

Metro State University



WRIT 358: 1,000 Words or Less

Fall Semester, 2024

Four Credits; Mostly Online

Thursdays 6:00-9:20 p.m.

Aug 25 – Dec 8

Instructor: Suzanne Nielsen

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Department of Writing, Literature and Language

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Office Hours: Face-to-Face: Mondays, 10-2; Wednesdays, 10-2, or by appointment through zoom
Please note that email is my preferred method of contact and will result in faster responses to you. Be sure to put the course name in the subject line so that I can differentiate between all the different students and other University community members I work with. Remember to use your Metro State email account to avoid your message going to the spam folder.

Course Description: Poems, prose poems, brief memoirs, flash fiction, social satire columns, short lyrical essays, children's picture books - what have they all in common? Brevity. In this workshop, students will deepen their knowledge of the general craft of writing, expand personal writing horizons by writing outside familiar genres, and work intensively on drafting and revising short works. We will analyze both published texts and student writing. Drafts will be submitted to the entire class. Polished work is not expected initially, although the goal of the workshop is to move a piece of writing along the revision continuum from 'rough' to 'closer to being finished.'

Prerequisite: Writ 251: Introduction to Creative Writing or equivalent

OUR FIRST AND LAST CLASS WILL MEET IN PERSON IN NM/L211

Our ZOOM INVITE information for the semester (don't lose this). Log in promptly at 6:00 pm each week with this same invite):

<https://minnstate.zoom.us/j/91895294683>

Competence Statement: Understands craft of writing short-short creative texts at a level well enough to draft, revise and critique short creative works in two or more genres.

Learning Methods/Outcomes:

Writing short creative works is a multi-genre workshop designed for creative writers who wish to work exclusively on very short pieces. Students will deepen their knowledge of the general craft of writing, expand their personal writing horizons by writing outside familiar genres, and work intensively on drafting and revising short works. The range of writing possible in the class include poems, prose poems, personal essays, sudden fiction, humor writing, short-short memoirs and creative non-fiction, and other genre-defying work. This course may be repeated for credit.

Required Texts:

Flash Fiction International, edited by Robert Shapard and James Thomas ISBN: 978-0-393-34607-7

The Poet's Companion, by Dorianne Laux and Kim Addonizio ISBN: 978-0-393-31654-4

Brevity: A Flash Fiction Handbook by David Galef ISBN13: 978-0231179690

Flash Fiction Forward: 80 Very Short Stories by Robert Shapard ISBN 10: 0393328023

Evaluation Criteria/Assignment Information:

Turn in stories with these word limits: 50; 200; 500 (**one of each**)

Submit copies of **one** written draft (no more than 1,000 words each).

Submit a revision of one of those drafts to the class.

Compile an annotated list of print and online publications that specifically seek short works (minimum ten sources).

Complete all reading assignments and writing exercises.

Turn in two typed freewrites to the instructor each class session. (**total: 22 for semester**)

Participate orally in class.

Make careful and considered critiques of classmates' work and return to writers **weekly**.

Attend all class sessions.

Turn in all assignments on time.

Grades: Because this creative writing workshop focuses on process, I do not grade creative drafts; rather, I respond to them based on originality, content, mechanics, grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Everything else is graded, including participation and attendance. Approximate grade breakdown:

Attendance, 25%. Quality of oral participation, 25%. Quality and timely submission of all drafts, revisions, exercises and other requirements, 50%.

Attendance is defined based on course delivery mode. A student is "in attendance" if he or she meets the following conditions before the end of the second week of the course:

- Classroom Courses – the student is present in the classroom.
- Web-Enhanced (Reduced Seat Time Courses) – the student is present in the classroom or submits at least one academically relevant assignment.
- Online Courses –the student submits at least one academically relevant assignment
- Independent Studies – the student contacts the instructor or submits at least one academically relevant assignment.

Please Note: If you miss more than one class, either by absence or tardiness/early departures, your grade will be lowered. Missing more than three classes will result in an F. No extra credit or make-up work is available.

Plagiarism and Copyright

Plagiarism is defined as the act of claiming another person's work as one's own. This can be copying or copying even parts of sentences from an article, journal, internet site, another student's work, or other written work. It can also mean using another student's assignment and making minor changes.

Changing a few words around in content is still plagiarism.

Sometimes students are not sure if they are committing plagiarism. Please consult the instructor regarding more information on plagiarism and how to avoid it. The instructor reserves the right to assess through <http://www.turnitin.com/> and/or asking for resources used. Student are encouraged to consult the Metropolitan State University Writing Lab and resources for assistance as well.

University Non-Attendance and Reporting Policy and Procedure

The purpose of the Non-Attendance and Reporting Policy is to ensure Federal Title IV regulations are adhered to with respect to a student's enrollment level for the purpose of calculating and paying financial aid. While Metropolitan State University is not required to take attendance, Federal Title IV financial aid regulations require a procedure to establish that students have attended, at a minimum, one day of class for each course in which the student's enrollment status was used to determine eligibility for the Pell Grant Program. In addition, the university needs to determine a last date of attendance for those students who receive all failing grades or unofficially withdraw. Attendance is defined based on course delivery mode. A student is "in attendance" if he or she meets the following conditions before the end of the second week of the course:

Classroom Courses –the student is present in the classroom.

Web-Enhanced (Reduced Seat Time Courses) –the student is present in the classroom or submits at least one academically relevant assignment.

Online Courses –the student submits at least one academically relevant assignment

Independent Studies – the student contacts the instructor or submits at least one academically relevant assignment

If a student does not attend the first two classes, either live and/or online, that student is automatically dropped from the course. If a student adds the course past the drop/add date, he/she will not receive points for any assignments, discussions, quizzes, or exams for which the due date has already occurred. Refer to the Non-Attendance & Reporting Policy 2259 [Policy 2259](#), and the Non-Attendance and Reporting Procedure 259 [Procedure 259](#).

Note to the student: The above description is the University Policy, but for some courses, based on how it is listed in the registration materials, participation must occur during the first week of class or the student is dropped from the course.

Center for Accessibility Resources

Diversity and Disability Statement:

Our institution values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible.

Students with disabilities are also welcome to contact the Center for Accessibility Resources to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in the course, including accommodations.

Phone: 651-793-1549

The University provides access to its programs and services by making reasonable accommodations for qualified students. Accommodations may include approval for early registration, note-takers, interpreters for the deaf, adaptive equipment, and testing arrangements.

Workshop Collegiality: A creative writing workshop can explore submissions that include, either overtly or indirectly, contemporary and emotional issues such as race, sexuality, social class and political or religious beliefs that can sometimes result in heated discussions and true disagreements. Always remain aware that disagreement does not mean that someone else is a morally bad person. We all want to be treated with respect and care, so listen thoughtfully to others' words and put yourself in their position. Listening is an important skill to cultivate. People are not abstract concepts; they're your fellow classmates. Metro's University Community Conduct Code in the Student Handbook contains good information. If you have a question or concern, please consult with me privately.

Workshop Structure and Sample Schedule: All students will work together with the instructor on analysis of texts, discussion of technique and relevant subject matter, and daily writing exercises. A critiquing schedule will be set up in the beginning of the course, with dates assigned for material due, so that no more than four or five student submissions will be critiqued per session. Participants must email one copy of each submitted draft for each student one day prior to workshop, and an additional one for the instructor.

Notes on Workshop Participation: A workshop is an intensive seminar in which we scrutinize, pore over, examine, read and re-read, discuss, and argue over your personal writing. Writers know just how hard it is to produce a piece of good writing. It is essential, and required, to acknowledge the work another writer has put into her or his piece. When reading and critiquing others' drafts, I always ask myself this question: *How can I be most useful?* Being useful means paying careful attention to what writers are trying to do in the draft, and suggesting constructive ways to help writers achieve their best work. Respect all work by working as hard as you can both on your own and others' drafts. Always note the strengths of a piece, as knowing what works can often help guide writers into a revision. Accept each piece on its own terms; do not try to change a writer's fundamental voice and/or subject matter. Finally, try to separate yourself from your work; it's not you that's being examined, but a piece of writing which stands by itself. Hard though it is at times, once you've written it and sent it out there, it belongs to the world.

Each week two students will be assigned two stories from FFF for discussion. Work together on this and come up with a list of five questions, along with a brief summary of the story. See stories listed on a separate handout titled Discussion Leaders/Story Selections & Page Numbers

Typical Workshop Schedule

6:00-7:15	Analysis and discussion of assigned readings Writing exercise Discussion of exercises Discussion of craft and technique
7:15-7:30	BREAK
7:30-9:00	Workshop student drafts
9:00-9:15	Freewrite: takaways

Elements of Good Writing: (refer to when thinking about your assigned 34 critiques)

In the course of our workshop we'll focus on various elements of good writing, with an eye to areas in

which you are particularly strong and others you need to work on. Whether you're working on your own draft or critiquing a classmate's, try to keep in mind the importance of the following, no matter the genre:

Characters	Strong, vivid characters
Plot	Plot, however subtle. You should be able to state the bare bones of what the piece is about.
Dialogue	Where does it work? Where is it stilted? Where does it help the flow of the story?
Pacing	Where does the piece move and flow in a good rhythm? Can you enter into it and be carried along or do you stop and falter? Is the piece too long or too short? Does it try to fit in too much or too little? (note sentence and paragraph length and layout)
Language	Strong, clean language that makes 'helper' words unnecessary
Voice	Are you writing in a voice that is your own? Or are you floundering about in a sea of other voices that you are trying to make your own? How do you figure out what voice is yours?
Tense/Point of View:	Would another point of view or tense work better for this particular piece?
Details:	Pay close attention to specifics; they are what so often make a piece real and compelling. Note or suggest details such as names, descriptions, colors and vivid images that help to bring a story home.
Metaphor/Simile:	If used, does the piece make good use of these literary devices? Or are they cliché and stilted?
Chronology:	Would a different time frame or structure help the piece?
Beginnings and endings:	Do they work or can one or the other be pared away? When does the story grab you? What about the ending?
Gut reaction:	Despite problems you may encounter, does the piece work on some level? Why? How?

Flexible Schedule

Week One (August 25): Introduction to class. Explanation of workshop structure and subject matter. Introduction to course texts. Discussion of local literary resources. Writing exercises. Set up critiquing schedule.

Note: Tonight after zooming would be a good night to choose a poem you particularly love and begin memorizing it to recite to the class on September 30th.

Week Two (September 1): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: Read pp. 11-84 of *A Poet's Companion*. Choose one selection you particularly like and be prepared to discuss why in class. Read pp. intro-9; 56-67 of *In Brevity*. Complete two freewrites.

Due tonight: 1) Two exercises, typed and printed; 50 word story; paragraph response to *FFF*, pp.

9-27.

Week Three (September 8): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: Read pp. 85-194 of *A Poet's Companion*. Choose one selection you particularly like and be prepared to discuss why in class. Read pp. 10-14; 68-79 of *In Brevity*. Complete two freewrites.

Due tonight: 1) Two freewrites, typed. 2) An annotated list of publications specifically seeking short works of creative writing (minimum ten sources), typed and printed. 200 word story due. Complete paragraph response to *FFF*, pp. 28-45.

Week Four (September 15): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: Read pp. 15-21; 80-95 of *Brevity*. Note interesting passages and insights to discuss as well. Choose one selection you particularly like, or are challenged by, and be prepared to discuss it in class. Complete two freewrites.

Due tonight: Two freewrites. 500 word story due. Complete paragraph response to *FFF*, pp. 46-67.

Week Five (September 22): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: Read pp. 22-29; 96-109 of *Brevity*. Choose one selection you particularly like, or find challenging, and be prepared to discuss it in class. Complete two freewrites.

SMALL GROUP WORKSHOPS in zoom breakout rooms

Due tonight: Two freewrites. Start thinking about your 1000 word (or less story. Complete paragraph response to *FFF*, pp. 68-92.

Week Six (September 29): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: Read pp. 30-36; 110-114 of *Brevity*. Choose one selection you particularly like, or find challenging, and be prepared to discuss it in class. Complete two freewrites. POEM RECITATIONS.

Due tonight: 1) two freewrites. Complete paragraph response to *FFF*, pp. 93-114.

Week Seven (October 6): Individual Conferences through Zoom. Be on time.

Week Eight (October 13):

For tonight: Read pp. 37-40; 115-119 of *Brevity*. Read Dufresne's *The Art of the Glimpse*.

Due tonight: 1) two freewrites. Start drafting 1000 word story. Complete paragraph response to *FFF*, pp. 115-134.

Week Nine (October 20): START WORKSHOPPING 1000 word stories. In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: Read pp. 41-45; 120-123 of *Brevity*. Choose one selection you particularly like, or find challenging, and be prepared to discuss it in class. Complete two freewrites.

Due tonight: 1) two freewrites. Complete paragraph response to *FFF*, pp. 135-156.

Week Ten (October 27): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: Complete two freewrites. Read pp. 46-55; 124-128 of *Brevity*.

Due tonight: 1) two freewrites. Continue workshopping 1000 word stories. Complete paragraph response to *FFF*, pp. 157-180.

Week Eleven (November 3): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: Read pp. 195-203 of *The Poet's Companion*. Choose one selection you particularly like, or find challenging, and be prepared to discuss it in class. Complete two freewrites.

Due tonight: 1) two freewrites.

Week Twelve (November 10): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: Complete two freewrites.

Due tonight: 1) two freewrites, typed and printed. **1000 word story due.** Complete paragraph response to *FFF*, pp. 181-199.

Week Thirteen (November 17): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: Complete two at-home writing exercises.

Due tonight: 1) two exercises, typed and printed. Complete paragraph responses to *FFF*, pp. 200-217.

Week of November 24: OFF FOR HOLIDAY

Week Fourteen (December 1): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: PORTFOLIOS DUE/REVISIONS DUE

Complete two freewrites.

Due tonight: 1) two freewrites. Complete paragraph responses to *FFF*, pp. 218-227.

Week Fifteen (December 8): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

For tonight: PORTFOLIO PRESENTATIONS and VIRTUAL POT LUCK

Portfolios will include:

Your portfolio will be turned in week 14. This portfolio will assist me in assessing the progress you have made with your writing/reading during the semester. Your portfolio should include:

1. Self-evaluation: (1 page)
2. Stories: 50, 200, 500, 1000 or less
3. Revision of one of your stories (1000 words or less)
4. 22 free writes
5. 11 paragraph responses
6. Two critiques of peer work, your choice
7. Annotated Bibliography
8. Poem recitation

Please identify where each ingredient (1-8) is within your portfolio

There are many offices on campus that provide additional support and/or information outside of class including:

- Black, African, and African American Support Services:
<https://www.metrostate.edu/students/support/african-and-african-american-student-services>
- American Indian Student Services: <https://www.metrostate.edu/students/support/american-indian-student-services>
- Asian American Student Services: <https://www.metrostate.edu/students/support/asian-american-student-services>
- Latinx and Undocumented Students Support Services:
<https://www.metrostate.edu/students/support/latinx-undocumented-services>

- LGBTQ Student Services: <https://www.metrostate.edu/students/support/glbtrq>
- Veteran Services: <https://www.metrostate.edu/students/support/veterans>
- Women's Support Services: <https://www.metrostate.edu/students/support/women>
- International Student Services: <https://www.metrostate.edu/students/support/international>
- Multicultural, American Indian, and Retention Services:
<https://www.metrostate.edu/students/support/culturally-responsive-support>

Email

This course requires students to use their campus email account for all communication for related to this class. Emails originating from outside the campus email servers may be deleted without review of the instructor. This policy prevents viruses and spam. Please include in the subject line of your emails the course number and a brief description that summarizes the content of the email as well. It is very important to at least include your course and course number in the subject line to assure proper feedback and credit for your work.

Note: In order to keep a reasonable amount of flexibility in this class I reserve the right to adjust our syllabus as situations dictate.

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Literary Terms

Alliteration	Flash-forward	Setting
Allusion	Foreshadowing	Simile
Antagonist	Genre	Soliloquy
Assonance	Imagery	Sonnet
Characterization	Metaphor	Stanza
Chronology: ABC, BAC, CBA, etc.	Motif	Stereotype
Climax	Onomatopoeia	Strophe
Conflict	Personification	Suspense
Dialogue	Plot	Symbol/symbolism
Dissonance	Point of view	Tense: past, present, future, conditional
Exposition	1 st person point of view	Theme
Figurative Language	2 nd person point of view	Villanelle
Flashback	3 rd person point of view	

Ideas for FREE WRITES

1. Make a list of words, enough to fill an entire page. Pick five words at random from a list and write them at the top of a piece of paper. Write a piece that incorporates all five words.
2. Cut lots of individual words out of a magazine and put them in a container. Pick three to five words at random and use them all to form a title. Write a piece inspired by the title.
3. Recall a visual image that has always puzzled, mystified, or fascinated you. First describe the image and then write a piece inspired by it.
4. Use an old photo or a photo from a magazine. Write a piece inspired by that image.

5. While sitting on a bus or in a cafe or walking down the street, etc., write down one line from a random conversation. Use that line as the first sentence of a piece of writing.
6. Open a book, any book. Closing your eyes, use your index finger to pick a sentence at random. Use that sentence as the first line of a piece.
7. Using exercises #5 and #6, reverse the order - use the sentence as the *last* line of your piece of writing.
8. Pick a line of poetry, a single line - can be the title, the ending line, or one from the middle of a poem - and use that as the beginning or final line of a piece of writing.
9. Put on a piece of music without words that lasts approximately three to ten minutes and write something that reflects the emotional tone of the music.
10. Write a conversation, consisting of *dialogue only*, in which someone is hurting someone else.
11. Choose an object in the room and describe that object for five minutes using third person point of view and present tense. Then write for five minutes in present tense from the object's point of view.
12. Describe your happiest moment.
13. Write your own obituary.
14. Write the history of your life, in ten minutes.
15. Write the history of your life, going backward.
16. Pretend you are separated from your body. Observe yourself from a slight distance. Describe how you look, what you might be thinking or feeling at this particular moment.
17. Describe yourself at a certain vividly-remembered moment in childhood, in the third person, past tense.
18. Repeat #17, but in the first person, present tense.
19. Repeat #18, but in the third person, future tense.
20. Describe yourself as you hope to be when you're 90.
21. Write about a lie you once told.
22. You have a memory in which the color brown is predominant. Write about it.
23. You have a memory in which someone's hand is stretched toward you. Write about it.
24. You have a memory in which you are running fast. Write about it.
25. You have a memory in which you are laughing in the dark. Write about it.
26. You have a memory in which you witnessed someone hurting someone else. Write about it.
27. You have a memory of a certain house. Write about it.
28. Write about one extraordinary moment from your childhood. Write about the same moment from the third person, past tense.
29. Recall your favorite scent and one memory which it evokes. Recall your most hated smell and one memory which it evokes.
30. Write about one aspect of your body and your feelings about it.
31. Write about your favorite article of clothing and why you love it.
32. Recall your most embarrassing moment and write about it.
33. Recall your proudest moment and write about it.
34. You have a memory in which you are alone in the woods. Write about it.
35. You have a memory of water. Write about it.
36. You have a memory of looking at your own reflection in a mirror. Write about it.
37. You have a memory of swimming in the dark. Write about it.
38. Write about something you have never told anyone about.