

AS/EN 2600 6.0 C – Introduction to Creative Writing

Fall/Winter 2019-2020

Thursdays, 11:30-2:30

ACE 008

Course Director

Dr. Andy Weaver

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Office hours: Tues 11:00-1:00, or by appointment

(NOTE: office hours are strictly on a drop-in basis; appointments during office hours need not and cannot be set; if office hours conflict with your schedule, email me to try to make other arrangements to meet me at my office.)

Expanded Course Description

This course introduces students to the writing of literary fiction and poetry, through assignments, exercises, focussed critiques, and readings. Our concern is literary writing (not commercial genre writing, such as sci-fi, detective fiction, fantasy, romance, though elements of these popular forms sometimes overlap with literary writing).

Good writers are necessarily great readers. This means they read deeply, attuned not only to ideas, but to all the available properties of the art form: poetic effect, musicality, elegance, pattern, emotional tone and counter-tone, allusion, and the place of a work of fiction or poetry within literary traditions and historical periods. One of the goals of the course, then, is to provide students with terms and principles essential to deep reading, and to expose them to works of fiction and poetry that illustrate these terms and principles.

Organization of the Course

Classes typically cover technical, practical, and theoretical concerns for apprentice writers of poetry and fiction, often with reference to readings. Short assignments and in-class exercises support the longer work of complete poems and a short story.

We'll spend several weeks on fiction and several on poetry. Throughout, students will be drafting and revising work to be included in their year-end portfolios.

Students must be active participants. In short, everyone contributes in every class; mere attendance is not enough; you must have something to say. You will be evaluated partly on the quality of your in-class contribution every week.

Course Learning Objectives

This course is designed to help students become better writers and readers of literary fiction and poetry by practicing their craft and receiving critiques of their work, and by refining their responses to the literary prose of others. Students will be able to draft and revise original fiction and poetry, and to deepen their understanding of literary techniques, forms, and traditions.

The specific objectives of the course are that students will be able to:

- write and revise poetry and literary prose with the guide of editorial advice
- read and discuss published fiction and poetry
- demonstrate an understanding of a work's formal aspects and historical context

Course Texts / Readings

[Please note: these two texts should be bundled together at a lower price at York's Bookstore.]

1. *The Broadview Anthology of Short Fiction* - Second Edition. Eds. Julia Gaunce, Suzette Mayr, Don LePan, Marjorie Mather, & Bryanne Miller. Broadview Press, 2012.
2. *How to Read (and Write About) Poetry*. Ed. Susan Holbrook. Broadview Press, 2015.

Additional readings may be assigned or recommended during the course.

Evaluation

10% Fall Term Participation (see "Participation" below for a description)

10% Winter Term Participation " " " "

10% First- / Third-Person Conversion Assignment (**due in class on October 10th**)

10% Poetry Set #1 (3 poems: a portrait poem; a free verse poem; an ekphrastic poem OR ode)
(**due in class on November 7th**)

5% Fall Test (**sat in class on November 28th**)

10% Short Story (8-12 pages) (**due in class on February 27th**)

10% Poetry Set #2 (3 poems: a contemporary sonnet OR fixed form poem; a euphony poem; a concrete poem OR heightened syntax poem) (**due in class on March 19th**)

5% Winter Test (**sat in class on March 26th**)

30% Final Portfolio (**due in class on April 2nd**)

Note: Prose should be double-spaced. Do not space between paragraphs (indent instead). Poetry should be single-spaced. All work should, of course, be error free.

Final Portfolio: The final portfolio should consist of the three poems you've written for the course that you are most pleased with as finished products, as well as the revised draft of your short story. Each portfolio must have an introductory statement (300-500 words) wherein you describe your opinion of your writing over the course (what did you find easiest and why; what was hardest and why; what do you think you do best as a writer; what did you improve on the most; what do you think you need to improve on as a writer; etc.—this statement is a self-assessment of your standing as a writer as you look back on the course). In addition, each of the three poems and the short story should have its own short introductory statement (approximately 100 words per statement), in which you describe the specifics of your process of creating/editing the work, as well as anything you think you've done particularly well or that you think you need to improve upon in the work. All of these statements are an important part of the final portfolio.

Class participation: It will be difficult for students to do well on the participation grade if they miss more than one or two classes during the term, or if they are frequently late.

Students should realize that attendance includes completing the preparatory work needed to participate in each class. All readings must be completed before the relevant class, and attention should be focused on all lectures, class discussions, and workshops; in-class writing may be assigned, in which students will be expected to think critically and/or creatively about course texts. A student's participation grade is determined according to how s/he performs in all of these aspects; this mark is not simply a register of how many questions you answer or ask in class.

Students must take an active role in their education in this course; this means that they should contribute towards a positive academic atmosphere that is attentive to everybody's learning needs and that they should treat each other with respect and courtesy. A classroom should be a place to learn and to debate, which means listening is as important as speaking. Furthermore, throughout this course we may be dealing with topics on which students may hold deep personal beliefs or opinions; all students must treat fellow students and their opinions with respect. This does not mean we must all agree (in fact, lively discussion and debate are greatly encouraged); it simply means that students should show respect and tact to each other when these differences of opinion arise. Students should maintain an open mind towards both their own views as well as the views of others in the classroom. At no point will sexist, racist, or homophobic language or ideas be tolerated. Please act appropriately.

Participation Folders: at the end of each term, each student will hand in a participation folder. All in-class writing exercises, weekly assignments, and workshopping/editing for that term should be included in the participation folder, so students must keep track of all these writings. Any revisions that students did to these writings (in or out of class) should also be included. Please identify each exercise/draft clearly on the top of each page. This folder will be part of your overall grade for term participation.

Lateness Penalties and Missed Tests

Assignment Submission: Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment. Due assignments are to be handed in to the professor at the beginning of the class meeting.

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** a doctor's note will suffice for the granting of an extension. Students must complete **all** course requirements in order to receive a passing grade. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Course Director but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor's letter).

Missed Tests: Students with a documented reason for missing a course test, such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., which is confirmed by supporting documentation (e.g., doctor's letter) 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.

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 either a letter grade designation or 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 - http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf)

Students may take a limited number of courses for degree credit on an ungraded (pass/fail) basis. For full information on this option see Alternative Grading Option in the English section of the 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

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

EN 2600 2019-20 Weekly Schedule

(The schedule, including assignment dates and due dates, is subject to change. Students are responsible for keeping abreast of these changes)

FALL TERM

Sept 5 INTRODUCTION

Intro to the course, to fiction and poetry; literary fiction vs genre fiction; poetry and the concrete. Making distinctions: specific/general; abstract/concrete; showing/telling; self introduction. In-class writing exercises (this applies to every class)

Assigned for next class: bring a meaningful object (concealed in a paper bag) and a found photograph to the next class

Assigned reading for next class: Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"; and Sheila Heti, "The Raspberry Bush"

Sept 12 FICTION 1: ELEMENTS OF FICTION and CLOSE READING

"Compress everything always": keep it tight; "If you've heard it before, don't write it": the evil of clichés; an intro to character; story vs plot; narrative surprise. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away..." and Heti's "The Raspberry Bush."

Assignment due today: bring a meaningful object (concealed in a paper bag) and a found photograph to class

Assigned for next class: walk description

Assigned reading for next class: Tim O'Brien, "The Things They Carried"; and Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl"

[Note: Sept 17th is the last date to enroll in Fall and Year courses without the instructor's permission]

Sept 19 FICTION 2: DESCRIPTION and CHARACTER

Make us see; know the words; writing a scene and dialogue (start with an interior setting); “The Things They Carried”; practice object description. Description of a friend; the mystery of personality; make them real; using interiors; “Girl”; still life and character sketches

Assignment due today: walk description

Assigned for next class: still life and character sketch exercises

Assigned reading for next class: Sandra Cisneros, “My Friend Lucy Who Smells Like Corn”; and Eden Robinson, “Queen of the North”

Sept 26 FICTION 3: FIRST-PERSON NARRATION

First-person narration and character as language; depth and the first person. “My Friend Lucy...” and “Queen of the North”; writing a first-person opening, establishing character and tension

Assignment due today: still life and character sketch exercises

Assigned for next class: first-person story opening, with one main character interacting with another character (refer to the “First- & Third-Person Narratives Assignment” sheet before starting this exercise)

Assigned reading for next class: Ernest Hemingway “Hills Like White Elephants”; and Ian Williams, “Break-In”

Oct 3 FICTION 4: THIRD-PERSON NARRATION

Are you a maximalist or a minimalist; Hemingway and Williams; kinds of third-person narration

Assignment due today: first-person story opening

Assigned for next class: First- / Third-Person Conversion Assignment (to be graded)

Assigned reading for next class: Holbrook, “Introduction: What Makes Poetry Poetry and Why Are We So Afraid of It?” pages 1-8; and “Poem Discussion Four,” pages 33-41.

Oct 10 POETRY 1: WHAT IS POETRY?

Terminology; lines vs sentences; end-stopped and enjambment; free verse vs fixed forms; the role of influence/response/community; the place for emotion; ekphrasis; Exquisite corpse poems; line break exercise.

Assignment due today: First- / Third-Person Conversion Assignment (to be graded)

Assigned for next class: ekphrasis exercise

Assigned reading for next class: Holbrook, “Poem Discussion Five,” pages 43-55

Oct 17 Fall Term Reading Week (no classes or office hours held)

[Note: Oct 22nd is the last date to enroll in Fall and Year courses with the instructor's permission]

Oct 24 POETRY 2: ODES, APOSTROPHES, ADDRESSES

The ode; apostrophes; types of address; meditative poetry and how to portray the act of thinking

Assignment due today: ekphrasis exercise

Assigned for next class: ode, apostrophe, address exercise

Assigned reading for next class: Holbrook, "Poem Discussion Six," pages 57-66

Oct 31 POETRY 3: PORTRAIT POEMS

Portraits; thinking about the change from three dimensions to two; diction and word choice; how to show rather than tell (but still tell enough!)

Assignment due today: ode, apostrophe, address exercise

Assigned for next class: portrait poem about an object, person, or place (may take the form of an ode or an apostrophe/addressed poem); Poetry Set #1; also, each student must bring 26 photocopies of one of their three poems for the poetry critique

Assigned readings for next class: all online: Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro," "Portrait d'une Femme," "Ts'ai Chi'h" and "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter"; Amy Lowell, "Patterns," "The Pike," and "The Weather-Cock Points South"; William Carlos Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow" and "Poem [As the cat]"; H.D., "Sea Rose" and "Sea Violet"

Nov 7 POETRY 4: IMAGERY / LEARNING TO CRITIQUE POETIC FORMS AND SUBJECTS

Imagism: make it vivid, make the stone stoney, no excellent beauty without strangeness; metaphor and symbolism: definitions; compression and exactitude; metaphor through imagery; objectivism. Discussion of workshopping etiquette, expectations, etc., in general and in regards to poetry specifically

ASSIGNMENT DUE TODAY: portrait poem; **Poetry Set #1** (set of three poems for instructor to grade: a portrait poem; an ekphrastic poem OR an ode; a free verse poem. **Also**, each student must bring **26 photocopies** (enough for the whole class) of one of these poems for the Poetry Critique)

Assignment for next class: carefully read and make notes for all Group A poems for critique

Nov 14 POETRY CRITIQUE, Group A

Assignment for this class: carefully read and make notes for all Group A poems for critique

Assignment for next class: carefully read and make notes for all Group B poems for critique

Nov 21 POETRY CRITIQUE, Group B; REVIEW FOR TEST #1

Assignment for this class: carefully read and make notes for all Group B poems for critique
Assignment for next class: study for term test (sat in next class); prepare your Participation Folder; AND make 5 copies of draft/notes/short story ideas so you can brainstorm in small groups.

Nov 28 FALL TERM TEST / SHORT STORY BRAINSTORMING

Fall term test sat in class today; small group brainstorming on short story drafts/ideas/notes

ASSIGNMENTS DUE TODAY: Participation Folder and bring 5 copies of your draft/notes/short story ideas so you can brainstorm in small groups

Assigned readings for next class: James Joyce, “Araby,” Tobias Wolff, “Powder,” and Alice Munro, “Gravel”

Assignment for next class: finished short story draft (bring three stapled copies of your story to next class to pass around for peer editing)

WINTER TERM

**Jan 9 FICTION 5: THE SHORT STORY / “HIVE-MIND”
TROUBLESHOOTING**

the retrospective first person; Joyce, Wolff, and Munro; group discussion of your short story problems/questions; editing another writer's work; revising your own work; distribute story drafts in editing groups of three

Assignment due today: finished short story draft (bring three stapled copies of your story to class)

Assigned readings for next class: Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily”

Assignment for next class: start reading/making editorial notes on two classmates' stories (all notes due on Jan 23)

Jan 16 FICTION 6: BUILDING SUSPENSE

What is suspense on the page; O’Connor and Faulkner; micro-horror exercise

Assigned reading for next class: Chinua Achebe, “Dead Man’s Path”; and Sherman Alexie, “Do You Know Where I Am?”

Assignments for next class: finish your editorial notes on two classmates’ stories; also, each student must bring 25 copies of their short story (stapled!) to class

Jan 23 FICTION 7: TONE / SMALL GROUP EDITING

Tone; Achebe, Alexie; small group discussion of the groups' short stories; circulation of short stories for workshop critiques

Assignments due today: finished editorial notes on two classmates' stories; also, each student must bring 25 copies of their short story (stapled!) to class today

Assignment for next class: carefully read and make notes for all Group A stories for critique

Jan 30 SHORT STORY CRITIQUE: GROUP A

Assignments due today: comments for all Group A stories for critique

Assignment for next class: carefully read and make notes for all Group B stories for critique

[Note: Feb 3rd is the last date to drop Year courses without receiving a grade; students who withdraw from courses during the Withdrawal Period (Feb 4th-April 5th for Year courses) will receive a grade of "W" on their transcript]

Feb 6 SHORT STORY CRITIQUE: GROUP B

Assignments due today: comments for all Group B stories for critique

Assignment for next class: carefully read and make notes for all Group C stories for critique

Assigned reading for next class: Holbrook, "Poem Discussion One," pages 9-15" and "Poem Discussion Three," pages 25-31

Feb 13 SHORT STORY CRITIQUE: GROUP C / POETRY 5: SONNETS and FIXED FORMS

The sonnet (classical and contemporary); basic meters; other classic verse forms: glosa; villanelle; sestina

Assignments due today: comments for all Group C stories for critique

Assignments due next class: short story (to be graded) AND sonnet exercise

Assigned readings for next class: Holbrook, "Poem Discussion Seven," pages 67-72 and "Poem Discussion Eight," pages 73-87

Feb 20 Winter Term Reading Week (no classes or office hours held)

Feb 27 POETRY 6: VISUAL POEMS and MELOPOEIA

Visual poetry and concrete; melopoeia and sound-based poetry; euphony and sound sense

Assignments due this class: short story (to be graded) AND sonnet exercise

Assignment due next class: visual poem or euphony poem exercise

Readings assigned for next class: Holbrook, “Poem Discussion Two,” pages 17-24; and “Poem Discussion Nine,” pages 89-96.

March 5 POETRY 7: LOGOPOEIA, SYNTAX, RHYTHM

Heightened syntax; playing with rhythm

Assignment due this class: visual poem OR euphony poem exercise

Assignment due next class: heightened syntax exercise AND prepare two short texts/excerpts for small group peer-editing help—bring 4 copies of these texts to next class

Readings assigned for next class: Holbrook, “Poem Discussion Ten,” pages 97-109

**March 12 POETRY 8: POLITICAL POETRY and REVISING AND EDITING /
SMALL GROUP EDITING**

Political poetry and the politics of poetry; feminism; how to be political without (maybe) being offensive

Assignment due this class: heightened syntax exercise AND prepare two short texts/excerpts for peer-editing help—bring 4 copies of these texts to class for peer editing

Assignment due next class: Poetry Set #2 AND bring all final portfolio materials for editing

March 19 CLICHES and OTHER CONCERNS / SMALL GROUP EDITING

ASSIGNMENTS DUE THIS CLASS: Poetry Set #2 (set of three poems: contemporary sonnet OR fixed form poem; euphony poem; concrete poem OR heightened syntax poem) AND bring to class all final portfolio materials for editing

Assignment due next class: study for Winter Term Test (sat in next class); Participation Folder due; AND continue preparing your Final Portfolio (for the latter, bring in all the pieces you’re planning on including in your Final Portfolio, and think about concerns, questions, etc., that you have about those pieces, since we’ll brainstorm those issues next class)

March 26 WINTER TERM TEST / PORTFOLIO PREPARATION

ASSIGNMENT DUE THIS CLASS: Participation Folder

Assignment due next class: Final Portfolio and prepare any questions about writing and/or the
“writing life” you might have

April 2 WHAT WE CAN'T TEACH YOU

ASSIGNMENT DUE THIS CLASS: FINAL PORTFOLIO