English 4307/6307 N
Dr. Janet Lowery
Advanced Creative Writing
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**Texts:** for fiction writers: *The Art of Fiction*, John Gardner; *Winter’s Tale*, Mark Helprin; *Gilead*, Marilynn Robinson. For Poetry writers: *Ahead of All Parting*, Rainer Maria Rilke; *In the Next Galaxy*, Ruth Stone; *A Gilded Lapse of Time*, Gjertrude Schnackenberg; *The Big Red Book*, Rumi. For those writing in another genre, include a reading list in your contract. If you’re only interested in reading short fiction, read Flannery O’Connor’s complete works and choose another short story writer to read.

**Course Description:** This is a writing intensive course in a workshop format that allows students who’ve already taken a creative writing class from me to concentrate on developing their craft. Generally, students will know each other in the class from earlier workshops so there is already some sense of comradery among the members of the class. Students will complete various assigned readings in contemporary fiction or poetry, and write short stories or poems, and their numerous revisions.

**Objectives:** Through the workshop method and the study of the poetry and the short story, students will develop their writing skills in short fiction and/or poetry and/or the memoir, or playwriting (any genre for which you’ve already taken one workshop). This is not an introductory class in any genre, so only write in genres you’ve already taken classes for. Students will also gain the more tools and experience with which to evaluate their own and their classmates’ efforts.

**Requirements:** Students will be required to write a contract, to which I agree, specifying their plans and goals for the course. Generally, undergrads should write around 20 pages of prose or 12-15 pages of poetry and grad. students should complete around 25-30 pages of fiction or 18-25 pages of poetry (some exceptions if one’s style is minimalist.) Students will copy and distribute their own work each class time. Reading is to be done at your pace.

**Grades:** Written work will not be graded individually for a variety of pedagogical reasons, among them the notion that creative work should almost always be revised several times after they are first turned in, therefore a grade on an early draft does not reflect an accurate evaluation of the eventual shape that story might reach. Generally, I treat this course as a studio art course in terms of grades. In this Advanced Creative Writing workshop, I will want to meet individually with you during the semester—after the mid-semester (second week of March). At the end of the semester, each student will turn in a portfolio of his/her work which will not be returned. Your portfolio constitutes 80% of your grade; Attendance and Participation is another 20%. Once you miss more than 3 hours of class time, your grade drops 1/2 letter grade for each hour of class time missed (special situations shift that policy). The reason attendance is so important is because the class format is a workshop, and a workshop's success is contingent on the commitment of its members to the workshop process. This process is further explained in the appendix to all my cw classes, with which most of you, if not all of you, are familiar.

**Final Exam:** There is no final exam for this class. Your portfolio is due the first Thursday of exam week. You may hand it in on the last day of class for extra credit.

**You will have work due every class time all semester (probably).**

**Fiction Writers** should begin reading *The Art of Fiction* by John Gardner, then move to read the minimalist stylist Marilynn Robinson and then Mark Helprin’s very long novel. Helprin is the most amazing in my opinion, so be prepared.
A note to Catholics in class: Check out Brett Lott as a contemporary Christian writer, as well as Marilyn Robison, also a Christian, though a Congregationalist, not a Catholic. Alice McDermott (The Bigamist’s Daughter, Charming Billy) is a contemporary Catholic writer as is Ann Patchet (Bel Canto) and Ron Hansen (Nebraska, Atticus, Mariette in Ecstasy, The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford).

Poets: start with Ahead of All Parting and proceed from there at your own pace. I don’t expect you to read the entire book (1/2 is in German) but please read as much as you can before moving on to Ruth Stone, Gjertrude Schnakenberg (a Catholic writer), and Rumi.

Advice: be brave about writing. No one else can speak your truth or tell your story (or stories)!

Take advantage of this time period to write what you never seem to have time to write.
Contract between Dr. Lowery and ________________________________
4307 Advanced Creative Writing

My plans and goals for the semester include:

What I think I plan to write and at what pace (generally):

What I plan to read (outside reading?):