

PLEASE READ!

ENGLISH 335.01 Creative Writing and Reading Like a Writer

Course description:

English 335 is a course focussed on reading from a writerly perspective as an early but important step in the development of a writing practice. Many writers are nervous about being “influenced,” and so fail to understand that reading with the eye of a writer, and paying attention to form and structure, diction and language, in the work of established writers, is key to building a strong creative foundation. This course requires creative work in response to and in concert with reading; it focuses on structural and formal elements and their specific deployment, undertaking genetic and generic explorations in how reading enables writers to engage with both process and form in their writing. This is a foundational class, but flexible in its appreciation of multiple creative approaches.

Students are expected to read a great deal and should be prepared for intensive, steady, and ongoing work. The course is conducted as a seminar, with students expected to complete assignments promptly, and to keep up with a heavy reading load.

Yes, students will be expected to discuss literature and writing in class.

Yes, this class requires that students read a good many books (see text list below), some of which engage with potentially uncomfortable subjects.

No, students will not be given in-class writing assignments.

This course encourages students to develop their writing practice, but does not babysit creativity.

Yes, it is fun,

Yes, it is a lot of work.

Be prepared.

Texts and readings:

Margaret Atwood, *Murder in the Dark*

Julian Barnes, *Flaubert’s Parrot*

Alan Bennett, *The Uncommon Reader* (available on Kindle)

Marian Engel, *Bear*

Charlene Knight, *Dear Current Occupant*

Robert Kroetsch, *Too Bad*

bpNichol, *Organ Music: Parts of an Autobiography*

Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family*

Francine Prose, *Reading Like a Writer*

Richard Wagamese, *Indian Horse*

The books are available in the bookstore.

If you wish to read ahead, we will begin with *Reading Like a Writer* and *Indian Horse*.

Assignments and Evaluation:

Students will be graded on their writing, their reading acumen, on written reading analyses, on reading reviews, and on class participation. Participation and critical acumen (including literary range and formal awareness) will be evaluated as well.

Constraints:

Students are asked to resist a reading focus on genre writing, meaning fan fiction, crime, zombie, fantasy, horror, romance, science fiction or inspirational writing. This is a course in reading as a writerly activity and replicating the genre conventions of popular forms will not stretch your literary muscles.

Your various assignments will provide you with specific constraints as well.

Grades and Assignments

4 short assignments (reading reviews), each of which apprehends a different element of fiction

(400-500 words each)

1 writerly analysis of form (500 words)

1 final well-crafted capstone creative response (1600 words)

Percentage Breakdown:

Each short assignment is worth 10%: 40%

Writerly analysis of form/structure: 20%

Class participation: 10%

(Based on attendance, oral participation and preparation throughout the course)

Capstone creative/critical response: 30%

100%