction to course/Review Syllabus
- Focus exercise
- Free writing
- Uses of Creative Writing in Social Work
- Persuasive Writing
- Analyze "The Writer" by Richard Wilbur
- Narrative Therapy, briefly
- Free Writing - Loop Writing
- List of 10 things you enjoy
- Assignments for September 11:

1. Begin journal writing
2. Come up with a topic for your writing piece
3. Write a letter to the editor - to be shared in class
4. Read :

- Narrative Therapy articles
- "Creative Writing as a Social Work Intervention"
- "Writing: Self & Reflexivity"
 - "Grandfather in the Old Men's Home"
 - "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night"

5 Make a date with yourself

September 11

- Focus exercise
 - Free writing
 - Discuss narrative therapy articles, Walz article, reflexivity
 - Discuss readings
 - Questions/Discussion/Share letter writing/discuss topic ideas
 - Free Writing exercises: core negative beliefs; favorite things about yourself
 - Free writing - authoritative discourse from childhood & subvert it
 - Assignments for September 18:
1. Continue journal writing - reflect in journal about someone who has blocked or blocks your creativity, who has fed your negativity - reflect about someone who has championed your creativity, bolstered your positive self-image (Believe it!)
 2. Be prepared to share your writing for class for discussion & critique
 3. Read:
 - "Man Made of Words"
 - "Lady Lazarus"
 - "Daddy"
 - "The Yellow Wallpaper"

1. Make a date with yourself

September 18

- Focus exercise
- Free Writing
- Questions/Discussion
- Discuss "The Lottery"
- Sylvia Plath video & discussion
- Principles of critique & criticism
- Workshop your writing with class
- Free Writing: Describe an emotional state via story

- Assignments for September 25:
 1. Journal writing: write a letter to yourself or someone you trust defending yourself against your inner critic
 2. Read:
 - "Hills Like White Elephants"
 - "Isaac"
 - "The Lottery"
 - "Daystar"
 - "My Son, My Executioner"
- 1. Make a date with yourself

September 25

- Focus exercise
- Free Writing
- Questions/Discussion
- Principles of revision
- Discuss readings
- Enemies/Champions of your creativity
- List of childhood favorites
- Workshop your writing with class
- Free Writing
- Assignments for October 2:
 1. Journal - reflect on revising your writing
 2. Bring revised writing to class
 3. Read:
 - "When a Mother Calls"
 - "My Papa's Waltz"
 - "Breakdown"
 - "I Stand Here Ironing"
 - "A & P"
- 1. Make a date with yourself

October 2

- Focus exercise
- Free writing

- Questions/Discussion
- Discuss readings
- Workshop revised writing
- Self-assessment of your writing
- Free Writing
- Evaluation of class