

Course Overview: Writers' Workshop

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Course Description:

In this semester elective, students learn about techniques used by published writers and experiment with devices and methods to hone their own writing skills. They write in a variety of genres, including creative essays, memoir, short talks, news stories, short fiction, and several types of poems. The course is ideal for practicing and perfecting the college application essay, as well as creating pieces for submission to *Mercedes* and other outside publications and contests. Emphasis is on process writing, especially the revision component of the process. Students work in small writing groups to encourage, critique, and share with one another.

Major Texts:

The major texts for this course: model works by published authors & by your peers.

(We will also delve into *A Whack on the Side of the Head* by Roger Von Oech on occasion, and this text will be provided to you.)

A Little Sumpin' About a Writers' Workshop:

The operative word is "WORK," which means we'll be working on our own writing (the process & product) and the writing of our peers. It is a community of writers who give and who gain, who can help and who can hinder. So, if you are to share your work on any given day but fail to bring it, our community suffers. You were to be our firestarter, but you failed to bring the spark to ignite us. We cannot begin without your spark. We will not survive without that fire.

Everybody in the room is responsible to everybody in the room. On any given day, if you are not sharing your work, you will be offering feedback for someone else's work. And that's what puts the "WORK" in workshop.

*You'll note talk of FAILURE here. Of course there is. Writers, like baseball players & engineers and, uh, nearly every other artist or highly successful person on the planet, fail early & fail often. Hall-of-Famers strike out. Space rockets crash. Broadway shows flop. If you're willing to flop early & flop often, we'll all succeed in the end. (So, you may flop as a writer, but NOT as a classmate!)

Homework & Assessment:

At Our Lady of Mercy, we believe that homework is an essential part of the learning process. Purposeful homework tasks help students to build independence, develop and refine skills, and build their confidence as learners. At Mercy, homework is assigned to students in an effort to:

- Help students be READY for the learning that will occur in class
- Engage students in PRACTICE needed to develop fluency in important skills
- Guide students in PROCESSING and reviewing new learning
- Provide students with opportunities to REVISE their thinking
- Help students to BUILD their background knowledge

Assessments will be a collection of individual & team work, written work, oral presentations, discussions, and the evaluation of, and feedback for, peers' writing. Most writing & reading will be done outside of class so that the essential sharing of original work, and the resulting essential feedback, can happen in class.

NOTE: As stated earlier, if our in-class interactions are to be successful, each student must take personal responsibility to complete assigned readings/writing on time. This is a matter of respect for our fellow writers in our writing community.

Late Work - Deadlines:

You must submit all written work on time or risk losing credit. Deadlines matter outside our classroom walls, so they should matter inside our walls, as well. To be an active citizen in a democracy, you must meet the very important DEADLINE of getting to the polls on election day, or your voice will not be heard. If you have your act together, however, there is an exception called an Absentee Ballot, a concept we will discuss in class & incorporate into this policy to assist you.

You must submit all major written work to pass the course.

The new (2021-22) OLM Late Work Policy is as follows:

- Students are expected to submit all assignments by the date established by the teacher.
- Grades on assignments will reflect student understanding of content, however, 20% will be deducted for all assignments submitted late, with the exception of an excused absence.
- No credit will be given for assignments turned in one week past the due date, unless by prior arrangement with the teacher.
- Teachers will work with students to establish deadlines when late work is the result of an excused absence. If work is not completed by the established deadline, the late assignment guidelines will go into effect.
- It is the expectation that the students and parents/guardians will monitor their grades in the online gradebook.
- Teachers will conference with students and parents when there are multiple occurrences of assignments being turned in late.

Grading:

Emphasis will be on the writing process vs. the final product; however, a pure and vigorous pursuit is expected throughout.

Quarter grades are calculated as a percentage of total points available for the term, with larger assignments garnering more points (e.g. tests & larger written projects typically = 100 points; lighter written work such as daily homework & quizzes typically = 10 to 50 points). So, if there are 1,000 points available and you receive 900, then you have 90%.

FINAL GRADE FORMULA: Quarter 1= 42.5%, Quarter 2=42.5%, Final Project=15%

Final percentages will be converted to Mercy's LETTER grade system each term.

End of Course Learning Goals & Classroom Expectations:

Upon course completion, students should be equipped with an enriched curiosity about writing in its many forms, as well as a renewed pride in the power of their voices. Let's enjoy this journey together!

The Classroom 3 R's:

Responsibility.....Have it

Respect.....Exhibit it & Earn it

Rip-Roarin' Fun.....Enjoy it

(Student signature)

(Parent/Guardian signature)