

FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ENGLISH 698, A & B-01

Fall/Winter, 2013-2014

COURSE TITLE: GRADUATE COURSE, THE BOOK-LENGTH MANUSCRIPT

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Wednesdays, 16:00 – 17:00

Homepage/course website: <http://english.ucalgary.ca/profiles/aritha-van-herk>

**I. Course description:**

**English 698** is a course intended to offer the advanced writing student an opportunity to work intensively toward completion of a book-length prose manuscript. Students at this level must be comfortable with the various elements and theories of narrative and the development of a sustained investigation, and should be prepared to work creatively and imaginatively in applying those theories to their own writing, as well as to their colleagues' writing. Participants are also expected to read widely as part of their background work, and to engage with literary events (e.g. the Calgary Distinguished Writers readings).

This course requires students to work toward completion of a book-length prose manuscript. Each student who has been given permission to register in this class will already have a substantial amount of writing toward his/her project, and will begin by bringing to the class a description of the particular project s/he wishes to undertake over the course of the year. This project might consist of a short novel, a collection of short stories, a novella, a series of interconnected tales, a prose-poem, a work of prose non-fiction, or a work of ficto-criticism. Genre is not a rigid consideration, but the object of this course is to enable each student to realize his/her particular project to the greatest possible configuration. This course requires critical acumen, editorial focus, and an enormous amount of writing and reading. Students must be prepared to read and critique approximately 1200 pages of workshop material.

## II. Texts and readings:

The following are texts meant to resonate with the writer who seeks to complete a book. You may use any edition.

Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*. (ISBN: 9780099540083).  
Frederick Busch, *A Dangerous Profession*, 1999. (ISBN: 9780767903981).  
Umberto Eco, *Six Walks In The Fictional Woods*  
Marian Engel, *Bear*. (ISBN: 9780771093791).  
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*.  
Robert Kroetsch, *A Likely Story*. Red Deer Press, 1995. (ISBN: 9780889951037).  
Helen Humphries, *The Frozen Thames*. (ISBN: 9780771041457).  
Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir Of The Craft*.  
Milan Kundera, *The Curtain*, 2007.  
Anne Lamott, *Bird By Bird*, 1995. (ISBN: 9780385480017).  
Alberto Manguel, *The City of Words*, 2007.  
Francine Prose, *Reading Like A Writer: A Guide For People Who Love Books & For Those Who Want to Write Them*, 2007. (ISBN: 9780060777050).

Your choice of a good Glossary or Dictionary of Contemporary Literary Theory, for example, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, J.A. Cuddon

or

*A Glossary of Contemporary Theory*, Jeremy Hawthorn

Additional works relevant to the project of each member of the class will be assigned.

## III. Assignments and Evaluation:

Writing (Minimum 150 pages toward a complete book): 60%

Editing, analytical skills, critiques: 20%

Presentation + written appraisal: 10%

Participation: 10%

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**TOTAL      100%**

**There will be NO final exam in this course. Students will be given graded feedback on each piece of work, and an overall graded evaluation at Christmas.**

**Writing:** Students must plan their year, scheduling their dates of submission and their presentations. In September, students will set out their own deadlines, but can expect material to be critiqued twice per term or four times per year. The last day for submission of work that students wish critiqued in class is March 31. NO EXCEPTIONS. While deadlines are not cast in stone and writers inevitably need to be flexible, if you are late, your work will be discussed last. The last day to submit the final draft of your project is April 14, 2014.

Editing, critiques: Editing and criticism is a key part of this class. Students MUST keep up with the reading and critiques of their colleagues' writing. Critiques of the material being workshopped are due the night they are workshopped.

Presentation: Each student (in consultation with Professor van Herk) will select a primary work of particular relevance to his/her project and will make a writerly presentation on that text (fifteen minutes). Students' in-class presentations should engage with a work by virtue of its value as writerly exemplar, apprehending the text not as a critic or reader, but as a writer. What issues does this text raise about writing? Creative presentations are encouraged, but students may choose the method of presentation. Students will be graded on their sophisticated critical response to the work under discussion; all students are expected to read the texts under consideration. One week after giving their presentation, and taking feedback into account, students will submit a written appraisal of their presentation.

Participation: Attendance and participation are part of a student's grade. You are expected to attend class and to contribute to class discussion. But participants will also be graded on oral fluency, relevance of contributions, background knowledge and literary expertise.

Please submit critiques and material directly to the instructor. If it is not possible to do so, take your assignment to SS 1152 and put it in the dropbox. Your work will be date-stamped and placed in the instructor's mailbox. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of all assignments in case of loss by any cause. Assignments cannot be returned by staff in the Department office.

### **Grading system:**

Assigning grades for creative work is always arguable, but this is an academic course, and must fulfill academic requirements. Your Final grade will consist of an evaluation of all the work you perform and hand in, taking into consideration your planned trajectory. All workshopped writing is graded (using the letter system) and returned to you. You will be given a mid-session evaluation at the end of term in December. Your attendance and participation are part of your participation grade. You are expected to attend class and to contribute to class discussion. The final portfolio (your book draft) should demonstrate development and improvement of your writing in this course and will be figured in your final grade.

**ALL WORK** (writing, presentation, critiques) **MUST BE COMPLETED IN ORDER TO PASS THIS COURSE.**

Following is a description of how grades are derived. Please read and note the Graduate Grading System at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-e-1.html>

#### **A+ (4): Outstanding, exceptional.**

A+ is a grade earned only in very rare instances, by work that is absolutely stellar, publishable, dazzling in its achievement.

#### **A (4): Excellent work**

The work is moving toward publishable level. Use of language is concise and precise; figures of speech are imaginative and original; the content is interesting, the approach is fresh, and the form chosen the best possible, every element of fiction engaged with sophistication and elegance.

**A- (3.70): Very good and consistent work**

The work is very good, with a heightened use of language, striking aspects of imagery or story, and an interesting perspective or point of view. Word choice and description generally exact and thoughtful, trajectory of writing achieved.

**B+ (3.3): Good Performance**

The work is good, writing is competent and shows promise, but definitely would benefit from more work and greater focus. The writing could use more refinement or development, and usually more revision.

**B (3.00): Satisfactory performance**

The work is satisfactory, but relies heavily on ordinary use of language, and is not formally innovative. The writing is competent and shows promise, but definitely needs more work and greater focus. Images or plot are sound but may verge on the clichéd, predictable, or derivative. Vocabulary is adequate but may be limited.

**B- (2.70): Minimum pass for Students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies**

Images or plot are sound but may verge on the clichéd, predictable, or derivative. Vocabulary is adequate but may be limited. Use of language is ordinary, not formally innovative.

**C+ (2.30): Work shows little originality and little investment**

All grades below "B-" are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted toward Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements. Individual programs may require a higher passing grade.

University of Calgary's Grading System: A+/A (4.0); A- (3.7); B+ (3.3); B (3.0); B- (2.7); C+ (2.3); C (2.0); C- (1.7); D+ (1.3); D (1.0); F (0)

Please note that, according to the University Calendar (F.1), instructors may use their discretion when rounding upwards or downwards if the average of term work is between two letter grades.

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

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#### **IV. FURTHER EXPECTATIONS:**

Each student comes to this course having submitted initial material toward a particular book-length writing project, as well as a description of that project. Projects will likely be honed as the year progresses, but the initial description is useful as a template for the work that writers set out

to accomplish. A vague notion of the outcome desired is not sufficiently definite to direct the year's work; students must proceed with a clear sense of the project they wish to complete. By the end of the year, each student should have at least 150 pages (MINIMUM 120 pages) of a manuscript, sufficiently framed as a revised and polished draft, and confident about its completion.

Along with their project description, students must frame a plan, including a set of self-established deadlines. Each student can count on having 30 pages workshopped four times a year (twice per term); however, that guideline can be adjusted if responses to a longer section of work will be more useful to the writer. Students are expected to re-write as the year progresses for submission of their final project at the end of the year, due April 14, 2014. This date is final; there will be no extensions.

Every student is expected to critique and to edit his/her colleagues' work with care and in appropriate detail. Workshopping takes place in class, orally, while the writer whose work is being discussed takes notes. All students submit to the writer (with a copy to me), a double-spaced, two-page written critique on each of their colleagues' submissions. Critiques should offer both appropriate critical analysis and suggestions for improvement, engaging with the text from the position of both writer and reader. Students thus develop critical acumen, and must be able to read varieties of writing with an objective and critical eye.

Students will distribute work to be critiqued at least ONE WEEK before class. If work is made available less than seven days before class, it will be bumped to the following week. NO EXCEPTIONS. Please take this into consideration in your planning. Your disorganization is not the class's emergency.

Each student (in consultation with me) will select a primary work, of particular relevance to his/her project and will make a writerly presentation on that text (NO LONGER THAN 15 minutes). Students' in-class presentations should engage with a work by virtue of its value as writerly exemplar, apprehending the text not as a critic or a casual reader, but as a writer. What issues does this text raise about writing? Creative presentations are encouraged, but students should use as their presentation arc a narrative theoretical dimension of particular interest to writers. Students will be graded on their sophisticated critical response to the work and on the written appraisal that will be handed in one week after the presentation.

## **V. How to do well in this course**

1. Class attendance is required. You will have difficulty passing this course if you do not attend, if you do not write regularly, and if you do not read your colleagues' work with care and diligence. Keeping up is essential. Organize your time to get the most out of this course and you will gain not only the draft of a manuscript but critical and theoretical expertise.

2. If you are to make good progress, it is essential that you set aside time for writing every day. It is unwise to try to write half a novel in one week. Students who work steadily throughout the year perform better than students who binge-write. Special pleading (dry spells or broken fingers) serves only to irritate. Writing is a matter of discipline, not excuses. However, if you

are ill or are experiencing other difficulties, do let me know so that appropriate consideration can be given to your circumstances.

3. Material **MUST** be double-spaced and must use a clear font so that it can be read easily.

Students are responsible for supplying electronic copies of their work to their colleagues, who can download the material to be critiqued from Blackboard. Each student **MUST** give the instructor **TWO** hard copies of each submission, in a large clear font, on one-sided pages. You must provide **TWO** hard copies of your critiques of your colleagues' work, **ONE** for Professor van Herk and one for the author of the text under consideration.

4. This is a course in literary writing, not a course in how to get published or what is trendy. We are more concerned with exceptional writing than we are with its marketing.

5. The schedule for this class, as the attached outline makes clear, sometimes varies. A class may be cancelled, but it will always be replaced, if not by a class, then by a literary event. Please let me know if this flexibility creates difficulties for you. Use the schedule to plan and to make effective use of your time.

6. Students often labour under the misguided notion that they do not wish to be "influenced" and that reading outside material or hearing writers read is not relevant. In fact, literary context provides students with invaluable inspiration and experience. You are expected to attend at least two readings over the course of the year. You are also expected to read widely. You do **NOT** have to submit reading reports.

7. Sophisticated in-class participation (discussion) is a requirement, part of the graded component of this course.

8. Students will set out their own deadlines, expecting material to be critiqued at least twice per term or four times per year, with the option of longer sections being workshopped. While deadlines are not cast in stone, if you are late, your work will be discussed last. It is unacceptable to hand in late critiques; these will be penalized.

9. The work that is circulated in the class deserves your full attention. However, it does not deserve the attention of your cousins, roommates, or friends. Please keep your colleagues' work confidential, and treat it with respect, as you would wish your writing to be treated.

10. Work is to be discussed in class with intelligence, using literary terminology. See VI.

11. If you are having difficulties of any kind, or if you have questions, please feel free to meet with me. If you cannot make an appointment during my regular office hours, I am happy to arrange to meet at another time. Do not hesitate to inform me of potential difficulties because I may be able to help you solve them.

## VI. Guidelines for in-class discussion

From the language that holds sway in daily conversation, a nuanced vocabulary may seem archaic, but in fact, is increasingly desirable. The current reliance on “thing,” “stuff,” “you know,” and “like” are especial markers of a lazy tongue. In this class, we will focus on improving your eloquence and wit and moving beyond dull or limited vernacular. Please take notes on our discussions of oral fixatives, and add your favourites to the list as the year progresses. In terms of evaluative positions and their critical expression, your personal tastes are a less useful benchmark than objective evaluation. When reading any text, the questions you must confront are not whether or not you “liked” the material, but whether it is convincing, effective, and interestingly developed. If you determine that some aspect of the writing works well, explain what and why. And if you feel some aspect of the story does not work well, explain what and why. Abusive or personal comments will not be tolerated.

## VII. Guidelines for Written Critiques

The same care and attention holds for the critiques that you will write in response to your colleagues’ writing. You will all be aware of the project your colleagues are working on, and with that overall trajectory in mind, students are expected to read and comment on colleagues’ work with courteous objectivity, offering suggestions and edits. As part of your critical acumen, all students are required to write a two-page double-spaced critique in response to every segment of material discussed in class. These written critiques are due on the evening of class discussion; your reading should thus not be a re-hash of what is said in class, but your own initial response to the work you have read. Late critiques will be penalized. Critiques **MUST** include the name of the piece being analyzed, the author’s name, your name, and the date, with two paper copies, one for Professor van Herk and one for the student whose work is under scrutiny and who will value your suggestions.

Critiques should focus on what strikes you, the reader, as the most intriguing element of the writing you have read. They should cover two aspects: what works well and what does not work well, and **why**. Begin with what is effective, then address what worked least well, and **why**. Critiques should avoid, at all costs, general or self-evident comments, or spurious praise. “I liked this piece,” is not useful. Critiques should **NEVER** be personal or in any way derogatory--such comments are considered academic misconduct. Students must address the work on the page and **NOT** the writer who has created the material. Nor should critiques consist of hollow praise without substantial editorial comment.

Constructive criticism analyzes both the merits and the flaws of a creative work, the point being to help the writer improve the work. It is a cruel fact that every piece of writing in this class is a work in progress; not one of you will be at a level where you produce perfect writing. And because every writer must learn to edit and critique his or her work, the more critically a writer can read, the better a self-critic and consequently the better a writer s/he will become. Receiving constructive criticism from careful readers enables every writer to improve his/her writing, and is one of the most useful aspects of this course. As well, in-class discussion of material enables every student to develop his/her critical ability as well as his/her own writing. Learning to be a discerning reader is an important step in developing into a better writer, but it is also a skill that

translates from this class into your other courses and your daily life. Critiques will be marked for usefulness, consistency, consideration, skill, literary knowledge, critical acumen, and creativity. They are part of each student's final grade.

### **VIII. Guidelines for Electronic Devices**

We are all at the mercy of social networking, cell phones, text messages and e-mail, but in this class we need to concentrate on writing.

a) We will be in a wireless-access classroom. You may take notes and work on a laptop in class. If the context is relevant, we may use the Internet to search for a particular item of information together. You are to use your laptop or tablet as a tool to accompany the context of what we are learning and discussing. You are not to surf the net, text message your friends, or do assignments for a different class.

b) Cell phones are to be turned off in class.

c) Portable media players, like iPods, are not to be used in class.

d) I check and answer e-mail regularly, but do not expect me to reply to a query within minutes. I usually answer e-mails within 48 hours.

### **VIII. Making Material Available**

You may choose to provide copies of your writing to your classmates in paper form, or you may choose to make copies available in virtual form. Students will send me electronic copies of their work, and I will put a pdf of the work to be critiqued up on Blackboard for all students to access. Because of the issue of deadlines and because of the requirements of evaluation, you must submit TWO HARD copies of your writing (single-sided) to Professor van Herk, and bring TWO HARD copies of your critiques, giving one to Professor van Herk and one to the author of the work. Missing work can lead to failure.

#### **Plagiarism:**

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

#### **English Department Website:**

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca/graduate>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.



**Writing support:**

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

**Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:****Academic regulations and schedules:**

Consult the Department of English's graduate website for courses, departmental deadlines, and other related program information at <http://english.ucalgary.ca/node/245>. Consult the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar for university and faculty regulations, dates, deadline, fees, and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar is <http://grad.ucalgary.ca>.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Barbara Howe at 403 220 5484 or visit her in Social Sciences Tower 1148 in the first instance.

For program planning and advice, contact Barbara Howe at [howe@ucalgary.ca](mailto:howe@ucalgary.ca) to make an appointment with Dr. Jacqueline Jenkins, Graduate Program Director.

**Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:**

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/it/help/articles/email/etiquette>

**Grade appeals:**

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that "mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision."

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

**Deferral of term work and final examinations:**

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

**Academic Accommodation:**

It is the students' responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodations and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact them at 403-220-6019. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services are not eligible for formal academic accommodations. More information about academic accommodations can be found at [www.ucalgary.ca/access](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access).

**Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points:**

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints;>

**Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act:**

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

**“Safewalk” Program:**

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

**Contact for the Graduate Student Association:** <http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/>

**Contact for Students Ombudsman’s Office:** <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

## **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

## **DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT**

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>)

“The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, ..., to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community”. The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a “positive and productive learning and working environment.” This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that “seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff”. Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.