ENGL2202 - Intermediate Creative Writing 2
Course Outline

Course Co-ordinator: Kim Cheng Boey
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Ph: 02-4921 6780
Fax: 02-4921 6933
Email: kimcheng.boey@newcastle.edu.au
Consultation hours: Tues 11.30- 12.30pm (for Ourimbah students)
Wed 11.00 am– 12.00 pm (for Callaghan students)

Semester: Semester 2 - 2007
Unit Weighting: 10
Teaching Methods: Lecture, Seminar, Workshop

Brief Course Description
This course continues the study of the fundamentals of three genres: poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction. Students will continue to read extensively in poetry, short fiction and creative nonfiction to understand the skills and techniques that go into the forging of the texts. They will also further their ability to critique their own writing and that of their fellow students. This course also focuses on the use of drafts as staging posts to the final work.

Contact Hours
Workshop for 2 Hours per Week for 13 Weeks
workshop/lecture/seminar

Learning Materials/Texts

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1, Semester 2 - 2007
CTS Download Date: 7/7/2007
**Course Objectives**
Upon successful completion of this course, students will have
1. Furthered the understanding of the art of creative reading - the ability to identify a good text and use it as a creative model;
2. Developed an ability to analyse literary texts in a coherent way;
3. Acquired a deeper knowledge of the different genres, literary tradition and forms;
4. Learned more about the mechanics of a good poem, a compelling narrative and creative nonfiction;
5. Learned to work with drafts in the quest for the ideal form.

**Course Content**
This course builds upon the knowledge and experience accrued in Intermediate Creative Writing 1. It furthers literary training in three genres: poetry, narrative and creative nonfiction. It explores experimental trends in contemporary poetry, and focuses on more elusive techniques such as the establishment of voice and use of metaphor in prose texts. It also stresses the importance of working with drafts; students learn to revise and edit their work and that of their colleagues.

**Assessment Items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essays / Written Assignments</th>
<th>* Creative Work: 2500 words or equivalent (50%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays / Written Assignments</td>
<td>* Short Creative Writing Exercise: 500 words or equivalent (15%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Critical Essay: 1000 words (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group/tutorial participation and contribution</td>
<td>* Class participation (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance at seminars is compulsory. Two absences are allowable in the case of illness or other emergencies, and two more absences may be recovered by completing extra work on each of the seminars missed, but further absences will be regarded as failure to complete the course.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>* Journal and book review: 500 words (10%)</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**
ENGL2201 or equivalent.

**Callaghan Campus Timetable**
ENGL2202
**INTERMEDIATE CREATIVE WRITING II**
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>9:00 - 11:00</th>
<th>[MC110]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>11:00 - 13:00</td>
<td>[MCG28C]</td>
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<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>11:00 - 13:00</td>
<td>[MC110]</td>
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<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>17:00 - 19:00</td>
<td>[MCG28C]</td>
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**Ourimbah Timetable**
ENGL2202
**INTERMEDIATE CREATIVE WRITING II**
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>9:00 - 11:00</th>
<th>[O_CS2.01]</th>
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<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>13:00 - 15:00</td>
<td>[O_CN2:1.06]</td>
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**Plagiarism**
University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. A student plagiarises if he or she presents the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Without limiting the generality of this...
definition, it may include:

- copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;
- using another’s ideas without due acknowledgment;
- working with others without permission and presenting the resulting work as though it was completed independently.

Plagiarism is not only related to written works, but also to material such as data, images, music, formulae, websites and computer programs.

Aiding another student to plagiarise 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 -


The University has established a software plagiarism detection system called Turnitin. When you submit assessment items please be aware that for the purpose of 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 plagiarism checking service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking).
- Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

Written Assessment Items

Students may be required to provide written assessment items in electronic form as well as hard copy.

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date, as advised in the Course Outline, unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension of time for submission of the item. University policy is that an assessment item submitted after the due date, without an approved extension, will be penalised.

Any student:

1. who is applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or
2. 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;

must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, to the appropriate officer following the instructions provided in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Procedure - Policy 000641.

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

Please go to the Policy at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html for further information, particularly for information on the options available to you.

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

- **Requests for Special Consideration** must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.
- **Requests for Extensions of Time on Assessment Items** must be lodged no later than the due date of the item.

- **Requests for Rescheduling Exams** must be received in the Student Hub no later than ten working days prior the first date of the examination period

Your application may not be accepted if it is received after the deadline. Students who are unable to meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak to their Program Officer in the first instance.

**Changing your Enrolment**

The last dates to withdraw without financial or academic penalty (called the HECS Census Dates) are:

For semester 1 courses: 31 March 2007  
For semester 2 courses: 31 August 2007  
For Trimester 1 courses: 16 February 2007  
For Trimester 2 courses: 8 June 2007  

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

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of semester/trimester, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of semester/trimester must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs.

To change your enrolment online, please refer to  

**Faculty Information**

The Student Hubs are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students on campus.

The four Student Hubs are located at:

**Callaghan campus**

- Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Union Building  
- Hunter Hub: Student Services Centre, Hunter side of campus

**City Precinct**

- City Hub & Information Common: University House, ground floor in combination with an Information Common for the City Precinct

**Ourimbah campus**

- Ourimbah Hub: Administration Building

**Faculty websites**
Faculty of Education and Arts

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/

Contact details

Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie
Phone: 02 4921 5000
Email: EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au

Ourimbah
Phone: 02 4348 4030
Email: EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au

The Dean of Students
Resolution Precinct
Phone: 02 4921 5806
Fax: 02 4921 7151
Email: resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Deputy Dean of Students (Ourimbah)
Phone: 02 4348 4123
Fax: 02 4348 4145
Email: resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Various services are offered by the University Student Support Unit:

Alteration of this Course Outline

No change to this course outline will be permitted after the end of the second week of the term except in exceptional circumstances and with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of any approved changes to this outline.

Web Address for Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards

Web Address for Rules Governing Postgraduate Academic Awards

Web Address for Rules Governing Professional Doctorate Awards

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

The 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 please contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, or via 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 related to confidentiality and documentation please visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website at: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability

**Essential Criteria in Assessment**

This course contains compulsory components or assessment items that must be satisfactorily completed in order for a student to receive a pass mark or better for the course. These essential elements are described in the CTS. Refer - [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000648.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000648.html)

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Attendance at seminars is compulsory. Two absences are allowable in the case of illness or other emergencies, and two more absences may be recovered by completing extra work on each of the seminars missed, but further absences will be regarded as failure to complete the course.

| * Journal and book review: 500 words (10%) |

Students will be assessed on their contribution to class discussion. For the critical readings each week, they will have to demonstrate that they have understood the texts by making relevant observations. For the workshop session, they will have to make constructive comments about the creative work presented. A record of the attendance will be kept and students may approach the tutor at any time for feedback about performance.

**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.

**Further 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
ENGL 2202 Intermediate Creative Writing 2
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:

β 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.
β Word length: The word limit of all assessment items should be strictly followed – 10% above or below is acceptable, otherwise penalties may apply.
β Proof read your work because spelling, grammatical and referencing mistakes will be penalised.
β Staple the pages of your assignment together (do not use pins or paper clips).
β University Assessment Item Coversheet: All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet available at: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/
β 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
β 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.

β 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.
β 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 @ www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/.

1. 3500-word creative writing portfolio (70%)
2. 1500-word critical essay (30%)

It is acknowledged some assignments are not able to be processed by Turnitin.

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.

Note: As Turnitin is now part of Blackboard, the Faculty recommends that Schools consider use of Turnitin where appropriate.

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
No Assignment Re-submission

Students who have failed an assignment are not permitted to revise and resubmit it in this course. However, students are always welcome to contact their Tutor, Lecturer or Course Coordinator to make a consultation time to receive individual feedback on their assignments.

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 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>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49% or less</td>
<td>Fail (FF)</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>
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<tr>
<td>50% to 64%</td>
<td>Pass (P)</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>
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<tr>
<td>65% to 74%</td>
<td>Credit (C)</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>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Week beginning</td>
<td>Lecture Topic &amp; Assessment at a Glance</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>July 30 – Aug 3</td>
<td>Plot – Bernard Malamud’s “The Last Mohican” Richard Wright’s “Big Black Good Man”</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Aug 6 – Aug 10</td>
<td>Closed Forms 2/ The Sestina - Alberto Rios’ “Nani”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Aug 13 – Aug 17</td>
<td>Time/ Space Shifts – Patrick White’s “Five-Twenty,” James Baldwin’s “Going to Meet the Man”</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Aug 20 – Aug 24</td>
<td>Complex/ Shifting Point of View – Harold Brodkey’s “Ceil.” Leon Rooker’s “In the Garden,” Wolfgang Borchert’s “Do Stay, Giraffe” <strong>Short Writing Assignment due Aug 24</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sep 3 – Sep 7</td>
<td>Getting into Character – E.L. Doctorow’s “The Hunter,” Yukio Mishima’s “Patriotism,” Raymond Carver’s “Fat” or Tobias Woolf’s “Hunters in the Snow,” Tadeusz Borowski’s “This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen”</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sep 17 – Sep 21</td>
<td>Creative Nonfiction – The Personal Essay <strong>Critical Essay due Sep 21</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Oct 2 – Oct 12</td>
<td>Semester Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Oct 22 – Oct 26</td>
<td>The Art of Revision 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note:
* The session structure is as follows: 45 minutes of lecture and discussion on the readings of the week. This is followed by a 15-minute writing exercise. The second hour is devoted to workshop critique, in which students' writings are discussed and creative recommendations made.

* Works to be critiqued should be submitted and distributed at least a week before being workshoped. They should be read at home and a brief critique prepared for the workshop. This allows us more precious discussion time. You should also do the weekly readings at home and makes notes for discussion in class.

* 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.

* Participation is accessed by the degree of positive contribution to class discussions. Students can get feedback on their participation during the semester.

* The assessment items are a Creative Writing portfolio(50%), a critical essay (20%), a short creative writing assignment (15%) and a journal (10%). For the Creative Writing portfolio and short assignment, you may use the creative writing suggestions in the weekly topics below or develop your work independently. Prose can be a single short story or personal essay, two or three short stories up to 2500 words. For poetry, the number of poems may range from 8-15, depending on the length of the poems and quality. For the 1000-word critical essay, you must select one of the critical questions relating to the topics from the course. The 500-word journal should include observations about writing and writers, drafts for projects, and a review of a contemporary work. You should be working on your journal through the semester, making it a place where you deposit images, ideas, and thoughts about writers and writing.

* All work must be typed, at least one-and-a-half-spacing used. All pieces should bear a title, your name and date.

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, form, literary devices etc and apply them to the texts being read. The creative section consists of writing exercise related to the themes and writing skills and techniques covered in the readings.
**Week 1 - Beginnings**

Where does the story begin? Ursula Le Guin says: “First sentence 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 and capture the reader. Hence the great pains with the first paragraph for the short story or essay, the first scene, the first few pages for the 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 a speech: James Baldwin’s “Going to Meet the Man” begins with “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 begin with a scene that wraps the story, the beginning and end meeting in the present of the telling, like Richard Ford’s “Communist.” 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: Flannery O’Connor’s “The Artificial Nigger,” Leonard Michaels’ “The Deal” or John Updike’s “Separating.” 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?

**Creative**

1. Write a story that begins with the end. You could attempt a story that begins with a death of a person and then goes into a retrospective account of events leading to the death, snapshots of that deceased character’s life.

2. Chekhov’s advice to somebody who came to him with a manuscript was to discard the first third of it. His reason was that writers usually spend too much time laying out the exposition, preparing the beginning, whereas life isn’t like that. Now look at some of the stories you’ve written. Could you throw away the first few paragraphs or pages? How does it look? Has it altered your story, made it more intriguing or realistic?

**Week 2 - The Art of Memory**
William Wordsworth says that poems are “emotions recollected in tranquillity.” For him poetry captures “the spots of time,” the moments when life seems coherent and meaningful. Poetry is about redeeming, salvaging otherwise forgotten moments from time, giving an order and shape to our lives. The act of recall is not simply nostalgia; it is an attempt to revisit the past in order to give it a meaning, place it in a meaningful relationship to the present.

Critical

1. Robert Frost says that his poems provide a “momentary stay against confusion.” Explore his poem “Directive,” the memory or memories it tries to uncover in the light of this statement. How does the poem enact the search for the past? Examine the rhythm, voice, imagery closely and see how they relate to the theme.

2. Theodore Adorno once said that poetry is impossible after Auschwitz. He has been proven wrong by many poets who have written about the Holocaust. How does Anthony Hecht’s “The Book of Yolek” approach this very difficult subject? What is the memory the poem seeks to recreate? Who is being addressed in the poem? What is the tone and mood and how do they reinforce the theme?

3. What is being remembered in Philip Levine’s “Smoke”? Explore the imagery in close relation to the theme.

Creative

1. Write about a memory from childhood, a moment with a friend, your parents, a moment which has been so deeply etched in your mind.

2. Write about a place where you spent a great deal of time in your childhood, a place where perhaps you made some important discovery, for example, that you are you.

3. Now let’s try some free or automatic writing. Let all random images of the past surface. Record them as they arrive. Arrange them in a list. Can you see a poem there, a certain shape and meaning perhaps?

Week 3 - Plot

Plot is the design of your story. It is the way actions, events and characters are linked, the route they take to get to the moment of conflict and crisis. Without the plot, the story loses its dramatic, emotional and thematic significance. The elements of the plot structure are exposition, complication, crisis, conflict and resolution. But as you’ve already discovered, most literary fiction dispenses with the exposition or mixes the elements in different permutations. Read the glossary at the back of the course outline for the elements of the plot structure.

Critical
1. Read Bernard Malamud’s “The Last Mohican.” Identify the exposition, complication, the crisis, conflict and resolution in the story. What is the story about? How does Malamud stage the theme? How does he build up the suspense, develop the protagonist’s character?

2. Compare the story structure in Richard Wright’s “Big Black Good Man” with that in Bernard Malamud’s “The Last Mohican.” What are the similarities in terms of plot division and movement?

3. Chekhov is known for not only doing away with the exposition but also ending with an ending that does not provide satisfactory resolution and closure. Pick two stories in the anthology that begin in medias res and end unexpectedly. Why and how do the stories subvert the conventional structure of exposition-complication-crisis-conflict-resolution?

Creative

1. Raymond Carver’s “The Fat” begins with the “I” telling a story. There is no clear exposition and no clear ending. The reader is made to piece together the life of the speaker. Do the same. Create an “I” who is telling another person his or her experiences. This gives you a story within a story frame. Let the reader gather the story of your protagonist’s life from the information strewn in the conversation.

2. Alternatively, imagine yourself in a café overhearing a conversation, somebody telling a story. Report on what’s being said. Pay attention to the scene, to the speakers who are being overheard.

Week 4 - Closed Forms 2/ The Sestina

Poetic forms can be fun, liberating, enabling. They can be seen as containers of our deepest feelings, a trellis for our complex thoughts, a body to embody what seems almost beyond words. Form can also draw out, attract hidden ideas, feelings, the discipline of it making us look harder, deeper.

Poetic forms imply some kind of patterned repetition and in a sense that is what poetry is about, repetition miming the repeating seasons, the cycle of night and day, death and life, with variations. In the earlier course, you came across the villanelle; now we meet the sestina. Like the villanelle, it is a body of patterned sounds, repetition and rhythm merging to form a coherent whole. The sestina is based on six repeating words, and so it hammers home a particular set of ideas. The permutations provide a resonant field of meanings.

Critical

1. Writing about the sestina, John Frederick Nims says that “in a good sestina the poet has six words, six images, six ideas so urgently in his mind that he cannot get away from them; he wants to test them in all possible combinations and come to a conclusion about their relationship.” Comment using one or two sestinas from The Making of the Poem.

2. What is Alberto Rios’ “Nani” about? How does the sestina embody what he is trying to say? How and why has he chosen to vary the form?
Creative
1. Think of a landscape or an idea. Let a cluster of words form. Pick six and try stretching them into a sestina.

2. Write a sestina like Alberto Rios’ “Nani,” about somebody you love or admire, a family member or friend. Let the sestina help you to focus the portrait.

Week 5 - Time/ Space Shift
A story is narrative sequencing of events. It can be a chronological ordering, a temporal succession of events. But life is not like that. It is more fragmentary and intractable and to tell a story in a chronological fashion denies the messiness out there, and the fact that we continually revert to the past. To mirror the disjunction of the modern or postmodern world, and to keep the readers alert and fully engaged, writers resort to disrupting the temporal sequence of the narrative. They insert flashbacks, when the protagonist recalls a scene from the past, often involuntarily. Flashbacks can throw the character and narrative back to a distant time and place, making the reader read the story and perceive the character in another light.

Critical
1. Explore how the use of recall/flashback in Patrick White’s “Five-Twenty” creates a character that is fully believable and convincing.

2. Is James Baldwin’s “Going to Meet the Man” merely about racial hatred and division? How does the use of recall/flashback bring out the themes? How does the past shape the present and the identity of the protagonist?

Creative
1. Write a story centred on a protagonist who is coming home after a long sojourn abroad. Weave the memories of the past from which he or she had tried to escape into the journey home.

2. Your protagonist has come to a crisis point where he or she must make a drastic decision. Let him or her recall the events that have led to this predicament.

3. Model your story on Baldwin’s “Going to Meet the Man.” Your character is haunted by a distant memory and goes back to it to find a way of understanding the present. Use flashbacks and recall.

Week 6 - Complex/ Shifting Point of View/ Stream of Consciousness
Because reality is more splintered and complex than we think, writers often try to fracture and layer the perspectives in the narrative. One of the ways to do it is the use of a combined point of view, mixing first, second and third-person to achieve a complex, multi-layered narrative. This deepens psychology of characters and narrative, prompting the reader to look at the story from different angles. The use of complex/shifting point of view can be confusing and irritating if it is not patterned and structured to achieve an overall effect that contributes to the theme.

The stream of consciousness is another device used to deepen and complicate the narrative point of view. The writer enters the character’s mind, thinking, feeling and seeing things through his or her eyes as if from a first-person point of view. This approximates the subjective consciousness of the character. Virginia Woolf uses this throughout her novels. It has the effect of slowing the
story down, making it meditative, impressionistic and dreamlike. Woolf weds stream of consciousness to the third person. It can also be grafted onto the first-person, as in Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury. Here we get an interior monologue, in which a character talks to himself in a random manner. Joyce’s Ulysses provides a famous example, in which the character Molly Bloom ends the book with a long monologue. There is no punctuation and the thoughts and memories are tumbled together, the flood of words ending in “and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.”

Introducing the stream of consciousness slows the narrative pace. It is used to portray moments of meditation, indecision and crisis.

There are other tricks to achieve complex point of view. In Carol Shields’ The Stone Diaries, letters, diary, journal, newspaper reports all shed different light on the story. In Graham Greene’s The End of the Affair, Bendrix is given Sarah’s journal and the story becomes told from another “I” point of view. Book Three is entirely made up of extracts from the journal, giving us an anguished view of the story and helping Bendrix and the reader to understand Sarah better.

**Critical**

1. Read Harold Brodkey’s “Ceil.” What is the story about? What are the ways Brodkey uses to complicate the narrative point of view and the perception of reality in the story?

2. Examine the use of stream of consciousness in Leon Rooke’s “In the Garden” and Wolfgang Borchert’s “Do Stay, Giraffe.” How does the subjective consciousness relate the themes of the stories?

**Creative**

1. Write a story about somebody who has disappeared or died and about whom you are trying to construct a reliable story. You can try combining points of view and also use “letters” and “notes” written by or about that person.

2. Attempt a poetic narrative like Wolfgang’s Borchert’s “Do Stay, Giraffe” or Leon Rooke’s “In the Gardern.” Use stream of consciousness to create the subjective mood, blurring the boundary between dream and reality.

**Week 7 - The Prose Poem**

Ezra Pound observes that the poet who wishes to write free verse should beware of writing bad prose hacked into arbitrary line lengths. In a sense, free verse is a misnomer, as poetry can never be free of the cadence, the measures that makes poetry poetry. Even if the form of the poem does not conform to any traditional form, it still has to find a shape, a form to contain and express it, and this is governed by a sense of rhythm and cadence, of what we pump into a line or how far we can stretch it. The line break is the place where the poem gets an idea of where it is going or
what it is going to look like. There are poems that ignore the line break, and runs on like prose. Typographically, it reads like prose. However it is so informed by the presence of poetic rhythms, the figures of speech, imagery, rhyme, alliteration, assonance and other poetic devices that it reads like poetry. There may be narrative hints or an implied story lurking, but the dominant mode is the lyrical, the poetic mood or tone. It is marked by what Pound calls the musical phrase.

The prose poem first appeared in French poetry in the early 19th century, and became an experimental mode used a great deal by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, the Symbolists and then the surrealists. In the prose poems of Rimbaud, the boundary between prose and poetry blurs, as the distinction between dream and reality, art and life dissolve. In “A Season In Hell,” Rimbaud practises a phrase he has made famous, a deliberate disorientation of the senses:

I dreamed of crusades, voyages of discovery never reported, unrecorded republics, suppressed religious wars, revolutions in manners, movements of races and continents: I believed in all enchantments.

I invented the colours of the vowels! – A black, E white, I red, O blue, U green – I made rules for the form and movement of each consonant, and, with instinctive rhythms, I flattered myself that I had created a poetic language accessible, some day, to all the senses. I reserved translation rights.

At first this was an academic study. I wrote of silences and of rights, I expressed the inexpressible. I defined vertigos.

The poem celebrates a moment of visionary power, discovering a new vocabulary for a new way of looking at life and writing.

The prose poem is spontaneous, giving the impression that it is an instantaneous record, a moment when the unconscious is tapped, and the writing has a feel of immediacy. In “Log,” Alice Jones captures a moment between sleep and waking

Afternoon of slumber, logging dreams on the mind's dusty screen. Where did it come from, that cartoon sleep of sawing timber? We lumber up from depths, wrestling with sunlight, uncrusting our eyes. An unrecognized timbre of voice loudly shouting something new, limber of tongue, loose of syllogism. Don't rest, write it down. We're up to no good, barking up the wrong tree. That story where Wynken, Blynken and Nod sail forth cloudy-headedly, navigating the sky in a wooden clog, star-lit. The recording angel's lost her book and deeply sleeps the day away in dreams of woods, those papery trees, everything rustling.
The pun on log creates shifting layers of meaning: log as journal, log as timber, and logging on. It recreates that unstable ground between consciousness and sleep, language and the unconscious, dream and reality.

**Critical**

1. What makes Carolyn Forche’s “The Colonel” a prose poem rather than a short lyrical prose narrative?
2. Read Edward Thomas’ “Rain.” Thomas often started with prose sketches, which he cut and arranged into poems. Write out “Rain” without the line-breaks? How does it read? What determines the format of the poem, whether it should remain a prose-poem or be shaped more like a poem? You may want to read Denise Levertov's essay on the use of the line-break which can be found at: http://www.uair.edu/~rmburns/RB/levlinet.html.
3. Go to the library or search for Arthur Rimbaud's “The Illuminations” or “A Season in Hell” on the internet. Why has Rimbaud chosen the prose-poem to convey his vision?

**Creative**

1. Try sitting down at your desk and let your drift into a spell of automatic or free writing. This is the act of writing anything that comes, letting yourself into a trance where you become a conduit for the images, the words.
2. Write a prose-poem in the form of a letter, like Richard Hugo's letter poems. Pay attention to the music of the lines, the imagery, and the tone. What makes it a poem rather than a prose sketch?
3. Write a series of prose-poems centred on a theme, like, for example, moving house, travelling, living in the suburb etc. How do they read? Are they prose-poems or merely prose sketches?

**Week 8 - Getting into Character**

Ernest Hemingway remarks: “The hardest trade in the world is the writing of straight, honest prose about human beings.” It is much harder to write about people we know, the faces we meet in the street, the beings that we brush against in our daily lives than fantastic characters, robots or sci-fi humanoids.

Creating round or believable characters requires an ability to see and listen. There is a host of potential characters around us. Writers create characters out of their own experiences. Often it is a combination of the biographical or autobiographical with the imagined which makes up real and alive characters.

The common ways to depict characters are description (appearance, movement, gestures), action (including the character contradicting his thought or speech with an unexpected action), dialogue and scene, and also through the eyes of other characters.

**Critical**
1. Chekhov says: “In my opinion it is not the writer’s job to solve such problems as God, pessimism, etc; his job is merely to record who, under what conditions, said or thought what about God or pessimism. The artist is not meant to be a judge of his characters and what they say; his only job is to be an impartial witness.” Comment using one of these: E.L. Doctorow’s “The Hunter,” Yukio Mishima’s “Patriotism,” Raymond Carver’s “Fat” or Tobias Wolff’s “Hunters in the Snow.”

2. Describe the protagonist in Tadeusz Borowski’s “This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen,” his age, gender, race, appearance, character etc. How does Borowski make us see him? What are the revealing details? How does he preserve his humanity in an inhuman environment? Is there any inconsistency in his character or actions? Does that make him believable? Borowski’s story is rooted in his own experience in the concentration camp. Could we assume that the “I” is Borowski himself?

Creative

1. Do a portrait of somebody you admire, a writer, a painter, an actor etc. You can refer to published biographies. Describe him or her in three scenes, focussing on the appearance, the body movement, habitual gestures, interaction with others etc. Use objective descriptions. Do not enter the mind of your character. Do these objective details reveal the inner character?

2. Write a story in which your protagonist is attracted to somebody but does not have the courage to declare his or love. Instead he or she follows the movement of the beloved from afar. Let your protagonist describe the person and in the process reveals his or her own character.

3. Write a story about two persons locked in a conflict. Let the tension and conflict reveal their character. Use appearance, scene and dialogue, thought and action.

Week 9 - Open Forms2/ The City

Free and experimental verse started to flourish with the rise of the city. Eliot’s ‘The Waste Land’ is perhaps the most famous example. But before modernism the French symbolists were already dismantling inherited forms, improvising and inventing a new poetic language for the city. Baudelaire’s poems mapped late nineteenth-century Paris, his hallucinatory and fragmented cityscapes duplicating the schizophrenic and haunted mind of the modern man. The city was the place for radical experiments in the arts, the frenetic movement of urban life, the lively jazz scene, the break from representational forms in the visual arts fuelling an improvisatory spirit in poetry and generating new poems about the city.

Critical

1. Compare the portrayal of the city in Douglas Crase’s “The Elegy for New York” with that in Mona Van Duyn’s “Condemned Site.” How does each poem create its image/s of the city?

2. What do Allen Ginsburg’s “America” and Frank O’Hara’s “Ave Maria” say about the American city? Examine the voice in each poem. How does each poem reflect the poet’s attitude towards the American city?

Creative
1. Write a poem about a walk through either Sydney, Newcastle or another city. You can mark and locate your poem with street names. Pay attention to the faces, the sights, smells and your own thought.

2. Write a poem about one of these city sites: a cinema, a discotheque, the museum, the shopping mall, Chinatown, Central Station, a popular street.

**Week 10 - Creative Nonfiction/ The Personal Essay**

In recent years creative nonfiction has emerged as a literary genre that is drawing practitioners from all fields of writing. It is a very broad label that covers very diverse subgenres: memoir, biography, the personal essay, meditation, nature writing, literary journalism, literary science etc. A creative nonfiction piece may straddle a few of these genres and be very hard to pin down. The requirement is that the account is factual and based on personal experience or investigation. One may, however, detect elements of fiction in it: the plotted narrative, the characterisation, dialogue and scene-crafting. Indeed we know that facts have been reshuffled and rearranged so that the work reads as compellingly and coherently as good fiction. There are also lyric touches, reflective imagery and poetic rhythms interrupting the narrative stride.

The memoir is perhaps the most popular form of creative nonfiction. A memoir covers a period in a person’s life, not the entire span, as the autobiography does. A memoir can be about a few crucial years, a few months, a few days, or even just one day. It also focuses on certain experiences bearing on a certain theme. It could record a lone voyage around the world, an illness, quest of identity, about becoming a writer etc. The memoir employs fictional devices to tell its story. Events can be edited and recast in the process of finding the shape and meaning for the experiences. The overlap with fiction notwithstanding, what characterises the memoir is the emotional honesty, the belief that this is what happened.

**Critical**

1. Read the personal essay (your tutor’s choice) and see how it resembles a short story. What is the theme(s) of the essay? How does the essay convey this? Explore the rhythm, imagery, syntax, the use of point of view or any key device that makes the essay work.

**Creative**

1. Describe the place you grew up in. Visualise the streets, the shops, the markets, the surrounding hills etc. You may want to draw a map of it, and list the significant landmarks, the places that were important to you, like the library, the bookstore etc. Is there any event or incident that happened in any of these places which has stayed with you or which has suddenly surfaced? Have you managed to convey a sense of the place and time? Are your descriptions vivid enough
to engage all the senses, sight, smell, sound, touch? Read it as a reader. Can you feel the writing transport you there?

2. What is the most important event that has shaped you into who you are? Avoid launching into it directly. Take the time to set the scenes, to see connective threads, to weave reflective elements into the narrative.

3. Write an essay about a member of your family. Centre your essay on a particular memory, or a sequence or connected memories. Sift through the family album and pick a few snapshots. Describe the person from these portraits.

Week 11 - The Poem as Self-Discovery

Writing is a journey, a cliché, but nonetheless a valid metaphor. Poetry especially has this power to carry us into the hiding places, into the deepest reaches of ourselves, because it relies less on conscious articulate speech and operates in a medium that is close to music, a language of instinct and intuition. William Wordsworth’s “The Prelude” is perhaps the first sustained poetic exploration of the self in English poetry, setting a precedent for other Romantics and, one can argue, the confessional poets like Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath.

Critical

1. Read the excerpt from William Wordsworth’s “The Prelude.” What discovery does Wordsworth make about the self and nature in this episode? How does he lead us to the epiphanic moment?

2. What is Denise Levertov’s “Uncertain Oneiromancy” about? Is it a real journey being described? What is revealed in the poem? Examine the imagery and mood and how they relate to the meaning of the poem.

Creative

1. Read Robert Frost’s “Directive” again. Place yourself on a journey back into the places of childhood. Do not use the “I” but the second person like Frost does. Map your trip with images, symbols perhaps, of the different stages, the phases of the past, back to the beginning.

2. Use an extended metaphor, as Adrienne Rich does in “Diving into the Wreck,” to enact the process of self-exploration.

Week 12 - Epiphany

This is often the most important point of a short story, especially if the plot is not openly confrontational. Epiphany is a religious term to denote a spiritual revelation. James Joyce famously applied it to describe a moment when the mundane is transfigured into something meaningful and transcendental. It is a moment charged with significance, when the protagonist experiences insight and knowledge, an experience not easily translated into words. It may be a pronounced moment which resolves the narrative.

In the novel, the epiphany can also effect a resolution to the story, as in John Updike’s novel The Centaur, when the son receives a final vision of the father:
I turned my face away and looked through the window. In time my father appeared in this window, an erect figure dark against the snow. His posture made no concession to the pull underfoot; upright he waded out through our yard and past the mailbox and up the hill until he was lost to my sight behind the trees of our orchard. The trees took white on their sun side. The two telephone wires diagonally cut the blank blue of the sky. The stone bare wall was a scumber of umber; my father’s footsteps thumbs of white in white. I knew what this scene was – a patch of Pennsylvania in 1947 – and yet I did not know, was in my softly fevered state mindlessly soaked in a rectangle of coloured light. I burned to paint it, just like that, in its puzzle of glory; it came upon me that I must go to Nature disarmed of perspective and stretch myself like a large transparent canvas upon her in the hope that, my submission being perfect, the imprint of a beautiful and useful truth would be taken.

Then – as if by permitting this inchoate excitement to pass through me I had done an honest piece of work – I went weary and closed my eyes and nearly dozed, so that when my mother brought up my orange juice and cereal I ate with an unready mouth.

It is a moment of vision and transcendence when the protagonist experiences something ineffable. Epiphanies like this are religious in intensity and can only be approached in poetic terms. Updike’s language is highly visual and metaphorical, the sensuous touches and rhythms conveying the intense moment as the protagonist is visited by the past and his dead father.

The moment of epiphany should be unforced. Listen for it. Locate it so that the external setting mirrors the change in the character’s perception.

Critical
1. Locate the moment of epiphany in any of the following stories: Bernard Malamud’s “The Last Mohican,” Albert Camus’ “The Adulterous Woman,” James Baldwin’s “Going to Meet the Man,” Richard Ford’s “Communist.” How does this moment reveal the meaning of the story?

2. There are stories that refuse the epiphanic moment, avoiding the closure which in real life doesn’t exist. Can you identify three stories you have read so far that avoid the epiphany? Why have the writers chosen to end the stories without any epiphany?

Creative
1. Write a journey story that ends in an epiphanic moment. It can be a bus ride, as in Camus’ “The Adulterous Woman,” a train journey or a hike in the country.

2. Write a story about misunderstanding, a story in which your opinion of a person is rectified at the end of the story, and you begin to see life in a new light, as in V.S Pritchett’s “The Saint.”

Week 13 - The Art of Revision

Anton Chekhov gave some advice about revising a story: first, he said, throw out the first three pages. As a young writer I figured that if anybody knew about short stories, it was Chekhov, so I tried taking his advice. I really hoped he was wrong, but of course he was right. It depends on
the length of the story, naturally; if it's very short, you can only throw out the first three paragraphs. But there are few first drafts to which Chekhov's Razor doesn't apply. Starting a story, we all tend to circle around, explain a lot of stuff, set things up that don't need to be set up. Then we find our way and get going, and the story begins ... very often just about on page.
— Ursula LeGuin

Kerouac may have reeled off On the Road in three weeks on a continuous typewriter scroll, and Faulkner may have sped through a story in a single nightshift, but in reality most writers labour for years on the work. Drafts and furious revisions, that is the test of a writer.

Revision is an intensive process. Hemingway is known to have done thirty drafts for a story. Gaps have to be filled in, but more often Ursula LeGuin’s update of Chekhov is right. The wastepaper basket, as another 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 better position to see better. 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 and not have a superfluous note in the composition.

When we write, the writer comes to the fore and the critic takes a back seat. But when it comes to revision, it is time to let the critic take over the controls. This transition is not easy and 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. You are then likely to see and hear better. Carver reveals: “Maybe I revise because it gradually takes me into he 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.”

**Checklist**

Revision or rewriting entails a mobile vision – you should step back from your work and scan it as a whole and at the same time be able to zoom in to scrutinise the parts. Let the reader-critic in you take over and test-read it to check the coherence and ensure that every word counts. Flannery O’Connor says: “A story is a way to say something that can’t be said any other way, and it takes every word in the story to say what the meaning is.”

Here is a checklist for revision:

- What is the story about? What is the central defining moment of the story? Is it a moment of conflict, confrontation, knowledge? Do the sequences, the parts add and lead up to this? Is there enough causality, motivation, suspense to move the story and the reader forward?

- Has the central moment and scene been well sustained, explored and linked to the resolution? Is the resolution too forced or unsatisfactory?

- Are there irrelevant scenes?

- Have you repeated anything that doesn’t need recapitulation?

- Is there enough description? Or is there so much of it that the narrative is too ponderously slow?

- Is the writing too laboured, too self-conscious?
- Have you observed the golden rule-show and not tell? Inevitably there is summarizing, straightforward telling but this should be kept to a minimum and be done in an interesting way.
- Is there anything that is vague or general?
- Scan the sentences, the paragraphs. Are they too flat, overlong, clumsy or monotonous?
- Is there any passage that is overwritten or over-embellished? Samuel Johnson counsels: “Read over your compositions and, when you meet a passage that you think is particularly fine, strike it out.”
- Have you glossed over or hurried through a scene which could be important?
- Go over all the fundamentals – plot, structure, character development, location, point of view, and test if they have been well worked.
- Check the choice of words. Check the sentences, then the paragraphs. Do they flow?
- Get rid of clichés, unnecessary adjectives and adverbs.
- Tighten up the dialogue. Get rid of unnecessary speech markers like “he says,” if it is clear who is talking.
- Check the punctuations. Refer to the MLA Handbook for writers if you are unsure about punctuations like semi-colons.

Checklist for poets

Is the shape of the poem right? Is it in the right voice?
Is there too much telling? Is it saying the obvious; in other voices, are the sentiments clichéd?
Is there too little imagery? Too many images?
Is there a sustained metaphor that becomes boring, makes the poem too predictable?
Does the imagery relate to the theme?
Are the rhythms right? What about the music?
Are the lines too long, too short? Are the line breaks in the right place?
Look for clichés, stale verbs and adjectives?
Are there adverbs you can replace with vivid verbs?
Is it too predictable, too sentimental, too clichéd?
Is there a sense of movement towards knowledge, sense of quest?
Have you allowed for a sense of mystery, the unknown or have you explained it all away?
Is there more to be explored?
Do the lines flow, the stanzas connect, the images link?
You may have to leave the poem for a while. Read around, read more poetry. Take notes in your journal. You may stumble for an image, the solving line or shape. When you come back to it with renewed vision, you may discover the real poem revealed.

Required Texts


**Recommended Texts**
