

**Carleton University  
Winter 2021  
Department of English**

**ENGL 1500 B: *Introduction to Creative Writing***

**Thursdays / 2:35 – 5:25 p.m.  
Format: Blended**

Preclusions: None  
Prerequisites: None

**Instructor: Dessa Bayrock  
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Office Hours: Fridays, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., or by appointment**

**I. Course description:**

This online course will introduce students to writing fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, and dramatic works. As an introduction to creative writing in these genres, this class is focused on *process* rather *product*; over the course of this semester, we will talk about (and engage in) the steps necessary in developing a writing practice. We will read a variety of short stories, creative non-fiction essays, poems, and dramatic writing, and think about the ways these primary texts affect and inspire our own work. We will also consider literary and creative writing theory from writers spanning a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives, and explore their contents and context through writing of our own. Finally, we will examine the role of writing and art in today's contemporary context, including how this context is shaped in a variety of ways by individuals, institutions, and grassroots organizations, and how we might go about publishing work or otherwise becoming involved with this community.

This course is intended for those who have never written before, those who used to write and want to get back into practice, those who have only been able to explore writing in a minimal way due to other constraints on time, labour, or energy, as well as for those who actively write and are seeking community or commiseration. All are welcome. Please note that this course is not a prerequisite for taking other Creative Writing courses offered through the Department of English at Carleton. If you already consider yourself a practiced writer, you may consider enrolling instead in one of these upper-year courses in Creative Writing. However, admission to these courses often requires the submission of a portfolio of polished work, in which case this course can be helpful.

This [online blended course](#) includes both asynchronous activities, which you complete on your own time before class, and synchronous activities, which we will complete together during scheduled online meetings. Asynchronous activities will include reflections, readings, and watching lecture videos; these activities should be completed before our synchronous meetings,

which will be discussion-based, include cooperative brainstorming in small groups, and guided writing exercises we will complete as a class. Please note all synchronous class meetings will be recorded and posted on cuLearn. Live attendance at synchronous class meetings is encouraged but not mandatory; if you are unable to attend our synchronous meetings, please watch these recordings on your own time and complete the activities included in these meetings.

For this online class, you will require a computer or laptop, as well as internet access. You must be able to access cuLearn and ARES, and be capable of accessing YouTube and other video and audio materials as necessary. You will also require Microsoft Word, which is free to Carleton students and can be accessed here: <https://carleton.ca/its/ms-offer-students/>.

## **II. Learning Outcomes:**

The purpose of this course is for students to:

- develop a “writing practice” — a habit of regular writing, attunement to the development of original ideas, critical thinking about what we read and what we write, and the ongoing examination of the roles we see for ourselves as part of the broader writing community
- become familiar and comfortable with a variety of genres and styles of writing by reading and writing widely
- explore writing as a form of self- and community-care, extend that care to ourselves and others both *with* and *through* writing, and to begin to understand how these politics of care extend into the broader writing and publishing community

## **III. Texts:**

No texts are required for purchase for this course. All required readings will be available on Ares or posted to cuLearn. Scheduled readings are listed on the course calendar.

## **IV. Blended Course Structure**

### ***General Weekly Structure:***

Each week, students are expected to complete the following tasks in the following order:

- complete the assigned readings
- complete the weekly task (if applicable)
- watch the lecture videos posted to cuLearn (maximum one hour of lecture material will be posted in this way)
- attend our weekly meeting which will take place during our regularly scheduled class time.

### **General Live Class Meeting Structure:**

Our live weekly meetings will take place during the regularly scheduled class time (2:30 to 4:30 p.m. EST). These meetings will never exceed two hours. As a general rule, we will spend the first third of class discussing the readings and the lecture material; we will spend the middle third of class engaged in small group discussions or guided activities; we will spend the final third of class discussing our writing practices, insecurities, and the work of the coming weeks.

Ideally, you will be able to attend this meeting in real-time in order to participate in the discussions and activities. However, each class meeting will be recorded and posted to cuLearn; if it is not possible to attend our class meetings live, you can watch these recordings and follow along with the activities and discussions on your own time.

### **V. Course Calendar:**

The “date” section indicates the date of our real-time, scheduled class meetings online every Thursday. Readings and weekly reflections should be handed in via cuLearn by 1 p.m. on Thursdays. Please note: major assignments are due on Fridays at midnight.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Due</b>
January 14	<b>Introduction to the course</b>  <i>who am I; who are you; what are we doing here together, and why; how will we do it?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Read:</b> Course Outline</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>In-class:</b> Weekly reflection #1 (Lynda Barry)</li></ul>
January 21	<b>Creation and Creativity</b>  <i>how to get started in writing; overcoming perfectionism; writing through difficult circumstances; “write what you know”; critiquing and learning from what we read</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Read:</b> “Shitty First Drafts” by Anne Lamott (ARES)</li><li>• <b>Read:</b> “My Singularity” by Nnedi Okorafor (ARES)</li><li>• <b>Read:</b> “Four minutes and 33 Pairs of Sweatpants” by Martin Riker (ARES)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Complete:</b> Introductory survey (via cuLearn) by 1 p.m. EST</li><li>• <b>Write:</b> Weekly reflection #2 (Anne Lamott OR Nnedi Okorafor OR Martin Riker)</li></ul>

January 28	<p><b>Characterization, World-Building, and Other Vital Detail-Making</b></p> <p><i>Building a piece of writing into a world; building characters to inhabit it;</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “Characterization” by Diana Wynne Jones (ARES)</li> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “Characterization” from <i>Wonderbook</i> by Jeff VanderMeer (ARES)</li> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “Grey Water” by Carleigh Baker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Write:</b> Weekly reflection #3 (Diana Wynne Jones OR Jeff Vandermeer OR Carleigh Baker ) by 1 p.m EST</li> </ul>
February 4	<p><b>Dialogue, Description, and Other Vital Detail-Making</b></p> <p><i>how do people describe themselves by the way they talk to one another; how do the things we own describe us; how are we going to bring this all together for next week’s assignment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “Description” and “Dialogue” from <i>Wonderbook</i> by Jeff VanderMeer (ARES)</li> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “Fit4U” by Mona Awad (ARES)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Write:</b> Weekly reflection #4 (Jeff VanderMeer or Mona Awad) by 1 p.m. EST</li> </ul>
February 11	<p><b>Reflecting on Fiction</b></p> <p><i>What have we learned so far; how are our assignments coming along; how are the lessons of fiction applicable to other formats and genres of writing?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “The Lost Island” by Wayde Compton (ARES)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Submit:</b> Fiction assignment by midnight EST on <b>Friday, February 12</b></li> </ul>
<b>February 18</b>	<b>Reading Break.</b>	<b>No Classes.</b>	<b>No Homework.</b>

<p>February 25</p>	<p><b>Between Forms and an Introduction to Poetics</b></p> <p><i>What is “poetics”; how are poetics present in writing other than poetry; how do we apply poetics to our lives; how do we forage poetics in the wild</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read:</b> selections from <i>The Jokes</i> by Stephen Thomas (ARES)</li> <li>• <b>Watch:</b> “Everything You Need to Write a Poem” by Daniel Tysdal: <a href="https://youtu.be/z0BUYzMypI8">https://youtu.be/z0BUYzMypI8</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Optional:</b> Submit a favourite poem of yours to the class forum</li> <li>• <b>Write:</b> Weekly reflection #5 (Stephen Thomas) by 1 p.m. EST</li> </ul>
<p>March 4</p>	<p><b>Poetry and Poetics</b></p> <p><i>form, imagery, rhythm; continuing our discussion of poetics; daily habits and daily poems; thinking over our upcoming poetry assignment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read:</b> Poetry selections (cuLearn)</li> <li>• <b>Listen:</b> <i>Secret Feminist Agenda</i> by Hannah McGregor (cuLearn)</li> <li>• <b>Watch:</b> “To This Day” by Shane Koyczan: <a href="https://youtu.be/ltun92DfnPY">https://youtu.be/ltun92DfnPY</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Submit:</b> Daily poetry journal by 1 p.m. EST</li> </ul>
<p>March 11</p>	<p><b>Creative Nonfiction</b></p> <p><i>Breaking the fourth wall; life writing and live writing; lyricism and alternate forms of the essay</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “Introduction to <i>Shapes of Native Nonfiction</i>” by Elissa Washua and Theresa Warburton (ARES)</li> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “Funny, You Don’t Look Like (My Preconceived Ideas of) an Essay” by Chip Livingston (ARES)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Submit:</b> Poetry assignment by <b>Friday, March 12, at midnight EST</b></li> </ul>
<p>March 18</p>	<p><b>Creative Nonfiction: Continued</b></p> <p><i>Breaking the fourth wall; twining narratives together; thinking about our upcoming creative nonfiction assignment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “The Bottomless Pit of Self-Loathing / The Peak” by andrea bennett (ARES)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Write:</b> Weekly reflection #6 (Elissa Washua and Theresa Warburton OR Chip Livingston OR andrea bennett)</li> </ul>

March 25	<p><b>Screenwriting, Playwriting, Podcasting, and Other Dramatic Writing</b></p> <p><i>What is drama; how do drama and narrative intersect; how can we use performance as a writing tool</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “Introduction to Writing” by Jake Archer (cuLearn)</li> <li>• <b>Read:</b> “Starting Your Podcast: A Guide For Students” (online): <a href="https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/662070097/starting-your-podcast-a-guide-for-students">https://www.npr.org/2018/11/15/662070097/starting-your-podcast-a-guide-for-students</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Write:</b> Weekly reflection #7 (Jake Archer)</li> </ul>
April 1	<p><b>Catching Up and Looking Forward</b></p> <p><i>What have we learned so far; how are we doing on our next assignments; what do we want to circle back and spend more time on?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Suggestion:</b> Catch up on any weekly reflections you may have missed.</li> </ul>
April 8	<p><b>Community, Publishing, and Other Next Steps</b></p> <p><i>Where do we go from here? Local writing communities; creative writing in the university; revising, submitting, and publishing; pitching and freelancing; query letters and agents; writing practices now and into the future</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Read:</b> selections from “my small press writing day” by rob mcLennan (cuLearn)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Submit:</b> Third assignment (Creative Nonfiction assignment OR dramatic writing assignment) by <b>Friday, April 9, at midnight EST</b></li> </ul>

## VI. Assignments

Please note that standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

***Weekly Reflections (25%)***

***Due weekly by 1 p.m. EST on Thursdays; all reflections due April 19 by midnight EST***

Students are required to complete at least five weekly reflections throughout the semester, responding directly to one of the weekly readings in a brief and casual way. Reflections should ideally be completed immediately after finishing assigned readings to capture your first impressions; each reflection should be approximately 400 words, or 2-3 minutes of audio which will be uploaded to cuLearn as a Word document, PDF, or MP3 or MP4 file.

These reflections are casual and will be graded as sufficient or insufficient; sufficient reflections will engage with the text and show your process of thinking through its implications for your own work or writing practice. You are encouraged to write these in first person, and may find it helpful to think of them as letters (to yourself, to the professor, or to a friend) or as journal entries. Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure will not be graded, but reflections should be clearly written and proof-read.

Each reflection handed in by the weekly deadline will be worth five marks; reflections handed in after the weekly deadline will be worth three marks. Students are welcome to submit as many reflections as they wish throughout the semester for a maximum of 25 marks.

***Fiction Assignment (20%)***

***Due Friday, February 12 by midnight EST***

Students will write a piece of fiction 3-5 double-spaced pages in length as well as a one-page reflection on the writing process. Further guidelines will be provided and posted to cuLearn by Friday, January 29.

***Poetry Journal (10%)***

***Due Thursday, March 4 by 1 p.m. EST***

Students will complete a week-long journal as an exercise in everyday poetics. Further guidelines will be provided in-class and posted to cuLearn by Friday, February 26. Please note this assignment will be marked on a sufficient/insufficient scale.

***Poetry Assignment (15%)***

***Due Friday, March 12, by midnight EST***

Students will write a collection of poetry 3-5 pages in length, with a minimum of three poems, as well as a one-page reflection on the writing process. Further guidelines will be provided and posted to cuLearn by Friday, February 26.

***Creative Nonfiction Assignment OR Dramatic Assignment (20%)***  
***Due Friday, April 9, by midnight EST***

Students will write a piece of creative non-fiction 3-5 double-spaced pages in length as well as a one-page reflection on the writing process. Further guidelines will be provided and posted to cuLearn by Friday, March 5.

**OR**

Students will write a piece of dramatic writing 3-5 double-spaced pages (or 5-10 minutes) in length as well as a one-page reflection on the writing process. Further guidelines will be provided and posted to cuLearn by Friday, March 5.

***Final Reflection (10%)***  
***Due Monday, April 19, by midnight EST***

Students will reflect on their writing practice and the evolution of their writing over the term in 2-5 double-spaced pages. Further guidelines will be provided and posted to cuLearn by Friday, April 2. Please note this assignment will be marked on a sufficient/insufficient scale.

**VII. Statement on Plagiarism:**

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment,



failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

## **VII. Requests for Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

**Religious obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is

known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>