

Creative writing leads professor on journey to becoming author

Chase Johnson

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From growing up on the East Coast, moving to Texas and ending up in Kearney, Theodora Ziolkowski continues to positively impact students and inspire others while doing what she loves.

Ziolkowski is an assistant professor who teaches creative writing at UNK. When she is not in the classroom teaching, she spends her time working as an author.

“Since I have always loved reading and really getting into the characters, I really enjoyed creative writing and making my own stories,” Ziolkowski said.

Ziolkowski has written and published short stories such as “On the Rocks” and “Mother Tongues.” She has received awards including the 2018 Next Generation Indie Book Award and was the recipient of the Inprint Marion Barthelme Prize in Creative Writing. Her short story, “The Bind,” was nominated for a Pushcart Prize earlier this spring.

Tony Morales-Rodriguez, a junior student at UNK had nothing but positive things to say about her.

“I had Ziolkowski for a lot of my creative writing classes and she was just so passionate about creative writing,” Rodriguez said. “Her energy filled me with confidence when it came to my writing.”

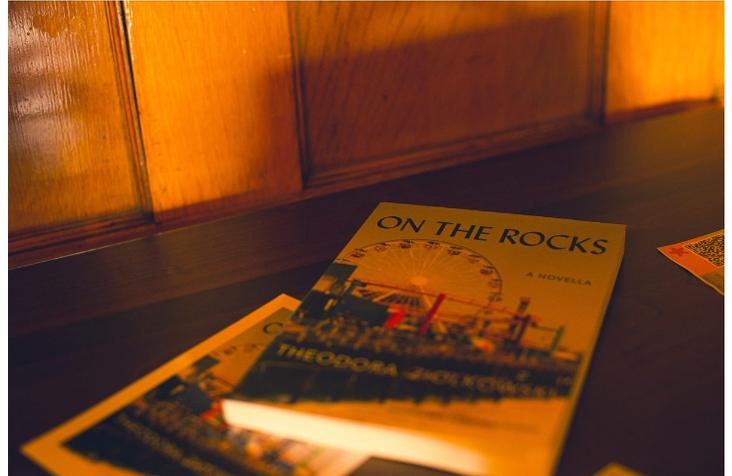
Students who have previously taken her class especially loved her creative writing course.

“I loved taking classes from Ziolkowski because she was so creatively challenging in the best way,” said Jessica Bruha, chapter president of Sigma Tau Delta and former student of Ziolkowski. “She introduces a lot of really great reading material in class to get us inspired, writing fiction with her is just really fun.”

Ziolkowski said she can come across as extroverted, but in reality, is an extremely introverted person.

She needs lots of alone time to write. While she loves being in a community with others, she is also drawn toward quiet time to reflect and create.

“I am so grateful to do what I do,” said Ziolkowski. “I get to teach the subject I care about most while doing the thing I love most. My UNK students and faculty are all brilliant and certainly inform my introverted side.”



“On the Rocks” is a short story written by Theodora Ziolkowski. Photo by Micah Torres / Antelope Staff