Course Co-ordinator: Kim Cheng Boey  
Room: MC 142  
Ph: 02 – 4921 6780  
Fax: 02 – 4921 6933  
Email: kimcheng.boey@newcastle.edu.au  
Consultation hours: Friday 9-11am

ENGL1201 - Creative Reading and Writing  
Course Outline

Semester  
Semester 2 - 2009

Unit Weighting
10

Teaching Methods
Lecture  
Seminar  
Workshop

Brief Course Description
This is an introduction to creative writing that stresses the importance of creative reading in developing the skills and techniques of the beginning writer. Through a close reading of texts across different genres, students are alerted to the creative possibilities and challenges specific to each genre and are encouraged to imitate and adapt the tools of the writing trade.

Contact Hours
Workshop for 2 Hours per Week for the Full Term  
Workshop/lecture/seminar

Learning Materials/Texts

Course Objectives
Upon successful completion of this course, students will have
1. acquired an understanding of the art of creative reading - the ability to identify a good text and use it as a creative model;
2. developed the ability to analyse literary texts in a coherent way;
3. acquired a knowledge of the different genres, the literary canons, tradition and forms
4. started on the writing path with literary exemplars to inspire them.

Course Content
This course is an introduction to creative writing with the focus on reading as an essential part of the development of the writer.

The structured reading program guides students through the different genres, literary forms and traditions and reveals the skills and techniques of major writers. Students learn to respect the various literary canons but are at the same time encouraged to experiment and reshape inherited forms. They are directed to literary exemplars to hone their writing instincts and skills, in classroom writing exercises and in their chosen creative project.

Particular attention will be paid to
* the features and creative challenges of the different genres;
* the literary traditions and canons of each genre;
* the critical tools in literary analysis;
* the skills and techniques of major writers;
* discovering literary exemplars to inspire students.

Assessment Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essays / Written Assignments</th>
<th>* Creative Work: 2500 words or equivalent (65%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays / Written Assignments</td>
<td>* Short Creative Writing Exercise: 500 words or equivalent (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Critical Essay: 1000 words (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: (please specify)</td>
<td>Students must submit all assessment items in order to complete the course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assumed Knowledge
Nil.

Callaghan Campus Timetable
ENGL1201 CREATIVE READING AND WRITING
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2009

Seminar
Wednesday 11:00 - 13:00 [MCG28C]
or Wednesday 11:00 - 13:00 [GP212/214]
or Wednesday 11:00 - 13:00 [MC132]
or Wednesday 15:00 - 17:00 [V104]
or Wednesday 17:00 - 19:00 [MCLG59]
or Wednesday 17:00 - 19:00 [W243]
or Wednesday 15:00 - 17:00 [MCLG59]
or Wednesday 15:00 - 17:00 [MCG28C]

Ourimbah Timetable
ENGL1201 CREATIVE READING AND WRITING
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2009

Seminar
Tuesday 9:00 - 11:00 [O_CN2112]
or Tuesday 13:00 - 15:00 [O_CN2102]
IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity, honesty, and a respect for knowledge, truth and ethical practices are fundamental to the business of the University. These principles are at the core of all academic endeavour in teaching, learning and research. Dishonest practices contravene academic values, compromise the integrity of research and devalue the quality of learning. To preserve the quality of learning for the individual and others, the University may impose severe sanctions on activities that undermine academic integrity.

There are two major categories of academic dishonesty:

**Academic fraud** is a form of academic dishonesty that involves making a false representation to gain an unjust advantage. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it can include:

a) falsification of data;

b) using a substitute person to undertake, in full or part, an examination or other assessment item;

c) reusing one's own work, or part thereof, that has been submitted previously and counted towards another course (without permission);

d) making contact or colluding with another person, contrary to instructions, during an examination or other assessment item;

e) bringing material or device(s) into an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item; and

f) making use of computer software or other material and device(s) during an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item.

g) contract cheating or having another writer compete for tender to produce an essay or assignment and then submitting the work as one's own.

**Plagiarism** is the presentation of the thoughts or works of another as one's own. University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

a) copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;

b) using another person's ideas without due acknowledgment;

c) collusion or working with others without permission, and presenting the resulting work as though it were completed independently.

**Turnitin** is an electronic text matching system. During assessing any assessment item the University may:

- Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or

- Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a text matching service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future checking).

- Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

RE-MARKS AND MODERATIONS

Students can access the University’s policy at: [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000769.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000769.html)
MARKS AND GRADES RELEASED DURING TERM

All marks and grades released during term are indicative only until formally approved by the Head of School.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING ASSESSMENT ITEMS

*Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations* items must be submitted by the due date in the Course Outline unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension. Unapproved late submissions will be penalised in line with the University policy specified in *Late Penalty* above.

Requests for *Extensions of Time* must be lodged no later than the due date of the item. This applies to students:

- applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or
- whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment.

Students must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, as outlined in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure at: [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html)

*Note:* different procedures apply for minor and major assessment tasks.

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

- Special Consideration Requests must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.
- Rescheduling Exam requests must be received no later than 10 working days prior the first date of the examination period.

*Late applications may not be accepted.* Students who cannot meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak firstly to their Program Officer or their Program Executive if studying in Singapore.

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness. If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au. As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester. For more information on confidentiality and documentation visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website: [www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability).

CHANGING YOUR ENROLMENT

Students enrolled after the census dates listed in the link below are liable for the full cost of their student contribution or fees for that term.

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of term. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of term will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of term, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of term must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs or with your Program Executive at PSB if you are a Singapore student.

To check or change your enrolment online go to myHub: https://myhub.newcastle.edu.au

STUDENT INFORMATION & CONTACTS

Various services are offered by the Student Support Unit: www.newcastle.edu.au/service/studentsupport/

The Student Hubs are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students studying in Australia. Student Hubs are located at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Callaghan Campus</th>
<th>Port Macquarie students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Building</td>
<td>contact your program officer or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Hub: Level 2, Student Services Centre</td>
<td><a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Precinct</td>
<td>Phone 4921 5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Hub &amp; Information Common, University House</td>
<td>Singapore students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contact your PSB Program Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Coast Campus (Ourimbah)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Hub: Opposite the Main Cafeteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Websites</th>
<th>General enquiries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/business-law/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/business-law/</a></td>
<td>Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/</a></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4921 5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/engineering/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/engineering/</a></td>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/health/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/health/</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/science-it/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/science-it/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards</td>
<td>Ourimbah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000311.html">www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000311.html</a></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4348 4030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules Governing Postgraduate Academic Awards</td>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000306.html">www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000306.html</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules Governing Professional Doctorate Awards</td>
<td>The Dean of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000580.html">www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000580.html</a></td>
<td>Deputy Dean of Students (Ourimbah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4921 5806;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fax: 02 4921 7151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au">resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This course outline will not be altered after the second week of the term except under extenuating circumstances with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of the change.
Online Tutorial Registration:

Students are required to enrol in the Lecture and a specific Tutorial time for this course via the Online Registration system. Refer - [http://studinfo1.newcastle.edu.au/rego/stud_choose_login.cfm](http://studinfo1.newcastle.edu.au/rego/stud_choose_login.cfm)

NB: Registrations close at the end of week 2 of semester.

Studentmail and Blackboard: Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

Important Additional Information

Details about the following topics are available on your course Blackboard site (where relevant). Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

- Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details
- Online copy submission to Turnitin
- Penalties for Late Assignments
- Special Circumstances
- No Assignment Re-submission
- Re-marks & Moderations
- Return of Assignments
- Preferred Referencing Style
- Student Representatives
- Student Communication
- Essential Online Information for Students
Faculty of Education and Arts
School of Humanities & Social Science

ENGL 1201 Creative Reading and Writing
Important Additional Information

Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date. Late assignments will be subject to the penalties described below.

Hard copy submission:

- **Type your assignments:** All work must be typewritten in 11 or 12 point black font. Leave a wide margin for marker's comments, use 1.5 or double spacing, and include page numbers.
- **Word length:** The word limit of all assessment items should be strictly followed – 10% above or below is acceptable, otherwise penalties may apply.
- **Proof read your work** because spelling, grammatical and referencing mistakes will be penalised.
- **Staple the pages** of your assignment together (do not use pins or paper clips).
- **University Assessment Item Coversheet:** All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet available at: [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/)
- **By arrangement with the relevant lecturer, assignments may be submitted at any Student Hub located at:**
  - Level 3, Shortland Union, Callaghan
  - Level 2, Student Services Centre, Callaghan
  - Ground Floor, University House, City
  - Opposite Café Central, Ourimbah
- **Date-stamping assignments:** All students must date-stamp their own assignments using the machine provided at each Student Hub. If mailing an assignment, this should be address to the relevant School. Mailed assignments are accepted from the date posted, confirmed by a Post Office date-stamp; they are also date-stamped upon receipt by Schools.

**NB: Not all of these services may apply to the Port Macquarie Campus.**

- **Do not fax or email assignments:** Only hard copies of assignments will be considered for assessment. Inability to physically submit a hard copy of an assignment by the deadline due to other commitments or distance from campus is an unacceptable excuse.
- **Keep a copy of all assignments:** It is the student’s responsibility to produce a copy of their work if the assignment goes astray after submission. Students are advised to keep updated back-ups in electronic and hard copy formats.

Online copy submission to Turnitin

In addition to hard copy submission, students are required to submit an electronic version of the following assignments to Turnitin via the course Blackboard website available at [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)
  - Creative Work: 2500 words or equivalent (65%)
  - Short Creative Writing Exercise: 500 words or equivalent (15%)
  - Critical Essay: 1000 words (20%)
Prior to final submission, all students have the opportunity to submit one draft of their assignment to Turnitin to self-check their referencing. Assignments will not be marked until both hard copy and online versions have been submitted. Marks may be deducted for late submission of either version.

Academic Integrity

Integrity, honesty, and a respect for knowledge and truth are the bases of all academic endeavours in teaching, learning and research. To preserve the quality of learning, both for the individual and for others enrolled, the University imposes severe sanctions on activities that undermine academic integrity.

There are two major categories of academic dishonesty:

(a) Academic Fraud, in which a false representation is made to gain an unjust advantage by, for example,

- the falsification of data
- reusing one’s own work that has been submitted previously and counted towards another course (without permission)
- misconduct in Examinations

(b) Plagiarism, which is the presentation of the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes

- copying, paraphrasing, or using someone else’s ideas without appropriate acknowledgement
- failure to identify direct quotation through the use of quotation marks
- working with others without permission and presenting the resulting work as though it were completed independently.

Please note that aiding another student to plagiarise (e.g. by lending assignments to other students) is also a violation of the Plagiarism Policy and may invoke a penalty.

For further information on the University policy on plagiarism, please refer to the Policy on Student Academic Integrity at the following link -


Penalties for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the due date, without an approved extension of time will be penalised by the reduction of 5% of the possible maximum mark for the assessment item for each day or part day that the item is late. Weekends count as one day in determining the penalty. Assessment items submitted more than ten days after the due date will be awarded zero marks.

Refer - ‘Rules Governing the Administration of Assessment Items - Rule 000113’ available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000113.html (section 18)

Special Circumstances

Students wishing to apply for Special Circumstances or Extension of Time should apply online. Refer - ‘Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items - Procedure 000641’ available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html

Assignment Re-submission

As this is a 1000 level course a student who fails the first assessment item will be allowed to correct errors and re-submit the assignment for a capped mark of 50% of the available marks for the assessment item.

Re-marks & Moderations

A student may only request a re-mark of an assessment item before the final result - in the course to which the assessment item contributes - has been posted. If a final result in the course has been posted, the student must apply under ‘Procedures for Appeal Against a Final Result’ (Refer - http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/).

Students concerned at the mark given for an assessment item should first discuss the matter with the Course Coordinator. If subsequently requesting a re-mark, students should be aware that as a result of a re-mark the original mark may be increased or reduced. The case for a re-mark should be outlined in writing and submitted to the Course Coordinator, who determines whether a re-mark should be granted, taking into consideration all of the following:

1. whether the student had discussed the matter with the Course Coordinator
2. the case put forward by the student for a re-mark
3. the weighting of the assessment item and its potential impact on the student’s final mark or grade
4. the time required to undertake the re-mark
5. the number of original markers, that is,
   a) whether there was a single marker, or
   b) if there was more than one marker whether there was agreement or disagreement on the marks awarded.

A re-mark may also be initiated at the request of the Course Coordinator, the Head of School, the School Assessment Committee, the Faculty Progress and Appeals Committee or the Pro Vice-Chancellor. Re-marks may be undertaken by:

1. the original marker; or
2. an alternate internal marker; or
3. an alternate external marker (usually as a consequence of a grievance procedure).

Moderation may be applied when there is a major discrepancy (or perceived discrepancy) between:

1. the content of the course as against the content or nature of the assessment item(s)
2. the content or nature of the assessment item(s) as against those set out in the Course Outline
3. the marks given by a particular examiner and those given by another in the same course
4. the results in a particular course and the results in other courses undertaken by the same students.

For further detail on this University policy refer - ‘Re-marks and Moderations - Procedure 000769’ available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000769.html
Return of Assignments

Students can collect assignments from a nominated Student Hub during office hours. Students will be informed during class which Hub to go to and the earliest date that assignments will be available for collection. Students must present their student identification card to collect their assignment.


Preferred Referencing Style

In this course, it is recommended that you use the MLA referencing system (similar to the APA system) for referencing sources of information used in assignments. Inadequate or incorrect reference to the work of others may be viewed as plagiarism and result in reduced marks or failure.

An in-text citation names the author of the source, gives the date of publication, and for a direct quote includes a page number, in parentheses. At the end of the paper, a list of references provides publication information about the source; the list is alphabetised by authors’ last names (or by titles for works without authors). For further information on referencing and general study skills refer - ‘Infoskills’ available @ www.newcastle.edu.au/services/library/tutorials/infoskills/index.html

Student Representatives

Student Representatives are a major channel of communication between students and the School. Contact details of Student Representatives can be found on School websites.

Refer - ‘Information for Student Representatives on Committees’ available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/committees/student_reps/index.html

Student Communication

Students should discuss any course related matters with their Tutor, Lecturer, or Course Coordinator in the first instance and then the relevant Discipline or Program Convenor. If this proves unsatisfactory, they should then contact the Head of School if required. Contact details can be found on the School website.

Essential Online Information for Students

Information on Class and Exam Timetables, Tutorial Online Registration, Learning Support, Campus Maps, Careers information, Counselling, the Health Service and a range of free Student Support Services is available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/currentstudents/index.html

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading guide</th>
<th>Fail (FF)</th>
<th>Pass (P)</th>
<th>Credit (C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49% or less</td>
<td>An unacceptable effort, including non-completion. The student has not understood the basic principles of the subject matter and/or has been unable to express their understanding in a comprehensible way. Deficient in terms of answering the question, research, referencing and correct presentation (spelling, grammar etc). May include extensive plagiarism.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% to 64%</td>
<td>The work demonstrates a reasonable attempt to answer the question, shows some grasp of the basic principles of the subject matter and a basic knowledge of the required readings, is comprehensible, accurate and adequately referenced.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65% to 74%</td>
<td>The work demonstrates a clear understanding of the question, a capacity to integrate research into the discussion, and a critical appreciation of a range of different theoretical perspectives. A deficiency in any of the above may be compensated by evidence of independent thought. The work is coherent and accurate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>75% to 84%</td>
<td>Distinction (D)</td>
<td>Evidence of substantial additional reading and/or research, and evidence of the ability to generalise from the theoretical content to develop an argument in an informed and original manner. The work is well organised, clearly expressed and shows a capacity for critical analysis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>85% upwards</td>
<td>High Distinction (HD)</td>
<td>All of the above, plus a thorough understanding of the subject matter based on substantial additional reading and/or research. The work shows a high level of independent thought, presents informed and insightful discussion of the topic, particularly the theoretical issues involved, and demonstrates a well-developed capacity for critical analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weekly Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Week Commencing</th>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27/07/09</td>
<td>Introduction: Reading Into Writing – Sources: Mark Strand’s and Eavan Boland’s introductions to <em>The Making of the Poem</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>17/08/09</td>
<td>In the Beginning – Carver’s “Fat”; Doris Lessing’s “The Habit of Loving”; Edna O’Brien’s “Sister Imelda”; Truman Capote’s “Children on Their Birthdays.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>24/08/09</td>
<td>The Image – Wallace Stevens’ “The Idea of Order at Key West”; John Keats’s “To Autumn”; Shelley’s “Ode to the Wild West Wind.” Submit 500-word Creative Task (or equivalent in poetry) 26th August for Callaghan; 28th Aug for Merewether</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>31/08/9</td>
<td>Plot – William Trevor’s “Beyond the Pale”; Cesare Pavese’s “Suicides”; Carver’s “Fat”; Joyce Carol Oates’s “The Tryst.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>14/09/09</td>
<td>Placing the Story – Graham Greene’s “Two Gentle People”; William Maxwell’s “The Pilgrimage”; Richard Ford’s “Communist.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>21/09/09</td>
<td>Open Forms: – Gwendolyn Brooks’s “We Real Cool”; T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”; Allen Ginsberg’s “America.” Submit 1,000-word Critical Essay 23rd September for Callaghan, 25th Sept for Merewether</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>28/09/09</td>
<td>Semester Recess: 28 September to 11 October 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12/10/09</td>
<td>Point of View – Naguib Mahfouz’s “The Conjurer Made Off with the Dish”; Alberto Moravia’s “Jewellery”; Albert Camus’s “The Adulterous Woman.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>19/10/09</td>
<td>Character – Patrick White’s “Five-Twenty”; V. S. Pritchett’s “The Saint.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/11/09</td>
<td>Submit 2,500-word Portfolio Monday, 2 November</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COURSE INTRODUCTION

The discussion/essay topics are divided into critical and creative sections. The critical section focuses on literary analysis and appreciation of the stories and poems. You will acquire critical tools and concepts such as genre, verse form, narrative structure, etc., and apply them to the texts being read. The creative section consists of writing exercises related to the themes and writing skills and techniques covered in the readings.

AS YOU SET OUT

This course, like the other courses in the Creative Writing program, is not a hobby writing class. It is for those who have a commitment to reading and writing, who have felt the need to put into coherent form the stories of their lives.

Some of you may question the need to read, especially works which seem to defy and challenge common perceptions of what a story or poem is. Most of the stories you will encounter in *The Art of the Tale* (your companion for the rest of your journey here, the three years, if you decide to go that far) are not easy, run-of-the-mill commercial fiction. The stories don’t have a straightforward beginning, middle and end. Flannery O’Connor says: “A story isn’t really any good unless it successfully resists paraphrase, unless it hangs on and expands in the mind.” Life is more inexplicable and ineffable than we think, and works of art are attempts to express what cannot be expressed, the questions, and the silences. We want stories that challenge us, make us rethink, and look at worn things with new eyes. We want to be lifted out of ourselves, enter another’s world, live other lives, and feel our imagination extended in the reading journey.

READING

W. H. Auden remarks that “Poetry makes nothing happen.” The irony is there, but the line is often read as implying that the arts are impotent to save humankind from evil and self-destruction. Primo Levi, a survivor of Auschwitz, recounts an incident in the death camp that indicates otherwise. In *If This Is a Man*, Levi teaches a French camp-mate Italian. He finds himself reeling off the Canto on Ulysses from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Levi feels as if he is hearing it for the first time himself, and for a moment can “forget who I am and where I am.” The two men are connected by the talismanic power of Dante’s words. Unfortunately, a few lines elude Levi’s memory. He says without irony: “I would give today’s soup to know how to connect the last fragments to the end of the Canto.” Looking back on the incident thirty years later, he asserts: “When I wrote ‘I would give today’s soup to know how to retrieve the forgotten passage,’ I had neither lied nor exaggerated; I really would have given bread and soup — that is blood — to save from nothingness those memories which today, with the sure support of printed paper I can refresh gratis whenever I wish, and which therefore seem of little value.”

The incident is ample testament to the power of reading, and of good writing. Even if it cannot save an innocent child from the concentration camp, it does serve in an ineffable way to help us endure. Robert Frost famously says that the poem is “a momentary stay against confusion.” The good poem or story can sustain us by making a provisional order out of chaos, with its salving arrangement of words, its stitching of fragments together into some kind of order.

We want to read books that stay in our heads, reverberate, make us attentive to the mysteries of life, death and love. Kafka says that books should act like axes upon our frozen souls. Reading should help us live more intensely, be more questioningly alive. It is a rite of initiation and passage into other worlds. *The Art of the Tale* and *The Making of a Poem* offer not only a glimpse of possible writing styles and techniques, but a compendium of different cultures and languages, of other ways of seeing and envisioning the world. Many writers take a journey through foreign literatures and languages to find exemplars, in an attempt to liberate themselves from the all too familiar voices of home, and discover their own voices.
READING INTO WRITING

Eudora Welty observes: “Learning to write may be part of learning to read. For all I know, writing comes out of a superior devotion to reading.”

We write because we have read. Writing in a way is a seamless extension of reading. It is a conversation we hold with books and writers, a deeper form of reading. Great writers are also great readers, committing to memory the cadences, the voices, of the writers to whom they have apprenticed themselves. In the old days, it was not uncommon for poets to copy out poems by other poets for their friends, or for themselves. John Keats copied poems to send to his friends. Theodore Roethke copied by hand the poems he loved. Joan Didion reveals that she typed out Ernest Hemingway’s stories “to learn how the sentences worked.”

“Reading is complicity in the creative process,” Marina Tsvetyeva affirms. We share with the writer the state of trance, of inspiration, the moment of insight and epiphany. We listen when we read, listen to the way the words come off the page, the intimate tone in which certain lines speak, as if directed solely to ourselves. We assimilate these voices, and try to find out what makes them sound like music, like truth. We write with the voices and influences of other writers, dead or alive, circulating in our bloodstream.

We set out by imitating, by trying to come close to the voices that have spoken to us. That is the first step in creative reading, letting the words emerge in response to other words, other voices. You see, hear and feel how what is being read works. You discover the approach, the strategies, the choices of a writer. You adapt these to make the elements in your story come together, make the characters come alive. As your repertoire of tricks increases, you discover you have a new trick of your own; but didn’t somebody you read a few life-times ago also use that somewhere? You acknowledge the debt, but also feel that you have earned it, the phrasing that sounds almost like your own now. Somewhere along the way, the two paths become one, creative reading and writing. Writing is reading. You read the words as they emerge, you read the words reading your thoughts, printing the images and translating the pulses of your heart and mind. Sometimes you read your work as if it were written by another.

This course firstly aims to prepare you for a lifetime of creative reading, reading books which matter, books which may help you on the way to writing better, or failing that, help you to ask the important questions. Reading the texts deeply and creatively, we hear the internal music of the stories and poems, and know what makes them sing. We start to tune in to the mysteries of the invisible, become alive to the visible world, and see, as if for the first time, the pen in our hand, the paper where the words have emerged, and out there, another world.

WRITTEN WORK

You are required to submit a 500-word response to a specific creative task, a portfolio of original prose or poetry, a critical essay. You should use the weekly creative tasks or writing exercises in the course to shape your portfolio, though you are also free to develop your work independently. The 2,500-word creative portfolio can be a sustained short story or a collection of shorter pieces. As an equivalent to 2,500 words of creative prose, the number of poems can range from 6 to 14 depending on the length and quality. You may attempt a mixed portfolio of fiction and poetry. A portfolio which shows no sign of engagement with the readings, or with the writing skills you are being asked to practise, will nonetheless be considered as displaying, not originality, but an unwillingness to learn the craft of writing.

For the 1000-word critical essay, you must choose one of the critical essay questions listed on the assessment page. You can find instructions on how to present and style your critical essay in the “Guidelines on Essay Writing.”

If you have doubts, uncertainty and anxiety about what you are doing or supposed to be doing, please speak with your tutor or the course coordinator. There is a discussion board on Blackboard; log on if you want to meet your fellow writers and readers. You can arrange to meet, outside the workshop, to discuss issues relating to writers, writing and reading; for some writers a flat white is equivalent to the Castalian spring, essential to inspiration.
ASSESSMENT ITEMS

SHORT CREATIVE EXERCISE

Date due: Wednesday 26th August for Callaghan, Friday 28th for Merewether  
Hard Copy Submission: In Class or Student Hub  
Submission to Turnitin: No  
Word length: 500 words (or equivalent in poetry, say 2–6 poems)  
Percentage of assessment: 15%

This is an opportunity to test out how work which you may (or may not) have had workshopped is assessed by your tutor. If a short story, it should be kept short, not exceeding two A4 pages. If a long poem or group of poems, the word-count may be considerably less than 500 words, but should also not exceed two A4 pages.

The creative exercise may be in response to one of the weekly creative tasks in “Workshop Preparation Notes,” or one of the in-workshop writing exercises; or it may be independent work.

The short creative exercise should not be resubmitted with your portfolio.

As opposed to a draft for workshopping, double (or 1.5) spacing is appropriate for the exercise. Print a cover sheet, available from http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/ — fill it out, sign the declaration of originality, and attach it to your submission.

CRITICAL ESSAY

Date due: Wednesday 23rd Sept for Callaghan, 25th Sept for Merewether  
Hard Copy Submission: In Class or Student Hub  
Submission to Turnitin: Essay must be submitted to Turnitin; you are advised to check your originality report before final submission  
Word length: 1000 words  
Percentage of assessment: 20%

This is an opportunity to display your critical reading skills and you must answer one of the following critical essay questions.

1. Have the characters in Carver’s “Fat” and E. L. Doctorow’s “The Hunter” changed at the end of the story? Discuss in relation to the use of narrative point of view.

2. Read Pound’s account of how “In a Station of the Metro” came to be written. What does Pound mean when he claims that “The image is the word beyond formulated language”?

3. Choose one of the following stories: Doris Lessing’s “The Habit of Loving”, Edna O’Brien’s “Sister Imelda” or Truman Capote’s “Children On Their Birthdays.” Read the story and revisit the first paragraph. How does it work as a hook to draw the reader into the story? How does it establish the rhythm, mood, voice and themes of the story? How does it relate to the ending?

4. Read Richard Ford’s “Communist.” Explore the role of place in developing the story’s characters and themes.

5. Read T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and Allan Ginsberg’s “America.” They were representative poems of their times: Eliot’s poem is an important early example of “free verse”, mirroring the climate of uncertainty and futility in the first quarter of the twentieth century; Ginsberg’s poem is an anthem for the Beat generation during the Cold War of the 1950s. Explore how the mood of either poem serves to capture the mood of its era.

6. What if Albert Camus’s “The Adulterous Woman” were written from the first-person point of view? What, in your opinion, would be lost in the process?
7. Read Patrick White’s “Five-Twenty.” The story revolves around the old woman. What are the ways in which White suggests and portrays his character? To what effect?

8. How does the ending of Tobias Wolff’s “Hunters in the Snow” reinforce the story’s themes?

9. Read Graham Greene’s “Two Gentle People” and William Maxwell’s “The Pilgrimage.” Both stories are set in a foreign place. Explore the role of “displacement” in developing the themes of these stories.

10. Read Joyce Carol Oats’s “The Tryst”. What is the effect of limiting the narrative perspective to that of the central male character? How do the actions and reactions of the characters in the story drive the plot?

In the heading of your essay, set out clearly which question you are responding to.

You are advised to search out critical opinions on the author, his/her works and even the particular story or poem you choose to write on, and incorporate these in your essay. Nevertheless, the critical essay is for you to attempt; other critical opinions should not displace, but take their place, in your own structured discussion.

It is essential that your essay includes a bibliography.

You should read the “Guidelines on Essay-Writing” in this Course Outline, with particular attention to the “Bibliography”, to ensure that you use an appropriate academic style in your bibliography, to source your quotations from the text, and to document your references to critical authorities.

The critical essay should not be resubmitted with your portfolio.

The essay must be submitted to Turnitin (see the page on this anti-plagiarism system in the Course Outline). Mark the cover sheet to confirm you have done so. You are advised to check the originality report and correct your essay (if necessary) before finally uploading the digital text to Turnitin. Plan your preparation time so that you complete all these tasks before submission of the hard copy at 5 p.m.

PORTFOLIO

Date due: Monday 22nd November
Hard copy submission: The Hub
Submission to Turnitin: Portfolio must be submitted to Turnitin
Word length: 2,500 words
Percentage of assessment: 65%

Attach a single cover sheet. Take care to include your own and your tutor’s name, as well as the course code and title, the day and time of your seminar or workshop, the due date, and the fact that this is an ENGL1201 portfolio. Tick on the cover sheet to confirm that you have submitted the portfolio and review to Turnitin, and sign the originality declaration.

The portfolio may include work produced in response to the weekly creative tasks or one of the in-workshop writing exercises; or it may be independent work; but it must have been written while you have been enrolled in ENGL1201. Remember too, that the portfolio may not be found passable by the assessment committee if it shows little or no engagement with the readings or the seminar discussions, and displays few or none of the writing techniques focussed on in the critical and creative tasks.

If you are submitting a portfolio of poetry, or a mixed portfolio of poetry and prose, you should discuss with your tutor what would be an acceptable equivalent to 2,500 words of prose.

When preparing, allow time to proof-read and correct your printed-out portfolio, as well as to submit it to
WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

An example of a workshop structure is as follows: the first hour might be made up of 45 minutes of lecture and discussion on the readings of the week. This might lead to 15-minute writing exercise, followed by a 45-minute session devoted to workshopping and critiquing students’ work. Depending how the semester develops, what the tutor decides will be most beneficial to the students, and what the students themselves ask for, the structure can be varied.

Work to be critiqued should be submitted and distributed at least a week before being workshopped. Students should read it at home and prepare a brief critique for the workshop. This allows more precious discussion time. This procedure gives students in the workshop time to read, reflect and make notes for discussion in advance of the workshop. Some tutors may vary this requirement, however, and allow students to bring work in the week in which it is to be discussed. This second procedure makes it more necessary for students to read their work aloud.

The golden rule to be observed in the sessions is respect, for the tutor and for your fellow writing students. We are all beginners, and respect and humility are essential in the writing life. Criticism should be constructive and be directed at the text, not the author.

BLACKBOARD AND THE COURSE ONLINE

The weekly workshop will be mainly devoted to workshopping or group discussion. Nevertheless, there is another way to contact other students during the week. Many of you will be familiar with the University’s web pages and know how to access lectures on Blackboard. If you are not familiar with the site, here are some directions on how to find the ENGL1201 site.

To access the on-line learning system Blackboard, from the University home page http://www.newcastle.edu.au/
  click on Students, then Current students
  then click on Blackboard in the right box, under Online tools:
  http://blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp

You need to enter your Username and Password to log-in to Blackboard successfully. You need to be enrolled in ENGL1201: Creative Reading and Writing to access this online tool.

Once you have logged in, you will find you have your own page in Blackboard. Look in the “My Courses” box on the right-hand side of the display, and click on ENGL1201: CREATIVE READING AND WRITING (2007 SEMESTER 2 CALLAGHAN).

In the left-hand panel of the ENGL1201 display, you will be able to click on “Course Outline” to find a PDF copy of this Course Outline.

By clicking on “Discussion Board” you can open a forum that will enable you to ask questions of other students or discuss the poems and fiction on the course. Anonymous postings are not permitted, and students are asked to restrict discussion to insights about the course, their writing and their opinion of other writers they have been reading.

Through Blackboard, you may also access Turnitin, by clicking on “Assignments” in the left-hand box. The requirements for, and advantages of, using Turnitin are discussed on the next page.
**TURNITIN**

Turnitin was introduced by the University primarily as a software for detecting plagiarism, and remains a powerful engine for that purpose. It also has a valuable self-education function, however, and you can use it in this way in Creative Reading and Writing. Turnitin also provides a means of protecting copyright and vindicating the originality of what you have written.

All assignments in this course must be submitted to Turnitin. You are required to declare that your work is original and has been submitted to Turnitin on the cover sheets you attach to the critical essay, and to the portfolio and review.

You are advised to do more than just submit your critical essay to Turnitin, however. You should also check the originality report. The originality report may show some level of reproduction of words from the fiction or poems you are writing on, and also from the critical works you have used in preparing the essay. Turnitin does not distinguish between reproduction of a string of words without acknowledgment, and reproduction of a string that is properly acknowledged and referenced — with inverted commas for short quotations, indentation for longer quotations, and a parenthetic references or endnotes to source quotations and acknowledge the authorities you have consulted.

You should use the originality report from the first submission of your critical essay to check that all your quotations are properly shown as quotations. When you have checked and (if necessary) corrected your assignment, upload the corrected assignment as a final submission to Turnitin and print your Turnitin receipt. Note, however, that it can take twenty-four hours or more before an originality report is issued from Turnitin. In order to check your originality report, then correct and resubmit the critical essay, you should aim to have the essay completed **several days, or even a week, before the due date.** Delay obtaining a report will not be accepted as an extenuating reason for late submission.

The Portfolio must also be submitted to Turnitin, to demonstrate their originality. Some writers worry that in uploading their stories and poems to Turnitin they are giving up their copyright, but the reverse is rather the case. Turnitin does not publish your stories or poems, and will do no more than show strings of words from them, if they appear in another student’s writing. Rather than take away copyright to your words and poems, Turnitin will protect it. If other students or writers pretend your work is theirs, they will be exposed as plagiarists, and you will be vindicated as the original author.

**To access Turnitin**

Follow the steps on the previous page, to enter Blackboard. Once you are inside the ENGL1201 display, click on “Assignments” in the left-hand panel. The Assignments page will open, showing three assessment items, and for each assignment setting out the Turnitin requirements. By clicking on the Turnitin logo to the left of “Critical Essay” or “Portfolio and Review” (or the View/Complete line beneath), you will be able to fill in your details (“Submission title” is “Critical Essay,” “Portfolio and Review,” etc.) Upload the assignment, and check your originality report when it becomes available. Make any necessary corrections, and submit the final assignment.
WORKSHOP PREPARATION NOTES

WEEK 1 – READING INTO WRITING

Since students will not receive the Course Outline before the first workshop, these tasks will be retrospective, but you may still find them valuable.

**Critical**

1. Read Mark Strand’s “Becoming a Poet” and Eavan Boland’s “Poetic Form” in The Making of a Poem. The essays record an encounter with a poem that has shaped the poet’s life and work. What are the views of reading and writing that Strand and Boland offer? What do the essays say about the relationship between writing and living, art and life?

**Creative**

1. Is there a poem or a story which has come like a revelation to you, altering the way you look at things, and in some way leading you to the place where you are now in life? Is there a necessary poem or story you come back to again and again, as a believer would to a holy book? Trace the memory of your first encounter with the writer or the text, and explore the possible readings of it, and why it has travelled with you so long, so far.

WEEK 2 – THE SHORT STORY

In The Art of the Tale Halpern posts as an epigraph an observation of Jorge Luis Borges’s: “Unlike the novel, a short story may be, for all purposes, essential.” Borges’s observation implies that the short story is indispensable to culture, to civilisation, to human existence. We need stories in order to keep alive, to order the otherwise random and incoherent events that make up our lives. Since the short story is the shortest form of storytelling, it is the *sine qua non* without which we would lose the sense of ourselves as sentient human beings.

Also implicit in Borges’s statement is the idea that the short story is a more exacting art form than the novel. Unlike the short story, the novel is long and expansive; there is room for digressions, for extra movements. In a novel, you have more time to develop the story, shape your characters, conjure a sense of place, build up thematic layers, and even get away with scenes and events not absolutely essential. But in a short story, verbal economy is paramount, and a superfluous touch enough to mar the entire piece. Every word has to be exactly right, all the details essential and telling, and there is no room for extravagant touches. Just like a poem, the short story uses minimum space to deliver maximum impact. Often it reads like a poem, the effect reverberating long after you have read it.

Writing about Chekhov’s short stories, Virginia Woolf reflects: “As we read Chekhov’s little stories which are about nothing at all, the horizon widens.” Of Chekhov’s sad story “Gusev” she says that the questions “sound on and sound long after the reading.” Woolf’s observations on Chekhov may be applied to the short story as a genre. This is reinforced by Stephen Benét’s remark that the short story is “something that can be read in an hour and remembered for a lifetime.”

**Critical**

1. Chekhov is acknowledged to be the father of the modern short story. Eudora Welly notes: “The revolution brought about by the gentle Chekhov to the short story was in every sense not destructive but constructive. By removing the formal plot he did not leave the story structureless, he endowed it with another kind of structure – one which embodied the principle of growth. And it was one that had no cause to repeat itself; in each and every story, short or long, it was a structure open to human meaning and answerable to that meaning. It took form from within.” Apply this observation to Raymond Carver’s “Fat” and E. L Doctorow’s “The Hunter.”

2. Have the characters in Carver’s “Fat” and E. L. Doctorow’s “The Hunter” changed at the end of the story? The stories share common themes and strategies in their use of narrators and point of view. What
are they? Relate how the narrative strategies underscore the themes.

**Creative**

1. Raymond Carver says that "There are significant moments in everyone's day that can make literature. That's what you ought to write about." "Fat" and all his works revolve around very ordinary lives. Now go to a café, the train station, or a bookstore and observe. Is there somebody your attention is drawn to, somebody whose life you could turn into a story? Ease yourself into that person, into character and write from the first-person point of view.

2. Now try writing your first-person tale from a third-person point of view.

**WEEK 3 – WHAT IS POETRY?**

The etymology of the word “poetry” lies in the Greek “poēma,” meaning “something made, created.” It is an artefact, welded out of certain raw materials. It is a composition, a putting together of different elements to bring out something new. Words are pieced together, woven and forged into an order, an arrangement of sounds, rhythms, beats, to give a sense distinct from prose, a composition that sits somewhere between music and speech. Coleridge asserts of poetry that it is “the best words in the best order.”

It is a fusion of feeling and thought, of the poet’s inner world and the world out there. Poetry awakens us to all things big and small, visible and invisible. It alerts us to our human condition, our condition as consciousness-suffering beings capable of ecstasy, of rapture. It deals with our mortality, our individual finitude, and it expresses our longing for transcendence, our glimpses of immortality. While for many poets it is a quest for the eternal, it is also about paying attention to that which seems insignificant, to the mundane facts of life. William Carlos Williams's famous poem “The Red Wheelbarrow” confers artistic significance on an object which stands unnoticed:

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so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens
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The poem achieves so much with so little. It has just one image, and the poem reads like a simple prose observation cut up and arranged into poetic units that enhance its visual impact. It draws attention to the centring object, and invites a human response to it.

“The Red Wheelbarrow” takes that which is familiar and turns it into something unique, something like an art-object. It is an act of seeing, of imbuing what is seen with significance. Williams’s approach is linked to the Imagist movement of the early twentieth century, which stresses the use of strong clear imagery and simple language; but it also has much in common with Zen poetry. The haikus of Bashō and Issa are moments of seeing, of capturing the beauty and the different moods of the seasons.

Poetry begins from somewhere deep within the centre of our lives and selves. It records our position in the world, our movement through the seasons, through doubt, grief, joy, acceptance. It is about making sense of these moments, recording them as part of a story. Wordsworth bases his work on capturing “spots of time”, the moments and places where he attained a higher knowledge of life and nature. To the poet Issa:

This dewdrop universe
just a dewdrop
and yet,
and yet . . .

Critical

1. Read W. H. Auden’s “In Memory of W. B. Yeats.” The poem is a tribute to Yeats and his work, but, in paying a homage to Yeats and his verse, Auden also refers to his own poetic beliefs, to the relationship between art and politics which every serious artist had to consider in that turbulent time in which Auden was writing. Examine the views implied in the poem, of poetry, politics and how we live our lives in the grip of larger world events. How are these views conveyed? What is the role of the poet, and what function has poetry in this mid-twentieth-century world?

2. Choose either Elizabeth Bishop’s “One Art” or Wallace Stevens’s “The Idea of Order at Key West.” What does either poem say about poetry or art? How is the attitude towards art and life embodied in the poem?

3. Contrast the attitude towards poetry in Billy Collins’s “Introduction to Poetry” (at the back of the Course Outline) with that in Wallace Stevens’s “The Idea of Order at Key West.”

Creative

1. Attempt a sequence of haikus or short haiku-like pieces, brief images and aphorisms that encapsulate what you think about poetry, art and life.

2. Write an elegy for a dead writer you admire. Your poem can be a homage to that person’s work, but smuggle in your own views about art and life, as Auden does.

WEEK 4 – IN THE BEGINNING

Where does the story begin? Ursula Le Guin says: “First sentences are doors to worlds.” The beginning is the threshold which leads into another world, the imaginary world of the story. Often it is the place where the reader decides whether or not to cross over and take the journey. So the beginning has to seduce or take possession of the reader. Hence the pains writers take with the first paragraph of a short story or essay, the first scene or the first few pages of a novel.

Gabriel García Márquez confesses: “One of the most difficult things is the first paragraph. I have spent many months on a first paragraph and, once I get it, the rest just comes out very easily. In the first paragraph you solve most of the problems with your book. The theme is defined, the style, the tone. At least in my case, the first paragraph is a kind of sample of what the rest of the book is going to be. That’s why writing a book of short stories is much more difficult than writing a novel. Every time you write a short story, you have to begin all over again.”

Ford Madox Ford begins his novel The Good Soldier with “This is the saddest story I have ever heard.” Some stories begin with speech: James Baldwin’s “Going to Meet the Man” begins “What’s the matter?” she asked.” Some lay out the exposition in the first paragraph, like Italo Calvino’s “The Adventure of a Traveller.” Many begin in medias res, somewhere in the middle, as though the reader happens to drop in on an ongoing story. Some, like Richard Ford’s “Communist,” begin with a scene that wraps the story, the beginning and end, in the present of the telling. Whatever it is, the first paragraph, as Márquez says, sets the tone, defines the style and often foreshadows the rest of the story.

Critical

1. Choose one of the following stories: Carver’s “Fat,” Doris Lessing’s “The Habit of Loving,” Edna O’Brien’s “Sister Imelda,” or Truman Capote’s “Children on Their Birthdays.” Read the story and revisit
the first paragraph. How does it work as a hook to draw the reader into the story. How does it establish the rhythm, mood, voice and theme of the story? How does it relate to the ending?

**Creative**

1. Writers often pick up an image, an idea from poems and stories they have read and use it as a starting point for their own work. Franz Kafka took the line from Fyodor Dostoevski's *Notes from Underground*: “Only if I could become an insect!” and wrote “Metamorphosis.” Kafka’s story begins: “As Gregor Samsa awoke that morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect.” Is there any story in the anthology that has captured you and made you want to compose a variation on it? Modify the opening sentence and adapt it for your own story.

2. Short stories often end where a possible novel or longer story lurks. Raymond Carver picked up from where John Cheever’s “The Five-Forty-Eight” ends, taking the character into a new story. Take the last sentence of “Fat” as the beginning of your story.

**WEEK 5 – THE IMAGE**

We are surrounded by images, our senses bombarded by objects and their representations. We respond to images which are new to us, which shock or intrigue. There are also images to which we become impassive, images which are well-worn or clichés. In a way, poetry is an act and art of seeing. It is an imaginative apprehension of the world. Bearing in mind that “imagination” derives etymologically from *imago*, the image, poetry is about image-making, a discovery of images which produce different sensations and thoughts. The images are not merely visual; they can be auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile, as we see in Keats’s “To Autumn.” There are also images of stillness and images of movement (both kinetic and kinaesthetic).

When Ezra Pound emerged from his train in the Paris metro one evening, he was struck by a vision which he recorded in a thirty-line poem. This he pared down to two in the famous “In a Station of the Metro”:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

The whole experience is embodied in a single complex image. It speaks of the moment of seeing, as if for the first time, an image you had previously dismissed as commonplace. Pound’s imagist poem can be traced to the haiku tradition, to Japanese poets like Bashô, Buson and Issa. These poets condense an experience or mood into a single vital image, sparingly conveyed in seventeen syllables. The experience seems unmediated by language, so immediate are the sensations:

The fallen blossoms which I saw arise,  
Returning toward the bough, were butterflies.  
— Moritake

White cherry-blossoms in the sunset blaze:  
I stand, my breast against my staff, and gaze . . .  
— Sô-a

A trout leaps! Still in the stream below  
The slow white clouds of summer come and go.  
— Onitsura

A frail white butterfly, beneath the spell  
Of noon, is sleeping on the huge bronze bell.  
— Buson

Quietness owns this hut without a host:  
A woodpecker knocks on one veranda post.  
— Bashô

You must remain. I must depart,  
Two autumns falling in the heart.  
— Buson
Each haiku evokes a moment’s thought and feeling through a particular detail. The image captures not just a passing moment and mood, but also delineates a whole season. Haiku are responses to the seasons, their beauty and transience. Can you relate the haiku above to their respective seasons? How do they each conjure up a whole season?

**Critical**

1. Read Pound’s account of how “In a Station of the Metro” came to be written.* What does Pound mean when he claims that “The image is the word beyond formulated language”? Illustrate using Stevens’s “The Idea of Order at Key West” or Keats’s “To Autumn.”

* See below for this account.

2. Shelley’s “Ode to the Wild West Wind” and Keats’s “To Autumn” revolve around evocations of the same season. Compare the images of autumn in the two poems, or in one of the two. Describe the ordering, the connections and the contrasts in the range of images the poet(s) use(s). What different attitudes towards autumn, life and art do the images evoke?

**Creative**

1. Attempt a haiku or haiku-like sequence. Go for walk alone, in the bush, by the sea, or through the city. Pause, and listen, and watch. Be alive to the details. Take deep breaths and empty your mind. What do you see? A face, a leaf, a particular wave? What is the light like? What is that sound, or that voice, saying? Stay with the moment. Try putting down the first word, the first brushstroke. See if a haiku or something like it emerges.

2. Write a poem about what poetry or writing means to you. Express your belief through imagery rather than direct statement. You may want to read Joy Harjo’s “Perhaps the World Ends Here” (Making of a Poem, p. 254) to see how the poet shows rather than tells her experience of art and living.

**From Ezra Pound’s Gaudier-Brzeska (1916)**

Three years ago in Paris I got out of a “metro” train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another and another, and then a beautiful child’s face, and then another beautiful woman, and I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me, and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion. And that evening, as I went home along the Rue Raynouard, I was still trying and I found, suddenly, the expression. I do not mean that I found words but there came an equation . . . not in speech, but in little splotches of colour. It was just that — a “pattern,” or hardly a pattern, if by “pattern” you mean something with a “repeat” in it. But it was a word, the beginning, for me, of a language in colour. I do not mean that I was unfamiliar with the kindergarten stories about colours being like tones in music. I think that sort of thing is nonsense. If you try to make notes permanently correspond with particular colours, it is like tying narrow meanings to symbols.

That evening, in the Rue Raynouard, I realised quite vividly that if I were a painter, or if I had, often, that kind of emotion, or even if I had the energy to get paints and brushes and keep at it, I might found a new school of painting that would speak only by arrangements in colour.

And so, when I came to read Kandinsky’s chapter on the language of form and colour, I found little that was new to me. I only felt that someone else understood what I understood, and had written it out very clearly. It seems quite natural to me that an artist should have just as much pleasure in an arrangement of planes or in a pattern of figures, as in painting portraits of fine ladies, or in portraying the Mother of God as the symbolists bid us.

When I find people ridiculing the new arts, or making fun of the clumsy odd terms that we use in trying to talk of them amongst ourselves; when they laugh at our talking about the “ice-block” quality in
Picasso, I think it is only because they do not know what thought is like, and they are familiar only with argument and gibe and opinion. That is to say, they can only enjoy what they have been brought up to consider enjoyable, or what some essayist has talked about in mellifluous phrases. They think only “the shells of thought,” as de Gourmont calls them; the thoughts that have been already thought out by others.

Any mind that is worth calling a mind must have needs beyond the existing categories of language, just as a painter must have pigments or shades more numerous than the existing names of the colours.

Perhaps this is enough to explain the words in my “Vortex”:—

Every concept, every emotion, presents itself to the vivid consciousness in some primary form. It belongs to the art of this form.

That is to say, my experience in Paris should have gone into paint. If instead of colour I had perceived sound or planes in relation, I should have expressed it in music or in sculpture. Colour was, in that instance, the “primary pigment”; I mean that it was the first adequate equation that came into consciousness. The Vorticist uses the “primary pigment.” Vorticism is art before it has spread itself into flaccidity, into elaboration and secondary application.

What I have said of one vorticist art can be transposed for another vorticist art. But let me go on then with my own branch of vorticism, about which I can probably speak with greater clarity. All poetic language is the language of exploration. Since the beginning of bad writing, writers have used images and ornaments. The point of Imagism is that it does not use images as ornaments. The image is itself the speech. The image is the word beyond formulated language.

I once saw a small child go to an electric light switch and say, “Mamma, can I open the light?”

She was using the age-old language of exploration, the language of art. It was a sort of metaphor, but she was not using it as ornamentation.

One is tired of ornamentations, they are all a trick, and any sharp person can learn them.

The Japanese have had a sense of exploration. They have understood the beauty of this sort of knowing. A Chinaman said long ago that if a man can’t say what he has to say in twelve lines he had better keep quiet. The Japanese have evolved the still shorter form of the hokku.

The fallen blossom flies back to its branch: A butterfly.

That is the substance of a very well-known hokku. Victor Plarr tells me that once, when he was walking over snow with a Japanese naval officer, they came to a place where a cat had crossed the path, and the officer said, “Stop, I am making a poem.” Which poem was, roughly, as follows:—

The footsteps of the cat upon the snow
[are like] plum-blossoms.

The words “are like” would not occur in the original, but I add them for clarity.

The “one-image poem” is a form of super-position, that is to say, it is one idea set on top of another. I found it useful in getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion. I wrote a thirty-line poem, and destroyed it because it was what we call work “of second intensity.” Six months later I made a poem half that length; a year later I made the following hokku-like sentence:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
Petals on a wet, black bough.

I dare say it is meaningless unless one has drifted into a certain vein of thought. In a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward transforms itself, or darts, into a thing inward and subjective.

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**WEEK 6 – PLOT, AN INTRODUCTION**

Plot is the design of the story. It is what gives it shape, arranging the scenes, the events and actions into a meaningful and coherent whole. It welds the different elements so that the story moves into the moment of crisis and conflict, engaging the reader’s attention through withholding, building up, leading forth, ensuring that not a scene or event is wasted. Chekhov’s remark that “A shotgun introduced on page one must go off before the end of the story,” has often been applied to the concept of effective plotting. The
plot pattern delivers the meaning or the central idea of the story. Read the “Short Glossary of Critical Terms for Fiction” for appropriate concepts and terms to analyse the plot structure—the terms that are used in the following tasks.

**Critical**

1. Can you trace the exposition, the complication, the crisis-and-conflict-and-resolution in William Trevor’s “Beyond the Pale” and Cesare Pavese’s “Suicides”? Do the stories conform to the beginning-middle-end pattern? If not, why do they flout that order?

2. Can you find the traditional pattern of a short story — prologue, exposition or development, and finally dénouement or conclusion — in Carver’s “Fat” and Joyce Carol Oates’s “The Tryst”? What happens to the exposition and the ending?

**Creative**

1. Write a story that begins and ends with the same (or a similar but subtly altered) scene, for instance, a scene in which a character leaves a place and returns to it after many years.

2. Chekhov’s advice to one of his admirers who approached him with a manuscript was to tear up the first half of it, as too much was being explained. Take a story you have written and try deleting the first two or three pages. See if the story acquires a different meaning. Rewrite it if necessary. Alternatively, cut up your story into scenes. Reshuffle the scenes. How does it look?

**WEEK 7 – CLOSED FORMS (THE SONNET)**

Poetic forms, as Strand and Boland emphasise in *The Making of a Poem*, are not arbitrary and obsolete rules. They originate in the human breath, in the movement of the human body through the seasons, through the elements. They are vessels to help shape and contain the fleeting moment of inspiration and insight. They are shapes that reflect the curve of our feelings, our thoughts. Far from dismissing them as irrelevant or constrictive, contemporary poets have returned to the sonnet, the villanelle, the sestina and so on, to formulate contemporary experience. Such a return is part of the continuing dialogue with the past that all writers have always engaged in, as they search for an emblem, a symbol, to express their predicament.

Contemporary poets do not merely deploy the inherited forms; they reinvent them and bend the rules to the dictates of the poem or the material they want to accommodate, or stretch, the old form. Some shed the rhymes; some dispense with iambic pentameter; some shrink it so drastically that it is almost unrecognisable as a sonnet, were it not a poem of fourteen lines.

**Critical**

1. Familiarise yourself with the conventions and rules of the sonnet in *The Making of a Poem* (pp. 55–57) and with some examples of sonnets (pp. 58–70). Look at John Donne’s “Holy Sonnet: At the round earth’s imagined corners” and Gerard Manley Hopkins’s “Carrian Comfort.” Which sonnet model do they conform to most closely? Are there departures from the rules, and if so, why? Where is a turning-point or volta in each sonnet? Explore how the two parts of each sonnet combine to clinch the final effect.

2. William Carlos Williams declares: “Forcing twentieth-century America into a sonnet – gosh, how I hate sonnets – is like putting a crab into a square box. You’ve got to cut his legs off to make him fit. When you get through, you don’t have a crab any more.” Despite Williams’s comment, American poets (not only Americans) have continued to use and reinvent the sonnet form. Pick two sonnets by American poets (e.g., Edna St Vincent Millay, e. e. cummings, Jane Cooper or Mary Jo Salter) to argue against Williams. Alternatively, you might find sonnets by Gwen Harwood or David Campbell, John Blight or John Manifold, John Tranter or John A. Scott, to argue that Australian poets, too, have used the form to express their contemporary concerns effectively. (Only Gwen Harwood is represented in *The Making of a Poem.*)
Creative

1. Attempt a sonnet. You don’t have to rhyme it; in fact, without years of experience at writing rhyming verse, the rhyme scheme is likely to take over the poem and force you into writing doggerel. Do try to introduce the turning-point, according to the Shakespearean or Italian form, and pace your poem in, e.g., quatrains and a couplet, or in octave and sestet.

2. Construct a list poem of fourteen lines, repeating a word or a phrase like “My life is going to change . . .” or “This is the place . . . .” or “Because . . .” For an example of a more extended list poem, see Albert Goldbarth’s “Library,” at [http://www.poems.com/special_features/library.php](http://www.poems.com/special_features/library.php)

If you are not familiar with closed forms of poetry, the parallelism of a list poem can offer you a way of improvising in a more extended open form of poetry. See the Week 9 tasks.

Critical

1. Read Graham Greene’s “Two Gentle People” and William Maxwell’s “The Pilgrimage.” Both stories are set in a foreign place, in France as it happens. Explore the role of place in developing the characters and themes in both stories.

2. Read Richard Ford’s “Communist.” How important are the descriptions of nature to the narrative? Does it help to know anything about the state of Montana? Examine the imagery of the outdoors and the wildlife in this American story/state, and how they relate to the theme.

Creative

1. Write a story about a character returning to a place he or she left a long time ago. What has changed? What are the memories, the sounds, the smells which rise to the surface? What faces swim up from the past? Weave flashbacks into the descriptions of the place in the story’s present.

2. Pick a place, a train station, a bookstore, a café, a street or neighbourhood. Describe it, the colours, the sounds, smells, what makes it a place. Now fit three or four characters into the place. Make up stories about them; relate them to the place. You may have seen movies like *Trois Couleurs*, *Magnolia*, *Amores Perros*, where different characters and stories intersect in a particular place and time. Try doing that.

3. Write a story like Graham Greene’s, about two strangers meeting in a place foreign to one or to both of them. What draws them together, or pushes them apart?

WEEK 8 – PLACING THE STORY

Placing the story is a vital step in shaping a narrative. By imparting a sense of place to your narrative, you give it a sense of reality. The story becomes anchored, takes hold and shape. The characters have a landscape to move in, a backdrop against which their outlines can be traced. Getting the place right also means conjuring the right atmosphere for the characters to draw breath in, a mood and tone which will hold the story together. You can carve the locale elaborately in a novel. In the short story, you must map the place with a few deft touches.

WEEK 9 – OPEN FORMS 1

Robert Frost famously likens writing free verse to playing tennis without a net. It is arguable whether there is such a thing as free verse. Poems, even if not conforming to received patterns, obey their own organic rules, their internal rhythms, their own conditions. Every good poem finds its exact shape, a form that suffices. In fact, one could argue that it is more difficult to work with open forms, since it demands a different vision each time, a more concentrated listening and seeing. As D. H. Lawrence says, to verse that is truly free, “any externally-applied law would be mere shackles and death. The law must come new
each time from within."

**Critical**

1. The line-break is the most significant feature of the open-form poem. It is pivotal to the musical coherence of the poem, determining the semantic and rhythmic stresses, the way the poem looks and sounds. Read Gwendolyn Brooks’s “We Real Cool” and Williams’s “The Red Wheelbarrow” (see p. 15 above). Comment on the importance of the line-break to the meaning of each poem. Try rearranging the lines, and see whether the meanings of the poems suffer.

2. Read T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and Allen Ginsberg’s “America.” These were representative poems of their times; Eliot’s poem is an important early example of “free verse,” mirroring the climate of uncertainty and futility in the first quarter of the twentieth century; Ginsberg’s poem is an anthem for the Beat generation during the Cold War of the 1950s. Explore how the form of either poem serves to capture the mood of its era.

**Creative**

1. Write a poem that is a list of things. Ginsberg’s “America” is actually a list poem, using repetition (anaphora is the term for a patterned repetition of words and phrases) to hold the poem together. You may want to check Albert Goldbarth’s poem “Library,” in which nearly every line begins “This is the book . . .” See http://www.poems.com/special_features/library.php

2. Write a journey poem in prose. Some poets jot the images down and then chop the lines up. Pay close attention to the line-break. Do you find the poem reads better as a prose-poem?

**WEEK 10 – POINT OF VIEW (FIRST PERSON)**

The narrative point of view is the vantage point from which the story is told. It is a very important creative decision: it determines how readers respond morally and emotionally to the characters and their actions, and to the entire story. Look at the glossary for a summary of different narrative strategies and points of view. In one sense the first-person is where all stories start, with somebody involved in or witnessing a story. The “I” can be an observer or participant, or the protagonist.

Even in a story that is cast all in third-person, it is possible to find the point of view being focussed in the one character (or focaliser); in some novels (less often in a short story) it is possible to find the point of view shifting from one character to another. Such shifts need to be handled carefully, however, or it can seem as if the author is cheating, peering into some characters’ minds when s/he has no more idea than a reader what they are thinking or feeling.

**Critical**

1 a. List the advantages in the use of the first-person point of view.

1 b. Now list the limitations of the first-person point of view.

1 c. What if Naguib Mahfouz’s “The Conjurer Made Off with the Dish” were written from the third-person point of view? What if Albert Camus’s “The Adulterous Woman” were written from the first-person point of view? What is lost and what is gained in the process? In Mahfouz’s narrative is the reader permitted to understand events from an adult perspective? In Albert Camus’s tale, from which character’s point of view are events seen? Is there a moment or are there moments in the story where Camus does not give us access to that character’s perspective?

2. Read Alberto Moravia’s “Jewellery.” This is an example a narrator speaking out of a first-person plural perspective, of “we” and “us.” Why has Moravia chosen to use “we”? Examine the points at which the narrator reverts to “I.” Why does this happen? Relate the point of view to the theme.
**Creative**

1. Write a story using multiple first-person points of view. Draw on a memory, an incident that involved three or four people and explore the individual characters’ versions of what happened. Remember when switching from one character to another to change the voice, the speech and the view of the past. You can try doing three or four linked stories.

2. Write a childhood story using the first-person, like Naguib Mahfouz’s “The Conjuror Made Off with the Dish.” Capture the child’s voice and way of looking at the world around.

**WEEK 11 – CHARACTER**

Getting your characters right is pivotal to the story. F. Scott Fitzgerald says that “character is plot, plot is character.” Characters are flat when they are predictable and display just one trait in all circumstances. Ernest Hemingway says that the novelist should “create living people; people, not characters.” If they are alive, they should change; their moods and perceptions should shift from scene to scene. They should be beset with contradictions, with flaws of which they are unaware. The classic tragic hero, like Oedipus or Lear, has a fatal flaw or *hamartia*, which drives the character and plot to a tragic conclusion. While your characters may not possess a monumental tragic flaw, she or he should have weaknesses and inconsistencies as well as strengths and virtues. Well-drawn characters are living people, people whom the reader almost expects to meet after putting down the book. Writers often sense that their characters are working when they seem to take on a life of their own, to take the plot and themselves in unforeseen directions. Grace Paley believes that even an invented character deserves the open destiny of life.

**Critical**

1. Read Patrick White’s “Five-Twenty.” The story revolves around the old woman. What is she like? What are the ways in which White suggests and portrays his character? You could explore the scenes, mood, imagery, flashback, the comic as against the surreal and visionary quality of some of Ella Natwick’s encounters.

2. Read V. S. Pritchett’s “The Saint.” The narrator recounts an incident that happened when he was seventeen. Did the encounter with Timberlake change the narrator’s life? How has the news of Timberlake’s death changed his perception of the visitor? Pritchett cleverly exploits the gap between the narrator as he was as a seventeen-year-old and the adult narrator looking back on the past. How does this add to the characters’ portrayal and development?

**Creative**

1. Write about a character who is the opposite of you. Get into the character’s mind. Describe the face, the gestures, the movement, the details which reveal the inner character. Steer clear of clichés and use vivid descriptions.

2. Write about a person in your past who has made a deep impression on you or altered your perception of life, as Timberlake did the young narrator of Pritchett’s story. Recall the features and the gestures, and develop what you knew of the person into a set of incidents, a short plot. Model your first-person story on Pritchett’s story, using the recall frame: that is, begin in the present, switch to the past and come back to the present to conclude. Remember that, as the narrator recounts the story about the other person and the past, the narrator will also be revealing his or her own character.
John Updike remarks: “The ending is where the reader discovers whether he has been reading the same story the writer thought he was writing.” Just as the beginning is often the place where the story wins or loses the reader, the ending often decides whether the story will stay with the reader for a long time and be worth re-reading. And just as some stories dispense with the conventional beginning, there are many stories, after Chekhov, that end without the neat conclusion of commercial fiction. They end as if on a musical note, leaving subtle echoes reverberating in the reader’s mind. The Chekhovian ending is, in a sense, no ending. It doesn’t supply the resolution that the reader seeks but leaves him or her pondering, wondering what it all means.

We often end at unexpected places; this is the joy of writing, discovering as we write where we have to go. Tobias Wolff reveals:

> Usually by the time I get to the end of a story I have so altered my conception of the story in the actual writing and rewriting of it that it doesn’t remotely resemble what I thought the ending would be. . . . Things have to happen to me in the process of writing to change my ideas about the story or it fails to come to life for some reason. . . . When I write a story according to plan, when I actually bring it home the way that I thought it would end when I started, it is invariably bad.

**Critical**

Examine the endings in three following stories: Tobias Wolff’s “Hunters in the Snow,” Patrick White’s “Five-Twenty,” Albert Camus’s “The Adulterous Woman” and Nadine Gordimer’s “The Life of the Imagination.” What kind of endings are they – open, surprise, circular or closed? How do the endings reinforce the themes?

**Creative**

1. Write a story with a circular ending, the last scene reflecting the beginning.

2. Write a story that begins and ends on the same image or memory.
Revisioning

Revision is an intensive process. Hemingway is known to have done thirty drafts of a story. The wastepaper basket, one writer remarks, is the writer’s best friend. We generally write a lot more than necessary to get to the point where we are in a position to see what we needed to write in the first place. In another context, the jazz trumpeter Miles Davis says: “I always listen for what I can leave out.” The goal of revision is get the chords right, to have no superfluous note in the composition.

When we write, the writer comes to the fore and the critic takes a back seat. But when we revise, the critic must take over the controls. The transition is not easy; sometimes you have to keep the two balanced, reading and writing. You may also have to leave the work for a while, read around, and come back to it with senses refreshed. Then you are likely to see and hear better. Carver reflects: “Maybe I revise because it gradually takes me into the heart of what the story is about. I have to keep trying to see if I can find that out. It’s a process more than a fixed position.”

The same applies to poetry. We may end with a different poem to the one we set out to write. That is one of the wonders about poetry, about writing. We alter the words, replace the imagery, rearrange the lines, erase whole stanzas, put in new ones, dismantle the poem and start again with one or two lines. The seeming effortlessness of many great poems belies the intense labour, the painful craft that has gone into their shaping.

Revising is an act of revisioning, seeking after the true shape of the poem, listening for its heartbeat. Drafts are staging posts towards the realised poem, finding what works, discarding what doesn’t, discovering the potential, the possibilities missed at the first writing. It may involve severe editing, cutting away what conceals and distorts it.

There will be times when the rewriting doesn’t seem to achieve results. The poem remains murky, unformed, the lines out of sync. Perhaps the poem needs to time to mature; perhaps you are hurrying it too much. It may have to be put aside, left alone for a while. You may come back to it with new eyes, new insights.

Texts


Recommended Texts

SHORT GLOSSARY OF CRITICAL TERMS FOR FICTION

A brief glossary of literary terms for discussing poetry may be found in The Making of a Poem, pp. 289–92.

PLOT is the plan or design of a story. E. M. Forster in Aspects of the Novel illustrates what plot is not by the sentence: “The king died, and then the queen died.” In this form the sentence is a mere chronological sequence. Expanded to “The king died, and then the queen died of grief,” the sentence contains a plot, because it shows a causal link between the events. The plot is the way events and actions unfold to give rise to a sense of conflict and crisis. The structure of the plot is the arrangement of events and actions in order to heighten suspense, develop the characters, underscore recurrent themes, etc.

The structural pattern of the plot may contain the following elements:

- **Exposition** – the opening that sets the scene and introduces the characters.
- **Complication** – events develop so that the protagonist becomes caught up in some conflict.
- **Crisis** (Greek for “turning point”) – the moment of the greatest tension and uncertainty.
- **Climax** – the moment when the crisis prompts an action which will decide the outcome.
- **Resolution or Dénouement** – the outcome or conclusion.

Many stories begin in medias res (Latin for “in the midst of things”), flouting the beginning-middle-end order. In fact it was the advice of the Latin poet, Horace, that an epic should begin in medias res and not ab ovo (at the beginning or the hatching of the story). Story-tellers also employ flashbacks (past scenes or events relived in a character’s mind), and switch between past and present to complicate the narrative.

**Epiphany** – a moment of knowledge or self-knowledge, insight and revelation, when the character’s life or perception of life is altered.

POINT OF VIEW Narrative point of view is the vantage point from which the story is told. It is a very important creative decision: it determines how readers respond morally and emotionally to the characters and their actions, and to the entire story.

- **First-person narrative** (I, we) – The first-person narrator can be a major participant in the story, or can play a peripheral role as observer. The narrator can be reliable or unreliable in his or her account of the events. Dickens uses a first-person narrator and protagonist in Great Expectations. Emily Brontë uses two peripheral first-person narrators, who are also unreliable narrators, to complicate responses to the characters in Wuthering Heights.
- **Second-person** (you) – This is rare and very hard to sustain as it controls the reader’s response closely. The “you” suggests the narrator knows more about a character’s actions than the character him or herself. Peter Kocan uses second-person narrative to represent the consciousness of a dissociated protagonist in The Treatment and The Cure.
- **Third-person** (she, he, it, they) – The narrator is outside the action and reports the characters’ behaviour and speeches. This narratorial voice may sometimes be identified with the writer’s. Third-person is the most common narrative mode. A third-person narration can either be omniscient, with the god-like narrator knowing everything that goes on in the story and the characters’ minds. Or it can be limited: Third person limited point of view can either be objective — the narrator reports only what the characters do and say without entering into their consciousness — or subjective — in most examples, the reader has access to a single character’s thoughts and feelings, and observes the action through that focalising character. In Henry James’s third-person narrative, Portrait of a Lady, the point of view is focalised through a single character, Isabel Archer; Isabel is the centre of psychological interest and ethical understanding, but an ironical perspective is added: the reader can foresee developments which the protagonist, Isabel, cannot.
- **Free indirect mode** – If the third-person point of view is focalised through a number of characters in the course of a novel or short story this is termed a free indirect narrative. Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence’s fictions often employ this mode.
- **Combined Points of View** – Points of view are sometimes combined to give complexity to the narrative. In Margaret Atwood’s “Hair Jewellery,” the first and second-person perspectives are juxtaposed.
- **Stream of consciousness** – The writer attempts a verbal duplicate of the characters’ subjectivity, offering what can seem a transcription of the characters’ immediate thoughts and feelings. There are several ways to achieve this, the most popular of which is the *interior*
monologue, which reads as if the character is talking aloud to himself or herself. Virginia Woolf and James Joyce were pioneering exponents of stream of consciousness.

CHARACTER  Round – believable characters that change and grow in the course of the story.
               Flat – static characters that do not grow or change. They are often stereotypes, speak in identifying signature expressions, and can be effective in comic characterisation.
               Motivation – the reasons a character has for behaving as s/he does.

SETTING  Place and period are vital to a story. They anchor the narrative and give it a sense of reality. The place helps to map out events, reveal characters and outline the themes. Getting the place and period right sets the mood and atmosphere of a story.

IMAGERY/SYMBOL  Images are mental pictures which evoke emotional responses. Writers rely on imagery to develop scenes, enhance the mood and sense of place, convey emotions, and enliven the writing. Effective imagery makes a reader see a scene differently and avoids the danger of cliché. Images can be visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and gustatory. Similes and metaphors are figures of speech which bring together more than one image or concept. Similes formally compare one thing to another, using “like” or “as” (“His life is like a short story”). Metaphors merge the two objects without a rhetorical connector (“His life is a short story”). Symbolism is derived from Greek, “to throw together.” It connects an object or image to ideas, abstractions or values with which it may have no apparent connection. There are traditional symbols which stand for certain sentiments, like the rose for love, a star for hope or aspiration. Symbols in stories or poems are often more hidden or subtle. Beginning as concrete objects, they accumulate layers of further significance, like the albatross in Coleridge’s Rime of the Ancient Mariner or the caves in E. M. Forster’s Passage to India.

THEME  is a recurrent or significant idea or issue in a literary work. A moral fable may have an explicit theme, while a longer literary work can accommodate multiple themes. Themes in Patrick White’s “Five-Twenty” include love, frustration, waiting, ageing, memory, the imagination, dreams, rural and suburban Australia.

VOICE  can refer to the writer’s voice, a distinctive signature that marks the writing. The persona is a voice the writer adopts for a first-person narrator. In Nabokov’s Lolita, the voice of the “I” is pained, longing, and weary. In third-person narratives, the narrative voice refers to the voice in which the story is told. It can be detached and ironic, as in Chekhov’s and Carver’s stories, or dark and absurdist, as in Samuel Beckett’s stories.

STYLE  depends on the writer’s use of language, imagery, tone, syntax, punctuation, etc. Style is the way the words put his words together on the page, voice the way the words sound together in a tonally consistent composition. Hemingway’s style is famously sparse, a precursor of the 1980s minimalist movement which Raymond Carver’s work is said to exemplify. The narrative voice is detached, the details sparse, and the characterization achieved through an objective reporting of dialogue and scene. The aesthetic is that less is more; a reader has to make the necessary inferences and connections. Hemingway called this the “iceberg theory” of fiction: three-fourths of the story (or more) remains submerged, lying in wait for the unwary reader’s preconceptions. In contrast to Hemingway and Carver, writers like Vladimir Nabokov are more elaborate, resorting to metaphors and other rhetorical devices to stiffen the texture of their work. The imagery can be dense, the sentence structure complex, the scene and moment amplified for maximum resonance – hence the term maximalist.
GUIDELINES ON ESSAY-WRITING

1 THE ESSAY

The following sections particularly apply to the Critical Essay in ENGL1201. In later years, Creative Writing students may again have need to refer to this document, or one like it, not only when they are writing critical essays, but other forms or prose in which creative and discursive prose reporting on research are blended. These guidelines address the essentials of essay design and bibliographical style, in a report on critical analysis or literary research.

An essay is not a mere presentation of facts. We seldom want to find out how much you know; rather, we want to find out what you think, or, more precisely, how you think. A good essay argues a case and supports it with evidence.

A boring and unsatisfactory essay structure consists of the following parts: a first paragraph that restates the topic in other words; a middle essay that quotes from what authorities have said, or from parts of the text that might be used to support a relevant view on the topic, but does not argue for a view relevant to the topic; and a last paragraph that restates the topic in other words again.

It is better if you can find in the essay topic a problem that requires solution, an issue that can be argued both for and against, or a view that is overstated unless other considerations are taken into account. The middle essay then becomes a marshalling of evidence: to find an inductive solution to the problem; to weigh up arguments pro and con, before giving a final judgement; or to set out what can be said in defence of the topic statement but what, in view of competing formulations, would be a better definition of the case. If you conceive of your first paragraph as the proposal of a problem for solution, your last-paragraph conclusion will become non-repetitive and ground-breaking in what it has to say: it will be the solution.

2 THE ESSAY QUESTION

a) The instructional word “discuss”
“Discuss” means “examine by argument,” and it asks you to express your opinion about, or your view on, the idea that follows: e.g., “Discuss Charlotte Brontë’s use of nature in Jane Eyre.” In the context of a critical essay, “discuss” does not mean “hold a leisurely conversation” or “toss about ideas that seem relevant.” Nor does it mean “provide a survey of all possible opinions on the subject.” You are being asked to take a stand: to examine an idea, formulate an opinion about it, and support that opinion by a reasoned, coherent argument.

b) Other instructional words
Compare: examine similarities and differences.
Criticise: make a reasoned assessment (whether favourable or unfavourable).
Analyse: break the whole into parts so that you can interpret each part separately and examine internal relationships between parts, before reconsidering the whole.
Relate: describe connections.
Evaluate: analyse strengths and limitations, in order to pass a reasoned judgement.

c) The question
Having noted the instructional word, look carefully at the whole question: e.g., “Discuss Charlotte Brontë’s use of nature in Jane Eyre.” The question does not ask for a catalogue of natural imagery in Jane Eyre: rather, it asks you to determine what use Charlotte Brontë makes of nature — as an agent in the narrative, as a device for revealing character, as a means for creating atmosphere, or as a source of imagery and recurrent motifs.

Your essay should be focussed directly on the essay question. Read the question carefully, and read all of it. Do not simply seize on a few key words and use them as a launching pad for a general discussion of the text. The question should rather give you a basis for planning your essay structure.

d) The word limit
It is not there simply to tell you when to stop writing. A word limit forces you to be selective, to decide
what you think are the most important issues, and to express your ideas as clearly and succinctly as possible. A 500-word essay may require less writing than a 2000-word essay, but it does not require less thought. Going substantially over the word limit indicates that you have not drawn up an effective essay plan; falling well short of the word limit indicates that it is not only forethought in which your essay is lacking. You should have to write concisely to fit your argument into the word limit. To introduce repetition and to pad out what you have say are worse faults than falling short of the word limit.

3 ESSAY DESIGN

Your essay will need an opening paragraph that is a deliberate beginning and not an accident: it should establish the character and tone of your argument and its direction, telling the reader what it is you are setting out to determine. Your essay will need a substantial middle that defines and amplifies your argument, making it concrete and convincing. And your essay will need a conclusion that feels like a conclusion and not as if you have run out of steam: it should drive your point home, letting the reader know you have arrived, and precisely where. As has been suggested, conceiving of the topic as proposing a problem (a problem for which you will need to assemble and sort through data to arrive at a solution) is a more promising approach than considering the topic as simply an field in which data needs to be assembled.

4 THE ARGUMENT

Your argument should stand up in public. It should not be based simply on personal taste or private belief but on reasoned judgement. The substance of your argument should consist mainly of evidence you provide to support your opinions or the approach you have taken. In a critical essay “evidence” usually takes two forms, citation from the text and reference to authorities. You should instance specific episodes, scenes, passages or lines that support your ideas by providing concrete examples. Examples can be provided either by direct quotation from the text or by reference and description.

When quoting directly, select only what is relevant to your argument. Make sure that the grammar of a quotation coordinates with the grammatical context, the surrounding sentences and clauses. Alterations to a quotation should be shown in square brackets, where alteration is needed: e.g., “Keats points out that the condition of objects in the completed art-work is immutable, that ‘not a soul to tell/ Why [the town is] desolate can e’r return.’” Omissions in a quotation are shown with ellipses: e.g., “When Keats’s persona realises that the urn will ‘remain, in midst of other woe . . . a friend to man,’ he is rediscovering a truth about mutability implied by the urn.”

When you refer to the text, avoid merely paraphrasing the author; rather, summarise, criticise and relate. You should make clear how the example supports your argument, why it is relevant, and what interpretation of the passage is suggested by your argument.

5 THE CORRECT USE OF AUTHORITIES vs PLAGIARISM

An authority or critic can provide persuasive support for an argument you have already made (or are about to make). The critic’s opinion can only be a support — never a substitute — for your argument. You should enter into dialogue with the critic’s theory or opinion; it should take its place in the structure of your own argument. Some “authorities” you may find reason to disagree with. Citing a critical opinion that you are setting out to disprove may help establish your essay’s credentials as an argument.

Whenever you make use of a critic, whether you quote the critic directly or simply make use of his or her ideas, you must acknowledge the debt. Where you quote directly, all the words cited should be enclosed in inverted commas or, for longer excerpts, shown as an indented quotation. The borrowing should be introduced with an appropriate acknowledgement, and the context from which the borrowing has been drawn should be noted. Consider this passage from Richard Holmes, Coleridge: Early Visions (New York: Viking, 1989):

In the symbolic killing of the albatross, he [Coleridge] found what might be called a “green parable,” the idea of man’s destructive effect on the natural world, so that human moral blindness inadvertently introduces evil into the benign systems of nature, releasing uncontrollable forces that take terrible revenge. The Mariner was thus slowly developed from a sea-yarn out of an old folio into a metaphorical allegory of the Fall, a transformation that Coleridge alone could have
accomplished. (Holmes 173)

This is an appropriate citation from the passage:
In Richard Holmes’s view, it is possible to think of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as a “green parable.” “Human moral blindness” is shown to have introduced “evil into the benign systems of nature” (Holmes 173).

When you make use of an authority’s ideas, even if you do not repeat her or him verbatim, you must still acknowledge the source. The following paraphrase also sufficiently acknowledges a reliance on Holmes: “According to Richard Holmes, Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is an ecological parable based on the myth of the Fall” (173). The brief note in parentheses is sufficient to identify your exact source, as long as full details of the critical text are properly entered in your bibliography. (For this MLA or parenthetical style of reference, see below, “Bibliography.”)

Simply placing a note or page number at the close of a borrowing from a critic does not indicate where the borrowing (which might extend over many sentences) begins. *It is essential to mark the point at which your indebtedness begins with a phrase like “In Richard Holmes’s view” and to mark the point of closure with a reference.* The following sentences do not adequately acknowledge indebtedness to Holmes:

> It is possible to think of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as an ecological parable. Human moral blindness is shown introducing evil into “the benign systems of nature” (Holmes 173).

Acknowledging the critic by name at the beginning of the borrowing is more than a courtesy. Consulting critics and acknowledging them properly raises the level of scholarship of your essay. **Students who fail adequately to note the sources on which they have drawn are falling into habits of plagiarism.**

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

All assignments should include a bibliography. Even if your bibliography includes no more than details of the edition you have read (or video you have watched) in order to write on a particular novel, poem, play or film, that information is of use to a marker. It informs the marker which edition you have used, and it informs her or him that you have not consulted critical authorities.

You should list all the books and articles you have used in preparing an assignment, even if you have not quoted from them. Exceptions to this are a dictionary (though if you quote a dictionary’s definitions, you should name the dictionary in your essay) and the Bible (though if you quote from the Bible, you should cite book, chapter and verse in your essay). The Internet is not an exception to this rule. You should give full details of any Internet site you have consulted in preparing a specific assignment.

Importing information irrelevant to your argument from books you have read will result in an inadequate design and argument in your essay. Succumbing to the school-project method of cutting-and-pasting slabs of print from Internet sites will result in an equally inadequate essay. It may, indeed, result in a still more inferior production, given the inaccuracy of data entry and the inferior quality of information in many sites. The Web is a vast storehouse of searchable information, but you are well advised to check even general information (such as the dates of an author’s birth and death, or of his published works) against a reliable reference work like the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*. If you do not exercise critical discrimination, the Internet can become a powerful source of misinformation.

In the bibliography, books and articles should be arranged alphabetically, by authors’ surnames.

Necessary publication details for a book are author, title, editor (where applicable), place of publication, publisher, date of publication and (where applicable) page numbers.

Necessary publication details for an article in a journal are author, title of article, name of journal, volume number of journal, date of publication and page numbers.

Necessary publication details for a work posted on the Internet are author and title (where available), details of publication as for a book or an article (where appropriate), the date of entry, the publisher, the date of accessing the site, a description of the kind of posting such as e-mail or working paper (where necessary), and the full address of the site.

Titles of novels, plays, films, book-length poems or periodicals should be either underlined (*Middlemarch, Hamlet, Citizen Kane, The Prelude, Meanjin*) or italicised (*Middlemarch, Hamlet, Citizen Kane, The*)
Prelude, Meanjin). The title of a short poem or journal article, a chapter or an essay from a book should be placed inside inverted commas. The following is a guide to a satisfactory style and format for bibliographical entries.

**Book entries:**

**Entries for an anthology and a work in an anthology:**

**Articles collected in books:**

**Examples of an article in a periodical:**

**Examples of entries of electronic publications, in a database or on the Internet:**

The recommended reference work to consult for details of bibliographical style is: Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. The style which has been followed here is an MLA style. Lecturers may accept the author-date style used in the School of Education, or accept another style that presents information clearly and consistently, and allows a reader to retrace the steps by which an essay’s content has been assembled. For discussion of the MLA or parenthetical style of reference, see Gibaldi 114–18 and 118–229.

**ESSAY PRESENTATION**

Attach a cover sheet to your assignment. Cover sheets may be printed from <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/>.

Fasten the pages of your essay together with a single staple in the upper left-hand corner. Do NOT
place it in a plastic sleeve, folder or display book. (Creative Writing portfolios are an exception to this rule; though display folders are still headache to mark, a protective folder, in which the separate items are labelled and each item stapled, is an effective means of presenting the portfolio.)

Fill out every detail in the cover sheet, sign the declaration of originality, and make sure you date-stamp the assignment before submitting it to The Hub.

Assignments should be word-processed or typed.

Leave a wide left-hand margin for comments.

Double-space assignments, i.e., leave one line blank between each line of text.

A bibliography must be attached to every assignment (see previous section).

Give page numbers for the work(s) quoted.

The parenthetic notes and page references should be keyed to your bibliography. If your essay is only about one work, or you have introduced the name of the author or critic you are discussing, you can simply enclose a page number in brackets: e.g. (103). If there is any doubt about the author or critic being referred to, include the author or the critic's surname, e.g. (Ellmann 103). If you have referred to more than one work by an author, include part of the work’s title, e.g. (Ellmann, Wilde 103).