Fall, 1995
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-1:00; HH 139

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Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday, 2:30-4:00; whenever you can catch me.

Course epitome
The course title is redundant: all writing, by definition, is creative; some more, some less. Consequently, we will be trying out several genres of (creative) nonfiction as well as the more conventional mix of fiction and poetry. This is not a course in therapeutic writing, or "self expression". It is a course in writing which explores linguistic and imaginative ways to make it more, rather than less, creative.

I don't know how to teach writing beyond principles of grammar. I don't think anyone does. I don't think it can be taught. I do think, however, think it can be learned, in two ways: by reading a lot, and by writing a lot. This course puts a grade-loaded gun to your forehead and forces you to do both. Whether you learn is up to you.

And one more thing: we'll be following the ancient rhetorical technique of imitation. You will be writing most of your assignments in other 'voices'.

Required texts
Mc Cormack, *Inspecting the vaults*
Coupland, *Microserfs*
Small, *What's love got to do with it?*
cummings, *Selected poems*
335 Course reader

Recommended
*The Canadian writer's guide*

Requirements
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<th>Participation</th>
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<td>Assignments</td>
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<td>Fill-in-the-blank analysis</td>
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<td>Voice journal</td>
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<td>Peer review memo</td>
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<td>Feature work</td>
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Rules
No late assignments will be accepted, no extensions will be granted, and no incompletes will be awarded, without very strong reasons.

Always prepare two copies of every assignment: one for me, and one for your peer reviewer.
## Schedule

Please have all readings done BEFORE class, and be prepared to DISCUSS them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Sept</td>
<td>Hello; how are you?</td>
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<td>14 Sept</td>
<td>Hello; who are you?</td>
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<td>19 Sept</td>
<td>Hello; may we see your work?</td>
<td>1. Short prose or poetry.</td>
<td>Book reviews</td>
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<td>21 Sept</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>2. Book Review</td>
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<td>26 Sept</td>
<td>Cheryl Cohen</td>
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<td>28 Sept</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
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<td>3 Oct</td>
<td>To be or not</td>
<td>In-class rewrite à la Johnston</td>
<td>Johnston</td>
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<td>5 Oct</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>3. Gonzoed non-fiction</td>
<td>Thompson</td>
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<td>10 Oct</td>
<td>HST and Gonzoism</td>
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<td>12 Oct</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>4. Movie review à la Pevere</td>
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<td>17 Oct</td>
<td>Geoff Pevere</td>
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<td>19 Oct</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>5. Pop culture Renzetti</td>
<td>Renzetti</td>
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<td>24 Oct</td>
<td>Liz Renzetti</td>
<td>6. Fiction à laCoupland</td>
<td>Coupland</td>
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<td>26 Oct</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
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<td>31 Oct</td>
<td>X-People</td>
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<td>2 Nov</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>7. poem/try à la cummings</td>
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<td>7 Nov</td>
<td>Poetry; cummings</td>
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<td>9 Nov</td>
<td>Poetry free-for-all</td>
<td>8. poem/try à la tu</td>
<td>Kaszuba</td>
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<td>14 Nov</td>
<td>Sophia Kaszuba</td>
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<td>16 Nov</td>
<td>Poetry free-for-all</td>
<td>9. Feature project proposal</td>
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<td>21 Nov</td>
<td>Circle-poetry</td>
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<td>23 Nov</td>
<td>Open session on feature works</td>
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<td>28 Nov</td>
<td>Eric McCormack</td>
<td>10. short fiction à la McCormack</td>
<td>McCormack</td>
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<td>30 Nov</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
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<td>5 Dec</td>
<td>So long; thanks for all the fish</td>
<td>Peer Review Memo; Voice journal</td>
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ASSIGNMENTS

GENERAL READING ASSIGNMENT
Read and skim liberally among the mass of writing you see everyday, being particularly alert to issues of voice. The Globe and Mail is a good place to start, particularly since we will be discussing, and meeting, one of its writers (Renzetti), one of its editors (Cohen), and a free lance who places a lot in its pages (Pevere) but any venue is fine: The New Yorker is great, Wired is style-rich, various Toronto Sun columnists (Fisher, Amiel) are good grist. Bring your thoughts on these materials to class for general discussion.

ONE
Short fiction, nonfiction, or poetry, in your own voice. Something you’ve already written is fine, though you might want to polish it a bit, if needed.

TWO
A book review of What’s love got to do with it? Use the reviews in the course reader for models (800 words). In class, you will rewrite this review in Johnston’s style.

THREE
An autobiographical non-fiction pop culture story in the manner of Hunter S. Thompson (1000 words).

FOUR
A review of any current movie in the manner of Pevere (800 words).

FIVE
A pop culture story in the manner of Renzetti (800 words).

SIX
Short fiction in the manner of Coupland (1000).

SEVEN
A poem (or a few poems) in the manner of e. e. cummings (length is your own concern)

EIGHT
A poem (or a few poems) in your own voice, or, if you’re feeling brave, in the manner of Kaszuba. (length is your own concern)

NINE
A memo outlining your feature project, including where you will be submitting it for publication.

TEN
Short fiction in the manner of McCormack. (1000 words)

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANALYSIS
This will be a primarily stylistic/voice/persona analysis, of an author of your choice. You will need to tell the class a bit about context, but your main jobs are (1) to epitomize and evaluate the distinctive features that make up the author’s voice, and (2) to suggest what elements of this voice you think can benefit your own writing, and the writing of the other students in class. Any author, in any genre, will be fine. But you should focus on at least one-book, or a series of essays, stories, poems, etc. (i.e., don’t base your whole analysis on a couple of short stories or poems or magazine features.)

(The presentation time will depend on enrollment, but will not exceed 15 minutes.)

VOICE JOURNAL
Keep a journal about the authors we read, and any other authors you read who catch your eye/ear. You should have an entry for each of authors in our reading list (though you can concentrate on only author one for the book review readings), along with 2 or 3 more. Be concise (4-5 sentences per entry may be enough), but be precise.

FEATURE WORK
This is the main assignment of the term,—a feature story, essay, suite of poems, etc., intended for publication in a popular or literary journal. Word count is pretty free here, depending on the genre and medium of intended publication. But I am serious about the publication intention; you should be too. Include a memo outlining where you intend this piece to appear, and what characteristics it has that such an outlet might be interested in.
Peer Reviewing

Working Fictions: The Reviewer will read the work like an anal-retentive editor and work with the Reviewee on every conceivable aspect of the review—including, but not limited to, the categories outlined below—in a session that will take no more than forty minutes. Then you will change roles. For this process to work, it is critical that you both come to specific agreements about changes to the piece: make sure that every point of disagreement about the text comes to some form of closure.

With respect to all of these categories, please keep firmly mind your understanding of how the voice du jour (de la semaine) uses the elements of that category.

And keep in mind that rules can serve their best purpose if they are effectively broken, bent, or even mangled. But they can only serve that purpose if (1) the author knows the rule in the first place, (2) the author has a specific purpose in mind, and (3) the breaking, bending, or mangling clearly serves that purpose.

Spelling
Correct, slap both wrists, and move on.

Punctuation
Watch in particular for unorthodox period and comma usage: if the author can’t justify it, or (especially) isn’t aware that the usage is unorthodox, it needs fixing. Other marks that tend to be abused are apostrophes, quotation marks, and parentheses. Some marks that tend to be overused are exclamation marks, dashes, and parentheses. One which tends to be underused (especially for compounds) is the hyphen.

Syntax
Watch for unorthodox or awkward phrase groupings (nouns, rather than adjectives, modifying other nouns; adjectives, rather than adverbs, modifying verbs; stranded prepositions; etc.) and make sure they are justified: if the author can’t justify the phrasing, or (especially) isn’t aware that it is unorthodox, it needs fixing. Watch also for bad agreement, especially verbs that don’t go with their subjects and pronouns without appropriate (or any) antecedents.

Diction
Are the words appropriate? Do they mean what the author wants them to mean? Do they mean the same thing (or anything at all) to the projected readers? Are there more appropriate words, ones with more resonance, punch, or directness? If there are neologisms, are they justified (clear to the reader, serving a purpose, not duplicating a word that already exists)? Is the morphology orthodox (and should it be, in the context)? Are the specialized terms (if any) defined (implicitly or explicitly) clearly?
Structure

Sentence/line. Do the words develop naturally into a proposition (or question, or command—whatever is appropriate)? Do the subordinate propositions support the main proposition naturally? Watch particularly for parallelism faults and for pointless word strings. Does every word in the sentence develop it in some way?

Paragraph/stanza. Do the sentences/lines develop naturally into a paragraph/stanza? In particular, is there a clear point to the stanza or paragraph (something either expressed or expressible in a topic sentence), and does every sentence/line serve that point?

Overall. Do the paragraphs/stanzas develop naturally into a coherent work. In particular, is there a clear point to the piece (something either expressed or expressible in a thesis statement), and does every paragraph/stanza serve that point. The two most important terms here are theme (that is, the thing expressible in a thesis statement) and plot (the and-then, and-then, and-then unfolding of events), which ALL texts have: these are not just terms which concern fiction.

Imagery

Are the images sharp? Are they memorable? Do they serve a clear purpose?

Persona

Is the author's voice consistent? Does it suit the topic, the genre, and the venue of the piece? Can you describe that voice in a few short sentences?

Audience

Does the author have a clear grasp of audience? Is it consistent? Does it suit the topic, the genre, and the venue of the piece? Can you describe the author's sense of audience in a few short sentences?

Overall

Answer these questions by assigning a numerical value to the work.

What is your general impression of the piece?

poop paper

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What is your general impression of its potential, after revision?

it's hopeless; give up now

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Page 5: Peer review criteria
GRADING

PARTICIPATION
I will evaluate your participation in class discussions by the familiar criteria: quantity and quality. Several relevant and helpful contributions per class will earn you an A++; regular silence and/or absenteeism will earn you an F--; contributions falling betwixt the twain will be graded betwixtly.

PEER REVIEW
You will evaluate each other's peer-review contributions, which means you need to submit a memo on the last day of class commenting on and grading the people who have reviewed your work and discussed it with you. Your mark will come entirely from others' evaluation of your reviews, with one exception: if you do not hand in a memo, your peer-review mark will be F-.

The memo: Keep a record of everyone who discusses your work with you. Assign everyone a letter grade and write at least two sentences to justify that grade.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
Treat them as a job: do them, and you get paid; not, and not. There will be no grade assigned to any of them individually. If you hand in all of them, you will get twenty unalloyed percentage points toward your final grade. Miss one, and you will get fifteen, alloyed, percentage points. Miss two or more, you get zero for this component of the course. I'm not kidding.

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK
I will evaluate your analysis partially on presentation style but largely on the breadth and depth of your analysis; in particular, what are the features of this writer that you find distinctive, and how can you adapt (or, in a negative example, avoid) those features to improve your own work.

VOICE JOURNAL
I will evaluate your journal mostly on accuracy and perceptiveness, but also completeness. There should be, minimally, one entry for each of the topics of the course (i.e., one from the book review readings, one on Renzetti, one on Thompson, ...), but include a few other voices from your 'outside' reading. The only format issue is legibility (if I can't read it, I can't evaluate it): use computer printouts, e-mail, long-hand, whatever, so long as you're comfortable.

Note: keep this as a journal, with regular, dated, entries. You would be really nuts if you thought you could throw together something the night before it's due.

FEATURE WORK
Write good stuff, get a good mark.

Note: this work will not be marked at all without a covering memo explaining your intention to publish (and, especially, where). The publishing venue must be seriously considered. If it isn't, you will not have completed the course requirements, and you will receive a grade of INComplete; if, within one term, you have not found a suitable venue (or written something else, with the same requirements), your course mark will revert to F-. I'm serious.