

Carleton University
Winter 2020
Department of English

ENGL 1500B: Introduction to Creative Writing

Thursday, 9:35-11:25
Tory Building, 340

Instructor: Nadia Bozak
Email: nadia.bozak@carleton.ca

Office: Dunton Tower, 1918
Office Hours: Tuesday 10-11 or by appointment

Note: this course is **not** a prerequisite for taking the Creative Writing courses offered in the Department of English. In other words, taking this course does not guarantee admission into the department's Creative Writing courses. These courses (listed on the English Department's website) are all based on the submission of quality writing samples (which this course will give you the opportunity to prepare) and the permission of the instructor.

As such, if you already have a selection of creative work, you might consider submitting it to one or more of the workshops we offer without taking this course.

But:

- If you feel you need time and guidance establishing some quality writing, this course is the ideal place to do so.
- If you never plan on taking a Creative Writing course but still have an interest in writing (as a practice or perhaps as a business, or just because you love reading and wonder what goes on behind the scenes) this course is also for you.

Course Description:

This course is designed for students of any academic discipline or level who have an interest in creative writing, and in any number of genres. Students who have never written creatively are also welcome in this course: they just need a desire to try it out. Students who have written creatively are also welcome.

The weekly schedule is divided into:

- A lecture by the instructor on weekly topics
- A workshop (led by a tutorial assistant or the instructor, wherein students share, respond to, and revise assigned prompts)

Learning outcomes:

1. Students will emerge from this course with a selection of creative work in multiple genres (poetry, short story, creative non-fiction, screenwriting, perhaps others). With this writing, students can opt to apply for acceptance into the Creative Writing courses at the 2000 and 3000 level offered in the Department of English.
2. Students will also gain a critical understanding of how creative writing functions as an industry, an academic discipline, a profession, and a practice, within Canada and North America.
3. Students will learn to read literary texts as writers and to speak about these same texts as writers (rather than as readers or scholars)
4. Students will learn how to critique a piece of writing, employing key terms such as “voice” and “character” for fiction, “image” and “rhythm” for poetry

5. Students will learn how to edit their own creative work and that of others, and also how to *revise* their own work
6. Students will have the opportunity to practice reading their own creative work in front of others

Required texts:

Each week we will read creative writing and/or an essay on the weekly topic(s). These readings will be on ARES (a digital repository of class readings made available through MacOdrum library). Using CU Learn, students will access Ares, download, print out, and read the assigned readings, and come to class prepared to discuss them. Students will also be quizzed on these readings throughout the term.

Evaluation and Assignments:

1. In-class quizzes on assigned readings, lecture material, and guest speakers:

3 x 5 % = 15%

Quizzes cover all lectures, assigned readings, and guest speakers (if applicable). The quizzes are cumulative and are meant to evaluate comprehension of lectures and readings. They will not include writing anything creative (i.e. I will not ask you to write a poem etc.) They take about 20-30 minutes to write.

2. “Literary Event” review assignment: 15%

Each of you will attend a literary reading this fall here in Ottawa and write a review of it (two double-spaced pages, or approximately 500-750 words).

The Ottawa International Writers Festival is an international festival that runs in October, offering many tempting readings for you to attend and review (tickets are free for Carleton students). There are also literary readings hosted by the Department of English.

I will post some alternate readings (of fiction and poetry) throughout the term for you to attend.

Review Guidelines: You may begin your review by introducing the what/where/when/who of the event. You can then comment on such things as your general impressions about the content of the reading, the reading style, the venue, and/ or the experience of listening to authors speak about their writing. Most importantly, please describe and comment upon what you learned from the event, particularly what you might apply to your own creative writing practice or reading the creative work of others. Question and answer periods after a literary reading are usually quite enriching as they often address writing practices and the professional side of writing. As with all assignments in this course, this review will be typed in Times New Roman 12-point font, and double spaced.

Your review is due TWO WEEKS after the event. Please drop off a hard copy in the Essay Drop Box located outside the English Department office, 1812 Dunton Tower. Please plan ahead: I will no longer accept assignments after December 9, 2019.

3. Four Writing Prompts (revised and handed in with a “reflection” statement):

4 x 10 = 40 % total

Students will write eight prompts over the semester. From these eight prompts, students will choose their best four to revise and hand in to the instructor for grading (two from Weeks 2-6; two from Weeks 7-11). The editorial comments the prompts receive from your workshop groups are the starting point for your revisions. Once you have thought about the feedback, revise your piece **TWICE** with the aim to clarify, solidify, and polish your writing. You will then write a statement reflecting on the editorial and revision experience (250 words in length for each prompt). This reflection statement will be written in formal, academic English, in full sentences. Please write a reflection statement for each revised prompt. Each statement will be worth approximately 4% of the 10% allocated for each prompt.

You could comment on some of the following in your reflection statement:

1. Why or why you have not integrated comments received in the workshop (especially if there was an overwhelming class consensus on a certain point).
2. Was the workshop helpful to you? Why or why not?
3. What have you learned from the workshop going forward? What writing skills or techniques do you feel you know need to address in your writing?
4. Anything else you think is relevant.

The final HARD COPY package you hand in includes: two original prompts (with evidence of editing and suggestions from a peer-editor **and from you**), a revised draft of each prompt showing evidence of your revisions (you can use highlighting, track changes, or hand-written annotation to show your revisions), and a final polished draft of each prompt. [Thus: three drafts in total for each prompt: original prompt with signs of editing + second draft with signs of editing + final draft, and a reflection statement for each of the final prompts (two reflection statements in total)].

INCLUDE A COVER PAGE: with my name, course code, TA name, your name, date

Notes on Prompts:

- Prompts made available one week in advance of the workshops for which they are due.
- Prompts must be posted on CU Learn for your TA to read and comment upon **two days before** the workshop.
- The revised prompts you revise for your final assignment **MUST** have been presented to your workshop group and your TA for feedback. If a student hands in a prompt for the final assignment that has not been workshopped, the grade allocated will be **zero**.
- Students who miss a workshop must visit their TA during office hours to receive feedback on that particular prompt. Students can do this twice over the semester without explanation. Subsequent missed prompts need a note of accommodation or the prompt will not be read by your TA. Missing more than three prompts over the semester results in losing 10% of the total grade.

4. **Participation and Editorial Feedback: 30%**

Students will complete their prompts before the workshops, and bring 3-4 hard-copies to the workshops to distribute and discuss in person during “peer editing” sessions. TAs will monitor students’ written and verbal editorial comments, ensuring they are constructive and make use of terms and concepts discussed in lectures and readings.

While students are reading each other’s prompts in during the workshop, they are expected to make notations and comments directly on the hardcopies. These hardcopies, marked with “Edited by *Your Name*” will be handed in to TAs as a way to evaluate the quality of student comments.

This is the workshop portion of the course, dependent on reciprocally offering and receiving feedback on your creative writing with the aim of improving both your writing and your editorial skills.

5. **Attendance:** will be taken at the beginning of each lecture and workshop. Attending workshops is factored into your participation mark. A student who misses more than three lectures without a medical note, note of accommodation, or speaking to the instructor will automatically lose 10% of their final grade.

6. **Late Assignments:** Students will lose 2% a day for late assignments, including weekends.

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

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/>

Weekly Schedule

Date and Topic	Readings	Work Due
Week 1: Thurs. Jan. 9 Course outline; CU Learn and ARES; workshop mechanics/ reading as a writer	Raymond Carver, “Popular Mechanics” Francine Prose, “Close Reading”	Attend workshops
Week 2: Thurs. Jan. 16 Can creative writing be taught? Can it be an academic discipline? Should it be? Getting Started: Tips	Louis Menand, “Show Don’t Tell: Should Creative Writing Be Taught?” Anne Lamont, “Short Assignments,” “Shitty First Drafts”	“Warm up” prompt due for Workshop
Week 3: Thurs. Jan. 23 Elements of Fiction #1: Show vs. Tell/ Writing with the Senses	Chris Lombardi, “Description: To Picture in Words” Brandi Reissenweber, “Character: Casting Shadows”	Writing Prompt #1 due for Workshop

Elements of Fiction #2 Character / Plot vs Story	Junot Díaz, “Otravida, Otravez”	
Week 4: Thurs. Jan. 30 Elements of Fiction #3 Voice and Point of View Elements of Fiction #4 Setting	Valerie Vogrin, “Point of View: The Complete Menu” Chimamanda Adichie “The Thing Around Your Neck” Jack Hodgins, “A Plausible Abode;” Thomas King, “Borders”	Quiz #1 (in lecture) Writing Prompt #2 due for Workshop
Week 5: Thurs. Feb. 6 Topics in the power and politics of storytelling. Write what you know?	Thomas King, <i>The Truth about Stories</i> (excerpts) Toni Morrison interview with Junot Díaz (posted on CU Learn)	Writing Prompt #3 due for Workshop
Week 6: Thurs. Feb. 13 Topics in Creative Nonfiction #1: The Role of the Author / Researching Your Own Life	Philip Lopate, “Writing Personal Essays: On the Necessity of....” Lynn Coady, “Flight of the Wendybird”	Writing Prompt # 4 due for Workshop
Winter Break Feb. 17-21	Winter Break Feb. 17-21	Winter Break Feb. 17-21
Week 7: Thurs. Feb. 27 Topics in Creative Nonfiction #2: Mixing Genres	Michael Ondaatje, <i>Running in the Family</i> (selections)	First Two Revised Prompts + Drafts + Reflection Statements due
Week 8: Thurs. Mar. 5 Poetry #1: “Word Images” Poetry #2: Making Comparisons, Simile, Metaphor, Comparison	Kevin Clark, “Words That Paint, Colors that Speak” Lorna Crozier, “Fear of Snakes” Patrick Lane, “The Man”;	Quiz #2 (in lecture) Writing Prompt # 5 due for Workshop

	David Mason and John Frederick Nims, “What’s It Like?”	
Week 9: Thurs. Mar. 12 Poetry #3: Poetry, Society, Activism/ Poetry of Witness	Carolyn Forché, “The Colonel;” Yusef Komunyakaa, “Boat People”	Writing Prompt # 6 due for Workshop
Week 10: Thurs. Mar. 19 Poetry, catching up	Texts supplied in class, if needed	Writing Prompt # 7 due for Workshop
Week 11: Thurs. Mar. 26 The Screenplay as a Genre and Structure	Syd Field “What is a Screenplay?” Ben Cleary, <i>The Stutterer</i> (link to be posted on CU Learn)	Quiz #4 (in lecture) Writing Prompt #8 due for Workshop Prepare for in-class reading
Week 12: Thurs. Apr. 2 In-class Reading Writing as a Business: The Publishing Industry, Making a Living as a Writer, Awards	TBA	Second Two Revised Prompts + Drafts + Reflection Statements due

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

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/contact/form-pregnancy-accommodation/>

Religious obligation

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/discrimination-harassment/religious-spiritual-observances/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the Paul Menton Centre Website: carleton.ca/pmc

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 its 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/focus/sexual-violence-prevention-survivor-support/>

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. Please contact your instructor 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>