Negative Spaces Creative Writing Workshop

ENG 4XX-/5XX, 3 Units
Upper-Division Undergraduate/ Graduate Workshop
Syllabus

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Department of English

__COURSE DESCRIPTION__

This workshop explores "negative space" as a formal, aesthetic, and ethical principle in contemporary poetry and prose. Rather than treating absence as lack, the course examines silence, omission, fragmentation, and restraint as generative forces in literary composition. Students will study how what is withheld, unsaid, erased, interrupted shapes meaning, narrative, voice, and reader experience.

Through close reading, writing exercises, and peer workshop, students will experiment with form, compression, ellipsis, and white space while developing a sustained creative project. Emphasis is placed on revision as a method of discovering what a piece needs less of in order to say more.

COURSE READING LIST

- Roland Barthes — *The Neutral*, trans. Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier (Columbia University Press, 2005). Selected lectures.

- Susan Sontag — "The Aesthetics of Silence," in *Styles of Radical Will* (Picador, 2002).

- Stéphane Mallarmé — Selected poems, trans. E.H. and A.M. Blackmore (*Collected Poems*, Oxford University Press, 2008).

- Clarice Lispector — *Água Viva*, trans. Stefan Tobler (New Directions, 2012). Selections.

- George Oppen — Selected poems from *New Collected Poems* (New Directions, 2002).

- Anne Carson — *Short Talks* (Brick Books, 2017). Selections.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

- Workshop Participation (30%): Active engagement through attendance and discussion, this includes weekly drafts and exercises (short-form experiments, free-form: erasure, omission, constraint).
- Rotating Peer-review Participation (30%): Emphasis on listening, precision and constructive critique. Students submit written feedback prior to workshop meetings every week.
- Final Portfolio (35%): 10-15 pages of poetry or 15-20 pages prose.
- Artist Statement (5%): 2-3 pages on revision, narrative, voice, and craft choices.

COURSE POLICIES

- Attendance: Required. More than three absences may affect your final grade.
- Late Work: Accepted with penalty unless arranged in advance.
- Academic Integrity: All writing must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism will result in failure for the assignment.
- Accessibility: Students with accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor early in the semester.
- AI Use Policy: Generative AI tools may be used to assist brainstorming or structure but **NOT** to write your work.