

ARTS & SCIENCE 4CD3 / RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WRITING 2019-20 (Term 1)

Instructor: Anton Piatigorsky LRW-3038, Jenkins Room (416-602-9655) (piatiga@mcmaster.ca)

Class Time and Location: Friday 11:30 – 2:20, JHE A101

Office Hours: Friday 10:30-11:20 LRW-3038, Jenkins Room (or by appointment)

Course Description and Objectives

The process of creative writing involves two overlapping parts: inspiration and execution. Most writing courses only address the latter part, focusing exclusively on technical questions of execution, such as how to construct plot, character and theme, or how to apply dialogue, exposition and metaphor. This course, in contrast, is concerned with inspiration. We examine and consider how source materials are used to create works of poetry, plays and fiction. It is equally analytical, critical and practical. We read and analyze great literature, but from the writer's perspective, allowing us to study how source materials have been used to inspire and execute their works. Students are encouraged to learn techniques of inspiration: how to read associatively and imaginatively; how to utilize the form and content of reading for your own ends; and how to target research to deepen and expand your ideas. The goal is to demystify inspiration, to strip it of divine or Romantic connotations, and to foster curiosity and creative ambition. Aspiring writers of every level will adopt expansive themes, subject matter and techniques in their own work, and gain comfort tackling projects that demand research.

Course Structure and Schedule

The course is divided into two complementary sections. Part one addresses how to research form and structure (weeks 1-4). Part two addresses how to research content (week 5-12). Each class has three components: a theoretical investigation, an examination of a writer or writers, and a practical application. Each week is structured around a theme, and has assigned reading.

1) Inspiration (September 6, 2019).

James Joyce, *Finnegan's Wake*, pp. 3-4. (ccw).

Joseph Campbell & Henry Morton Robinson, *A Skeleton's Key to Finnegan's Wake*, pp. 3-13, 15-16, 22-34 (ccw).

2) Form: Poetry (September 13, 2019)

Stephen Burt and Davod Mikics, *The Art of the Sonnet*. Introduction, pp. 5-25.

Sir Philip Sidney, "Astrophel and Stella 45" pp. 38-42.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Sonnets from the Portuguese 28," pp. 162-165.

Edna St. Vincent Millay, "Bluebeard," pp. 242-245.

Robert Lowell, "Searching" pp. 325-328.

Alison Brackenbury, "Homework. Write a Sonnet. About Love?" pp. 397-399 (ccw).

Agha Shahid Ali, "Tonight", pp. 233-239 (from *the poem is you*, by Stephen Burt)

3) Form: Drama (September 20, 2019)

Waiting for Godot, Samuel Beckett

4) Form: Fiction (September 27, 2019)

James Wood, *How Fiction Works*. "Narration" pp. 3-38 (ccw).

James Joyce, "The Dead" (ccw).

- 5) Ideology and Philosophy (October 4, 2019)
 Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*. "The Library of Babel," pp. 112-118 (ccw).
 Lydia Davis, *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis*. "The Center of the Story," pp. 173-177 (ccw).
 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, "The Grand Inquisitor," pp. 246-264 (ccw).

- 6) Mythology and Ancient Text (October 11, 2019)
 Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad*.
 Zachary Mason, *The Lost Books of the Odyssey*, "The Stranger," pp. 9-16, "Bacchae," pp. 32-38,
 "Fragment," p. 71, "The Iliad of Odysseus," pp. 86-103 (ccw).

- 7) History, Part One (October 25, 2019)
 Anton Piatigorsky, *The Iron Bridge*. "Tea is Better than Pepsi," pp. 11-41; "The Consummation," pp.
 79-126 (ccw).
 John Nunnally, *Tales from the King's African Rifles*, pp. pp. 3-5, 156-159 (ccw).

- 8) History, Part Two (November 1, 2019)
 George Saunders, *Lincoln in the Bardo*

- 9) Anthropology (November 8, 2019)
 Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* pp. 1-139 (optional: the rest of the book)

- 10) Legal Procedure/Natural Science (November 15, 2019)
 Sergio de la Pava, *A Naked Singularity*, pp. 266-274 (first line), 281-301 (ccw).
 E.O. Wilson, *Anthill*, "The Anthill Chronicles," pp. 173-247 (ccw).

- 11) Psychology and Character (November 22, 2019)
 Stephen Grosz, *The Examined Life*. "On Laughter," pp 11-17; "A Safe House," pp. 28-35; "A Passion
 for Ignorance," pp. 55-62; "How Paranoia Can Relieve Suffering and Prevent a Catastrophe," pp. 81-
 85; "On losing a Wallet," pp. 130-135 (ccw).
 David Foster Wallace, *Oblivion*. "Good Old Neon," pp. 141-181 (ccw).

- 12) Your Life (November 29, 2019)
 J.M. Coetzee, *Summertime*. pp. 3-84, 221-242 (optional: the rest of the book).

Required Texts

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*
 Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad*
 Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*
 George Saunders, *Lincoln in the Bardo*
 J.M. Coetzee, *Summertime*

Additional reading is contained in the custom courseware (ccw), available at the *Campus Store*.

Assignments

Class Participation.....	4%
In Class Assignments.....	10%
Researching Form Assignment.....	23%
Researching Content Assignment.....	23%
Final Project.....	40%

- Class Participation includes attendance, completion of the reading, involvement in class discussion, and engagement in weekly group exercises.
- Each class features an in class assignment to practice the ideas and techniques discussed in that class. Each student is required to submit 3 of their in class assignments at the end of the semester. These combined assignments will make up 10% percent of the final grade, and will be graded in a manner similar to participation.
- Researching Form Assignment is a work of poetry, drama or fiction 700-1100 words (for fiction and drama), 2-3 pages (for poetry), double spaced, with 12pt. font, either poetry, play or fiction, that utilizes the skills learned in the first part of the course, on how to research and/or use formal and structural elements. It is **due on Thursday, October 3, 2019 at 4PM (via Avenue to Learn)**.
- Researching Content Assignment is a work of poetry, play or fiction 700-1100 word (for fiction and drama), 2-3 pages (for poetry), double spaced, with 12pt. font, either poetry, play or fiction, that utilizes the skills learned in the second part of the course, on how to research content, and apply source material. It is **due on Thursday, October 31, 2019 at 4PM (via Avenue to Learn)**.
- The Final Project consists of two pieces: a) a longer creative work, 2500-3800 words (for fiction or drama) or a shorter 10-12 pages (for poetry), double spaced, with 12pt. font, that includes research and source materials in its creation, and b) a shorter explanatory essay, 200-800 words, double spaced, with 12pt. font, that describes precisely how you have used your research. The point of the final project, and other assignments, is not to write a masterpiece, but rather to show diligence, imagination and flexibility in your process – to practice using research for creative work. The Explanatory Essay is not anything like a formal bibliography. It is rather a document that explains your sources, your thought processes, and your creative leaps in the process of writing. It is **due on Friday, December 6, 2019 at 4PM (via Avenue to Learn)**.
- Please submit all assignments in **.doc or .docx format**.
- The written work submission guidelines have been chosen to support the more sustainable use of paper, energy, and toner, and meet the Gold standard of the Office of Sustainability <www.mcmaster.ca/sustainability>. All written work should be submitted in the following format: no title page; sans-serif font.
- The penalty for late submission of assignments is **3% per day, including days of the weekend**.

McMaster Policy on Academic Integrity:

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences—e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1) Plagiarism—e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2) Improper collaboration in group work. 3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF):

In the event of an absence, students should review and follow the Academic Regulations in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.” Please consult the MSAF statement on our website (<https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/forms-requests/>) and direct any questions or concerns to Shelley Anderson or Madeline Van Impe in the Arts & Science Program Office.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities Statement *[Please use this wording]*

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. SAS can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or email sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, or Spiritual Observances (RISO) Statement

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, or Spiritual Observances (RISO):

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous, or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office (i.e. to Shelley Anderson or Madeline Van Impe in the Arts & Science Program Office) normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Please Note:

“The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check **their McMaster email** and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.” I will make announcements in class and by using the course email distribution list <eg: d-as4CD3>.

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