**Senior Creative Writing Q4 Independent Study**

In addition to giving a presentation, every senior writes a Senior Paper before graduating. For most English courses, this always took the form of a *7-15-page nonfiction essay*—students can write about whatever they’d like; because it’s the last time in high school they’ll get feedback on writing, they are encouraged to write about something that matters deeply to them. **Due to this quarter’s remote learning work-time restrictions, the required length has been reduced to 4-6 pages for all ACP classes**. **If you’d like yours to be longer, that’s fine.**

You’re welcome to also do *nonfiction*, but since in this course you’ve had significant practice in *fiction and poetry*, you could use one of those genres. You could even write a *mixed*-genre piece *or* some genre we haven’t studied in the course—play, screenplay, rock opera, etc.

All the writing counting toward your page total must be new writing you’re doing from this point on. You may start a brand new piece, or you may *continue* something you started before—maybe there’s a 5-page story that should be 10, so you’ll add 5. Or, you could complete multiple shorter works—if you’re doing poetry, you could produce another collection like the one you turned in for your Q1 Portfolio.

If, after some thought, you have no idea what you want to focus on for this paper, here are some *nonfiction* prompts you may choose from. Any of the prompts from any previous units are fair game; these are just some new ones:

1. What was the story of high school for you? How have the pandemic and quarantine, coming so late to the story, shifted the plot and conflict? How have the main characters, including the hero, responded? (One of my favorite stories is the last one in Lahiri’s collection *Unaccustomed Earth*, and at the very end there’s a tsunami—based on the real one that happened in 2004 and killed about 230,000.)
2. Write a list of subjects you would “never” write about. What are the silences that can’t be broken? Begin each sentence with “I would never write about” or “I hesitate to write about.” See if this backward maneuver might actually lead you into scenes, details, and memories you *might* be able to handle in an essay.
3. Begin an essay by describing a piece of art that has always intrigued you. Feel free to interpret the details, creating a speculative narrative about what is happening in the painting or what was going through the painter’s mind. Parallel your interpretation with events going on in the world around you and/or unfolding in your own life.
4. Think about your reading life. What piece of writing has “taken the top of your head off,” to use Emily Dickenson’s phrase? Write a reading narrative in which you enter into dialogue with this writing—feel free to quote it. How has this reading experience changed you and helped you to redefine your life?
5. Write an essay in the form of a how-to guide using the second-person voice. You can turn anything into a how-to. Less expected subjects, here, may give way to more tension. In Lorrie Moore’s book *Self-Help*, she has stories titled “How to Talk to Your Mother” and “How to Be the Other Woman.”

Your final draft is due **Monday 5/11**.

That might seem like a really long time to write 4-6 pages. It is, given the pace you’re used to. But teachers have been given strict work-time restrictions during this period of time: 2 50-minute class meetings plus 2 half hours of HW per week. That averages out to less than 2 pages per week (not including April Vacation if we still get that). If you’d like to work faster, feel free.

In accordance with schoolwide remote-learning grading policy, all Q4 work, including the final grade, is PASS/FAIL.

What about the Senior Presentations we were about to do? Those are on hold for now, primarily because they were never meant to be done remotely. If we return to school after 5/4, we’ll do the presentations as planned, just with a different schedule. If we’re still at home then, we’ll do some kind of remote version.

After giving this assignment some thought, **email me a brief proposal by 9AM next Tuesday 4/14**. A few sentences will do. No need to rush, but the sooner you get me this, the sooner I’ll respond, and the sooner you can get cranking.