

Radical Collapse: A 100-page Intensive
Summer 2022: May 10 - Aug 3
Tuesdays or Wednesdays 6pm-8pm EDT on zoom
Instructor: Marcella Haddad

Syllabus

Background

In my first semester of my MFA program I enrolled in a workshop aptly titled, “Exhaustion,” led by Jeff Parker. Our task was simple. Write 10 pages every week until they add up to 100.

I was drawn to the promise of productivity. What I discovered, instead, was a unique skill that has served me in the rest of my writing career; Honesty. The ability to look at a piece of work, or an idea, and know if it contains 10 pages within it. Even more important — Flexibility. The ability to switch gears and begin a new work if the original plan does not work out.

And, of course, the other incredible and illuminating surprise was the sincere joy and inspiration I found in being able to simply *read* my peers’ work each week. There were no requirements for notes or feedback. I was simply enjoying their work. I could read it on my phone on the bus or on my kindle in the evening without needing a notebook or word doc open beside me to record thoughtful critiques. I could enjoy getting lost in their stories. In the end, this is what made me more empowered to offer observations and insights during our meetings, because I had sincerely and openly entered their writing and had the full experience of being a reader without the pressures of being someone offering critique.

When it comes to our own writing in an intensive and generative workshop, we can turn to the words of Michael Martone, the grandfather of this workshop format, when he taught the ‘hypoxic workshop:’

“The purpose of the hypoxic workshop is to write. Its purpose is to allow the writer to write what she or he wants to write in a space that is uncritical—no time to ‘workshop.’ The writer is concentrating on understanding, developing, creating process not product. It is to increase endurance and efficiency of writing. It seeks to make writing itself, the act of writing, as natural and necessary as breathing. Make it habitual.”

Writing 100 pages in 3 months is a daunting task alone, but when we create structure, accountability, and community, we find inner reserves that were previously untapped.

In the two rounds of Exhaustion I've taken myself, I've written:

- An audio short story
- The opening chapters of three different novels
- An experimental short story that became a chapbook
- An epistolary short story told through emails and texts
- Alternative POVS from characters in a current project
- Ancient texts from invented worlds
- A personal essay
- A speculative nonfiction essay

As well as countless new short stories that have since been revised, or published, or held lovingly in their current draft form.

It is impossible to overstate the benefits that I have found in Exhaustion as a workshop. I have immensely enjoyed re-creating that community and inspiration in my version of the class 6 Weeks 6 Stories. For this class, though the nickname 'Exhaustion' is now infamous in my MFA cohort, I wanted to expand the title. I disliked the negative connotations with the term and the idea that this level of writing is a temporary state, a one-time, almost foolish undertaking.

For this course title, I knew there needed to be some acknowledgement of the intensity of the work — there's the exhaustion again, of course, but also the collapsing, a collapsing of our previously held suppositions of our own work, themes, and abilities. But there's something radical about it. Something valuable and worth undertaking, not in a masochistic way, but out of bravery.

It is clear that the power of this intensive class is not just in the work we produce, but in the agreement we form to simply witness and experience each other's work. There is simply no time to activate the critical, and sometimes deadly, comments that can stifle new projects. Therefore, its true power lies not just in our contracts with ourselves to write each week, but in our generosity of spirit and witness of the work of others.

And, it is impossible to deny 100 pages. That's a large stack of paper. That's 10 different documents on your desktop. I dare you to tell yourself that you are not a writer after accomplishing this.

I invite you to engage in a new form of writing and reading work that is intensive, academic, exploratory, and most importantly, urgent. The world desperately needs your work. And, selfishly, I can't wait to read it!

—Marcella

Course Objectives (aka, How to Survive)

- Produce a body of work. When you have a body of work, many things can happen. You can:
 - revise
 - submit
 - examine your work for themes and obsessions
 - know what you are capable of — know that you are a writer
 - have faith in the value of your work
- Identify which stories and ideas are urgent, and which are performative.
- Things don't always turn out as planned. You may think it's time to write a story or make progress on a project, but only one question matters every week — what has ten pages within it? The most exploration might lie in an unexpected place.
- Honor and exhaust your inspirations.
- Identify your obsessions.
- The point where you typically give up or give in is where the magic happens
- To witness new, strange, and sincere work from your peers every week is the truest form of inspiration
- Know that every word you write has readers. Not as a form of pressure, but of shared travelers on the journey of your work.
- Your instincts are your ally.

Logistics

Turn in 10 pages double spaced - no genre requirements - about 2000 words - every week

If you overwrite one week, bank those pages

Each week when you receive your peers' pages, read. Simply read. 40-50 pages

Each week you will summarize one person's work in 3-5 minutes

Discussion in class will be 10-15 minutes per person — more like book club than workshop

Mid-term meeting and end-of-term one-on-one meeting with instructor

Summer 2022 Cohort Schedules

Tuesday Cohort Pages due Friday night	Wednesday Cohort Pages due Sunday night
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ May 10 - class overview/logistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4 short story readings due before class ❖ May 17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due May 13 ❖ May 24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due May 20 ❖ May 31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due May 27 ❖ June 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due June 3 ❖ June 14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due June 10 ➤ One-on-one meetings ❖ June 21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due June 17 ❖ **June 28** NO CLASS - Break week to catch up ❖ July 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due July 1 ❖ July 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due July 8 ❖ July 19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due July 15 ❖ July 26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due July 22 ➤ One-on-one meetings ❖ August 2 - wrap-up and readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ TOC due July 29 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ May 11 - class overview/logistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4 short story readings due before class ❖ May 18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due May 15 ❖ May 25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due May 22 ❖ June 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due May 29 ❖ June 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due June 5 ❖ June 15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due June 12 ➤ One-on-one meetings ❖ **June 22** NO CLASS - Break week to catch up ❖ June 29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due June 26 ❖ July 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due July 3 ❖ July 13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due July 10 ❖ July 20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due July 17 ❖ July 27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10 pages due July 24 ➤ One-on-one meetings ❖ August 3 - wrap-up and readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ TOC due July 31

➤ Introduction due by class meeting Aug 2	➤ Introduction due by class meeting Aug 3
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Tuition

Pay in full: \$1,225

Payment Plan: \$409/month for three months

Tuition includes:

- 12 course meetings
- feedback on 100 pages
- 2 one-on-one meetings

Tuesday Nights 6-8pm EDT on zoom

May 11 – Aug 2

*no class June 22

- [Tues Pay in Full](#)
- [Tues Payment Plan](#)

Wednesday Nights 6-8pm EDT on zoom

May 10 – Aug 3

* no class June 28

- [Wed Pay in Full](#)
- [Wed Payment Plan](#)

FAQ

- What if I'm not ready to write this much?
 - You may not have written this much this quickly before, but in this class you will also have three things you haven't had before — witnesses, self-understanding, and inspiration. Each week you have guaranteed readers who are on your side — allies, not antagonists. Each week you will make choices related to which project you want to work on with a sense of urgency and accountability that has not been enacted on your writing process before. You will also have the inspiration of your peers' work each week that will offer new ideas and possibilities for style, content, and form. You are not being

asked to write 100 pages in the same situation you are in now. You are asked to enter a new space and new community that will support the writing of 100 pages.

- I have to do xyz before I take a class like this, and get my ducks in a row.
 - Your ducks will be with you forever. They will never behave. Take them with you.
- What if my work isn't ready to be shared?
 - There is no judgment, critique, or standards. This is not workshop. We are simply in community, existing in the world of your work. However, what can motivate you each week is to make your work 'readable' - possible to follow the main thread, for example, or free from typos. Your work is not expected to be anywhere close to a final draft. It only needs to be clean enough to invite others to visit.
- What if I don't have anything interesting to say about my peer's work?
 - Our goal in discussion is not to be interesting, insightful, or clever. Our goal is to witness. Our goal is to be fans. Our goal is to notice. Consider this book club, where the author is visiting and we can ask them questions as well as share our favorite moments.
- What if I have to miss a meeting?
 - Be sure to let me know and email me the summary of your assigned peer's work for that week so that I can still read it in the class. We will do our best to get some brief notes to you on your work. And yes — you still need to submit your own pages!
- What if I don't turn in pages one week?
 - I've never had a student fail to submit work, and don't intend to start now.
- What if I end up writing a completely different project than the one I came in with?
 - I hope you do!
- What are the one-on-one meetings about?
 - These meetings are an opportunity for close mentorship and discussion of your work. We will meet at the halfway point and at the end of the class. I will read everything you write — therefore, we can use this time to dive deeper into your themes, aesthetics, and characters in whatever way that you wish. We can also discuss your upcoming work in the class and possible revision plans for your work so far.
- Can I turn in an experimental/surreal/genre/epistolary short story with unusual formatting?
 - yes. If the page numbers are getting wiggy because of the format, just make sure it shakes out to about 2000 words.
- Can I turn in literary fiction?
 - yes.
- Can I turn in a personal essay?
 - yes.

- Can I turn in the beginning of a novel?
 - yes.
- Can I turn in a random scene from the middle of a novel?
 - yes.
- Can I turn in a made-up text from the world I'm creating?
 - yes.
- Can I turn in a dream I had?
 - yes.
- Can I turn in a dream one of my characters had?
 - yes.
- Can I turn in a grocery list?
 - As long as it's interesting.