

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE

ENGLISH 694

WINTER 2019

COURSE TITLE: Topics in Creative Writing: Prose Fiction (Long Form Fiction)

Wednesdays, 12:30-3:15 pm, SS 1059

Instructor: Suzette Mayr

Office: SS 1048 (during my Wed. formal office hour); SS 1148 (all other times)

E-mail: smayr@ucalgary.ca

Office hours: Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30 pm or by appointment

Homepage/course website: <https://english.ucalgary.ca/profiles/suzette-mayr>

Course description:

English 694.4 is a graduate course in Creative Writing, intended to offer advanced students an opportunity to work intensively on a long prose piece or prose collection. Students at this level must be completely comfortable with the various practices and theories of narrative intervention, and should be prepared to work creatively and imaginatively in applying those theories to their own writing, as well as to their colleagues' work. Students are also expected to read widely as part of their background work.

This course requires students to work toward completion of a polished prose manuscript of 70-100 pages. Students who have been given permission to register in this class will already have a clear sense of the project they wish to undertake; and a description of their project will be provided to the class. This project might consist of a series of stories, a novella, a series of interconnected tales, a prose-poem, among other genres. Genre is not a rigid consideration, but the object of this course is to enable each student to realize their project in its greatest possible configuration within the limit of the academic term. This course requires critical acumen, editorial focus, and steady writing and reading – I strongly recommend that you endeavour to write every day.

Pedagogy:

This class will be conducted primarily as a once-a-week workshop, with students handing in different portions of their project three times during the semester. Regular submissions should be between 20-25 pages. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss their colleagues' writing and the published texts with constructive, informed, and intelligent criticism. Grades will be based on writing achievements, one presentation, the ability to critique, and class participation. On Wednesday, 17 April 2019, students will submit (via Dropbox) the finished project of approximately 70-100 revised and polished pages for instructor evaluation.

The workshop format does not imply group work, but all-class participation under my direction. Students upload writing to D2L one week in advance, and students are expected to come to class having read that material and prepared with constructive criticism and relevant responses.

Texts and readings:

Joshua Whitehead. *Jonny Appleseed*

Stephen Henighan. *Blue River and Red Earth*

Richard van Camp. *The Lesser Blessed*
Monique Truong. *The Book of Salt*
Mariko Tamaki. *Skim*
Jenny Lawson. *Let's Pretend This Never Happened*
Helen Humphreys. *The Frozen Thames*
Assorted handouts as needed (on D2L or as hardcopy)

Assignments and Evaluation:

Writing (70-100 pages, double-spaced): 70%
Presentation (including one-page handout): 10%
Editing, analytical skills, critiques: 10%
Participation: 10%

There will be no final exam in this course. Students will meet with the instructor to receive graded feedback around mid-term, and at the end of the course.

All work must be completed in order to pass this course.

Presentation:

Each student must give one 20-25 minute oral presentation on a published text slated for class discussion.

On the day of the presentation, the student presenting must upload or distribute a one-page handout to every member of the class, outlining what the presentation will be about (this handout can be in point-form). You will need to bring 5 copies of the handout if you are opting for hardcopy, not including one for yourself. If you would like the instructor to photocopy the handouts for you, please email the handout to the instructor the Tuesday before your presentation.

Your in-class presentation should engage in a work in a writerly way, meaning that you do not apprehend the text as a critic or a casual reader, but as a writer. What does this text teach you (and the class) about writing? The story's writerly aspects should be pertinent to the entire class and to writing as a whole. In short, if you choose a text for its particular point of view, then address how/why the point of view is effective. How does the text open itself to critical readings? Does the text exemplify certain literary tropes or habits? Do not explain the story's content, or read overly lengthy passages aloud. The entire class will have read the text, and will be prepared to discuss how the narrative works (or doesn't), and how it can be read. Do not give an extensive biography of the author. Engage with the text in an innovative and creative way. You might choose a text thinking you want to write a similar text, only to discover that the work you have chosen actually does something entirely different. Some of you might choose a text that you "like" only to discover that it doesn't work very well. Your presentation should apprehend these possibilities. Presentations will be graded on their writerly and critical response to the work; keep this in mind when deciding how to proceed. Above all, utilize your writerly imagination.

Class Participation:

In order to receive full marks for the Participation portion of your final grade, you must arrive punctually, attend class regularly, and participate in a constructive, positive manner in class discussion. Absolute silence will not fulfill this grade; however, dominating the class and interrupting your colleagues during discussion will not either.

Guidelines for in-class discussion: Discussion forms the body of in-class time in this course. For the sake of useful criticism and discussion, certain words and expressions are discouraged in this class. Please make note of them and add to the list as the semester progresses. For a beginning, do not utter the following words or phrases: **I liked, I didn't like, I loved, I hated, it's real, but it really happened.** When reading a piece of fiction, please stay away from personal tastes; the questions you must confront are not whether you "like" a character, for example, but whether the character was convincing and whether their actions are prepared for in the light of the fictional trajectory required. If you feel that some aspect of the text works well, explain why. And if you feel some aspect of the text does not work well, explain why, using literary terminology.

Written Critiques:

Each student is required to critique and to edit their colleagues' work with care and in some detail, providing two copies of a half a page (minimum) to one page (maximum), double-spaced written commentary for each text critiqued (one for the instructor and one for the student whose work is being discussed).

These critiques are due on the evening of the class discussion; your reading should thus not be a regurgitation of what is said in class, but your own initial but thoughtful response to the work. Critiques should include the name of the piece being analyzed, your name and the date. Keep in mind how useful these critiques are to you as a writer. You must give helpful critiques to receive helpful critiques.

Critiques should focus on what strikes you, as the reader, as the most interesting element of the writing you have read. They should cover two aspects: what works well and what does not work well, and why. Always begin positively, 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 like this piece," is not useful. And critiques must **NEVER** be personal or in any way derogatory – personal remarks are considered academic misconduct and could result in permanent expulsion from the class. Students are addressing the work on the page and not the writer. Nor should critiques consist of hollow praise ("this is a fantastic story!") without substantial editorial comment. Constructive criticism analyzes both the merits and the flaws of creative work, the point being to help the writer improve work in progress; all the writing in this class is work in progress. The more critically a writer can read, the better a self-critic and consequently writer you will become. Learning to be a discerning reader is an important step in developing into a better writer.

E-mail and electronic submissions policy:

I am happy to reply to short, specific questions via e-mail, and will answer as promptly as possible. If you have detailed questions on the course material, it is more appropriate to make an appointment and see me personally at my office. Additionally, please do not upload your assignments late/after the agreed upon deadlines – this is disrespectful to the other students who may not have time to read late work well or thoroughly, and will disrupt the rhythm of the class.

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of a third of a grade (eg: an A- to B+) for each business day [not class] that the assignment is overdue. No assignments will be accepted two weeks past the assignment deadline without the prior consent of the instructor.

Grading system:

Grades are calculated according to the 4 point scale used in the *Graduate Calendar*:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-g-1.html>

Grade	Grade Point Value	Graduate Description
A+	4.00	Outstanding
A	4.00	Excellent-superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter
A-	3.70	Very good performance
B+	3.30	Good performance
B	3.00	Satisfactory performance
B-	2.70	Minimum pass for students in Faculty of Graduate Studies
C+	2.30	All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted towards Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements.
C	2.00	
C-	1.70	
D+	1.30	
D	1.00	
F	0.00	

Please note: A B- is considered a minimum pass for students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

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.

In the case of Instructors using numerical marks in the grading of term work, the departmental conversion chart applies.

90 + %	A+	4.0	67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
85 – 89 %	A	4.0	64 – 66 %	C	2.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7	60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3	55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0	50 – 54 %	D	1.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7	0 – 49 %	F	0

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

A range: Consistently exceptional work

The work is moving toward a publishable level. The use of language is concise and precise and original; figures of speech are imaginative and compelling; the content of the work is interesting and is treated in a fresh, new way, and the form chosen is the best possible. Writing in this range employs every element of

fiction with sophistication and elegance. **A+ is a grade earned in only very rare instances by work that is absolutely stellar. Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, this grade is earned for work that exceeds expectations in style, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.**

B range: Consistently good work

The work is above average, with good use of language, originality, and control, but could use more refinement or development, and more revision. It shows at least in part a heightened awareness of structure and image, several striking aspects of narrative, and an interesting perspective or point of view. Word choice and description are generally exact and thoughtful.

C range: Consistently average work

The work is satisfactory, but relies on ordinary, even somewhat predictable use of language. Work in this range is formally not innovative, although the writing will be competent, even promising. The material will definitely need more work, more layering, more texture. Image and plot are sound but may verge on clichéd and predictable. Vocabulary is adequate but may be limited.

D range: Minimal pass

The work shows some effort but is carelessly constructed and may have grammatical problems or lack awareness of the mechanics of English. Use of language will be undistinguished and clichéd, ideas ordinary, even predictable.

F: No credit

Work shows no effort; no work has been done at all.

NB: If you are having difficulties of any kind, or if you have any questions, please feel free to meet with me. If you cannot make an appointment during my regular office hour, 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.

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-5.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>

Library and Research Support:

Melanie Boyd Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact: maboym@ucalgary.ca.

Find The English Pages research guide here: https://library.ucalgary.ca/sb.php?subject_id=52619

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 the Graduate Office at 403 220 5484 or visit us in Social Sciences Tower 1148 in the first instance.

For program planning and advice, contact the Graduate Program Administrator at enggrad@ucalgary.ca to make an appointment with Dr. Suzette Mayr, Graduate Program Director.

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>.

Student Accommodations:

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

The student accommodation policy can be found at: ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf

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>

Other student resources:

SU Wellness Centre: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>

Campus Mental Health Strategy: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses (www.ucalgary.ca/usri). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys."

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. Instructors may request that evidence in the form of documentation be provided. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html>.

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

Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. Instructors may request that evidence in the form of documentation be provided. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html>.

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.