

## LAPS/EN 2600 6.0 SU ONL: INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING

### TERM, TIME AND LOCATION:

Summer 2020

Two Modules Per Week

Online: Moodle

### COURSE DIRECTOR:

COURSE DIRECTOR:

Jennifer Duncan

EMAIL:

jinx.duncan@sympatico.ca

OFFICE HOURS:

flexible; by appointment only (arrange by email)

### EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION:

#### **ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE**

Each week there will be two writing studio modules in Moodle that involve lectures, discussions of readings, exercises, assignments and critiques. Students need a computer with access to the internet, Microsoft Word and email. These modules will not be scheduled classes so students can choose their own times of engagement. However, work needs to be completed by the dates specified. Readings are to be done before writing assignments so that techniques, devices and approaches can be discovered and inform creative work. Responses to readings must be done in the appropriate discussion forum prior to the next scheduled module. Critiques need to be delivered both in the appropriate discussion forum and by using Word to make comments on the writer's text. Exercises need to be collected in a Writer's Notebook in Word. Participation in reading discussions and critiques are crucial for success in the course.

#### **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the course is to introduce students to the writing of poetry and fiction through the practices that comprise the writing lives of published authors. It is designed to familiarize students with literary traditions and the 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 *commercial* 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. 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.

"A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us." – Franz Kafka

"Make it new." – Ezra Pound

## COURSE TEXTS

Course Kit  
Student Work

## EVALUATION

- 10% Participation (including discussing readings and critiquing student work)
- 20% Writer's Notebook (creative exercises; 10% per term)
- 40% Writing Assignments within established deadlines:
  - 10% Third and First Person Narratives
  - 10% Poetry Set #1 (portrait, object and glosa poems)
  - 10% Short Story (8-12 pages)
  - 10% Poetry Set #2 (haiku, sonnet/villanelle, concrete/prose poems)
- 30% Final Portfolio: 15-20 pages; this should include selected revised and polished 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.

Regarding due dates: the penalty for work submitted beyond the assigned due date is a deduction of one full grade per week or part thereof. Students must complete ALL course requirements in order to receive a passing grade. Submitted work must be properly **labelled** with assignment or exercise name, individual title, and student's name. **All Word docs are to be labelled LastNameFirstInitialAssignmentLabel (e.g., SmithJPoetrySet1.doc) Prose is to be double-spaced, poetry single-spaced.**

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/acadhone.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.).

(For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar.

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

**Note:** The final date to drop the course without academic penalty is **July 17, 2019.**

## SYLLABUS

- May 11** Introduction to the Course  
Autobiography
- May 14** The Writer's Process  
Generative writing exercises
- May 18** Close Reading  
Reading: Elizabeth Tallent "No One Is a Mystery"  
Walk Description Exercise due (for instructor feedback)
- May 21** Beginning and Ending  
Reading: Clark Blaise, "To Begin, To Begin" and "On Ending Stories"
- May 25** Drawing from Life  
Still Life and Character Sketch Exercises  
Reading: Jhumpa Lahiri "Interpreter of Maladies"
- May 28** Point of View I  
Small Group Critiques: First Person Narration Draft due (2-4 pages; 4 copies)  
Reading: Jamaica Kincaid "Girl"; Tobias Wolff "Powder" (online: [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/pdf/2014/261077.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/pdf/2014/261077.pdf))
- June 1** Point of View II  
Revision: revising Third Person Narration as First Person  
Reading: Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants"; David Foster Wallace "Good People" (online: New Yorker website)
- June 4** What Is Poetry and How Do We Write It?  
Linebreak and Rhyme Exercises  
**Assignment #1: Third and First Person Narration due for grading**  
Reading: Karen Solie "Self Portrait in a Series of Professional Evaluations";  
Dionne Brand "Blues Spiritual for Mammy Prater"; Billy-Ray Belcourt "Grief After  
Grief After Grief After Grief" (online: [nakinisowin.wordpress.com](http://nakinisowin.wordpress.com))
- June 8** Metaphor and Symbolization  
Metaphor Exercises  
Portrait Poem (draft) due  
Reading: Roo Borson, "Blackberries"; Mark Doty "Tiara"; Naomi Shihab Nye "The  
Small Vases From Hebron"; Cathy Song "Girl Powdering Her Neck"

- June 11** The Anxiety of Influence: Poetry  
Object Poem draft due  
Find 4 consecutive lines of a published poem for writing the glosa  
Practice Critique  
Reading: P.K. Page "Alone"
- June 15** Poetry Critique: full class critique of poems from Poetry Set #1  
Submit **one** of your poems (portrait, object or glosa)
- June 18** Poetry Critique: continued
- June 22** Ways of Looking at Short Stories  
**Due: Assignment #2: Poetry Set #1**  
**Due: Writer's Notebook**  
Exercise: Secrets and Confessions  
Reading: Angela Carter, "The Werewolf"; Robert Zend, "The Key"
- June 25** **READING WEEK**
- June 29** Subtlety and Subtext  
Reading (in class): Ngozi Adichie "A Private Experience"
- July 2** Voice and Telling  
Reading (in class): Sandra Cisneros "My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn";  
Thomas King "One Good Story, That One"  
**Assignment #3: Short Story due** (to be posted for full class critique)
- July 9** Critiquing Short Fiction: Group A
- July 13** Critiquing Short Fiction: Group B
- July 16** Critiquing Short Fiction: Group C
- July 20** Introduction to Fixed Forms  
Haiku and Renga  
Exercises: haiku and renga  
Reading: from Lonnie Hull DuPont *Footprints in the Snow*
- July 23** Traditional Fixed Form Poetry  
Reading: Shakespeare Sonnet 55; Wendy Cope "Sonnet"; Claude McKay "The Lynching"; Phyllis Webb "Poetics Against the Angel of Death"; Dylan Thomas "Do Not Go Gently Into That Good Night"; Elizabeth Bishop "One Art"; John Yau "Chinese Villanelle"
- July 27** Sonnet and Villanelle  
Exercises: Sonnet and Villanelle

- July 30** Contemporary Forms: Concrete and Prose Poems  
Readings: Susan Holbrook "Poem Discussion #7"; Kay Boyle "Summer";  
Czeslaw Milosz "Esse"; Daphne Marlatt "kore"; Joy Harjo "This Land Is a Poem";  
Christian Bök "Chapter E"
- Aug. 3** Clichés  
Exercises: cliché metaphors, familiar figures  
**Assignment #4: Poetry Set #2 due**
- Aug. 6** The Art of Revision  
Portfolio Preparation  
**Writer's Notebook Due**
- Aug. 10** **Portfolio Due: NO LATE PORTFOLIOS CAN 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.