

Middle School Writer's Workshop "Journey of Transformation"

Course Description

The Writer's Workshop seeks to forge a community of conversation inspired to explore perennial questions that are central to, though not exclusive to, the Middle School experience. The Workshop is designed for students to create original forms of descriptive writing, poetry, drama and fiction. Vocabulary development, creative writing techniques, and skills are explored with the guiding theme of the "journey of transformation."

Instructor: Mr. Elliot Guerra

Mr. Guerra graduated with a dual degree in Catholic Studies and English Literature from Seton Hall University where he was a two-time Lily Endowment recipient for Spirituality and the Arts. He is the current Director of Confirmation at the Parish and the Director of Mission Development for both the Parish and Academy. He is also the creative director of OLMC's Theatre Arts program.

Grading

This is an enrichment workshop, designed to scaffold what students learn in language arts and reading while encouraging students to foster a deep appreciation for written language and many forms of expression. While there is no formal grading for the Writer's Workshop, students will participate in a completed project at the end of the trimester, the instructor and their peers will review their work. Failure to participate, or refusing to work may lead to disciplinary action.

Samples of Required Texts (All texts will be provided.)

Excerpts from essays and speeches by Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Short stories from Julia Alvarez, Sherman Alexie, Amy Tan, Gary Soto and more!

Poetry from Alice Walker, Emily Dickinson and more!

The Bible (New American Translation)

Learning Objectives

All grades, while focusing on different aspects of creative writing will cultivate an appreciation for and experience different cultures and traditions from around the literary world and strive to understand the mysteries of the shared human journey of self-discovery. Students are asked to reflect upon their own transformative experiences and envision their personal journeys. We, as a class, will make prayer a central part of our academic life in the classroom.

Learning Goals (In this course you will learn how to...)

1. *Accept personal responsibility*

You will learn how to take greater personal responsibility, and gain more control over the

outcomes and experiences that you create both in class and in the halls.

2. Increase self-motivation

You will learn to create greater inner motivation by, among other things, discovering your own personal meaningful goals for the class.

3. Improve personal self-management

You will learn numerous strategies for taking control of your time and energy in class that will allow you to move more effectively and efficiently toward the accomplishment of your academic goals.

4. Develop interdependence

You will learn how to develop mutually supportive relationships with your classmates who will help you achieve your goals and dreams as you assist them to achieve theirs.

5. Increase self-awareness

You will learn how to respect other people's beliefs and opinions and be more aware of your possible unconscious limiting beliefs.

6. Maximize your learning

You will learn key research techniques and how to properly source material. You will apply this knowledge to develop your writing and reading skills more effectively. You will learn how to improve your writing skills through the extensive writing and reading practices.

7. Improve creative and critical thinking skills

You will learn how to enhance the thinking skills essential for analyzing and solving problems in your academic life. You will also develop reasoning skills that will help you construct persuasive arguments.

8. Master effective study skills

You will learn how to improve essential skills such as reading, taking notes, studying, memorizing, and conquering academic anxiety!

9. Appreciate diversity and raise cultural awareness

We will create a classroom community with people who have ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and, behaviors that are different from our own and learn to appreciate and better understand the differences. We will learn that "what hurts our brothers or sisters hurts all of us."

Rules for Success (Student Responsibilities)

This course has three important rules. If you choose to follow these rules, your odds of learning the material and becoming a better writer will increase exponentially. (These rules will also help you succeed in your other classes.)

1. Show up!

To succeed in this course, you must choose to attend ready and prepared to work. Be attentive, interested and interesting. As soon as you enter the classroom or digital classroom, regardless of what we are doing, you should have your reading material, a notebook, and a writing tool out. Most classes will begin with prayer, a “do now” independent activity, reading, a brief lecture and class discussion as well as peer review.

2. Do work!

Everything I assign I expect to be completed in a timely fashion, including reading and viewing of materials. If you are assigned to read (or watch) something, do not treat the assigned reading as an inferior exercise. Actively read, by which I mean read in a way that you are able to retain the information given. You will be expected to be able to speak on the material.

If the work is rushed or it is clear that you did not do your work with intention and care, I will draw a line through the paper with the letters R.N.F. which stands for Read No Further. You will not waste my time with inadequate work; I ask you not to waste yours either. You will be asked to do the assignment again. Your work is the most precious thing you can give someone other than your love. I care less if your work is done correctly as I care it is done well.

3. Respect Yourself!

Students are expected to act with integrity in all they do and say. I find discipline to be not a matter of punishment but a matter of self-respect. Calling out, criticizing others, not listening, etc. shows a lack of respect for yourself and the dignity in which you were raised. Respect yourself and remember you are representing your parents and families in the way you carry yourself at all times.

I have always treated my middle school students as the talented, aspiring young adults they are, not as little children. If students behave like little children, they will be treated as little children and asked to leave the digital classroom or room A discipline slip will be issued and a phone call placed home.

Instructor Responsibilities (You can expect me to...)

1. Come to class with a good attitude.
2. Be respectful of your ideas and value the diversity of thought you bring to the classroom.
3. Be open to dialogue and ideas that challenge me, or that I may disagree with.
4. Answer any appropriate questions you may have. Admit when I do not know something and get back to you in a timely manner.
5. Use a variety of teaching techniques and modalities to accommodate different learning styles.

6. Return written assignments in class and online in a timely fashion and provide helpful feedback.
7. Offer you engaging and stimulating lectures and activities to the best of my ability.
8. Respect, Defend, Encourage and Discipline you, so you can reach your highest potential.
9. Treat you fairly.
10. Communicate often with your parents, especially when you're doing positive and interesting things.
11. Pray for you and encourage you.