

English CENG505: Creative Writing**Summer 2016****Instructor: Lauren Kirshner****Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 5:00-6:00 pm**Email:** lauren.kirshner@ryerson.ca**Course Dates**

Tuesday June 21, 2016 – Tuesday August 2, 2016

Course Schedule

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:00-9:00 pm, room KHE323A

Calendar Description

This upper-level course offers students the opportunity both to study models of good writing and to develop their own creative abilities. Class discussions and workshop groups are designed to enhance the student's understanding of the creative process, to stimulate the imagination, and to develop individual abilities. Areas of discussion include style, prosody, conflict, character, dialogue, and revision.

Detailed Description

This course introduces students to the craft of fiction writing. It requires no previous creative writing experience, just a commitment to learning the craft, reading widely, with focus, and applying various techniques to their own work. Through lectures, in-class discussions, group work, and assignments, students will be introduced to theories of fiction writing (what authors have said about their process and motivation); explore the fundamentals of the fiction writing process (where do ideas come from, how to stay motivated, how to overcome writer's block); study and apply techniques of the fiction writing craft (including characterization, scene, dialogue); and learn how to edit fiction. The in-class writing exercises will give students a chance to practice skills covered in the course and strengthen their skills as fiction writers. From the beginning to the middle of the course, students will read widely and often; the end of the course will reduce the readings to give students time to devote to the preparation of their creative writing portfolios. Students will complete in-class writing exercises and are encouraged to be punctual and attend all classes to keep up-to-date with the course.

Course Goal and Student Learning Outcomes

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ✓ Understand how writers approach the craft of fiction writing
- ✓ Define the characteristics of fiction
- ✓ Understand key fiction writing terms (Story, plot, characterization, point of view, voice, setting, description and dialogue)
- ✓ Understand how fiction is constructed
- ✓ Read fiction closely
- ✓ Identify creative writing techniques in fiction
- ✓ Gain familiarity with major 20th and 21st Century works of fiction

- ✓ Employ various techniques for initiating the creative writing process including free-writing, writing from a photo, and writing from a concept
- ✓ Write stories with a clear beginning, middle and end
- ✓ Edit their own stories

Evaluation

Fiction writing terms quiz 15% **Thursday June 23**

Assignment 1 20% **Tuesday June 28 and Thursday July 30**

Group story analysis 20% **Tuesday July 5 – Thursday July 21**

Assignment 2 – 20% **Tuesday July 12 and Thursday July 14**

Assignment 3 – 20% **Tuesday August 2**

Participation – 5% **Throughout**

Required Reading – our main course text:

Hodgins, Jack. *A Passion for Narrative*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993.

Required Reading – short stories and articles (all available on Blackboard):

Cameron, Julia. “The Artist Date.” Article.

Cisneros, Sandra. “Hairs.” From *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage, 1985. (Short story).

DiStefano, Mike. “Uneasy Rider.” From *The New York Times*, Dec 22, 2011. (Article).

Gaffney, David. “Stories in Your Pocket.” (Article).

Gaitskill, Mary. “Secretary.” From *Bad Behaviour*. New York: Vintage, 1988. (Short story).

Goldberg, Natalie. From *Writing Down the Bones*. Boston: Shambala, 2005. (Excerpt).

Hemingway, Ernest. “Hills Like White Elephants.” From *Collected Stories*. New York: Everyman Library, 1995. (Short story).

Johnson, Denis. “Car Crash While Hitchhiking.” From *Jesus’ Son*. New York: FGS, 1992. (Short story).

Johnston, Sibyl. *The Longman Guide to Fiction Writing for Beginners*. New York: Pearson-Longman, 2007. (Article).

Moore, Lorrie. “How to Become a Writer.” From *Like Life*. New York: Vintage: 1985. (Short story).

Orwell, George. “Why I Write.” *Gangrel*, London, 1946. (Article).

Saunders, George. “Sticks.” From *Collected Saunders*. New York: FGS, 2011. (Short story).

Sharma, Akhil. “A Mistake.” (Short story).

Toor, Rachel. “The Habits of Highly Productive Writers.” (Article).

Yates, Richard. “Dr. Jack-on-Lantern.” From *Collected*. New York: Vintage, 1992. (Short story).

Walser, Robert. “In the Electric Tram.” From *Selected Stories of Robert Walser*. New York: NYRB, 2002: (Short story).

Course Schedule:

| | Date | Topic | Reading (to be done <i>before</i> class) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---|---|
| Part 1: Writers on Writing | | | |
| 1 | Tuesday June 21 | Introductions Why write? Preparing to write I | Orwell, George. “Why I Write.” Goldberg, Natalie. “Writing Down the Bones.” Toor. “The Habits of Highly Productive Writers.” Hodgins. “Getting Started.” 23-45 |

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| | | | Cameron. "The Artist Date." |
| 2 | Thursday June 23 | Preparing to Write II | Gaffney. "Stories in Your Pocket." Walser. "In the Electric Tram." Cisneros. "Hairs." Saunders. "Sticks." Assignment 1 discussed Presentation groups formed Fiction terms quiz |
| 3 | Tuesday June 28 | Micro Story Festival | Assignment 1, part I: Bring in a micro story and read it in class (see assignment sheet 1) |
| 4 | Thursday June 30 | Micro Story Festival II | Assignment 1, part II: Bring in your own story and read it in class (see assignment sheet 1) |
| 5 | Tuesday July 5 | Story and plot | Hodgins. "Some Observations on Plot." 125-151 Sharma. "A Mistake." (Group 1) Gaitskill. "Secretary." (Group 2) Hodgins. "One Good Sentence..." 45-71 |
| 6 | Thursday July 7 | Character | Hodgins. "Character." 99-125 Munro. "The Bear Came Over..." (Group 3) |
| 7 | Tuesday July 12 | Assignment 2 roundtables | Assignment 2 workshop Bring copies for your group |
| 8 | Thursday July 14 | POV and voice | Hodgins. "Point of View..." 181-205 Moore. "How to Become a Writer." (Group 4) Joyce. "Araby." (Group 5) Assignment 2 due |
| 9 | Tuesday July 19 | Setting Description | Johnson. "Car Crash While Hitchhiking." (Group 6) Yates. "Dr. Jack-o-Lantern." (Group 7) Hodgins. "Setting." 71-99 |
| 10 | Thursday July 21 | Dialogue | Johnson. "Dialogue." DeStefano. "Uneasy Rider." Hemingway. "Hills Like White Elephants." (Group 8) |
| 11 | Tuesday July 26 | Editing | Hodgins. Revision." 234-255 Editing packet – on Blackboard |
| 12 | Thursday July 28 | Conference period | Bring in your final story for one on one feedback from me |
| 13 | Tuesday August 2 | In-class sharing & celebration | Assignment 3 due Celebration  |

Description of Assignments/Quizzes

Fiction terms quiz (15%) – Thursday July 23

Multiple choice and short answer quiz on fiction writing terms (terms on Blackboard).

Assignment 1 – Micro Story/Flash Fiction (20%) – June 28 and June 30

See assignment sheet (on Blackboard).

Group story analysis (20%) – Tuesday July 5 to Thursday July 21

This is a group presentation. Working with your group, you will analyze a short story from a writer's perspective and present your analysis and insight to the class in a well-organized, thoughtful and focused 20-25 minute presentation. See assignment sheet for more details.

Assignment 2 (20%) – Tuesday July 12 and Thursday July 14

See assignment sheet (on Blackboard).

Assignment 3 (20%) – Tuesday August 2

See assignment sheet (on Blackboard).

Participation (5%) – Throughout

Attendance, participation in class discussions and groups, assistance with room set-up, collegiality with peers, etc.

A Note on Formatting and Presentation:

Please print and double-space your assignments and use 12 Times New Roman font.

Assignments must be handed to me in hard copy, in class. Assignments are not accepted via email or in my box (without prior permission) under any circumstances.

The Final Portfolio

Please put your materials in a large envelope with your name and student number clearly written on the front. Roughly one week after the last class, I will send you an email letting you know where and when you can pick up your marked portfolio.

University Policies

1. For the student code of **Academic Conduct** (including policies on plagiarism), please see: <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf>. You must submit only original work in this class. Creative writing you have written in the past, though an integral part of your process and development as a writer, cannot be submitted for grading in this course.
2. For the student code of **Non-Academic Conduct**, please see: <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol61.pdf>
3. **Academic Consideration:** For specific policies regarding academic consideration, see: <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol134.pdf> Policy 134 - *Undergraduate Academic Consideration and Appeals*.
5. Ryerson policy on student email: Students are required to use and maintain their Ryerson email address as their official communication with the Instructor. <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol157.pdf> Policy 157 - *Student email Policy*

Course Policies

Assignments and late penalties

You are responsible for turning in all assignments on the posted due dates. Late submissions are subject to 5% per day penalty to a maximum of seven days; after seven days assignments are not accepted without a doctor's note.

Missed Quizzes and Presentations

Missed quizzes and presentations cannot be made up without medical documentation.

Attendance

A missed quiz, presentation or workshop cannot be made up unless you were absent because of illness or emergency, as documented by a medical note supplied at the class immediately following the absence. During my office hours, I'm glad to catch you up on anything you have missed.

Use of Blackboard

Readings are posted on Blackboard every week.

Punctuality

Please be punctual. The class begins at 6:00 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Please strive to arrive ten minutes before class to set up your writing materials and get settled in.

Classroom etiquette

Please don't text, web browse, game, or watch movies while I'm teaching or your colleagues are speaking. Cell phones must be fully turned off for the duration of each class.

Communication with instructor

I am accessible by email. If your question requires a lengthy answer or discussion, make an appointment to see me during office hours. Please remember to treat your email as a professional writer's communication by including a salutation (ie: Hi/Dear Lauren) and a signature (your name).

Concerns/Issues with the course

Should you have any concerns with the course work, please make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. I am here to support your learning process and creative journey, and no question is too great or small. I look forward to getting to know you and reading your work!

“When I used to teach creative writing, I would tell the students to make their characters want something right away - even if it's only a glass of water.”

- Kurt Vonnegut

“The most beautiful things are those that madness prompts and reason writes.”

– Andre Gide

“The idea is to write it so that people hear it and it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart.”

- Maya Angelou