ENGL2202 - Intermediate Creative Writing 2
Course Outline

Course Co-ordinator:  Kim Cheng Boey
Room:  MC142
Ph:   02-4921 6780
Fax:   02-4921 6933
Email:  kimcheng.boey@newcastle
Consultation hours:  Friday 9-11am
Semester   Semester 2 - 2010
Unit Weighting  10

Learning Materials/Texts

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 the Full Term
workshop/lecture/seminar

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>
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<tr>
<th>Essays / Written Assignments</th>
<th>* Creative Work: 2500 words or equivalent (50%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays / Written Assignments</td>
<td>* 2 Workshop presentations, 500 words each or equivalent (30%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Critical Essay: 1000 words (20%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other: (please specify)</td>
<td>Students must submit all assessment items in order to complete the course.</td>
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</tbody>
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Assumed Knowledge
ENGL2201 or equivalent.

Callaghan Campus Timetable
ENGL2202
Intermed. Creative Writing 2
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2010
Seminar Thursday 9:00 - 11:00 [MCG28C]
or Thursday 11:00 - 13:00 [MCG28C]
or Thursday 17:00 - 19:00 [MCG28C]

Ourimbah Timetable
ENGL2202
Intermed. Creative Writing 2
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2010
Seminar Tuesday 9:00 - 11:00 [O_CS201]

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:

- copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;
- using another person's ideas without due acknowledgment;
- 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 (under student) at the link 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

*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.

**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.

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/fees/censusdates.html

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/

School of Humanities and Social Science
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>
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<tr>
<th>Callaghan Campus</th>
<th>Port Macquarie Student Hub</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Building</td>
<td>The University of Newcastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Hub: Level 2, Student Services Centre</td>
<td>A Block, Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>City Precinct</td>
<td>Widderson Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Hub &amp; Information Common, University House</td>
<td>Port Macquarie NSW 2444</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Coast Campus (Ourimbah)</td>
<td>Phone: 49215000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Hub: Opposite the Main Cafeteria</td>
<td>Singapore students</td>
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<td>contact your PSB Program Executive</td>
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### OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

**Faculty Websites**

**Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards**

**Rules Governing Postgraduate Academic Awards**

**Rules Governing Professional Doctorate Awards**

**General enquiries**
- Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie
  - Phone: 02 4921 5000
  - Email: [EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au)
- Ourimbah
  - Phone: 02 4348 4030
  - Email: [EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au)

**Dean of Students Office**
The Dean of Students and Deputy Dean of Students work to ensure that all students receive fair and equitable treatment at the University. In doing this they provide information and advice and help students resolve problems of an academic nature.
- Phone: 02 4921 5806
- Fax: 02 4921 7151
- Email: [Dean-of-Students@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Dean-of-Students@newcastle.edu.au)

**University Complaints Managers Office**
The University is committed to maintaining and enhancing fair, equitable and safe work practices and promoting positive relationships with its staff and students. There is a single system to deal with all types of complaints, ranging from minor administrative matters to more serious deeply held grievances concerning unfair, unjust or unreasonable behaviour.
- Phone: 02 4921 5806
- Fax: 02 4921 7151
- Email: [Complaints@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Complaints@newcastle.edu.au)

**Campus Care**
The Campus Care program has been set up as a central point of enquiry for information, advice and support in managing inappropriate, concerning or threatening behaviour.
- Phone: 02 4921 8600
- Fax: 02 4921 7151
- Email: [campuscare@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:campuscare@newcastle.edu.au)

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://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/enrolment/regdates.html

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

Studentmail and Blackboard: Refer - 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/

- 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
## Weekly Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Week Commencing</th>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/08/2010</td>
<td><strong>Plot</strong> – Bernard Malamud’s “The Last Mohican” Richard Wright’s “Big Black Good Man”</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>16/08/2010</td>
<td><strong>Closed Forms</strong> – The Sestina - Alberto Rios’ “Nani”</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>23/08/2010</td>
<td><strong>Time/ Space Shifts</strong> – Patrick White’s “Five-Twenty,” James Baldwin’s “Going to Meet the Man”</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>30/08/2010</td>
<td><strong>Complex/ Shifting Point of View</strong> – Harold Brodkey’s “Ceil.” Leon Rook’s “In the Garden,” Wolfgang Borcher’s “Do Stay, Giraffe”</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>13/09/2010</td>
<td><strong>Getting into Character</strong> – 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20/09/2010</td>
<td><strong>Open Forms/ The City in Poetry</strong> – Douglas Crase’s “The Elegy for New York,” Mona Van Duyn’s “Condemned Site,” Allen Ginsburg’s “America,” Frank O’Hara’s “Ave Maria” <strong>23rd September Submit 1,000-word Critical Essay</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>27/09/2010</td>
<td><strong>Semester Recess: 28 September to 10 October 2009</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/10/2010</td>
<td><strong>Creative Nonfiction</strong> – The Personal Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1/11/2010</td>
<td><strong>Revision</strong> Submit 2,500-word Portfolio <strong>Friday, 5th November</strong></td>
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*The two workshop presentations to be rostered in class*
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 straight-forward 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 otherworlds. 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 two workshop presentations, ideally one in the first half of the semester and the other in the second half, 500 words each or the equivalent. You have to present them in class and explain the narrative strategies or forms used in your work. The two presentations could revolve around a single project, showing how it has evolved from the early draft to a more final form, or they could be separate works. 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.

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 ENGL2202 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 http://www.newcastle.edu.au/students/current
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 ENGL2202: 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 ENGL2202 in the left-hand panel of the ENGL2202 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 ENGL2202 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

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 *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 *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 writer puts 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 ENGL2202. 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 an art-work is immutable, that ‘not a soul to tell/ Why [the town is] desolate can e’er 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 metaphysical 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:
[Note: Chadwyck-Healey’s Literature Online is a valuable database when searching for poetry texts. It is available to students through the University Library.]


[Note: This is an example of a site that has not much to recommend it, or that needs approaching with discrimination by a twenty-first century student of Dickens. Saintsbury’s essentially nineteenth-century view of the great nineteenth-century novelist has dated; its limitations show in the limited space accorded to Great Expectations.]

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 parenthetic 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).

**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 that 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 and 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.

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**Week 4 – Closed Forms / 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.

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**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 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.set 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 to 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 Garden.” 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.ualr.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?

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 Forms/ 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” reveal 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 etc.

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. Narrate and describe a memory or memories associated with this place. 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.

3. Explore the imagery in “Diving into the Wreck” and how it relates to the theme.

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 two 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 - Revision**