

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE

ENGLISH 335.01 Creative Writing and Reading Like a Writer

Time: Tuesday/Thursday: 12:30 – 13:45

Classroom: MS 211

Instructor: Aritha van Herk

Office: SS 1132

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Office hours: 14:00 – 16:30, Tuesday/Thursday

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Course description:

English 335 is a course focussed on reading from a writerly perspective as an early but important step in the development of a writing practice. Many writers are nervous about being “influenced,” and so fail to understand that reading with the eye of a writer, and paying attention to form and structure, diction and language in the work of established writers, is key to building a strong writerly foundation. This course combines creative work with reading; it focuses on structural and formal elements and their specific deployment, undertaking genetic and generic explorations in how reading enables writers to engage with both process and form in their writing. This is a foundational class, but flexible in its appreciation of multiple creative approaches.

Students are expected to read a great deal and should be prepared for intensive, steady, and ongoing work. The course is conducted as a seminar, with students expected to complete assignments promptly, and to keep up with a heavy reading load.

The short assignments and the reading reports will break down elements of literature, analyzing different forms and their expression with the textual examples we are reading.

Each student is required to read with care and in some detail, should come to class having read assigned material, and prepared to discuss this material in close detail, with eloquence and wit.

Pedagogy, workload, methods of evaluation:

This class will be conducted primarily as a seminar. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss this writing with constructive, informed, and intelligent responses, and to apply their learning to their writing.

Grades will be based on ability to critique and analyze, on critical and creative writing exercises, quality of writing (grammar, eloquence, and persuasiveness), and in-class participation. There is NO final exam in this course. Attendance is essential. **All Assignments must be completed to pass.**

Texts and readings:

Margaret Atwood, *Murder in the Dark*
Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*
Marian Engel, *Bear*
Anne Fadiman, *Ex Libris*
Robert Kroetsch, *A Likely Story*
Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*
bpNichol, *Organ Music: Parts of an Autobiography*
Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family*
Francine Prose, *Reading Like a Writer*
Richard Wagamese, *Indian Horse*

The books are available in the bookstore.

Assignments and Evaluation:

Students will be graded on their writing, their reading acumen, on written reading analyses, on reading reviews, and on class participation. Participation and critical acumen (including literary range and formal awareness) will be evaluated as well.

Constraints:

Students are asked to resist a reading focus on genre writing, meaning fan fiction, crime, zombie, fantasy, horror, romance, science fiction or inspirational writing. This is a course in reading as a writerly activity and replicating the genre conventions of popular forms will not stretch your literary muscles.

Grades and Assignments

4 short assignments (reading reviews), each of which apprehends a different element of fiction
(400-500 words each)
1 writerly analysis of form (1000 words)
1 final well-crafted capstone creative response (1600 words)

Percentage Breakdown:

Each short assignment is worth 10%:	40%
Writerly analysis of form/structure:	20%
Class participation:	10%
(Based on attendance, oral participation and preparation throughout the course)	
Capstone creative/critical response:	30%

100%

As per Calendar Section E.3, attendance is included in your participation grade:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-3.html>

Grades:

ALL assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

There is **NO** final exam in this course.

Grading: Your final grade will consist of an evaluation of all the work you hand in. All assignments (reading and writing) are graded (using the letter system) and returned to you.

Your attendance and participation are part of your participation grade. You are expected to attend class and to contribute to class discussion.

The final assignment should demonstrate a degree of sophisticated textual awareness in light of its creative approach.

Following is a description of how grades are derived.

A-/A/A+ (4): Consistently exceptional work

Use of language is concise and precise; figures of speech are imaginative and original; the content is interesting, the approach is original and acutely aware of form, as well as being analytically adept.

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

B range (3): Consistently good work

The approach is solid, but could use more refinement or development, and the writing more revision. It shows in some part a heightened use of language, several striking aspects of imagery or trajectory, and an interesting perspective or point of view. Word choice and description are generally exact and thoughtful.

C range (2): Consistently average work

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

D (1): Minimal pass

The work shows some effort but is carelessly constructed and is not well-written or thought out. Use of language is undistinguished and clichéd; ideas are ordinary.

F: No Credit

Work shows no effort; no work has been done at all, or is always late.

The University of Calgary's official four-point Undergraduate Grading System, as described in the Calendar (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-2.html>), will be used in this course.

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 when the average of term work and exams 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.

Submission of Work:

Assignments are to be sent to the professor as electronic submissions, in Word form, so that they can be readily corrected. You must also provide ONE hard copy of each assignment, given to the professor in class. This hard copy is insurance for you: if you have a technical problem or a computer breakdown, you have backup.

You must make every effort to give assignments directly to Professor van Herk. If it is not possible to do so, take your assignment to SS 1152 and put it in the dropbox. Your assignment 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.**

Guidelines and Policies

Electronic Devices:

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

a) We will be in a wireless-access classroom. You may take notes and work on a laptop in class. You are to use your device 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, play games, or do assignments for a different class.

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

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

Food, Drink, etc.:

Students may drink coffee or water or juice in class, but I would request no consumption of food. Eating in a class is distracting and intrusive.

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/read, and if you do not keep up.
2. If you are to make good progress, it is essential that you set aside time for focused reading/writing every day. It is unwise to try to complete an assignment the night before it is due. Students who work steadily achieve a much stronger improvement arc.
3. If you are ill or are experiencing other difficulties, do let me know so that appropriate consideration can be given to your circumstances. If you wish a deferral, you **MUST** complete appropriate formalities on time.
4. Assignments must be double-spaced and must use a clear font so that they can be read easily, both in hard copy and on-line. You **MUST** give the instructor ONE hard copies of each assignment.
5. This is a course in literary preparation, and in literary writing, not a course in how to get published or what is trendy. We are more concerned with exceptional writing skills than we are with its marketing.
6. The schedule for this class, as the attached outline makes clear, sometimes varies. A class may be cancelled or moved, 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, to read ahead, and to complete assignments on time.
7. Students might labour under the misguided notion that they do not wish to be “influenced” and that reading outside material or participating in the literary life of the community is not relevant. In fact, reading is the key to effective writing and you are expected to read widely.
8. Class participation (discussion) is a requirement, part of the graded component of this course.
9. Work is to be discussed in class with intelligence, using literary terminology.
10. 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 will do everything possible to help you solve them.

Guidelines for in-class discussion:

From the language that holds sway in daily conversation and from our abbreviated texting language, a nuanced vocabulary may seem archaic, but is increasingly desirable. The current reliance on “thing,” “you know,” and “like” are markers of a lazy tongue. In this class, we will focus on improving your eloquence and wit by moving beyond such limited vernacular. This class will seek to help you overcome speech disfluencies, which consist of various breaks, irregularities or non-lexical vocables that occur within the flow of speech. These include *false starts*, i.e. words and sentences that are cut off mid-utterance; and *fillers*, i.e. grunts or non-lexical utterances such as “huh”, “uh”, “erm”, “um”, “well”, “so”, “like”, and “you know.” Please take notes on our discussions of oral fixatives and vocabulary dependencies, and add your favourites to a list as the year progresses.

The “I LIKE” syndrome: In terms of evaluative positions and their critical expression, your personal tastes are a less useful benchmark to apply than objective appreciation. 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, with reference to literary elements. If you determine that some aspect of the work works well, explain what and why. And if you find some aspect of the work that does not work well, explain what and why.

Learning is about confronting uncomfortable ideas. At some point during this class, we are likely to discuss sensitive material, material that will challenge your thinking or upset your expectations. These challenges are about enhancing your clarity and capacity for critical thinking.

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>

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events

<http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse-english-club>.

Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

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>. 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 Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

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 ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.

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.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/>

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students’ Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at

ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at

<http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:

arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca

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

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."

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.