



UNSW
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Arts & Social
Sciences

School of the Arts and Media

ARTS2032

Creative Writing

(six units of credit)

SESSION 2, 2015

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COURSE CONVENOR:

Dr Paul Dawson

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Consultation hours:

TUTOR:

Email:

Course Structure

Lectures

- Two one-hour lectures per week on contemporary fiction, poetry, and experimental writing
- Lectures will include analysis and discussion of course readings (bring course reader)
- Mondays 12-1pm: Webster Theatre A
- Wednesdays 11am-12pm: Electrical Engineering G24

Tutorials

- Weekly one-hour tutorials discussing course readings and take-home writing exercises, and workshopping draft manuscripts for folio of creative work
- Tutorials begin in Week Two of semester

Mobile phones MUST be turned off during lectures and tutorials

Textbooks

- A course reader (2 vols.) is available from the university bookshop

Summary of the course

The aim of this course is to familiarise students with a wide range of contemporary literature and to encourage them to experiment with a variety of different styles and genres in their own writing. Students undertaking this course will acquire a practical

understanding of how literature works by developing their critical reading skills, and will have the opportunity to gain feedback on their own writing in a supportive workshop environment. Students will also develop the craft skills necessary to generate, revise and edit their own work.

Aims of the course

- To provide students with an awareness and understanding of the pluralism and generic range of contemporary literature
- To develop the critical reading skills of students, which will enable them to identify and analyse the formal elements of a work of literature, and to critically appraise and improve their own writing
- To provide students with a practical knowledge of a range of literary techniques and devices in the craft of writing
- To encourage students to experiment with a variety of different styles and genres in their own writing
- To help students develop their skills in generating, drafting, revising and editing their own work
- To encourage students to consider the literary and social contexts within which their own work is being written
- To facilitate through workshops the production of a polished and professionally presented folio of creative writing

Expected learning outcomes

- 1) Knowledge of movements, styles and genres in contemporary literature
- 2) Ability to identify formal elements of literature and how they operate in specific genres
- 3) Familiarity with the practical decisions writers make in relation to the craft of writing
- 4) Appreciation of the importance of the critical faculty to the creative process
- 5) Ability to critically appraise your own work and the work of others
- 6) Improved skills in drafting, revising and editing your own manuscripts

Graduate Attributes

It is hoped that the above learning outcomes will foster the following qualities identified as graduate attributes for the English major:

- 1) the capacity for analytical and critical thinking and for creative problem-solving at the level of both research and writing
- 2) a respect for ethical practice, diversity and social responsibility
- 3) the ability to engage in independent and reflective learning
- 4) the skills of effective communication and effective collaborative team work

LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READING LIST

WEEK ONE

Monday 27th July

Introduction

Wednesday 29th July

Plot versus Character?

readings

David Eggers, "Notes for a Story of a Man Who Will Not Die Alone"

Helen Garner, "Life of Art"

Barbara Wels, "Gorgeous"

Helen Fielding, opening to *Bridget Jones' Diary*

WEEK TWO

Monday 3rd August

Narrative Voice: Third Person

readings

Patrick Suskind, opening to *Perfume*

Tim Winton, opening to *The Riders*

Toby Litt, "Map-Making Among the Middle-Classes"

Edward Berridge, "Bored Teenagers"

Wednesday 5th August

Narrative Voice: First Person

Readings

Susanna Moore, opening to *In the Cut*

Jonathan Littell, opening to *The Kindly Ones*

W.G. Sebald, "Dr Henry Selwyn," *The Emigrants*

Bret Easton Ellis, opening to *The Rules of Attraction*

Ewan Morrison, "Re: Your ad"

WEEK THREE

Monday 10th August

Narrative Voice: First Person Plural ('We') and Second Person Narrators

readings

Jeffrey Eugenides, opening to *The Virgin Suicides*
Zakes, Mda, opening to *Ways of Dying*
Lorrie Morre, "How"
Frederick Barthelme, "Shopgirls"
Paul Dawson, "A Gun in Your Pocket"

Wednesday 12th August

Description and Narrative Time

readings

Glenda Adams, "Reconstruction of an Event"
Margaret Atwood, opening to *The Handmaid's Tale*
Bret Easton Ellis, "Morning" from *American Psycho*

WEEK FOUR

Monday 17th August

Showing and Telling

readings

Isabelle Allende, "Phantom Palace"
Dean Kiley, "So Then I Said to Helen"
Wayne Macauley, "The Affair in M—"
Raymond Carver, "Are You a Doctor?"

Wednesday 19th August

The Double Voice: Narrator and Character

readings

Ian McEwan, extract from *Atonement*
Tom Wolfe, extracts from *I am Charlotte Simmons*
David Foster Wallace, extract from "Mr. Squishy"
Jonathan Franzen, opening to *The Corrections*
Hubert Selby Jr, opening to *Last Exit to Brooklyn*

WEEK FIVE

Monday 24th August

Read it and Weep: The Sound of Poetry

Wednesday 26th August

The Line in Contemporary Poetry

readings

Bronwyn Lea, "The Other Way Out"
Robert Gray, "Late Ferry"
Coral Hull, "How Do Detectives Make Love?"
Nin Andrews, "Where Memory Ends"
Stephen Lawrence, "Is this Poetry?"
Andrew Zawacki, "1-3", *Masquerade*
Beth Shepherd, "Friday March 21 2003"
Michael Batinic, "Death in Autumn"

WEEK SIX

Monday 31st August

The Poetic State of Mind

readings

Anthony Lawrence, "Thanatos"
John Leonard, "Confessional"
Jordie Albiston, "The Fall"
Bronwyn Lea, "Tomorrow I Will Plant Flowers, Find a New Place to Hang my Keys"
Andrew Taylor, "Developing a Wife"
John Ashberry, "Summer"
Paul Dawson, "Imagining Winter"
Kate Fagan, "Anti-landscape: Lighthouse Beach", "Lighthouse Series"

Wednesday 2nd September

From First Draft to Printed Page: Drafting, Revision and Editing

readings

Paul Dawson, "Thomas Pennington's Fetich"

WEEK SEVEN

Monday 7th September

How the Writing Workshop Works

Wednesday 9th September

If a Story Falls Down in the Woods and No-one Reads it, Did it Really Fall Down?

WEEK EIGHT

Monday 14th September

The lyric 'I' and its Others

readings

Anne Sexton, "The Addict"; "The Ballad of the Lonely Masturbator"
Sharon Olds, "When it Comes"
Bronwyn Lea, "Dog Days"; "A Place"; "Bronwyn Lea"
Emma Jones, "Waking"
Coral Hull, "Sparrow"
Ouyang Yu, "Translating Myself"
Bob Perelman, "Chronic Meanings"
John Kinsella, "Imitations of Sign and Subjectivity in York"
Bernard Welt, "I Stopped Writing Poetry"

Wednesday 16th September

Poetry from the Margins/Poetry of Social Protest

readings

Adrienne Rich, "Rape"
Gig Ryan, "If I had a Gun"
Ouyang Yu, "Fuck You Australia," "A Racist Chinese Father"
Ania Walwicz, "Australia"
Les Murray, "The Suspension of Knock"
Paul Dawson, "Thanks for the Poems, Pauline Hanson"
Kevin Hart, "To Australia"
John Kinsella, "Steel-box Filing Cabinet", "The Zoo Ark"
Lionel Fogarty, "Fuck all Departments", "Ain't No Abo Way of Communication"

WEEK NINE

Monday 21st September

Poetry of Urban Space: Writing the City

readings

Kenneth Slessor, "William Street"
Coral Hull, "Liverpool"
John Mateer, "Muslim Woman, Carlton"
Komninos, "The Ballad of King Street"
Jill Jones, "Saturday Morning in Ashfield"
Paul Dawson, "Daybreak"
Lionel Fogarty, "Urban Black"
Susan Sinclair, "Night Rider"
Jorie Graham, "Updraft"
John Updike, "New York City," "Icarus"
Charles Martin, "After 9/11"

Wednesday 23rd September

Postmodern Exhaustion: Magic Realism and Metafiction

Readings

Peter Carey, "Do You Love Me?"

Jeanette Winterson, extract from *The Passion*
Julia Slavin, "Dentaphilia"
David Foster Wallace, "Octet"
Tim O'Brien, "How to Tell a True War Story"

WEEK TEN

Monday 5th October

No Lecture: Public Holiday

Wednesday 7th October

Historical Fiction

readings

Gail Jones, "On the Piteous Death of Mary Wollstonecraft"
Michel Faber, opening to *The Crimson Petal and the White*
Simon Leys, opening to *The Death of Napoleon*
Edward P. Jones, opening to *The Known World*

WEEK ELEVEN

Monday 12th October

The Contemporary Voice: Minimalism to Maximalism

readings

Gautam Makalni, opening to *Londonstani*
Chimimanda Ngozi Adichie, "Jumping Monkey Hill"
Zadie Smith, opening to *White Teeth*
Adam Thirlwell, opening to *Politics*
Nicola Barker, opening to *Clear*

Wednesday 14th October

The Contemporary Sentence

readings

Cormac McCarthy, opening to *The Road*
James Ellroy, opening to *American Tabloid*
Salman Rushdie, opening to *Satanic Verses*
David Foster Wallace, "Luckily the Account Representative Knew CPR"

WEEK TWELVE

Monday 19th October

Poetry for the People: performance poetry/spoken word/poetry slam/ hip-hop

readings

Justin Chin, "Chinese Restaurant"

Lynne Procope, "Untitled"

Staceyann Chin, "I Don't Want to Slam"

Saul Williams, extract from "NGH WHT"

Emilie Zoe Baker, "Wet (moist page remix)"

alicia sometimes, "good i can be," "the amp, the kick & the pretty kitties"

Philip Norton, "This is Not a Love Poem",

Wednesday 21st October

Student Readings (volunteers needed)

MODES OF ASSESSMENT

1) Minor Assignment: “Reading as a Writer”

- 750-1000 word practical criticism of a sample of writing in the course reader
- The model for this essay should be the critical practice of ‘reading as a writer’ conducted in lectures. When analysing your chosen piece the following questions should guide you:
 - *What are the most striking formal elements of this piece?* Choose one or two which are most important to its success, and analyse how they operate, ie.: plot structure, narrative voice, point of view, dialogue, description, etc for fiction; line breaks, stanzaic structure, metaphor, layout or metrical form, etc for poetry.
 - *How does the writer’s use of these elements inform the aesthetic, thematic or political effects of the piece?* For instance, how is irony generated by a particular narrative voice; how does point of view create or exclude sympathy for specific characters; how do certain metaphors establish a critical or otherwise tone; how is everyday language semantically reoriented when included in a poem; how does a line break shift or multiply the meaning of a sentence?
 - *How does this piece fit into a broader critical context?* Does it draw upon recognisable generic conventions? Is it part of a particular movement or literary style? What is its relationship to other similar works (of fiction or non-fiction), to a moment in history, to public debate?
- 30% of overall mark
- DUE DATE: **Monday 7th September** (week seven)

2) Major Assignment: Creative folio

- 3000-3500 words of prose (12-14 double-spaced pages) **or** 300 lines of poetry (approx. 15 pages – max 20 lines per page). Some of you will hand in a combination of these genres, in which case your total folio should not exceed twenty pages

- The folio will be comprised of redrafts of material workshopped during the semester
- All pieces must be complete; no fragments or work in progress (unless you are handing in part of a longer piece and have cleared this with your tutor)
- All submissions must meet professional standards of presentation: typed, double-spaced, page-numbered, twelve-point font with wide margins on left and right-hand sides (poetry can have 1.5 spacing). Manuscripts must be proof-read for spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, etc.
- For written feedback and return of manuscripts you must include an appropriately sized (A4 or larger), stamped, self-addressed envelope with your submission. Folios without an envelope will be recycled.
- 60% of overall mark
- DUE DATE: **Thursday 5th November**

3) tutorial preparation

- All students must submit a draft manuscript of their Creative Folio for formal workshopping in class.
- Students are expected to attempt the writing exercises for each week of the semester, even when formal workshopping has commenced. To ensure that this requirement is meant, students will be asked at random throughout the duration of the semester to submit their exercises to the class tutor.
- Students are expected to annotate and provide written commentary on all manuscripts submitted for workshopping by their peers. To ensure that this requirement is met, the tutor will conduct random spot checks of manuscripts before they are handed back to their authors at the end of a class.
- 10% of overall mark

To pass this course students must:

- attend at least 80% of lectures and tutorials (a roll will be taken)
- satisfactorily complete each mode of assessment

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Minor Assignment: “Reading as a Writer”

You will be assessed on your ability to:

- produce a clearly written, grammatically correct and logically structured essay
- identify and discuss the formal elements of the work in terms of the writer’s craft decisions
- construct a fluent and coherent argument about the piece of writing under critical scrutiny
- support this argument with a ‘close reading’ of the work
- cite and analyse appropriate passages as textual evidence

Major Assignment: Creative Folio

- Professional presentation of manuscript, suitable for submission to journal editors and publishers: this means appropriate layout for the genre of work submitted, and proof read for errors
- Competence in craft skills (relating to narrative voice, plot structure, line breaks, dialogue, etc) developed throughout the semester, and relevant to the genre within which the work operates (poetry, fiction, fictocriticism, etc)
- Improvement of work from draft manuscript workshopped in class to final polished piece submitted for assessment; ie. evidence of redrafting and editing of original manuscript based on judicious consideration of feedback from tutor and fellow students. This will demonstrate your ability to see self-criticism as a crucial part of the creative process, your confidence as a writer, and your willingness to accept the realities of the publishing industry
- Displaying ambition, originality and innovation, ie.: work which avoids literary cliches and resists formulaic recycling of generic templates or well-worn narrative structures; work which attempts to explore complex ideas or emotions; to experiment with narrative structure; to engage with difficult issues; to renovate or extend existing genres, to demonstrate a dialogic awareness of previous traditions or contemporary movements in literature, etc

- Quality of writing – an unavoidably subjective criterion which requires trust in the professional opinion and critical taste of the marker. The nebulous and unrealistic concept of ‘publishable quality’ will not be employed here so much as a flexible standard of writing in relation to the work of other students.

Tutorial preparation

To satisfy this assessment requirement you are expected to:

- Attempt and maintain copies of the weekly writing exercises
- Provide written feedback on all manuscripts submitted for workshopping

Relation between the assessment criteria and the learning outcomes

- The minor assignment in “Reading as a Writer” will help you to develop your understanding of the craft of writing, to refine your critical reading skills and appreciation of literature, and to better understand the decisions you make in your own writing.
- The Creative Folio will allow you to put into practice the writing skills you have learnt during the course by producing your own original work.
- The tutorial preparation will encourage you to write regularly and experiment with different strategies and conventions of writing. It will also encourage you to gain confidence in presenting your work to readers, to develop the ability to accept criticism of your work, and to develop your ability to critically appraise the work of others, which will help you edit and revise your own work

<i>Assessment task</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Learning outcomes assessed</i>	<i>Graduate attributes assessed</i>	<i>Due date</i>
<i>Reading as a Writer</i>	<i>750-1000 words</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>1-4</i>	<i>1, 3</i>	<i>7th Sep</i>
<i>Creative Folio</i>	<i>3000-35000 words</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>3-6</i>	<i>1, 3</i>	<i>5th Nov</i>
<i>Tutorial Preparation</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>2-6</i>	<i>2, 4</i>	<i>N/A</i>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT HOW THE COURSE WORKS

How you are expected to engage with the course

You will get the most out of this course if you attend all lectures and tutorials, present your work to class as often as possible, and participate fully in group discussions.

Your ideas and opinions in workshops are vital to the success of the course because it relies very much on group-based learning. The workshop is both a form of pre-publication, where you get to test your work with a sympathetic readership, and a communal creative process in which readers share suggestions for re-writing.

Tutorials in the first part of the semester will focus on reading and discussing the weekly writing exercises. Tutorials in the second part of the semester will be devoted to workshopping student manuscripts, with the aim that these manuscripts will then be revised for assessment at the end of semester. All students must submit draft manuscripts for workshopping in order to pass the course.

Guidelines for workshopping

Depending on class sizes, formal workshopping of draft manuscripts will begin in Week Six. A class timetable will be drawn up and each student must put their name down for one workshopping session. Although the point of the workshop is to discuss works in progress, it is important to present a well-developed draft. Handing in one or two pages with the sketchy outline of a story, or a couple of scribbled poems turned out the night before, will not help you or the class. Therefore, think carefully and realistically about when you will have material ready, and once you have nominated a date, commit to it.

When it is your turn to be workshopped, it is your responsibility to email your draft manuscript to the class at least three days in advance. This draft should be a word document attached to the email. **All manuscripts submitted for workshopping should be double-spaced, page numbered, with a minimum of two centimetre margins.** This formatting is important for two reasons: 1) ease of reading and workshopping. Readers need space in the margins and between the lines for proof-reading suggestions, annotations and commentary. Page numbers help everyone find a

particular line or passage being discussed in class; 2) professional practice. Manuscripts submitted to literary journals need to be professionally presented, otherwise they run the risk of being rejected without being read.

It is the responsibility of all students to print up and read these manuscripts before class and come to class prepared to edit and critically assess the material. All work should then be returned to its author with written feedback. **It is very poor form to miss the class following the week in which you have workshopped your manuscript.**

Students are expected to continue their course readings and writing exercises throughout the semester.

SOME INTERESTING THOUGHTS ON HOW THE COURSE IS TAUGHT

Rationale for the inclusion of content and teaching approach

There is no ‘canon’ in Creative Writing pedagogy so the material in the course reader is an inevitable reflection of the individual tastes of the course convenor and the lecturers. Nonetheless, these readings have been selected to give students a feel for the range of contemporary literature, for what is being written now. Without understanding the current state of the art it is hard to be innovative or fresh with your own writing. The readings have also been selected as exemplars of the various formal devices discussed in lectures, and as examples of good writing. They will hopefully provide students with models, with standards to aspire to, with inspiration to write. Students are encouraged to be rigorous with their reading, to really focus at the level of the sentence, or the poetic line, on how literary effects are achieved by writers. Students are encouraged to experiment with forms and styles they are not familiar with, and, above all, to be ambitious.

Teaching strategies

- lectures to impart knowledge of the range of genres and formal devices evident in contemporary literature; to provide an understanding of the craft of writing; and to share with students the great joys of literature

- writing exercises to encourage practical experimentation with these genres and devices, and to generate material for the creative folio
- a minor exercise in “reading as a writer” to further develop the critical reading skills which are essential to the creative process
- workshopping of student manuscripts to gain peer group feedback on works in progress and to develop skills of critical appraisal, editing and redrafting

Course evaluation and development

This course is continually being developed to reflect shifts in contemporary literature and the lecturers’ changing approaches to teaching, in the context of ongoing international scholarship on Creative Writing pedagogy. Honest and productive student feedback is vital to this ongoing process. Why do students enrol in Creative Writing classes? What do they actually hope to learn? These are key questions. If you have any comments about the course which can reasonably be addressed during the semester, please offer these thoughts informally to your tutor or the convenor.

The formal, and anonymous, CATEI evaluation process at the end of semester is also of great significance. Feedback from this forum has resulted in assessment criteria being refined and sharpened, lectures being pitched at a more appropriate level, and heads being nodded in frustrated agreement about the paucity of time available for workshopping.

Now that CATEI evaluations are conducted online, student participation has dropped dramatically, resulting in feedback which is statistically unreliable. For instance, when only a small proportion of students respond, one dissatisfied student can constitute 20% of the overall response. It tends to be only the students who loved a course or those who were disillusioned by it who take the time to fill out the surveys. This presents a skewed overall impression of what students thought. You are thus urged to take the time to fill out the CATEI survey at the end of semester. Remember too, that in the same way comments on an assignment are more helpful than a mark, your written feedback on the course is more important than the boxes you tick, or the circles you click on with your mouse.

OTHER STUFF

Level of progression within the English major

A Level Two course builds on the foundations laid in introductory Level One courses by extending students' engagement with a more specialized field while still addressing broader aspects of literary studies already encountered. After completing this course students should have a more practical understanding of how literature works, having improved their skills in the close reading of literary texts, and developed their literary writing skills. This Level Two course should also equip students for further study in Creative Writing.

Resources for students

For information on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism, Essay-Writing Resources, Late Work, Submission of Assignments, and other relevant School and University Policies, please consult the document "Essential Information for All SAM students", which may be accessed here:

<https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

School Office address: Room 312, Level 3, Robert Webster Building.