

Carleton University  
Winter 2021  
Department of English

English 4915 Advanced Writing Workshop:  
The Observant Eye — Poetry and Fiction.

**Prerequisites:** Permission of the instructor or fourth-year Honours standing in English, a 3000-level creative writing workshop. (See instructor's notes regarding extension of eligibility to students with comparable creative writing experience.)

**Time:** Mon. 11:35 – 2:25 p.m.  
**Location:** Online (synchronous)

**Instructor:** David Stymeist  
**Office:** 1819 DT  
**Phone:** 520-2600 Ext. 2431

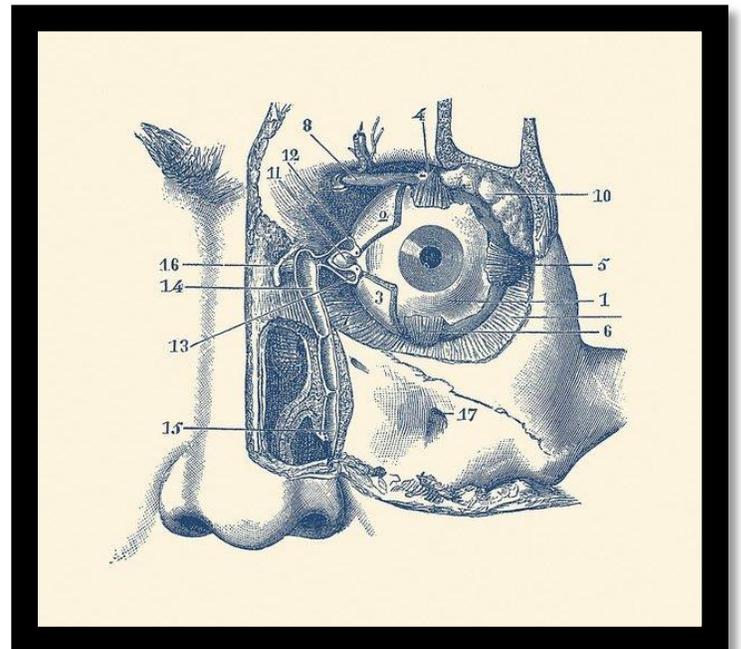
**Office Hours:** By appointment on Big Blue Button.

**Email:** [david.stymeist@carleton.ca](mailto:david.stymeist@carleton.ca)  
Alternate: [dstymeist@yahoo.ca](mailto:dstymeist@yahoo.ca)

## Introduction

This workshop helps writers improve and develop their close observation writing skills. In this exploration of descriptive detail and visualization, writers can workshop a number of creative forms: poetry, short stories, a segment of a novel, or a portion of a drama.

Toni Morrison in an interview observed, "I'm just trying to look at something without blinking." Close description, in the hands of a skilled writer, enables the reader to picture and inhabit a fully realized fictional reality. The ancient Greeks called this art *Mimesis*. They thought that mimesis was an inborn human impulse driving us to represent material reality using artistic tools, such as language.



As a workshop, this course offers the singular opportunity to strengthen your skills both as a creative writer and as an editor. Roughly every two weeks, you will be handing in drafts of your own original compositions for the rest of the class to read, discuss, and offer constructive, supportive criticism.

While we will be spending much time workshopping our fellow writers' work, we will also discuss the work of established poets and fiction writers. As such, there will be a number of assigned creative and critical readings. At the end of the term, you will submit your revised work in a portfolio for grading.

### **Synchronous Course**

A real-time, online course where the instructor and students meet via web conferencing tools, at scheduled days and times. Instructors and students share information, ideas and learning experiences in a virtual course environment. Participation in synchronous courses requires students to have reliable, high-speed Internet access, a computer (with a webcam), and a headset with a microphone.

Class time will occur on Big Blue Button, which can be accessed through CU Learn. BBB will enable me to deliver lecture material and for us as a group to have workshop discussions in real time on our computers from home.

### **Participation**

Since this is a workshop, every student needs to attend, read and comment on fellow student's work, read any assigned texts, and come prepared to engage in lively discussions.

Part of being a good writer is to become a great reader of other people's work. The more you are willing to put into the class, the more you (and us) will get out of it!

### **Workshop Structure and Expectations**

As this is an advanced workshop, students will be expected to write independently on topics that interest them without the need for individual prompts. (I can provide prompts if you need them on an individual basis)

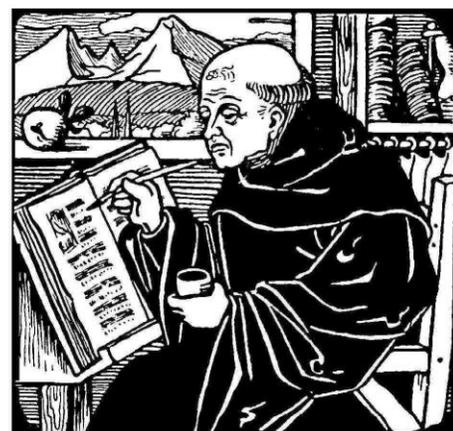
Your poems are due at the beginning of class the week before we discuss them. We download them, read, and think about them. The advance distribution allows the time necessary to read and comment on your writing thoughtfully.

### Workshop protocols:

- Everyone reads and writes comments on your classmate's work before class starts.
- The author reads their work aloud in class. The author can preface their work before they read. (If the author feels uncomfortable reading, an alternate can be found to read the work)
- The class discusses the work at length.
- If your work is being "workshopped," you should let the debate take its own course and don't intervene. You can offer clarification after the discussion has ceased.
- Record significant comments in order to assist in the revision process.

### Grades

Active Participation <i>(discussion in class, prompt submission of poems, reading preparation, attendance)</i>	10%
Editorial Contribution <i>(editorial attention to other students' work, quality of contribution to the workshop process)</i>	15%
Review	20%
Final Portfolio (16-20 pages of your work)	55%



### Workshop Schedule

[A Detailed Daily Workshop Schedule will be posted on CULearn]

### Application Process

Enrollment in this workshop is limited (max. 15 students).

Writing samples must be submitted by **Friday, November 6, 2020**. Please submit your writing sample (portfolio) using [the application form](#).

Applicants will receive an acknowledgement email to confirm the Department has received their writing sample. Decisions will be communicated by email no later than Wednesday, November 18, 2020. Students are advised to make an alternate course selection until those accepted into workshops are notified. **If the class is not full, late submissions may be considered.**

Acceptance is at the discretion of the instructor and is not guaranteed.

Note: 4<sup>th</sup> Year Standing in English and prior Creative Writing Workshop experience are typically required, but students with comparable experience are encouraged to submit a portfolio. (In other words, some third-year students with moderate writing experience have been let into the workshop in past years.)

### **Portfolio Submission Guidelines:**

1. A cover page with your full name, Carleton email, and student ID number
2. A brief statement (maximum 250-300 words) indicating a few writers that may have influenced your writing, why you want to take this workshop, and any previous writing/workshopping experience. (Writers at all levels of experience are welcome to apply.)
3. A sample of your writing of no more than 8 pages in total. (Use 12-point font, standard margins, and each page should include both your name and page number. Word or PDF file format preferred) Select your best, most polished writing. All forms/subjects are acceptable.

### **About the Instructor**

David Stymeist's collection, *The Bone Weir*, was published by Frontenac House in 2016 and was shortlisted for the Canadian Author's Association award for Poetry. His creative work has appeared in numerous magazines, including *The Antigonish Review*, *Prairie Fire*, *Dalhousie Review*, and *The Fiddlehead*.

He teaches Creative Writing, Crime Fiction, Digital Humanities, Renaissance Literature, and Aboriginal Literature at Carleton University. His critical essays and reviews have appeared in academic journals, such as *Studies in English Literature*, *Essays in Renaissance Culture*, *Mosaic*, and *College Teaching*.



As he grew up a non-indigenous member of a mixed family on O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, the author seeks ways to twine, twist, and mash-up various knowledges and ways of thinking. He is the editor and founder of the micro-press, *Textualis*, and is the former president of [VERSe Ottawa](#), which runs VerseFest, Ottawa's annual poetry festival as well as the City of Ottawa's Poet Laureate program.

## Course Regulations

The mark distribution for the year will be Term Grade: 100%. Class participation marks will include participation in class discussion, Prompt submission of your writing, reading preparation, and consistent attendance. Consistent attendance is required in this class; students failing to attend an absolute **minimum of 40%** of the classes will not receive a grade for their final portfolio.

All assignments must be handed in on the date specified unless cleared previously with the professor. Assignments must be handed to me in person or to the drop box in the English department office (1812 Dunton Tower) on the due date. If you choose to use the drop box, you must be prepared to incur any late penalties that may accumulate due to the unlikely occurrence of the paper's loss or misfiling.

Late assignments will be penalized 2% per day. Assignments without medical extension will not be accepted after two weeks of the due date. Please keep a copy of your assignment in case of loss by any cause. Students can expect to receive graded feedback in a timely manner; the instructor reserves the right to limit commentary on late assignments and portfolios. Students are required to submit all major assignments in order to pass the course as a whole.

Class etiquette: All digital activity in the class with personal devices should be directly connected to class activity; in other words, you shouldn't be checking your Facebook/Instagram page.

## Grading System:

Assignments in this course will be graded using the letter grading system: A-, A, A+ (Excellent); B-, B, B+ (Good); C-, C, C+ (Satisfactory); D, D+ (Minimal pass); F (Failure). Percentage conversion: A+ (90-100%), A (85-89), A- (80-84), B+ (77-79), B (73-76), B- (70-72), C+ (67-69), C (63-66), C- (60-62), D+ (57-59), D (53-56), D (50-52), F (0-49).

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.

## 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 serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts 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 a final grade of "F" for the course.

## 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>