

Summer Experiences

Creative Writing Institute

Please note this a sample schedule only and all activities are subject to change.

Schedule

The institute is divided into two daily sessions with a break for lunch:

- Workshop (9:00am-12:00pm)
- Lunch (12:00-1:30pm)
- Independent Writing Sessions (1:30-4:30pm)

Workshop:

Discuss published work, create your own pieces using innovative prompts, and share your work with classmates. Workshop will provide you with the unique opportunity to hear your classmates' reactions to your poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, in a supportive setting, and to develop your own critical skills regarding others' writing. If you've never experienced workshop, you'll quickly discover that it's an immeasurably valuable process, sparking new ideas, energizing your writing, and opening up new perspectives to become a more thoughtful writer and critic.

Independent Writing Sessions:

You'll spend the afternoons in independent writing sessions guided by prompts included with this syllabus. These prompts might find you responding to a documentary or film, exploring WashU's campus, or traveling off-campus on a field trip. Writing prompts are designed for you to focus on a specific writing skill. You will then meet together as a group to discuss your responses to these prompts with your peers and TA, and using their feedback, you will create a written piece that you will turn into your TA the next morning at the start of morning workshop.

Final Project

You will submit a written piece (no more than 2 pages) on a topic of your choice. You will read your final piece during the Open Mic Event on the final afternoon of the program.

Attendance

Timeliness and earnest engagement in all sessions is imperative to the general success of the institute and of your performance. Take care to attend each session on time every time. Teaching Assistants will take attendance at all sessions. You are required to attend every session unless otherwise approved.

Participation in Class Activities

Students are expected to actively participate in discussion, ask questions, and contribute during active learning sessions. While it is sometimes difficult to speak in class, your comments are valued as contributions to the collective understanding of course materials; actively participating will reinforce your grasp of the concepts, correct misunderstandings, and inspire deeper thought.

Professionalism

Please remember to treat everyone with patience and respect. Acknowledge and respect diversity and difference of opinion. Give your classmates the benefit of the doubt and express your concerns in a respectful way. Respect also includes using technology appropriately and considerately. Our classroom is a cellphone and internet free environment. Individual permission may be given for using word-processing programs in class. Please respect the rights of others to learn.

Academic Integrity

As a member of our academic community you are bound by honor regarding your academic work. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or work previously used as your own, or tampering with the academic work of others. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated.** To view the policy visit: studentconduct.wustl.edu/academic-integrity/policies-and-procedures/.

Student Performance Evaluation

Students are evaluated based on attendance, participation in class activities, interaction with peers, professionalism,

quality of work produced, asking for assistance when needed, as well as their ability to adhere to academic integrity standards and program policies. At the end of the program, students who have met the expectations of the program will receive a certificate of completion, letter of endorsement, and a completed performance evaluation. This is a noncredit program. Grades are not issued. A copy of the student performance evaluation is attached.

Independent Writing Session Prompts

Prompt 1: Walk to the quad and find a place to sit. Write about what you notice. Address all five senses: what do you see, touch, taste, hear, and smell? Use detail—does it smell good, or like freshly cut grass? Do you hear a lot of loud noises, or the combined voices of dozens of excited high schoolers? Make Wash U come alive.

Prompt 2: As you walk around the St. Louis Zoo observe the people (and animals) around you. Now invent a character:

1. What does s/he look like? Height, hair color, eye color, ethnicity...any physical detail you can think of. Does she have an interesting scar on her right hand? Does he have freckles on his wrists?
2. Where does this character come from? And where are they going? Is he a gas station attendant in Des Moines? A professor at Wash U? A little girl from San Diego? A mother from Seattle? What is this person's life like? Is the gas station attendant happy because he just got engaged to his high school sweetheart? Is the mother from Seattle anticipating a promotion at her advertising agency, where she works part time? Jot down interesting details about this person's life. Invent a history (write it down—maybe one or two paragraphs). Then tell us about where the character is now, what their life is like (maybe two or three paragraphs).

Prompt 3: Today you are headed to the Missouri History Museum. As you explore the exhibits be sure to *notice* the place. Notice how the tile is uneven in just that one corner, or an ornate fixture, painting, or artifact. Now, think of your character from yesterday. Move your character into this new setting. How does s/he get there? Running, walking, strolling leisurely? And what happens in this new setting? You haven't made a list of this new setting, but make it come alive all the same in part 2 of your story. Again, your character should not leave this physical setting. And again, you can put other characters in this setting.

Prompt 4: Sometimes poetry doesn't originate with a certain emotion or experience but rather the delicious unfamiliarity of a new phrase or use of language you've never heard before. And where better to find such language than in a library archive? For this writing prompt, find a phrase from your visit to Special Collections and make that phrase the title to a new piece of writing OR compile a list of new phrases--from letters, book covers, or whatever else you see that interests you--and include as many of them as you can in a new piece of writing that is yours. Yes, the phrases are from somewhere else, but this is not "plagiarism". Instead, it is you appropriating language and making it new in your own context.

Prompt 5: Today you will visit the Kemper Art Museum. After the presentation on "Narratives in Art" find a painting or other piece of art that you like and write in the voice of something in the painting. A person, for instance; or, if you're looking at something abstract, maybe you'll give voice to the color red. Let the piece guide you.

Prompt 6: You are headed to the historic Fox Theater today. Think of one of your characters from yesterday and begin your prompt: "FILL-IN CHARACTER runs into the Fox Theater, breathless." Let your story unspool. The only catch: your character should remain in the Fox Theater. S/he can think about other settings, other places, other people—but s/he should remain in the Fox Theater. But, s/he CAN interact with other invented characters in this setting. Maybe you place the mother's daughter here with her, or the gas station attendant's friend. Make sure that setting plays a big role in your story. The mother doesn't just sit down—no! She flops down on the green leather couch, throwing her black leather purse onto the shiny tile floor. You get the idea—make the place come alive.

Prompt 7: Enjoy a final afternoon as you relax and watch "The Princess Bride" a film about romance, fantasy, comedy, and adventure. So many genres combined into one. Did you know this film was adapted from a book originally? Take some time after the film and discuss with your peers some of the differences between some of your favorite films and their book counterparts.

This is your final independent writing session. Spend some time reflecting on the past few days and what you've learned. Then answer one question: "What makes someone a confident writer?"