

TERM: Spring 2025
COURSE TITLE: Creativity Through Constraints
COURSE NUMBER: ENGL 2122
SECTION TIMES/DAYS: TR 9:55 - 11:35 AM
INSTRUCTOR: Professor Harris
CORE ATTRIBUTE: EXP: Creative Experience
FLAGS: Not Applicable

This course does not count toward the English major or minor requirements; however, English majors interested in creative writing are advised to take one lower-division ENGL 2100 course to satisfy the Core Curriculum EXP: Creative Experience requirement.

COURSE DESCRIPTION/PRINCIPAL TOPICS

Creativity Through Constraints invites students to experience ways in which imposing constraints on writing literary texts produces innovative, original, and creative work. We will do close readings of a range of writers characterized by unique experiments with constraint-based production, including members of the Oulipo group (Workshop for Potential Literature) based in Paris. The philosophy of the Oulipo is that constraints liberate the writer's imagination, and induce writers to explore the possibilities of literature in ways they would never expect or accomplish otherwise. Students will study the different kinds of constraints the Oulipo have used and then engage in creating texts under constraints they get to choose. The overarching goal of the course is to induce students to experience literary creativity in both reading and writing texts. You must be prepared to read painstakingly, think analytically, and write attentively in this course. This class is a workshop, defined as a place where an artisan practices applied techniques and produces and delivers particular goods. The encompassing ethos of this class emphasizes experimentation and rigorous play. Challenging oneself to do difficult things, including reading complex texts and writing original works, takes one into new, unexpected territories.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will learn to attend to the structure and linguistic patterns of literary texts
- Students will experience how constraints enhance creativity in writing texts.
- Students will think about the forms of literary texts in theoretical and practical terms
- Students will analyze literary texts in order to identify their original, singular elements.
- Students will learn to critique peer work effectively

PREREQUISITES/RECOMMENDED BACKGROUND

FYS and Rhetorical Arts should be completed before taking this course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Perec, *Life A User's Manual*
Queneau, *Exercises in Style*

COURSE WORK/EXPECTATIONS

- 1. 5 creative constraint-based texts (varying 3 – 5 pages in length) (10% each)**
- 2. 3 critical analysis essays (10% each)**
- 3. Peer editing/workshop/class participation (10%)**
Includes in-class discussions and workshops, editing, group work
- 4. Oral presentation**
Students will present and perform one of their creative texts.