

AP/EN 2600 6.0 – Introduction to Creative Writing

Department of English – Creative Writing Program
Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies
York University

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Term: Fall/Winter 2019-2020
Lecture: Tuesdays 2:30-5:30, VH 1022
Office hours: Wednesdays 12:00-2:00 (by appointment), 628 Atkinson College

Course Description

This course introduces students to the writing of literary fiction and poetry through assignments, exercises, focused critiques, and readings. Students are taught to read deeply for craft and to apply principles from assigned readings to their writing.

Lectures survey various technical, practical, and theoretical concerns for apprentice writers of poetry and fiction. Short assignments and in-class exercises support the longer work of complete poems and a short story, and workshops help students hone their craft with group critiques from their classmates.

Classes will be divided equally between fiction and poetry. Throughout, students will be drafting and revising work to be included in their year-end portfolios.

Students must be active participants in this course. 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 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 learn how to:

- write and revise poetry and literary prose with the guide of editorial advice
- deepen their understanding of literary techniques, forms, and traditions
- read and discuss published fiction and poetry
- critique the work of their classmates in a constructive, supportive atmosphere
- demonstrate an understanding of a work's formal aspects and historical context

Required Texts

- *The Broadview Anthology of Short Fiction* – Second Edition. Eds. Gaunce et al. Broadview Press, 2012
- *How to Read (and Write About) Poetry*. Ed. Holbrook. Broadview Press, 2015.

(Additional required and supplementary readings will be posted to the course website.)

Evaluation

The final grade for the course will be based on the following rubric:

Fall

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| • Participation | 10% |
| • Poetry set #1 | 10% |
| • Story beginning | 10% |
| • Test | 5% |

Winter

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| • Participation | 10% |
| • Poetry set #2 | 10% |
| • Short story | 10% |
| • Test | 5% |
| • Final portfolio | 30% |

The **participation** grade is based on attendance, punctual workshop and assignment submissions, and contribution to class discussions.

Short stories are to be prose fiction of 8-12 pages (max. 4000 words).

Tests will evaluate students' attention to and analysis of assigned readings and the key concepts of the course.

Short stories are to be double-spaced prose fiction of 8-12 pages (max. 4000 words).

Poetry sets will comprise three single-spaced poems each.

The **final portfolio** will comprise revised versions of prose and poetry assignments, and **up to five writing exercises** chosen from those assigned throughout the year. The portfolio will be 20-30 pages.

Workshops

Students are responsible for workshopping one piece of poetry in the fall and one short story in the winter term.

Enough printouts of workshop pieces for the entire class will be provided a week prior to each workshop, and everyone is responsible for bringing hard copies to refer to in class.

Students who miss the workshops, and who wish not to be docked participation marks, will be required to provide written responses to their classmates' work.

Course Policies and Procedures

Attendance and Participation: A portion of your participation grade will comprise your attendance, so it's best—and an easy way to score marks—if you show up. Preparation (i.e. reading and engaging critically with assigned readings and your classmates' work) and active participation is key to the success of the class, and your experience as a student. Missed lectures and seminars are the responsibility of students; the Instructor will not be expected to provide material for which you have been absent.

Respect: Every student in the course should feel welcome to actively participate in lecture and seminar discussions. In order to ensure that everyone is comfortable voicing opinions or asking questions, a climate of tolerance and respect is essential. Any racist, sexist, heterosexist, vulgar, or otherwise inappropriate or personally insulting comments is unacceptable. Workshop feedback, as well, should be offered in the spirit of constructive criticism; personal attacks will not be tolerated. All students in this course will express their opinions with due consideration for their classmates, respecting everyone's right to a classroom free from hostility, ridicule, or bullying.

Deadlines: Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received at the beginning of the class on the assigned due date. Unless extensions have been granted before the due date of the assignment, failure to meet deadlines will be penalized one-half letter grade (1 grade point) per day. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Instructor but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor's letter). Students with special considerations who require extra time to hand in assignments should notify the Instructor at the beginning of the course.

Technology: Phones, tablets or other such electronic devices should be turned off during class time. Laptops must be used for note-taking purposes only—no social media, no web-surfing, no shopping, etc. Please limit these activities to the times before and after class or during class breaks. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in deductions to participation grades. Students with special considerations who require the use of electronic equipment should inform the Instructor at the beginning of the course.

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 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 Undergraduate Calendar - http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calugo4_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.

Academic Honesty: Academic misconduct, including but not limited to plagiarism, is a serious offence. 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

This website also includes:

- 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

Course Schedule

FALL TERM

Week One (Sept 10)

Course Introduction

Reading (in-class): Peters, "Rehearsal"

Assignment #1: Walk Description

Week Two (Sept 17)

Fiction 1: Short story beginnings

Reading: Foster Wallace, "Good People" (online)

Assignment #2: Story Beginning

DUE: Walk Description

Week Three (Sept 24)

Fiction 2: Character

Reading: *Broadview* – O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"

Exercise: Eulogy

Week Four (Oct 1)

Fiction 3: Dialogue

Reading: Online: Saroyan, "Gaston;" *Broadview*: Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants"

Exercise: A Conversation

Week Five (Oct 8)

Fiction 4: Point of View

Reading: Online – Diaz, "How to Date a Brown Girl," Machado, "The Old Women Who Were Skinned"

Exercise: POV switch

Reading Week (Oct 15): No class.

Week Seven (Oct 22)

Poetry 1: What is Poetry?

Reading: Online – from Lerner, *The Hatred of Poetry*; Holbrook, "What is Poetry;"

Fleming, "How I Found Poetry;" *HTRAWAP*: pp 1-8 (Introduction)

Exercise: A Poem About Poetry

DUE: Story Beginning

Week Eight (Oct 29)

Poetry 2: Form

Reading: Online – Young, "Errata;" Philips, "Domestic;" *HTRAWAP* – pp 9-31

Exercise: Mucking with Form

Week Nine (Nov 5)

Poetry 3: Imagery

Reading: Online – Dove, "Fifth Grade Autobiography," Lockwood, "The Ode on a Grecian Urn," Thammavongsa, "Gayatri;" *HTRAWAP* – pp 33-41

Exercise: Poetry from Photographs

Week Ten (Nov 12)

Poetry 4: Lineation

Reading: Online – Chang, “I Once Was a Child,” Ryan – “Album” and “The Niagara River,” Tate – “The List of Famous Hats” and “Bounden Duty”

Exercise: Breaks/No breaks

DUE: Poetry Set #1 (set of three poems for instructor to grade; also, each student must bring photocopies of one of these poems for the whole class for the Poetry Critique)

Week Eleven (Nov 19)

POETRY CRITIQUE

Week Twelve (Nov 26)

Flash Fiction and Prose Poetry

Reading: Online – Davis, selected pieces; James Tate, selected pieces; Kafka, selected pieces; Claudia Rankine, selected pieces.

Week Thirteen (Dec 3)

FALL TERM TEST

WINTER TERM

Week One (Jan 7)

Fiction 5: Metaphor

Reading: Online – King, “A Short History of Indians in Canada;” *Broadview* – LeGuin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”

Exercise: Tell it Slant

Week Two (Jan 14)

Fiction 6: Structure

Reading: *Broadview* - Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues;” Online – Proulx, “The Half-Skinned Steer”

Exercise: Maps

Week Three (Jan 21)

Fiction 7: Endings

Reading: Online – Salinger, “A Perfect Day for Bananafish;” *Broadview* – Carver, “Cathedral”

Exercise: A New Ending

DUE: Short Story workshop submission, Group A (copies for the whole class)

Week Four (Jan 28)

SHORT STORY CRITIQUE: Group A

DUE: Short Story workshop submission, Group B (copies for the whole class)

Week Five (Feb 4)

SHORT STORY CRITIQUE: Group B

Week Six (Feb 11)

Poetry 5: The Prose Poem

Reading: Online - Baudelaire, "Be Drunk," Harvey, "You Know This Too," Carson, from *Short Talks*, Rankine, from *Citizen*, Ruefle, from *My Private Property*
Exercise: A Prose Transformation

Reading Week (Feb 18): No class.

Week Eight (Feb 25)

Poetry 6: Selfhood

Reading: *HTRAWAP* – Koch, "To My Twenties," Plath, "Daddy," pp. 73-81; Online – Berman, "Self-Portrait at 28," from Kaur, *Milk and Honey*

Exercise: To Your Younger Self

Week Nine (Mar 3)

Poetry 7: Found Poetry

Reading: Online - Seeley, from *The Poetry of Donald Rumsfeld*, Malla & Parker, from *Erratic Fire, Erratic Passion*, poems from foundpoetryreview.com

Exercise: A YouTube poem

Week Ten (Mar 10)

Revising and Editing/Small group editing

DUE: 4 copies of 2 texts (prose and/or poems) for in-class peer-editing

Exercise: A Half-Cut Story

Week Eleven (Mar 17)

Other Forms

Reading: TBA

DUE: Poetry Set #2

Week Twelve (Mar 24)

WINTER TERM TEST

Week Thirteen (Mar 31)

Class reading

DUE: Portfolio