

## AS/EN 2600 6.0 A: INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING

### TERM, TIME AND LOCATION:

Fall/Winter 2019-20

Wed. 11:30-2:30

Vari Hall 1020

### COURSE DIRECTOR:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Jennifer Duncan  
OFFICE: TBA  
EMAIL: [jinx.duncan@sympatico.ca](mailto:jinx.duncan@sympatico.ca)  
OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays 9:30-11:30 by appointment (arrange by email)

### EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION:

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE:

Each week there will be a three-hour writing studio workshop that involves lectures, discussions of readings, in-class exercises and critiques. These classes are not like academic tutorials where the focus is on review of lectures and readings; they are like theatre or visual art studios in which much of the coursework happens in activities performed in-class. Thus attendance and preparedness are crucial for the writing studios to fulfill their purpose. There is no way to make up many of these activities if you miss class or are not prepared to participate. Students will be expected to come promptly to class having done the reading and writing assignments.

#### COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of the course is to introduce students to the writing of poetry and prose fiction through the practices that comprise the writing lives of published authors. It is designed to familiarize students with the literary traditions and possibilities of these forms, to help them explore creative reading/writing/editing processes, and to discover their talents. As the main focus of these studios is on students developing their own literary writing, and not genre writing, instruction is not formulaic but requires that students, through a community of practice and engagement with the writing life, work actively and independently to make connections between terminology, readings, lectures, and their own creative processes. Readings are to be done before writing the weekly assignment so that techniques, devices and approaches can be discovered. Students are expected to improve and polish their work and to develop an appreciation for, and understanding of, different approaches to literary writing. The main premise of this course is that words are transformative and it is hoped that students will approach this experience with openness, humility, ability to work through the frustration of a challenge and willingness to take risks so that they may transform themselves into emerging artists of the written word.

### COURSE TEXTS

- AS/EN 2600 (B/D) course pack
- *The Broadview Anthology of Short Fiction* - Second Edition. Eds. Julia Gaunce, Suzette Mayr, Don LePan, Marjorie Mather, & Bryanne Miller. Broadview Press, 2012.
- *How to Read (and Write About) Poetry*. Ed. Susan Holbrook. Broadview Press, 2015.

Additional readings may be assigned or recommended during the course. Students are also responsible for photocopying their works for critiques.

## EVALUATION

- 20% Participation (10% each term: including discussing readings, critiquing student work, performing in-class and at-home exercises; exercises to be collected into a Participation Folder)
- 10% First and Third Person Narrations
- 10% Short Story
- 10% Poetry Set #1
- 10% Poetry Set #2
- 10% Tests (5% each term)
- 30% Final Portfolio: 15-20 pages; this should include selected revised works and, if you wish, some new works. At least 2/3 of the portfolio should be revisions of course work. As well, include a letter of self-evaluation (250-500 words) that will introduce your portfolio and illustrate your critical concerns.

**Assignment Submission:** Prose is to be double-spaced; poetry is single-spaced. Do not space between paragraphs (use indents). Assignments and the portfolio should be free of errors.

**Lateness Penalty:** the penalty for work submitted beyond the assigned due date is a deduction of one full grade per week or part thereof. ONLY appropriate formal documentation (i.e. doctor's note) will suffice for granting of an extension. Students must complete ALL course requirements in order to receive a passing grade. Submitted work must be properly labelled with assignment or exercise number and name, individual title, and student's name. Prose is to be double-spaced, poetry single-spaced.

**Missed Tests:** Only students with formal documentation supporting a valid reason for missing a test may request accommodation from the Course Director. If the student is allowed to write a make-up test, the new test will not necessarily follow the form of the missed one. Further extensions or accommodation will require students to submit a formal petition to the Faculty.

ANY USE OF ANOTHER PERSON'S WORK, WHETHER IT IS IN PRINT OR ELECTRONIC FORM, WITHOUT PROPER CITATION CONSTITUTES PLAGIARISM AND WILL LEAD TO CHARGES OF A BREACH OF ACADEMIC HONESTY. Please see the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty at:

<http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/legislation/senate/acadhonesty.htm>

### Grading, Assignment Submission, Lateness Penalties, and Missed Tests

**Grading:** The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests will bear a letter grade designation and a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 90, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.). (For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar.

### **IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents):

[http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate\\_cte\\_main\\_pages/ccas.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm)

- York's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures/Academic Integrity Website
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation

# SYLLABUS

## SEMESTER 1

- Sept. 4:** Introduction to the Course  
In-class writing exercises (this applies to most classes)  
Exercises: Autobiography; Screen Time Log
- Sept. 11:** Finding Subjects  
Bring: a meaningful object concealed in a bag; a found photograph  
Exercises: Screen-free Day; Walk Descriptions (hand in for feedback next class)
- Sept. 18:** Language is Our Medium  
Bring: an example of excellent literary prose (photocopied passage)  
Reading: Elizabeth Tallent “No One is a Mystery”  
Due: Walk Description for instructor feedback
- Sept. 25:** Drawing from Life  
Still Life Description  
Reading: Sandra Cisneros “My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn”; Margaret Atwood “Death By Landscape” (both in Broadview)  
Exercises: Character Sketch
- Oct. 2:** Point of View  
In-class reading: Tobias Wolff, “Powder”; Jamaica Kincaid “Girl” (both in Broadview)  
Reading: Ernest Hemingway “Hills Like White Elephants” (Broadview); David Foster Wallace “Good People” (online, *The New Yorker*)  
Exercises: Hemingway and Wallace Conversions  
Due: First Person Narration (Draft)
- Oct. 9:** Subtlety and Subtext  
Reading: Ngozi Adichie “A Private Experience”; Alice Munro “Open Secrets” (both in course kit)  
**Assignment Due: Revised Third and First Person Narrations (10%)**
- Oct. 16:** **NO CLASS: Reading Week**
- Oct. 23:** What is Poetry?  
Reading: in Holbrook, Introduction, Poem Discussions #2 and #10), Karen Solie “Self-Portrait in a Series of Professional Evaluations”  
Assignment Draft Due: Person Poem

- Oct. 30:** On Imagery  
Metaphor exercises  
Reading: in Holbrook, Poem Discussions #4 and #5; Mark Doty “Tiara”, Cathy Song “Girl Powdering Her Neck”, Naomi Shihab Nye “The Small Vases from Hebron” (all in course kit)  
Assignment Draft Due: Ekphrastic poem or Ode
- Nov.6:** On Sound  
Rhyme review and exercises; linebreak exercise  
Reading: in Holbrook, Poem Discussions #8 and #9  
Assignment Draft Due: Free Choice Poem
- Nov.13:** Learning to Critique  
**Assignment Due: Poetry Set #1 (10%)** (set of 3 poems for instructor to grade, one of these poems is to be photocopied for the whole class for the Poetry Critique)
- Nov. 20:** Poetry Critique
- Nov. 27:** **Test #1**  
**Participation Folder due in class for evaluation**
- SEMESTER 2**
- Jan. 8:** Ways of Looking at Short Stories  
Bring: draft of short story (4 copies), memorized poem  
Reading: Angela Carter, “The Werewolf”; Robert Zend, “The Key” (course kit)
- Jan. 15:** Secrets and Confessions  
Exercise: Postsecret Monologues  
Reading: Eden Robinson “The Queen of the North” (in Broadview); Mona Simpson “Lawns” (online, *The Iowa Review*)  
**Assignment Due: Short Story (10%) (8-12 pages double-spaced) (25 copies double-spaced for critique)**
- Jan. 22:** Story Critique  
Discuss stories by Group A
- Jan.29:** Story Critique  
Discuss stories by Group B
- Feb. 5:** Beginnings and Endings  
*Ex Libris* game  
Bring: examples of good beginnings and endings from literary fiction  
Reading: Clark Blaise “To Begin, To Begin” and “On Ending Stories” (course kit)

- Feb.12:** Anxiety of Influence and Introduction to Poetic Forms  
Bring: four consecutive lines from a published poem you like  
Reading: P.K. Page "Alone" (course kit)  
Exercises: haiku, renga, glosa
- Feb. 19:** **NO CLASS Reading Week**
- Feb.26:** Traditional Poetic Forms: The Sonnet  
Reading: in Holbrook, Poem Discussions #1 and #3, Shakespeare Sonnet 55, Wendy Cope "Sonnet", Claude McKay "The Lynching", Phyllis Webb "Poetics Against the Angel of Death" (course kit)  
Due: draft of glosa
- Mar. 4:** Contemporary Poetic Forms: Concrete and Prose Poems  
Reading: in Holbrook, Poem Discussion #7; Czeslaw Milosz "Esse", Daphne Marlatt "healing", Joy Harjo "This Land Is a Poem" (all in course kit); Christian Bok "The Letter E" from *Eunoia* (online)  
Due: draft of sonnet or villanelle
- Mar.11:** Cliches  
Cliche exercises  
**Due: Poetry Set #2 (10%)** (glosa, sonnet or villanelle, concrete or prose poem)
- Mar. 18:** Revising and Editing  
Small group editing (bring 3 copies of what needs feedback for portfolio)
- Mar.25:** Portfolio Preparation  
**Test #2**
- Apr.1:** Participation Conferences  
**Due: Participation Folder**  
**Due: Final Portfolio**  
**NO LATE PORTFOLIOS WILL BE ACCEPTED**

# **GUIDELINES FOR CRITIQUE**

1. We will always begin with positive statements about what IS working before discussing what might not be working.
2. We will strive to find cultural referents that relate to the work, placing it within existing literary traditions and theoretical contexts.
3. We will view the piece by understanding what the piece is intending to be, not by imposing our own aesthetic on it.
4. We will not make personal comments about the writer. Our comments will be restricted to the piece itself.
5. We will not just say something isn't working. We will explain WHY we don't think it is working and WHAT the specific problems are.
6. We will trust each other to produce the most constructive feedback, giving it with thoughtful compassion and receiving it with an open mind.
7. We will share our personal reactions to the work as a way of understanding differences in aesthetics, world views, etc., without making value judgements. We will be respectful of differences even as we disagree.
8. We will celebrate mistakes that teach us as well as clear successes.
9. We are committed to building trust with each other so that we can authentically and spontaneously express ourselves.
10. We will begin every class with a circle and check-in.