ENGL3202 - Advanced Creative Writing 2 Prose
Course Outline

Course Co-ordinator: Dr Keri Glastonbury
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Consultation hours: Semester 2 - 2006
Unit Weighting: 10
Teaching Methods: Lecture, Seminar, Workshop

Brief Course Description
This course takes students on further explorations in their genre of specialization. Contemporary and postmodern formations will be examined to apprise students of new creative possibilities. Students will also learn to revise their portfolios as a collection and work on making them publishable.

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

Learning Materials/Texts

Course Objectives
Upon successful completion of this course, students will have
1. furthered their understanding of the art of creative reading - the ability to identify a good text and use it as a creative model;
2. furthered their 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;

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1 Semester 2 2006

CTS Download Date: 6 July 2006
5. been exposed to an array of voices from the local to the global and start to develop their own voice;
6. have been acquainted with contemporary developments in their area of specialization.

Course Content
This course takes students on further explorations in their genre of specialization. Contemporary and postmodern formations will be examined to apprise students of new creative possibilities. Students will revisit the traditions and forms encountered in earlier courses and learn how contemporary movements dismantle and reassemble them into new structures. Students will also learn to revise their portfolios as a collection and work on making them publishable. Particular attention will be paid to
* contemporary developments in poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction;
* comparing local and foreign voices;
* deepening knowledge of forms and traditions of each genre;
* developing a coherent collection of poetry or prose;
* rewriting and editing;
* the skills and techniques of major writers;
* discovering literary exemplars to inspire students.

Assessment Items
| Essays / Written Assignments | * Creative Work: 3000 words or equivalent (50%) due October 30 |
| Essays / Written Assignments | * Short Creative Writing Exercise: 500 words or equivalent (15%) due September 4 |
| Essays / Written Assignments | * Critical Essay: 1000 words (20%) due September 25 |
| Group/tutorial participation and contribution | * Class participation (5%) |
| 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 | * Journal and book review: 500 words (10%) due October 30 |

Assumed Knowledge
ENGL3201 or equivalent.

Callaghan Campus Timetable
ENGL3202
ADV CREATIVE WRITING 2
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2006
Seminar Wednesday 18:00 - 20:00 [MC102] PROSE
or Thursday 12:00 - 14:00 [MCG29] PROSE
or Friday 9:00 - 11:00 [MCG25] PEOTRY

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 - http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policy/academic/general/academic_integrity_policy_new.pdf
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 on the prescribed form.

Please go to the Policy and the on-line form for further information, particularly for information on the options available to you, at:


Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

· Requests for Special Consideration must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the 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 lodged no later than 5 working days before the date of the examination.

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 2 courses: **31 August 2006**

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of semester and prior to the commencement of the formal exam period. 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 the Student Enquiry Centre.

To change your enrolment online, please refer to

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/enrolment/changingenrolment.html

Contact Details
Faculty Student Service Offices

The Faculty of Education and Arts
Room: GP1-22 (General Purpose Building)
Phone: 02 4921 5314
The Dean of Students
Dr Jennifer Archer
Phone: 02 4921 5806
Fax: 02 4921 7151
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

Online Tutorial Registration:
Students are required to enrol in the Lecture and a specific Tutorial time for this course via the Online Registration system:

Registrations close at the end of week 2 of semester.

Studentmail and Blackboard: 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.

Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details
Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date. Late assignments will be subject to the penalties described below.

Hard copy submission:
- **Type your assignments:** All work must be typewritten in 11 or 12 point black font. Leave a wide margin for marker’s comments, use 1.5 or double spacing, and include page numbers.
- **Word length:** The word limit of all assessment items should be strictly followed – 10% above or below is acceptable, otherwise penalties may apply.
- **Proof read your work** because spelling, grammatical and referencing mistakes will be penalised.
- **Staple the pages** of your assignment together (do not use pins or paper clips).
- **University coversheet:** All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/studentguide/index.html
Assignments are to be deposited at any Student Hubs. Hubs are located at:

- Level 3, Shortland Union, Callaghan
- Level 2, Student Services Centre, Callaghan
- Ground Floor, University House, City
- Ground Floor, Administration Building, Ourimbah

Any changes to this procedure will be announced during the semester.

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. Assignments mailed to Schools are accepted from the date posted.

Keep a copy of all assignments: All students must date stamp their own assignments using the machine provided. Mailed assignments to schools are date-stamped upon receipt. However, 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 hard copy and on disk.

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:

- Short Writing Assignment (500words) due September 4
- Critical Essay (1000 words) due September 25
- Creative Writing Portfolio (3000 words) due October 30

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.

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.

Special Consideration/Extension of Time Applications
Students wishing to apply for Special Consideration or Extension of Time should obtain the appropriate form from the Student Hubs.
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/index.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.

Remarks
Students can request to have their work re-marked by the Course Coordinator or Discipline Convenor (or their delegate); three outcomes are possible: the same grade, a lower grade, or a higher grade being awarded. Students may also appeal against their final result for a course. Please consult the University policy at:


Return of Assignments
Students can collect assignments from a nominated Student Hubs during office hours. Students will be informed during class which Hubs to go to and the earliest date 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 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). Further information on referencing and general study skills can be obtained from:


**Student Representatives**

We are very interested in your feedback and suggestions for improvement. Student Representatives are the channel of communication between students and the School Board. Contact details of Student Representatives can be found on the School website.

**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 can be found at:


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<tr>
<th>Grading guide</th>
<th>Fail (FF)</th>
<th>Pass (P)</th>
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<th>Distinction (D)</th>
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<td>49% or less</td>
<td>An unacceptable effort, including non-completion. The student has not understood the basic principles of the subject matter and/or has been unable to express their understanding in a comprehensible way. Deficient in terms of answering the question, research, referencing and correct presentation (spelling, grammar etc). May include extensive plagiarism.</td>
<td>The work demonstrates a reasonable attempt to answer the question, shows some grasp of the basic principles of the subject matter and a basic knowledge of the required readings, is comprehensible, accurate and adequately referenced.</td>
<td>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>
<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>
<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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<td>Workshop Focus</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>July 24</td>
<td>Complex Point of View 2 – Milan Kundera’s “Let the Old Dead Make Room for the Young Dead,” Amoz Oz’s “Nomad and Viper”</td>
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<td>July 31</td>
<td>Time/ Space shifts – Milan Kundera’s “Let the Old Dead Make Room for the Young Dead,” Patrick White’s “Five-Twenty” Juan Rulfo’s “Talpa,” Jean Stafford’s “Children Are Bored on Sunday”</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Aug 7</td>
<td>First Person 2/ The Unreliable Narrator – Vasily Aksenov’s “Little Whale, Varnisher of Reality” Ingeborg Bachmann’s “Everything,” Margaret Atwood’s “Hair”</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Aug 21</td>
<td>Theme – James Baldwin’s “Going to Meet the Man,” Flannery O’Connor’s “The Artificial Nigger.”</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Aug 28</td>
<td>The Art of Memory – Carlos Fuentes’ “The Doll Queen,” Nabokov’s “Spring in Fialta”</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Sep 4</td>
<td>Creative Nonfiction/ Memoir Short Writing Assignment due</td>
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**Semester Break**

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<td>Oct 23</td>
<td>The Art of Revision</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Oct 30</td>
<td>Submission of portfolio – Portfolios and journals are to be handed in at the School of Humanities and Social Science by 5pm on Oct 30</td>
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* The session structure is as follows: 45 minutes of lecture and discussion on the readings of the week. This is followed by a 10-minute writing exercise and a 5-minute break. 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 workshopped. 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.

* You are required to submit a portfolio of original prose, a short creative writing assignment, a critical essay and a journal. For the short creative writing assignment and the portfolio, you may use the weekly writing exercises in the course or develop your work independently. The short assignment
can be a self-contained prose sketch, the beginning of a story or personal essay. It cannot be used again for the final portfolio. The portfolio can be a single short story or creative nonfiction essay, or a collection of shorter stories or creative nonfiction essays. In any case, the word limit is 3000. For the 1000-word critical essay, you must select one of the critical questions related to the topics from the course. The third assessment item is the 500-word journal. This should include observations on writing and writers, sketches for projects, and a brief review of a contemporary literary novel or collection of short stories. 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, double-spaced. 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 happened to drop in on the story. Some begin with a scene that wraps the story, the beginning and end meet 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: Richard Ford’s “Communist,” John Cheever’s “The Country Husband,” or William Maxwell’s “The Pilgrimage.” Read the story and revisit the first paragraph. Examine how it works as a hook to draw the reader into the story. Explore also how it establishes the rhythm, mood, voice and theme of the story.

**Creative**

1. Write a scene that begins and ends a story. What tense have you chosen? What determines the tone, the rhythm, the syntax, the imagery?

2. Chekhov’s short story “A Journey by Cart” begins with “They left the city at half past eight.” See if you can begin with the same sentence or something like “They arrived at the station past midnight.”

3. There are stories that open with a snatch of dialogue, like Naguib Mahfouz’s “The Conjuror Made Off with the Dish.” Hemingway’s “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” begins: “The marvellous thing is that it’s painless,” he said. “That’s how you know when it starts.” Is there something you have overheard that could be the beginning of a story?

**Week 2 – Complex/ Shifting Point of View**

Writers often deepen the psychology of characters and narrative, complicate the plot and subplots by a variety of methods. Last semester we encountered the use of stream of consciousness, when the
writer duplicates the subjective consciousness of the character, and the use of combined points of view, mixing first, second and third-person to achieve a complex, multi-layered narrative. 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.

**Critical**
1. Milan Kundera employs a very unusual narrative point of view for “Let the Old Dead Make Room for the Young Dead.” How would you describe it? How does this relate to the character development and the theme?
2. What is Amos Oz’s “Nomads and Vipers” about? Examine how the complex point of view underscores very complex themes. An understanding of the place and political backdrop is crucial to the understanding of the story.

**Creative**
1. Write a story involving two persons, like Kundera’s “Let the Old Dead Make Room for the Young Dead.” The characters meet after a long period of absence. Switch from one point of view to another, with different perceptions of the past, different interpretations of a crucial incident that might have caused them to separate years ago.
2. Now a real challenge. Try using the first, second and third-person in a story. You can re-read Robert Coover’s “Quenby and Ola, Swede and Carl,” or refer closely to Oz’s story for inspiration.

**Week 3 – Time/Space Shifts**

Flashbacks are the most common and important way of restructuring story time. These are moments when the past suddenly intrudes, interrupts the ongoing present, plunging the protagonist in another time and place. They are especially vital in stories rooted in memories, stories haunted by the past, like *The End of the Affair*. The frequent use of flashbacks challenges the reader to make the connections between events, pick out the irony of the drama, and amplifies the mood and theme of the narrative.

**Critical**
1. Milan Kundera’s “Let the Old Dead Make Room for the Young Dead” and Jean Stafford’s “Children Are Bored on Sunday” rely heavily on flashbacks for their narrative structure and theme. Compare/contrast how the two stories use flashback and how vital it is to the themes.
2. Juan Rulfo’s “Talpa” makes some really intricate time-shifts, including moments of flash-forward. Identify these shifts and how they enhance the theme.

**Creative**
1. Imagine your protagonist is on a journey escaping from the past. Don’t mention that he or she is running away. Useful flashbacks to reveal piecemeal what happened. Weave the flashbacks with descriptions of the ongoing journey.
2. Use Jean Stafford’s story as a model. Have your protagonist glimpse briefly somebody he or she was interested in once. Construct the flashbacks to fill up the story, inserting them at crucial points into the present.

**Week 4 – Unreliable Narrator**

There is often a gap between what the narrator tells us and what is really happening in a story. The first-person “I” at best furnishes a partial or fragmentary account of what happens, and if it is an unstable and afflicted “I,” the story is even more unreliable. Writers often exploit this to show how we distort or conceal reality. Even if the “I” appears to be a stable and sound character, there can be cracks in the narrative, so that the inner contradictions and the true character can be revealed.

**Critical**
1. Compare the protagonist in Vasily Aksenov’s “Little Whale, Varnisher of Reality” with the “I” in Ingeborg Bachmann’s “Everything.” Can we trust their accounts of what happened? What does this reveal about protagonists?
2. Is the narrator in Atwood’s “Hair Jewellery” reliable? How does Atwood show this?
**Creative**
1. Imagine a character who has just lost his or her child. Don’t mention the death. Let the character speak in the first-person, keeping the tone controlled. Now let there be inconsistencies between what the “I” tells us, and what happens. Are there other ways to make the “I” an unreliable narrator?
2. Now try attempting the above story but it could be a different trauma. This time insert a second point of view to contradict and subvert what the “I” says.

**Week 5 - Setting**
Place and places are very important in giving a sense of reality to your stories. They ground your plot and characters, give them the atmosphere they need to become alive. Getting the place right means that you’ve got the right mood, and where the story is less dependent than physical action, this can be the key to the success and meaning of the story.

**Critical**
1. What is Dino Buzzati’s “Seven Floors” about? How does the setting reveal the theme? Examine how Buzzati builds up the mood of the story.
2. Explore the setting and its relation to the theme in either Patrick White’s “Five-Twenty.”
3. Compare the use of a foreign setting in Bernard Malamud’s “The Last Mohican” with that in William Maxwell’s “The Pilgrimage.” Is the character in conflict or harmony with the place? How do the details of place, mood and atmosphere bring out the sense of character and crisis? How do the writers create the sense of place?

**Creative**
1. Write about a place you know, a store in the neighbourhood of your childhood, or a street or a place you frequented as a child. Recreate it, the sights, smells and sounds. Use as little as adjectives as possible. Seek out the images. Turn the place into a sort of character, a witness to the lives, the stories around it. Now write about three characters whose lives were tied to this place.
2. Your protagonist has just arrived in a foreign place. What are his or her feelings and perceptions? Weave the memories and thoughts of home into the stay abroad.

**Week 6 - Theme**
Theme is not to be mistaken for moral. We don’t want didactic stories, stories that point out a moral and direct us to certain conclusions. Stories should challenge us into rethinking, make us see differently. Theme is often something that emerges at the end of the writing, though it may be there in the beginning, hidden and undefined. Experience may be sometimes irreducible to linguistic logic. But stories often tell us what we know already, in different ways. Raymond Carver notes: “While short stories often tell us things we don’t know anything about -- and this is good of course -- they should also, and maybe more importantly, tell us what everybody knows but what nobody is talking about. At least, not publicly.”

Often the themes transcend the immediate context of the story. Alice Munro says: “Anecdotes don’t make good stories. Generally, I dig down underneath them so far that the story that finally comes out is not what people thought their anecdotes were about.”

**Critical**
1. Examine the social and political themes in James Baldwin’s “Going to Meet the Man” and Flannery O’Connor’s “The Artificial Nigger.”
2. Which of the stories in the anthology subvert the accepted ideas about truth, truthfulness, goodness, charity, love or sanity? What does it offer in its place?
3. Pick a story in the anthology that you have found difficult to pin down. Is it because the theme is vague, or that it has multiple themes? Is the story meant to frustrate our demand for a clear meaning in a story?

**Creative**
1. Look back on the stories you have written. Are there themes which recur? Why have you consciously or unconsciously reworked them? Are there connected themes, underlying or subthemes that the major theme points to?
2. Think of a theme that interests you. Love, friendship, loneliness etc. Pick an opening scene, a café, a bus stop where you will locate the theme. Let your mind circle around it for the ideas or images. There may be a face, a scene that you could start with. Now start sketching the opening scene with the theme as background. Do not state your idea at any time.
3. Take a proverb like “more haste, less speed” or “honesty is the best policy” and write a story in which the proverb is disproved.

**Week 7 – The Art of Memory**

We are all made up of memories. Who we are is shaped by the past and we are continually searching, digging into the past for clues to our identity and future. In fiction too, characters often look to the past, often unwittingly. Some are haunted by past mistakes, traumas that have pursued them to the present, as in Thomas Hardy’s *The Major of Casterbridge*. There are also characters who long for the past, for memories of love and passion. *Brideshead Revisited* is a long recall of an idyllic past of friendship and love. The story is made poignant by the gap between the beautiful past and the sterile present in which the protagonist finds himself in.

**Critical**
1. Carlos Fuentes’ “The Doll Queen” and Nabokov’s “Spring in Fialta” are about longing for past love. Explore the theme of memory in the two stories. Compare the ways the stories approach the past, the use of the time-shifts to underline the theme.

**Creative**
1. Model your story on Fuentes’ “The Doll Queen.” Pick an object, a book or a photograph that reminds your protagonist of the past. Send him or her on a search, real or imaginary, for the past.
2. Have your protagonist visit a place where he or she had an unforgettable relationship. Use the location to activate the recall, as in Nabokov’s story.

**Week 8 – Creative Nonfiction/ Memoir**

A memoir is not a chronological ordering of your life from birth to the moment of writing the memoir. Memoirs are not autobiographies. A memoir recounts a period in a person’s life, not the entire span, as the autobiography does. A memoir can be about a few crucial years in childhood. It could cover 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 or a mountaineering expedition. It could be about an illness, or it could be about vocation, about becoming a writer.

While an autobiography is concerned with facts, with chronology, the memoir is interested in presenting certain facts and moments in relation to the theme. Tobias Wolff’s *In the Pharoah’s Army* recounts his Vietnam War experience and Jonathan Raban’s *Coasting* tracks his voyage around Britain, with a parallel journey into his past to trace his growth as a writer and traveller. Both books, as many memoirs do, read like novels. They rearrange chronology, shuttle back and forth between different times and spaces, have carefully crafted scenes and dialogue and believable characters. Some of the scenes and dialogue has to be made up from faded echoes, and names may have to be changed for privacy reason. All these make it read like fiction. Tobias Wolff’s *This Boy’s Life* could have just as easily been labelled as novels; we would have read them differently. Sometimes it is a convenient label foisted on by the editors and reviewers. Philip Roth writes: “I write fiction and I'm told it's autobiography, I write autobiography and I'm told it's fiction, so since I'm so dim and they're so smart, let them decide what it is or it isn't.”

When it comes to the crunch, what marks the memoir from fiction is its claim to truth. The writer undertakes to communicate what he or she believes to be truth, or the emotional truth. What is required is honesty, that this is the way it happened in the writer’s mind. Tobias Wolff says: “If you are writing something you’re going to call a memoir, I think you owe it to your readers to be as honest as you can be.” The reader should know that the writer is exploring the past, looking for meanings, locating it in a meaningful relationship to the present. Events may be amplified, reshuffled, scenes refocussed, the players become more defined, as the writer searches for a meaning to what happened.

**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. Dig into your store of childhood photographs. Arrange them in chronology. Think about what connects them. What do these photographs tell you? Meditate on them and try to recreate the events surrounding them.

3. Do a playback and review the most important moments in your childhood. Pick one and write about it from the child’s point of view, in the present tense. Now rewrite the incident from the adult’s point of view, describing it in the past tense but adding in your reflections in the present tense.

**Week 9 – Voice/ Style**

Narrative voice refers to the voice in which the story is told. If it is in the first-person, the voice is that of the persona, which is different from the writer’s voice. The voice in J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* is that of Holden Caulfield, adolescent, naïve yet tinged with disenchantment.

In the third-person narrative, it is easier to hear the writer’s voice. Voice refers to the distinctive signature of a writer. It is the way the work sounds Style is the way the writers put his words together on the page. Voice is the way the words sound together, as a coherent composition. Hemingway’s style is famously sparse, a precursor to the minimalist movement of the 1980s exemplified by Raymond Carver’s work. The narrative voice is detached, the details are sparse and the characterization is achieved through an objective reporting of the dialogue and scene. Chekhov does this a lot, letting the events and the characters speak for themselves. The belief is that less is more, that it is better left to the reader to make the inference and connection. Hemingway calls this the “iceberg theory” of fiction, which suggests that three-fourths of the story should remain submerged for the reader to discover.

In contrast to Hemingway and Carver, writers like Nabokov and Updike are more elaborate and resort to metaphors and other poetic devices to give the writing more texture.

The style and voice depends on diction, sentence structure, tone, imagery and story structure.

**Critical**

1. Examine how Raymond Carver and E.L. Doctorow achieve the sparse, minimalist style in “Fat” and “The Hunter” and how important it is to the theme.

2. Pick one of these: Borges’ “The Aleph,” Doris Lessing’s “The Habit of Loving,” Edna O’Brien’s “Sister Imelda” or Truman Capote’s “Children on Their Birthdays.” What is the voice like? How does it relate to the theme? How is it achieved?

**Creative**

1. Read Carver and Doctorow and examine their minimalist style. Then read Updike and Nabokov and examine the maximalist style. Select a story you have written or a sketch for a story and write it first in the minimalist style and then write another version in the maximalist mode.

2. Write a dramatic monologue from the point of view of one of these: a migrant, a drunk, a homeless person, a 10 year old boy, a professor of classical languages, and an uneducated housewife, a priest. Pay close attention to the language, the thoughts etc. Use the syntax and grammar to make the voice more compelling. You may dispense with punctuations, use halting sentences and write ungrammatically if the character portrayal requires it.

3. Write about an event from the point of view of three characters. The occasion may be the death of a mutual friend or relative. Give the three characters different voices and perspectives.

**Week 10 – Intertextuality/ Metafiction**

In literary fiction, you’ll often come across stories which refer to other stories, books, poems, writers. This is not just the writer showing off his literary knowledge. Intertextuality serves to enhance and deepen the theme and also reminds us that book has come into existence because of other books, that writers write because they have read. It is a way of acknowledging the debt to other writers, of connecting the voices and concerns. Perhaps the most famous and explicit example of intertextuality is James Joyce’s *Ulysses* which harks back to Homer’s *The Odyssey*. More recently, Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours* rewrite Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*. But more often the allusions are subtle, stories paralleling the original or containing half-concealed allusions to other texts.
Intertextuality often occurs together with another phenomenon in fiction, metafiction. Metafiction is fiction which draws attention to its fictional identity, its narrative structure. It highlights the gap between the imagined order of the story and the actual messiness of the world out there. Tristram Shandy is one of the first novels to do that.

**Critical**
1. The following stories are strewn with instances of intertextuality: Margaret Atwood’s “Hair Jewellery,” Vasily Aksenov’s “Little Whale, Varnisher of Reality,” Tommaso Landolfi’s “Gogol’s Wife,” Harold Brodkey’s “Ceil” and Guy Davenport’s “The Haile Selassie Funeral Train.” Choose two of the stories and pick out the references to other texts and writers and explain the role intertextuality plays in the stories.
2. Borges’ writing is packed with his learning, and a typical Borges story will contain allusions to classical and arcane texts and in some cases it is hard to say whether Borges has invented them. Read “The Aleph” and examine the intertextuality and its role in the meaning of the story.
3. Robert Coover’s “Quenby and Ola, Swede and Carl” ends with the metafictional “Telling stories.” Explore the story as metafiction.

**Creative**
1. Write a story that is loosely based on a famous text, Don Quixote, King Lear, Lolita etc. Make veiled references to it, besides the paralleling the story and structure. You could include references to other texts with similar themes.
2. Write a story about a protagonist who is a reader/ writer. As things occur to him or her, draw on the books he or she reads to illuminate or mark the events.
3. Write a metafictional piece about the difficulty of conveying the truth in a story.

**Week 11 – Image/ Symbol**

Writing is an act of seeing with the imagination. It is about renewing the vision, about being able to look at the visible and the invisible with a questioning wonder.

To achieve that, prose writers resort to poetic language, sowing the sentences with lyric imagery. There are common literary devices like the simile and metaphor to enliven the prose, to brighten, intensify, complicate, layer, darken, relieve, amplify, lift the descriptive into salient moments in the narrative, and give the narrative a more distinct and resonant impact.

We use a simile when comparing one thing to another using words such as “like” or “as.” “Her love is like rich dark wine” is an example. However, when we say “Her love is a rich dark wine,” we turn it into a metaphor. Metaphor has its etymology in Greek; the original means to transport or carry over. When writers use metaphors, they carry one thing over into another realm. Images are merged in an imaginary act. Metaphors and similes can make us look at things anew. But they should be used unobtrusively, in service of the entire work, rather than to call attention to the finesse, to the literary polish of the writing.

A symbol is something that is invested with meaning beyond its own meaning. A rose is a symbol of love. Water is a symbol of life. The cross is a symbol of salvation. Symbols may not have obvious and definite meanings. The darkness in Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness cannot be reduced to the evils of colonialism; it can refer to that, but it embraces a multitude of other themes and meanings, among them, man’s inherent evil, the unconscious, the savage geography of the Congo, the undertow of human actions, the unknowable, and so on. Likewise the lighthouse in Virginia Woolf’s To a Lighthouse can represent the unreachable, the point of perfection, the balance of art and life etc. In Peter Matthiessen’s The Snow Leopard, the elusive leopard is a symbol of spiritual transcendence, for the paradoxical truth of human existence, for the fleeting and the illusory etc.

Symbols have to be worked into the narrative if they are to be effective. For example, a character on point of the breakdown of his marriage smashes a vase. The vase is inserted at this point to represent the life he has shared with the wife. The action loses its symbolic power because the symbol is contrived and not worked into the heart of the story. The vase would acquire more symbolic potency if introduced much earlier and seen in the course of the narrative.

**Critical**
1. John Updike is a master in using refreshing and revealing imagery. Analyse how the imagery in “Separating” helps to enhance the theme.
2. Explore the imagery/ symbolism in either Carlos Fuente’s “The Doll Queen” or Nabokov’s “Spring in Fialta” and analyse how the images/ symbols relate to the theme.
Creative
1. Make a list of about ten clichéd metaphors and similes. Rewrite them to make them fresh and engaging. Try linking them up into a passage or a scene.
2. Is there an object around you that means a lot to you, a painting, a photograph, a ring, a stone, a souvenir or heirloom. Write a story about it, how it has travelled through the year with you, exploring its symbolic meanings at various points in your life.

Week 12 – Endings

John Updike remarks: “The ending is where the reader discovers whether he has been reading the same story the writer thought he was writing.” Just as the beginning is often the place where the story wins or loses the reader, the ending often decides whether the story will stay with the reader for a long time and be worth re-reading. And just as some stories dispense with the conventional beginning, there are many literary stories after Chekhov that end without the neat conclusion of commercial fiction. They end as if on a musical note, leaving subtle echoes reverberating in the reader’s mind. The Chekhovian ending is in a sense no ending. It doesn’t supply the resolution that the reader seeks but leaves him or her pondering, wondering what it all means. We often end at unexpected places; this is the joy of writing, discovering as we write where we have to go. Tobias Wolff reveals:

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

Critical

Creative
1. Write a story with a circular ending, the last scene reflecting the beginning?
2. Write a story that begins and ends on a same image or memory.

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 3. — 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 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.”

**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.

**Required Text**


**Recommended Text**