

**2011-2012**  
**Creative Writing**  
Marisol “Pinqy Ring” Velez

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**Yo... Tell me YOUR Story!**

As a non-conventional method of teaching English, this get-out-of-your-seat, beat-rockin', tell-it-like-it-is and let-me-know-how-you-really-feel Creative Writing class is intended to run many courses. It will focus on critical thinking, writing, and reading skills. You will learn the History of Hip-Hop and Spoken Word, you will be performing in front of people, you will be reading many authors, you will be writing, and you will be taking a deeper look into why things are the way they are and how *we* can change them. Most of all, you will be writing *your* story!

Course readings will involve poems, Hip-Hop lyrics (past and present), stories (fiction and non fiction), plays, news articles and excerpts of books on Hip-Hop music and creative writing. Course assignments/evaluations will include poetry writing, Spoken Word, songwriting, story writing, playwriting, free or emotion writing and reflective/critical thinking essays, among other things. Each quarter, or “breakdown”, we will focus on one of the four elements of Hip-Hop, and we will also have a broad topic that will be broken down and studied at length in relation. Each quarter will also focus on a specific form of Creative Writing.

**Breakdown 1 – The DJ: Identity (Intro To Creative Writing)**

A comprehensive look into what composes each individual student and whom they are able to identify with. To build a sense of self-pride and self-worth through via a reflection of the literary pieces they are able to identify with. This unit will have a focus on an introduction to creative writing and all its forms. Some questions to be asked are: Why write creatively? Who are we, really? What composes an identity? What are the images created by mass media? How do we feed into those images? Are those images even real? How can we create a different, more positive presentation of “our people” in media?

**Breakdown 2 – The B-Boy/B-Girl: Self-Expression (Plays/Performance/Drama)**

This unit will include methods for self-expression through writing, and will focus on confidence-building activities so that students are able to feel comfortable sharing pieces with not only their peers, but with staff and on stage. Students will learn about the “break” culture and identify how it is a form of self expression. Student reading will be centered on plays, student work will revolve around creating a piece for performance and playwriting. Some questions to be asked are: In what ways can we express ourselves? When does self-expression become problematic? Who controls the expression of writers/poets/musicians today? Why does it seem everyone is a clone someone else?

**Breakdown 3 – The MC: Gender (Poetry/Rap/Songwriting)**

To find the commonality between genders, discuss the differences, and to highlight the work of women writers/performers in order to show how their work has been marginalized. Switch gender roles in writing and create “a day in the life” scenarios through poetry, songwriting and rap for students to fully comprehend the consequence and challenges of these prescribed roles. What are the risks of gender roles? Who prescribes these roles? How far back do they date? When did women become objectified in Hip-Hop, and why? How can we change this?

**Breakdown 4 – The Tagger: Community and Cultura (Fiction/Non Fiction)**

A focus on one’s own community and the community where their school is, the beauty of these areas will be focused on as well as the bad perception others may have. Students will be challenged to build responsibility and become productive members of their society, while generating revenue for their community spaces. Students will work on story writing. Questions to be considered are: How does your community define you? How does Chicago define you? How do you define yourself based on your surroundings? How will you tell YOUR story? How can you tell someone else’s story, who does not have a “voice”?

**Class Rules & Regs**

In something as free as Creative Writing, it is still important not to offend anyone in your audience. You

don't want anyone talking about your momma, do you?

The following rules will be **strictly enforced**:

- No gender-offending or homophobic language.
- No using of words that must be censored on the radio for most pieces, certain pieces can have curse words and that will be specified when it is time. We must learn how to communicate effectively, and though I understand at times there are no other words to use, this class will help you find other words to replace the bad ones.
- No gang-affiliated language.
- No ridiculing or judging of our peers.
- You can't give a critique on a piece unless you have a suggestion.
- If your grandmother wouldn't approve, just don't do or say it!

### **School Rules & Regs**

All school rules and regulations will be **strictly enforced**. Just because this is going to be a fun and interesting class, it doesn't mean we don't have to follow all the rules. Ya dig?!

### **Attendance**

How annoying is it for me to have to stop a class because you wanted to hit the snooze button on your alarm clock? This class is a *commitment*. Students **must** arrive to class, AND on time. We have a lot to cover in a small amount of time, so please be mindful of that and show up. How many times do you get to say you took a Hip-Hop English class, anyways?! I understand things happen; excused absences are eligible for make up work. **Excused means the school has excused it, so it doesn't go through me.** After 3 un-excused absences, and/or 4 or more tardies to class, the student's grade is at risk of dropping and will have to meet with class instructor (a.k.a me) for a warning, as well as to work out a solution.

### **Cellies & MP3 Players & Pagers...Wait. Who has pagers anymore?!**

How even *more* annoying is it to have a cell-phone ring during class, or see someone on Facebook updating their status about their Hip-Hop teacher with the pink hair. ALL electronic devices should be OFF. If one is found to be in use, it will be mine. I could use a new I-Phone, I'm BROKE! ☺

### **What You Need to Spend Dinero On**

Things you need chedda for are:

- **White Out.** LOTS of it! In life, we all make mistakes. But, we get to cover 'em up and keep it moving in this class!
- **Pens.** LOTS of 'em. You will be writing. A LOT. Be afraid. Be verry afraid!
- **A Thesaurus.** In order to become a wordsmith, you need words! This is a useful tool.
- **A notebook to take notes with.** There is a post-test and a pre-test to evaluate the knowledge gained from this course, so attentive note taking and participation are mandatory!
- **A personal writing notebook/journal.** This should have several entries, including creative pieces and random rants or ramblings. NO ONE will read this but me; you can read excerpts to the class ONLY if you choose to! There's no right size, shape or color. All I ask is that you make it say something about you. (I bought Michael Jackson notebooks for my classes this year!) ☺
- **Two Folders.** One will hold any paperwork or worksheets I give you in class, the other will hold any assignments you are to turn in or any poems that you will be work-shopping. At the end of the school year, one of these folders will be turned in as your final portfolio, so again, make it say something about you!

### **Course Requirements**

***Creative Writing Chapbook (20%)*** — All three classes will be expected to contribute to the composition of a chapbook, (a compilation of poems/stories/plays), which we will sell to fundraise. Students will

consistently be working on editing and revising original pieces of writing that will go in the chapbook, and everyone is required to contribute at least one piece.

***Final Portfolio/Writing Journal (2 Edited Creative Pieces Per Quarter, 3pg. Description of Changes Made/Devices & Vocabulary Used/Influence Received) (20%)*** — Students will be writing several creative pieces throughout the school year. Students will submit two pieces of their work per quarter for workshop. Those who are not presenting a poem should each write comments to the poet, and will have to participate in the class discussion and give ideas and suggestions to improve the piece of work. These things will all affect your participation grade (below). Students being workshopped will edit and revise their pieces using suggestions from peers, new vocabulary and concepts learned. At the end of the quarter, students will turn in a completed portfolio with the pieces revised and a 3 page paper describing the decisions and changes they made, as well as the literary devices used that we learned in class. Extra poems = extra credit, so it's important to always write, even if it's not a class assignment! One of the two pieces will be submitted for the chapbook (above).

***Homework/ Participation/Quizzes/Class Work (20%)***—Reflecting and analyzing are important factors in the learning process. Everyone is required to participate, and not adhering to this rule will significantly affect your grade. Similarly, preparing and bringing in homework assignments is also required and will affect your grade if not completed. A team is only as strong as each of its members; we're a team, so working both independently and in groups are equally important. Class assignments include, but are not limited to:

- “*Vicious Vocab*” – Contributing vocabulary words each week and quizzes on definitions
- “*Rhymed (Or Unrhymed) Line of the Day*” - Class Discussions
- “*U.N.I.T.Y*” — Group Work (1. Note-Taker 2. Vocal Rep 3. Group Leader 4. Question Rep)
- “*Manic Mondaze*” - Writing crazy prompts in the perspective of... Anything!
- “*Taboo Tuesdays*” – Using words wisely, to help people understand you and your world
- “*Freestyle Friday*” – Improvisation and quick-thinking skill building

***Essay (20%)*** —Each student is responsible for thinking critically about the texts we read, the pieces we create, the videos we watch or the songs we hear. Students will write one essay per quarter, (3-4 pages, double spaced) following pre-prepared prompts, however if the student is compelled to write a paper on another topic, it can be discussed, arranged and accommodated.

***Final Exam (20%)*** — A cumulative final exam each quarter based on the material, concepts, readings and vocabulary.

***Extra Credit*** — I understand that sharing things that are personal to you is a choice. Therefore, instead of requiring a personal writing journal, I will encourage you to turn in a personal writing journal each week for extra credit. Entries can include: Free write, quotes, drafts of creative pieces, ramblings, etc. Another extra credit opportunity includes performing at UNITY on Wednesdays. Lastly, commenting on assigned Facebook posts will also count for extra credit.

*Yes, yes, y'all! That's all! I look forward to rockin' with you this school year!*



***Hip Hop and Ya Don't Stop!***

***\*\*\*Please Note: This syllabus is subject to change\*\*\****