ENGL335 Genres of Creative Writing

Prof. S. Tolmie

Winter Term 2020

Mon/Wed 2:30-3:50 HH 119

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Office Hours: Mon/Wed 1:00-2:00 HH 266

Course Description: This course introduces students to both contemporary and historical forms of creative writing. Students will explore genres of poetry and prose fiction through their own writing and via imitating and interacting with published works in a variety of media. Students will also investigate the culture of publishing, learn key revision strategies, and critique the writing of their peers.

Course Objectives or Learning Outcomes: There are three main goals for this course. First is to improve students’ overall confidence, to allow them to take risks and experiment freely in multiple genres of creative writing. Second is to impart a series of technical skills in both poetry and prose. Third is to acclimatize students to the necessary process of giving and taking practical criticism, crucial to any writing career.

Readings: There is no textbook for this class. Occasional short readings will be distributed in class, chosen by students themselves, or posted on LEARN. These will form the basis for exercises or responses. For the most part we will be writing and editing original material. LEARN access will be required throughout this course both in class and outside of it.

Assignments and Practical Processes:

Participation: 30% (20% in class/10% online)

Critique Group Presentation: 15% (a group grade)

Midterm Portfolio: 20%

Final Portfolio: 35%
What Do These Mean?

*Participation:* this is an interactive class in which participation is crucial. It will involve a lot of writing in class and a series of game-like exercises for generating writing material. To get full marks for participation you have to attend class regularly and punctually (as most assignments will be announced and described there, with only brief reminders on LEARN) *with any assigned work completed*, and all drafts of work in progress and other relevant materials to hand. Always bring *both* pen and paper and a computer. Participation also means being a helpful and polite peer editor, discussant and asker of questions. Online it means checking in regularly to the General Forum and to your critique group’s Forum on LEARN and being an active and supportive presence there.

*Critique Group Presentation:* this will be a 20-minute presentation in any format (e.g., talk, skit, dramatic reading, game show, improv exercise) conducted by the critique group of 5-7 students into which you have been randomly placed on LEARN. This group will be an important port of call in this course, the primary place in which you solicit and post comments and critiques (crits). The purpose of this presentation is to show how well your group works together, by whatever means. All members will be graded for their performance on the day, as well as on their preparation and participation online in the group. It is important to adhere to the time constraints, and dates chosen for presentations are firm and cannot be moved. Students who do not pull their weight in the group will receive a letter grade lower than their peers and may receive a zero if they contribute nothing.

*Midterm Portfolio:* in this portfolio, you will hand in one polished piece of writing, in whatever format or genre, one crit of another student’s work, and the most useful crit you received on your own work from another student, plus your response to it. 50% of the grade will reflect the creative piece you submitted, and 25% each for the outgoing and incoming crits and responses.

*Final Portfolio:* on the last day of class, you will hand in a portfolio that contains your four best pieces of work, in whatever format or genre. This may include your midterm portfolio piece. You will also include a personal essay/artist’s statement explaining your creative process in creating the portfolio: how and why you chose these pieces, challenges and rewards of creating them, and any scholarly comments on their forms or techniques (in essay format, 3-5 pages). Finally, you will also submit the best three crits you made of other students’ work. The grade will reflect the creative pieces (50%), the personal essay/artist’s statement (40%) and the crits (10%).
Late policy

Both portfolios in this course must be submitted in person, in class, in hard copy or submitted to the LEARN Dropbox in PDF ONLY by class time on the due date. No exceptions. If portfolios are not in on the due date, they will be marked down 10% (a letter grade). If they are not in one week after the deadline, they receive zero. If you cannot attend class on the due dates and want to submit in hard copy, you must submit portfolios to the English department drop box in Hagey Hall the day before, up to 4 pm (it will be date stamped).

Missed presentations will receive a grade of zero unless a doctor’s note can be provided.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1: Making Things Difficult

1. Mon Jan 6: Words; Writing
2. Wed Jan 8: Listening

Week 2: Nonsense

1. Mon Jan 13: Listening; productive mistakes
2. Wed Jan 15: Dr Suess; Lewis Carroll

Week 3: Form and Sound

1. Mon Jan 20: Poetry: accentual syllabic meter: sonnets
2. Wed Jan 22: Sonnets and processes; nonsense sonnets

Week 4: Form and Content

1. Mon Jan 27: poems on the news; occasional poetry
2. Wed Jan 29: forms: limerick, pantoum, ghazal
Week 5: Poem as Event

1. Mon Feb 3: CRIT GROUP 1 PRESENTATION; filling out forms
2. Wed Feb 5: conversions

Week 6: Free-From Poetry

1. Mon Feb 10: free verse: what’s free about it?
2. Wed Feb 12: MIDTERM PORTFOLIOS DUE

STUDY WEEK FEB 17-21, NO CLASSES

Week 7: Prose is the Thing That Is Not Poetry

1. Mon Feb 24: CRIT GROUP 2 PRESENTATION; unpicking poems
2. Wed Feb 26: microfictions: 6- word, 150-word

Week 8: Shorts

1. Mon Mar 2: CRIT GROUP 3 PRESENTATION; flash fiction; person and perspective
2. Wed Mar 4: Flash fiction; tense

Week 9: Things

1. Mon Mar 9: CRIT GROUP 4 PRESENTATION; Chekhov’s Gun
2. Wed Mar 11: Here and Not Here

Week 10: Dialogue

1. Mon Mar 16: CRIT GROUP 5 PRESENTATION; direct speech
2. Wed Mar 18: indirect speech
Week 11: Narration

1. Mon Mar 23: CRIT GROUP 6 PRESENTATION; free indirect discourse

Week 12: The Order of Things

1. Mon Mar 30: beginning, middle, end
2. Wed April 1: FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE

Policies and Resources

Academic Integrity
In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage and the Arts Academic Integrity webpage for more information.

Discipline
A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties.

Grievance
A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals
A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a
A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals.

Note for Students with Disabilities
The AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (NH 1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

The Writing Centre
The Writing Centre works across all faculties to help students clarify their ideas, develop their voices, and write in the style appropriate to their disciplines. Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit their page. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available. Please note that writing specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not proof-read or edit for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.