

Close to Life: Writing Short Essays

Instructor: Christine Schoefer

This class meets in person on Tuesdays, from 10 a.m.–noon (6 sessions: April 2, April 9, April 16, April 23, April 30, May 7) at Golden Bear Center, Room 365 (1995 University Ave).

Class Description

What do short essay writers do? We pay attention to what we see and feel. We reflect. We describe and weave what we know. As we forge new connections in our thinking, we find ourselves falling through trap doors into deeper levels of understanding. In our word compositions, we arrive at fresh insights and offer these to readers.

In this course, we will delve into the art of writing and the craft of writing. We will learn techniques for getting into the creative flow and working there. For many writers – not only beginners - it is challenging to step away from “ordinary” everyday life and immerse into this magical process of writing that is solitary, generative and creative.

Course participants will practice writing short pieces and learn to become their own editors. They will read/listen to pieces written by classmates and practice giving constructive criticism and support. These skills that will benefit their own revising. Engaging with the writing of others allows us to recognize more clearly our own voice and style. (All in-class workshopping of writing is voluntary).

Week One – Plunging In

1. Introduction
2. Getting to know each other: What is your writing practice now? What do you hope to get out of this course?
3. In class writing: Why do I write or why do I want to start writing? Who is my imagined audience?
4. The basics: What do we need to write?
5. What makes a short essay.
6. Practicing at home (aka homework)

Week Two – Stepping into the creative flow

1. Check in
2. In class guided writing practice
3. Discussion: Naming our demons and our guides - what interferes with our writing?

What supports our writing?

4. In class guided writing practice
5. Recognizing the generative flow of writing
6. Practicing at home (homework)

Week Three- Exploring the Creative Flow

1. Check in
2. In class guided writing practice
3. Discussion: finding the nugget, the energetic heart of our writing.

4. In class guided writing practice
5. Discussion
6. Practicing at home (homework)

Session Four – The Craft of Revising

1. Check in
2. In class guided writing practice
3. Honing the skill of cutting
4. Finding precise words
5. Practicing at home (homework)

Session Five – Art and Craft: workshopping participants’ writing in class

1. Check in
2. Sharing a draft of writing in class. Putting pen to paper is a solitary endeavor and this sharing is an opportunity to offer and receive support in a structured context.
3. Discussion
4. Practicing at home (homework)

Session Six – Review and Moving Forward

1. Check in
2. Free writing: What did I learn that inspires and deepens my writing practice?
3. Discussion.
4. Free writing: How will I stay in the flow of writing after this class?
5. Discussion
6. Resources: finding writing partners, sharing venues that publish short pieces, and other tips.