Welcome to GrubStreet! Whether you're taking a class online or in-person at our Center for Creative Writing, please review the information below before your first class.

If at any point you have questions, please don’t hesitate to ask your instructor or a staff member.
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

GrubStreet actively works to be an expansive community, shaped by a broad range of perspectives, identities, and experiences representative of American, immigrant, and international populations at large. We are committed to welcoming, engaging with, and developing a diverse range of writing voices and want to facilitate a creative writing world that can expand the racial, social, and cultural boundaries of contemporary literature.

At a glance, here’s what you can expect from us, and what we expect from one another:

- **Inclusion**: we commit to working to ensure that everyone in our community feels a sense of belonging and ownership.
- **Humility**: we are always learning, and we put a premium on listening, asking questions, engaging with perspectives rather than assuming we have all the answers.
- **Generosity**: we treat everyone with respect and empathy as we push our writing to the next level.
- **Candor**: we prize direct, respectful, and honest conversation.
- **Risk-taking**: we embrace risk as necessary for artistic, organizational, and personal growth and change.
- **Accountability**: we recognize that in writing, as in life, the excellence is in the revision. We welcome feedback and commit to educating ourselves and each other and holding ourselves accountable to making GrubStreet welcoming to all.
- **Play**: we are dead serious about silliness and joy.

It’s normal to talk about the cultural context of writing, including bias, in GrubStreet classes.

In any writing class, each student will come with unique and interesting insights, and unique biases and blindspots. We all have them—we inherit them from our society, our education, our families, even our literature. At GrubStreet, our job is to be aware of those biases and to actively interrogate them and discuss them in light of our work and others. The workshop setting allows us to see and talk about aspects of our writing and thinking that we can’t access on our own, and we’re grateful for that. Just as we don’t shy away from pointing out when we resonate with a piece of writing, we don’t shy away from instances when a piece of writing is weakened by bias, stereotypes, or blindspots.

When we talk about bias, the focus is always on the writing, not the writer. We come to these conversations from a standpoint of curiosity and helpfulness.

**Be a help, not a judge.**

No finger-pointing and shaming. We ask questions like, “Why did you describe this person like that?” Or we share comments like, “The action at the end reminded me of a stereotypical trope that you may want to avoid.” It’s even fair game to say, “I think this is a misogynistic depiction” (naming an aspect of the writing itself), or, “I was offended by the word choice here” (naming how the writing made you feel), but it’s not appropriate to make assumptions about their intent.

**Defensiveness gets in the way of growth.**

In writing workshops, people react to our writing in ways we can’t anticipate on our own. Sometimes, they will react in ways that we didn’t intend them to.

GrubStreet classes foster diversity, equity, and inclusion by embracing the following standards.
We see this as tremendously valuable – how else would you have known that your writing could be interpreted that way? If someone in your class offers feedback about your writing that you disagree with, focus on understanding why they might have had that reaction, rather than on persuading them to change their feedback. Oftentimes, if someone misinterprets what we’ve written, there is something in the writing itself that isn’t totally clear (see the next standard for an important exception, though!). Remember that your instructor and your classmates are invested in helping you improve your writing; they’re not offering feedback on who you are as a person.

Your cultural lens isn’t universal.

Be aware that someone may be writing within a cultural tradition that you are unfamiliar with, and don’t assume that any unfamiliarity you may have with their references equals an artistic failure on their part. Be careful with your language to avoid playing into harmful tropes or stereotypes (e.g. describing non-white and/or non-Western characters as "exotic"). Work on expanding your notion of the audience and the writer/reader relationship by embracing the opportunity to be curious, instead of asking their work to cater to your preexisting knowledge, experience, and traditions. And, as always: when in doubt, Google it.

Get in touch.

If one of your classmates is making you feel unwelcome in your class in any way, please get in touch with your instructor. If you’re not comfortable with that, or if you have concerns about your instructor, please reach out to us at programs@grubstreet.org. The earlier a concern is brought to light, the best chance we have at addressing it. In almost every case, if one person sees an issue, others have seen it too, and everyone benefits from your speaking up.

When You Arrive

We are excited to welcome you to GrubStreet World Headquarters! Below is some information you may need. If at any point you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask your instructor or a staff member/intern.

Attendance.

Your presence is expected each week: each workshop member’s writing benefits from engagement from the whole class. We do not recommend missing more than one session of a 6-week class, or more than two sessions of longer multi-weeks. GrubStreet classes will not be recorded under any circumstances, and we do not offer hybrid class models for in-person classes. If you need to miss class, you can request that week’s materials from your instructor.

For the safety of everyone in the space, we ask that you not come to class if you feel sick or are experiencing symptoms of Covid-19.

If you are unable to attend class under these circumstances, we ask that you contact us at programs@grubstreet.org. In this event, you may be entitled to a refund in either GrubStreet credit or to the card used for purchase.

For any other updates regarding our Covid-19 Policies, please check our website.

When you arrive.

Classes meet on the second floor of our Seaport Center. Before you head to your classroom, please feel free to check in with the reception desk at the top of the stairs. If you are entering the second floor from the elevator, the reception desk is located to your left.
Food and drink.

There is a microwave and coffee maker in the kitchen that all are welcome to use. Food and drink in the fridge and cabinets is staff food, unless otherwise marked. Snacks, coffee, and tea on the white table in the kitchen are communal (unless otherwise marked), so please help yourself.

Our sink doesn’t have a disposal, so please remove any items dumped into it. Bottles, cans, and all paper can be recycled in the marked bins in the kitchen.

The copier.

GrubStreet is happy to provide photocopies for class-related documents, including readings and workshop drafts. Please submit print job requests to the form located at grubstreet.org/photocopies at least 48 business hours before your class. We cannot promise we will be able to print materials same-day, but will try our best. You may also make copies of already printed materials using the small Xerox machine. The copy room is located outside of room 4.

Wi-Fi access.

Please join GrubStreet-Guest to access free wifi. You will be prompted to press ‘accept’ when you first join.

Restrooms.
Restrooms are located down the class hallway to your left on the second floor.

As you leave.
Please be sure to leave things as tidy as they were when you arrived. Dispose of all coffee cups and recycle leftover handouts. If you are the last to leave a classroom, turn off the lights.

Fire exits.
Please follow the emergency exit signs along the ceilings, which will always direct you to the nearest exit.
Email Best Practices

Be mindful about CC’ing the whole class, or CC’ing the instructor. If you have a specific question or comment for a classmate, email them on a new thread—not the class’s weekly email chain. You don’t need to include the instructor on those direct emails unless you feel their input is needed. Likewise, if you have a question for the instructor that only pertains to you and your work, don’t CC the whole class.

Although the initial email sent to your class will BCC everyone’s email, eventually the instructor will need to start CC’ing everyone so that you can communicate with each other. If you’d rather not have your email shared with the class, please create a new free email account (we like Gmail!) that you can share with the class.

If you have an assignment due, please email it to the whole class by replying-all on that week’s email thread. This will help you and your classmates stay organized. Don’t start a new email thread just to share work.

If you’re submitting written feedback, please email it to your instructor directly. You instructor will be collecting everyone’s feedback and sharing it with the student(s) being workshopped that week.

Above all, remember that this is a live meeting class. Your instructor’s role is mainly to be available to you during the live class meetings, and while they may not be able to answer all of your emails between class sessions, they can certainly answer your questions when you meet as a class, just like they would in-person.

Writing Workshop Guidelines

Reading Other Writers’ Work

GrubStreet workshops are only as strong as their participants. In joining one of our workshops, you are making a commitment to the workshopping process. Though the specific expectations of a class will depend on the format, in all of our workshops you have a responsibility to take the time to read and comment on the work of other participants and to attend as many sessions as you possibly can. Fully engaging in the process will make you a better writer. Reading other people’s work with care will help you develop critical skills essential to your own writing.

During the workshop itself, you should be prepared to say at least one positive thing about a work and to point out at least one element in need of improvement. Please be as specific as possible, preferably using concrete examples. Remember that general comments, such as “I liked it” or “I didn’t like it” are not especially useful to the author. Try not to repeat what others have said.

We want each writer to benefit from as broad a range of reactions as possible, and we want to force readers to look and think harder about all the ways in which a piece is or isn’t yet working.

For sure, there will be disagreements. There’s little chance a group of writers will ever reach a consensus about a piece of work. Trust your response, think carefully about your reaction, and be as honest as you can. Above all, respect the writer’s work by making sure your comments are constructive and never damaging.
Standards of Behavior

At GrubStreet, we have one Golden Rule: take your writing seriously; yourself, not so much. In other words, be open to constructive criticism, be respectful, get serious about your own writing and the writing of others — and try to enjoy yourself while you’re at it. GrubStreet strives to be a rigorous but welcoming community where all writers, including teachers and students, can feel supported to do their best work.

Deadlines & Presentation of Work

Please follow the instructions your workshop leader gives you for distributing your work — and meet your deadlines! Submitting work late erodes the discipline that’s essential for a good workshop, and one missed deadline eases the way for another until chaos reigns. Don’t let that happen. Deadlines are your friends: they force you to finish something, however rough. For most of our workshops, you are responsible for emailing your work to the class the week before you are to be critiqued.

All work presented to the workshop should be typed, double-spaced, and titled, and the pages should be numbered.

Workshopping Your Writing

At some point in the workshop you will have an opportunity to talk — to ask clarifying questions, to voice a particular concern about your work, or to acknowledge trouble spots. Often our first response to criticism involves jumping to tell the suddenly offensive reader that they’re wrong or that they just don’t get it. However, readers need to be able to offer criticism freely and writers need to be open and objective.

In order to improve, we have to genuinely listen to feedback.

Think hard about what your classmates say about your work. Some points will make intuitive sense to you. Try to incorporate them into your next piece or your rewrites. Other points won’t seem as helpful. This is to be expected. Our advice is to use what is helpful, and ignore the rest. You’re bound to hear negative comments.

Don’t get hung up on them. You’ll never please everyone. Remember that good work is only born of a lot of earlier, less illustrious writing. Writing is rewriting.

After the class is finished discussing your work, you are free to ask questions about the comments or to direct the discussion to issues not covered during your review.

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In order to facilitate the best possible environment for our community, here are our rules for student behavior and ethical expectations for workshops:

- **Be Respectful.** Disruptive, aggressive, or dismissive behavior during class, including but not limited to excessive interruption of other students and/or instructor, name-calling or other personal attacks, shouting, finger-pointing or other aggressive behavior, and being dismissive of the instructor or your classmates, will be met with a warning from the instructor and/or GrubStreet staff. If the behavior continues or was particularly egregious and detrimental to the class, the student may be dismissed from the course.

- **Don’t be a jerk.** Harassment, whether verbal, physical, or sexual, of your fellow students, instructors, or staff members will not be tolerated, and will result in a student’s immediate dismissal from class.

- **Don’t be racist, sexist, ableist, or bigoted.** Any behavior or language that discriminates, demeans, or dismisses another person and/or their writing based on race, gender, ethnicity, ability, identity, or culture will be grounds for immediate dismissal from the class.

- **Be helpful, not harmful.** All critique is welcome in workshop, but please refrain from directive language (e.g., “You should [fill in the blank]”) or unconstructive criticism (e.g., “I hate this story”). If you don’t have anything constructive to say, don’t say anything at all.

- **Do your part.** Make sure that you can meet all requirements set by your instructor before committing to the class. If special considerations are needed, please discuss with your instructor as early as possible to avoid miscommunication or class disruption.

- **Failure or refusal to follow the instructor’s requirements related to class work, feedback, attendance, or deadlines may lead to a warning and subsequent dismissal from the class if the issue persists.**

- **Just Say No.** Drug use is not permitted on GrubStreet’s premises. Students over the age of twenty-one may partake in wine or beer at the instructor’s discretion. Smoking indoors is strictly prohibited (smoke breaks can be taken outside while class is on break).

Basically, treat everyone and their work the way you want them to treat you and your work (unless you want to be treated badly. In which case, do the opposite).

*GrubStreet reserves the right to ask students who violate our standards of behavior to leave the class.*

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**Ethical Guidelines for Sharing Work During Workshop**

Sharing your work in a feedback setting relies on a respectful and constructive exchange of perspectives, critiques, ideas, and suggestions. It also relies on the confidence that your work will be safe from plagiarism in the class. This can be complex territory that relies on building trust, engaging in communication within the class setting, and coming in with some clarity around definitions and expectations. Below are some introductory suggestions on how to engage with all of it.
What happens if I believe my work has been plagiarized in class?

This can be a very distressing experience, in which a writer can feel like boundaries have been violated. First, we encourage you to refer to the definition at the end of this section*, as well as this document, which provides expanded definitions for and an overview of plagiarism, confidentiality, and privacy as technical terms.

To clarify, writing on a similar topic or theme is not plagiarism. For example, there are thousands of books on the topics of grief, loss, the state of our world, etc. A writer stating in class that they are writing about a topic, place, or event does not mean that another writer cannot do the same, since topics and references cannot be singularly owned by one writer in the group. If you still believe your work has been directly plagiarized or its specific language, content, or context appropriated without prior discussion or permission, we recommend that you speak with your instructor and after hearing the instructor's suggestions, speak with the writer if you think that is appropriate or advised.

You can also contact us directly at programs@grubstreet.org if that feels more appropriate. Our programs team will be happy to assist, provide further information, facilitate a solution, and/or take appropriate action when warranted. We do want to make clear: blatant plagiarism of someone else's work, as reflected in the specific language, content, or context of the writing in question is grounds for a warning and/or dismissal from the class.

The critique guidelines say, “be helpful, not harmful,” but a classmate and I are so different (in age, gender, race, culture, etc.) that I feel as though I don’t have the authority to comment on their work. How do I approach feedback in that situation?

Be honest and acknowledge your gaps or biases while responding to the piece. Approaching our feedback with generosity and curiosity – especially when our experience or perspective might differ from the one portrayed in a piece of writing – can lead to more productive and honest interactions between writer and reader.

As a workshop participant, you can be inspired by a classmate’s writing without having to explicitly use elements or details of their work. While doing this may not be strictly plagiarism, it isn't in the best interest of your relationships with writing colleagues and can disrupt the trust built in a class setting. On the other hand, being influenced by someone else’s work is a common practice, as poetic and literary devices are often forms of inspiration and methods that many writers share. Particular strategies of craft, form and style do not belong to a person using them in an assignment. For example, if you are writing a draft with short chapters, it does not exclude anyone else from using that method, nor do they need permission.

What happens if a student uses or has been influenced by aspects of another student’s writing such as setting, stylistic approaches, or cultural details?

*Definition of Plagiarism: Copying of another’s expressive work without attribution.
For instance, we might not always be the intended audience for a particular piece of writing. Our artistic or cultural understanding may not align with what’s on the page. However, we still have a responsibility to interrogate our response to the piece and how to provide constructive feedback.

Moreover, it is crucial to understand that no one group of people is monolithic — whether this be Black people, elders, unhoused people, men, women, queer people, Korean, Diné, immigrant, and the list goes on. People of any particular group do not all have the same experiences, perspectives or feelings, so they should not be expected to have any particular or same insights on a character of a similar background. Thus, it should be the responsibility of every participant in the class to interrogate intent, audience, and gaps in cultural understanding with respect, generosity, open-mindedness, and a willingness to engage with our own biases and gaps.

Student Expectations

At GrubStreet, we take our student experience seriously. To that end, here is what you can expect, as a Grub student:

- Your class will begin on time. Unless you have been otherwise notified, your instructor will begin class at the designated time.
- You’ll get what you signed up for. Your class will match as closely as possible to the description that was given when you signed up for the class.
- You will be treated with respect. You and your work will be treated with respect from our staff, other students, and instructors (see our behavioral standards for more on what this means).

Here’s what we can’t guarantee:

- Your class will be perfect. We offer high-quality classes in a fun and supportive community, so we feel that your chances of enjoying your class are pretty high. That being said, everyone is different. There may be some students you don’t like. You might not click with a particular instructor. Every exercise and reading may not be to your taste. We ask you to be patient — even feedback or readings you don’t like can help your writing.
- Your class will never get cancelled. Life happens. Sometimes we don’t have enough students to run a class. You can trust us to never cancel a class unless it is in your best interest as a student, or it can’t be avoided. And you can also trust us to make it up to you.
- Your book/story/essay will get published. We do our best to set up our students for success. We cannot, however, guarantee you fame and fortune as a writer (if we could, we’d all be a lot richer).
**A Note on Hate Speech**

We will not tolerate work that is intentionally offensive, or contains hate speech toward any group of people. Obviously there are nuances here – a writer might use a harmful term with the intent of illuminating the experience of those targeted by that term, for instance (though you should use caution in doing so if you are not a member of the community targeted by this language) – but you may be asked to resubmit your work if it contains hate speech, and any use of it within the classroom will result in your immediate removal from class.

Persistent use of offensive language or content that creates a hostile environment will not be tolerated. Please also note that this does not mean that as long as you do not intend offense, that any language you use is therefore immune from criticism. Pointing out unintentionally harmful language or stereotypes is very much part of the workshop process, and we should welcome it as something that will make our writing better.

**Statement of Belonging**

At GrubStreet, belonging means creating and maintaining spaces where we boldly share our voices, our experiences, and our work as writers, readers, and audience members. Every member of our community commits to engaging across differences with curiosity and a desire to learn and grow together.

Community Agreements:
- Practice cultural humility, ask questions, and engage with different perspectives
- Offer grace to speak in draft form and be open to making mistakes
- Check our biases and be aware of how we carry our own identity and privilege as well as its impact

**Get in touch.**

If you feel your expectations are not being met, please let us know as soon as possible, and we will do our best to address the problem. Please keep in mind that any refunds or credits are subject to our refund and cancellation policy, which can be found on our website.

Again, welcome to GrubStreet! We hope you are as excited to be here as we are to have you.

If you have any questions, please contact us at 617.695.0075 or info@grubstreet.org.