



The University of Newcastle
Faculty of Education and Arts
School of Humanities and Social Science

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/>

Callaghan Campus
University Drive,
Callaghan 2308

NSW Australia

Office hours: 9am – 5pm

Room: MC127 McMullin Building

Phone: +61 2 4921 5175/5172/5155

Fax: +61 2 4921 6933

Email: Humanities-SocialScience@newcastle.edu.au

Web: <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss>

ENGL3201 - Advanced Creative Writing 1 (Prose)
Course Outline

Course Co-ordinator:	Dr Keri Glastonbury
Room:	MC139, McMullin Building
Ph:	02 49215160
Email:	keri.glastonbury@newcastle.edu.au
Consultation hours:	Wednesday 3pm – 5pm
Semester:	Semester 1 2007
Unit Weighting:	10
Teaching Methods:	Lecture Seminar Workshop

Course Overview

Brief Course Description

Allows students to undertake specialization in poetry or prose. Students will be able to concentrate on developing their poetic skills or narrative and descriptive techniques in order to produce a coherent and sustained portfolio in either poetry or prose.

Contact Hours

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

Learning Materials/Texts

The Art of the Tale edited by Daniel Halpern

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. furthered the ability to analyse literary texts in a coherent way;
3. acquired a deeper knowledge of the different genres, literary tradition and forms;

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1, Semester 1 - 2007

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4. learned more about the mechanics of a good poem or a compelling narrative;
5. been exposed to an array of voices from the local to the global and have started to develop their own voice.

Course Content

This course allows students to specialize in either poetry or prose and thus gives them more opportunity to develop as fiction writers or poets. Students will be able to concentrate on developing their poetic skills or narrative and descriptive techniques in order to produce a coherent and sustained portfolio in either poetry or prose.

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;
- * 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 4th June.
Essays / Written Assignments	* Short Creative Writing Exercise: 500 words or equivalent (15%). Due 30th March. * Critical Essay: 1000 words (20%) Due 11th May
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 4th June.
Other: (please specify)	Students must submit all assessment items in order to complete the course.

Assumed Knowledge

ENGL2201 and ENGL2202 or equivalent.

Callaghan Campus Timetable

ENGL3201

ADVANCED CREATIVE WRITING 1

Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science

Semester 1 - 2007

Seminar	Wednesday	18:00 - 20:00	[MC102]	PROSE
or	Thursday	12:00 - 14:00	[MCLG42]	PROSE
or	Friday	9:00 - 11:00	[MC102]	POETRY

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/policylibrary/000608.html>

The University has established a software plagiarism detection system called Turnitin. When you submit assessment items please be aware that for the purpose of assessing any assessment item the University may -

- Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or
- Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a plagiarism checking service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking).
- Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

Written Assessment Items

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

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

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

Any student:

1. who is applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or
2. whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment;

must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, to the appropriate

officer following the instructions provided in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Procedure - Policy 000641.

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

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

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

- **Requests for Special Consideration** must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the 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 10 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 1 courses: 31 March 2007

For semester 2 courses: 31 August 2007

For Trimester 1 courses: 16 February 2007

For Trimester 2 courses: 8 June 2007

For Trimester 3 courses: 21 September 2007.

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

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

To change your enrolment online, please refer to

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

Faculty Information

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

The four Student Hubs are located at:

Callaghan campus

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

City Precinct

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

Ourimbah campus

- Ourimbah Hub: Administration Building

Faculty websites

Faculty of Education and Arts

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

Contact details

Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie

Phone: 02 4921 5000

Email: EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au

Ourimbah

Phone: 02 4348 4030

Email: EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au

The Dean of Students

Resolution Precinct

Phone: 02 4921 5806

Fax: 02 4921 7151

Email: resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Deputy Dean of Students (Ourimbah)

Phone: 02 4348 4123

Fax: 02 4348 4145

Email: resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Various services are offered by the University Student Support Unit:

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/studentsupport/index.html>

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

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000311.html>

Web Address for Rules Governing Postgraduate Academic Awards
<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000306.html>

Web Address for Rules Governing Professional Doctorate Awards
<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000580.html>

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

----- *End of CTS Entry* -----

Online Tutorial Registration:

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

- http://studinfo1.newcastle.edu.au/rego/stud_choose_login.cfm

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 Assessment Item Coversheet:** All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet available at:
<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/studentlinks/studentform.html>
- **By arrangement with the relevant lecturer, assignments may be submitted at any Student Hub located at:**
 - Level 3, Shortland Union, Callaghan
 - Level 2, Student Services Centre, Callaghan
 - Ground Floor, University House, City
 - Ground Floor, Administration Building, Ourimbah
- **Date-stamping assignments:** All students must date-stamp their own assignments using the machine provided at each Student Hub. If mailing an assignment, this should be addressed to the relevant hub". Mailed assignments are accepted from the date posted, confirmed by a Post Office date-stamp; they are also date-stamped upon receipt by Schools.
- **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.
- **Keep a copy of all assignments:** It is the student's responsibility to produce a copy of their work if the assignment goes astray after submission. Students are advised to keep updated back-ups in electronic and hard copy formats.

Online copy submission to Turnitin

In addition to hard copy submission, students are required to submit an electronic version of the following assignments to Turnitin via the course Blackboard website:

- Creative short assignment
- Critical essay
- Creative Writing Portfolio

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 Circumstances

Students wishing to apply for Special Circumstances or Extension of Time should apply [online@http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html)

No Assignment Re-submission

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

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:

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/>

Return of Assignments

Students can collect assignments from a **nominated** Student Hub during office hours. Students will be informed during class which Hub to go to and the earliest date that assignments will be available for collection. Students must present their student identification card to collect their assignment.

Preferred Referencing Style

In this course, it is recommended that you use the 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 gives the 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:

- Infoskills:

www.newcastle.edu.au/services/library/tutorials/infoskills/index.html

Student Representatives

Student Representatives are a major channel of communication between students and the School. Contact details of Student Representatives can be found on School websites.

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:

- <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/currentstudents/index.html>

Grading guide		
49% or less	Fail (FF)	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.
50% to 64%	Pass (P)	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.
65% to 74%	Credit (C)	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.
75% to 84%	Distinction (D)	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.
85% upwards	High Distinction (HD)	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.

	Week beginning	Lecture Topic & Assessment at a Glance
1	February 19	The Short Story – The Contemporary Form Texts: Mercè Rodoreda's "Rain," Raymond Carver's "Fat," and Eudora Welty's "No Place for You, My Love"
2	February 26	Placing the Story 3. Wide angle/ Close –ups Texts: William Trevor's "Beyond the Pale," Ian McEwan's "First Love, Last Rites," John Updike's "Separating," and John Cheever's "The Country Husband"
3	March 5	Complex Point of View 1 Texts: Harold Brodkey's "Ceil," Robert Coover's "Quenby and Ola, Swede and Carl"
4	March 12	Stream of Consciousness/ Interior Monologue Texts: Luisa Valenzuela's "I'm Your Horse in the Night," Brodkey's "Ceil" and Rodoreda's "Rain"
5	March 19	The Experimental Short Story Texts: Susan Sontag's "Project for a Trip to China," Unguided Tour," Guy Davenport's "The Haile Selassie Funeral Train," Valenzuela's "I'm Your Horse in the Night," and "Why I Transformed Myself into a Nightingale"
6	March 26	Time/ Space Shifts Texts: Ann Beattie Ann Beattie's "Jacklighting," Nabokov's "Spring in Fialta" Short Creative Exercise Due 30th March.
7	April 2 Note: Good Friday Holiday	Creative Nonfiction – The Personal Essay
Mid-Semester Recess: Friday 6 April to Friday 20 April 2007		
8	April 23	Voice / Persona / Narrative Voice Texts: Richard Ford's "Communist," Natalia Ginzburg's "The Mother"
9	April 30	Prose Rhythm Texts: Ilse Aichinger "The Bound Man," Mario Vargas Llosa "The Challenge," Albert Camus' "The Adulterous Woman," Flannery O'Connor's "The Artificial Nigger"
10	May 7	Making It New / Avoiding clichés Texts: John Updike's "Separating," Ian McEwan's "First Love, Last Rites" and Richard Ford's "Communist" Critical Essay Due 11th May.
11	May 14	Style 1 Maximalist vs Minimalist Texts: Nabokov's "Spring in Fialta," Carver's "Fat" and Doctorow's "The Hunter," Ian McEwan's "First Love, Last Rites"
12	May 21	Texts - Capote's "Children on their Birthdays" and endings of the stories read so far
13	May 28	The Art of Revision
14	June 4	Creative Portfolio (with journal and review) due 4th June.
Examination period: Tuesday 12 June to Friday 29 June 2007		

Note:

* The first 45 minutes of the class will be devoted to a lecture and discussion on the topic/readings of the week. This is followed by a 10-minute creative writing exercise and a five-minute break. The second hour is for workshopping.

* Any work to be critiqued should be circulated a week before being workshopped. It should be read at home and a brief critique prepared for the workshop. This allows more discussion time.

* The golden rule to be observed in the sessions is respect, for the tutor and for fellow writing students. Respect and humility are essential in the writing life. Criticism should be constructive and directed at the text, not the author. The poem or story should be evaluated objectively, paying close attention to the craft.

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

* The assessment items are a Creative Writing portfolio (50%), a critical essay (20%), a short creative writing assignment (15%) and a journal. For the Creative Writing portfolio and short assignment, you may use the creative writing suggestions in the weekly topics below or develop your work independently. Prose can be a single story or two or three short stories totalling 3000 words. For the 1000 word critical essay, you must select one of the critical questions relating to the topics from the course. The 500 word journal should include observations about writing and writers, drafts for projects, and a review of a contemporary work. You should be working on your journal through the semester, making it a place where you deposit images, ideas, and thoughts about writers and writing.

* All work must be typed, double-spaced for prose, one-and-half for poetry. All pieces should bear a title, name and date.

* The weekly discussion 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 exercises related to the themes, requiring you to look closely at the skills and techniques covered in the readings.

Week 1 – The Contemporary Short Story**Critical**

1. Chekhov, more than any other writer, has shaped the contemporary short story. He took apart the traditional event-plot with the predictable trajectory of exposition (beginning), developing action (middle), climax and resolution (end), replacing it with something hard to define, more like a poetic mood or situation. Chekhov's stories, with their seeming formlessness, suggest that reality is more unpredictable and elusive than most Hollywood films would have us believe. The readers are often challenged into thinking what the stories are about, into rethinking what the nature of storytelling is. James T Farrell notes that Chekhov's influence has been "one of the factors encouraging the short-story writers of these nations to revolt against the conventional plot story and seek in simple and realistic terms to make of the story a form that more seriously reflects life."

Discuss Mercè Rodoreda's "Rain" and Raymond Carver's "Fat" in the light of these observations about Chekhov. In what ways do they subvert the conventional event-plot of exposition-development-resolution? Relate these to the themes of the stories.

2. Eudora Welty writes: “The revolution brought about by the gentle Chekhov to the short story was in every sense not destructive but constructive. By removing the formal plot he did not leave the story structureless, he endowed it with another kind of structure — one which embodied the principle of growth. And it was one that had no cause to repeat itself; in each and every story, short or long, it was a structure open to human meaning and answerable to that meaning. It took form from within.” Explore Eudora Welty’s “No Place For You, My Love” in the light of her own observation.

Creative

1. Write a scene about a man or a woman sitting in a café. The character could be alone or talking to a friend, as in the Carver story. If alone, what thoughts are passing through his or her mind? Is there anything in the café or outside that catches the attention, triggering perhaps a recall, a memory? If with a friend, have them talk about love and relationships, about their own experiences. Pay attention to the scene, the mood and atmosphere.
2. Write a story about a meeting between two strangers, how they are drawn to each other. Read Welty’s comment on Chekhov and Welty’s story. Give the characters the open destiny of real life, let them take over the story, write it themselves, as it were.

Week 2 –Placing the Story

Place gives a sense of reality to your characters and story. It anchors your narrative, gives not just a background but a terrain for the story to move in. Once you have located the narrative, the characters can have an atmosphere in which to breathe and the reader will know the lie of the land. Giving your story a sense of place means finding the revealing details, keeping the vision of place relevant to the theme. Keep the vision mobile; move in for close-ups and move back for long or wide-panning shots when necessary.

Critical

1. Examine the relevance of place to the theme in William Trevor’s “Beyond the Pale” or Ian McEwan’s “First Love, Last Rites.” Also comment on how the writers build up a sense of place.
2. John Updike is a virtuoso in the evocation of place, especially the American suburbia. His stories are exact and compelling snapshots of the average suburban family, its quotidian façade and the underlying fissures. “Separating” is vintage Updike, with its attention to the revealing detail, its ability to capture the feel of suburbia in refreshing images. Read the story carefully. How does Updike craft a sense of the suburban place? How does this enhance the theme of the story? You may want to compare Updike’s suburb with Cheever’s in “The Country Husband,” a writer whom Updike admires.

Creative

1. Write a story with a strong sense of place. Explore the views, smells, sounds and atmosphere.
2. Write a story about a family in an Australian suburb.

Week 3 – Complex Point of View

Reality is more complex, layered and discontinuous than the conventional story-plot suggests. To mirror this sense of contingency and uncertainty, contemporary writers often fragment their narratives, perform time and space shifts, introduce different perspectives. Using multiple or complex point of view is a common strategy. Writers can combine the first-person “I” with second or third person, or use multiple “I”s.

Critical

1. Read Harold Brodkey’s “Ceil.” How many points of view can you detect? Which are the crucial shifts in the point of view? How does this shifting and unstable point of view relate to the theme?
2. How many narrative points of view can you find in Robert Coover’s “Quenby and Ola, Swede and Carl”? What is the significance of this shifting point of view? Who is the “you”? What effect does it have on the story, on the reader?

Creative

1. Write about a past event involving three characters. It may be a tragic accident, or a misunderstanding, or a family crisis. They meet in the narrative present for an occasion. Get into each character’s mind and see the present and the past or his or her point of view. You can use the third person for the three characters, introducing the second person where appropriate. First try to mark the voices apart. Then see if you can insert some ambiguity, as in the Brodkey and Coover stories, by erasing the boundaries between characters and voices.
2. Write about a couple recalling the love affairs they have had. Use the third person for each character. You can refer to Milan Kundera’s “Let the Old Dead Make Room for the Young Dead.”

Week 4 – Stream of Consciousness

The phrase was coined by William James to describe the flow of thought and sensation in the human consciousness. It was applied by critics to the works of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, where readers have continuous access to the characters’ feelings and thoughts. There are two ways to render the stream of consciousness. One is the interior monologue, in which a character talks to him- or herself. The other is the subjective third person, in which speech tags like “She thought” or “She wondered” are removed, and we are plunged straight into the characters’ minds.

Critical

1. What advantages can you think of in using the stream of consciousness? When are appropriate moments for this? What are the disadvantages? Now read Luisa Valenzuela’s “I’m Your Horse in the Night.” What kind of stream of consciousness is in place here? How does it relate to the theme?
2. Read Brodkey’s “Ceil” and Merce Rodoreda’s “Rain” again. At which points does the stream of consciousness occur in the two stories? What does it do to the narratives?

Creative

1. Write an interior monologue spoken by one of these: a bored housewife, a car salesman, a truant student, a soldier, a professor, a homeless person, a drug addict etc. You can refer to the famous Molly Bloom monologue at the end of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* or Valenzuela’s “I’m Your Horse in the Night.”

2. Write a story about a character undergoing an attack of loneliness or anxiety. Use a third person point of view mixed with stream of consciousness.

Week 5 – The Experimental Short Story

There are short stories that challenge the conventional ideas of what a story is. Earlier we talked about how the Chekhovian story depends more on mood and atmosphere than plot. Some contemporary stories conceal, blur, or dispense with narrative continuity altogether. They often read like lyric poems, evoking the experience through rhythm and imagery rather than plot sequencing.

Critical

1. Susan Sontag's "Project for a Trip to China" is a play with voices, a series of impressions and images threaded through by the barest of narrative threads. Is it possible to say what the story is about? Can we identify the characters? Why do you think Sontag has chosen to tell her story in this fragmentary and lyrical way?
2. Read two of these: Guy Davenport's "The Haile Selassie Funeral Train," Valenzuela's "I'm Your Horse in the Night," and "Why I Transformed Myself into a Nightingale." In what ways do the stories violate the conventional notions of fiction?

Creative

1. Write about one or two characters on a train journey. Use Sontag or Davenport as a model. Record the fleeting impressions, the images, give glimpses of the characters' past, flashbacks. Make the mood poetic.
2. Use Davenport as a model. Imagine yourself on a long distance coach, and in the company of dead writers. Make the journey surreal or dreamlike. Refer to the writers' works. Incorporate actual biographical details, as Davenport does.

Week 6 – Time/ Space Shifts

Telling a story in a chronological sequence is the easiest and most boring narrative approach. Readers are lulled by the predictable sequencing and do not participate in the unfolding of the drama. To engage the readers more, writers resort to varying and disrupting the time sequence. They also use flashbacks, moments when the narrative slides into the past. The time and space shifts, the flashbacks suggest that reality is more fragmentary, discontinuous than we think, and that we are all haunted by the past, and spend a great deal of time recalling and reflecting on what happened.

Critical

1. Read Ann Beattie's "Jacklighting." What is the story about? What do the glimpses of the past tell us about Nicholas, about the other characters, about the narrator? How does the idea of jacklighting relate to the theme?
2. Read Nabokov's "Spring in Fialta." The story begins in the present and then goes into a series of flashbacks. Why does Nabokov use sustained flashbacks rather than tell the story as it happened? What does this tell us about memory and narrative?

Creative

1. Write a story about a character recalling a friend who makes periodic appearances in his or her life, like Nina. Use the present-past-present format or move back and forth between past and present more than once and between different places.
2. Attempt a story about a character who is travelling or living abroad. He or she could be running away from the past. Create something to remind your character of

the place she or he comes from, and slowly introduce the traumatic incident from the past.

Week 7 – Creative Nonfiction: The Personal Essay

Creative nonfiction, as noted in the second year writing courses, is a mixed bag of different subgenres. It is a convenient label for works which read like fiction but which have a factual basis. The elements of fiction are present: the plotted narrative, the character portrayals, the use of dialogue, the scene making etc. But there are also the reflective, the expository and lyric features, especially in the personal essay.

The personal essay, as the adjective implies, is a personal perspective on any chosen subject. Subjects covered may range from memoir, travel, reading, writing, nature, human rights, politics, cooking, fishing, history to just about anything. It weaves narrative, exposition and meditation into an intricate text. The narrative is interrupted and balanced by expositions, which may be poetic and lyrical.

Critical

1. Read the essay picked by your tutor. What is the theme? Identify the narrative elements used in the essay. Explore the imagery, the prose rhythm, and the tone to see how they enhance the theme.

Creative

1. Is there a theme, an idea you have been obsessed with for a long time? Write down the images, the memories, the different scenes, ideas associated with it. String them together in a narrative, and weave expository or reflective elements into it.
2. Write about the idea of home. Revisit the houses you have lived in. Use all your senses, sight, touch and smell to recreate them. String the memories into a narrative and weave that together with reflections about place and home into an essay.
3. Write about a member of your family. Retrieve photographs from the family album and describe them, stitching together with your memories and reflections.
4. Pick any topic you like – stargazing, rock-collecting, surfing, fishing, cooking etc. You may want to do some research and collect notes. Incorporate these into a personal essay recounting your personal experiences, your passion for the activity or subject.

Week 8 – Voice

Voice is often thought of as being something quite abstract. When we say a writer has a distinctive voice, we mean of course he has an individual style, the way his writing reads is different. But voice can also mean the narrative voice, the voice of the person who tells the story. In the first person narrative, the writer adopts a persona and if it is a boy, then the voice will be that of the boy. In the third person, the voice can be close to the writer's voice. Chekhov's voice is detached, ironic yet compassionate, while John Updike's is warm and intimate. Voice depends also on the subject matter and the style of writing, the way the writer puts his or her words together.

Critical

1. Read Richard Ford's "Communist." What is the voice like here? How does it relate to the theme of the story?
2. Now read Natalia Ginzburg's "The Mother." Can you describe the voice? What does the writer do or not do to achieve this voice?

Creative

1. Write a childhood story from the point of view of the child. It could be about a child coming to terms with his parents' separation or a child's first day at school. The voice should make the character come alive. Pay attention to the diction and the syntax. They are crucial in shaping the voice.
2. Write a tragic short story using a detached, ironic voice, like Ginzburg's in "The Mother."

Week 9 – Prose Rhythm

Rhythm is the way your sentences and paragraphs breathe. It is the pace, the cadence and movement of the words. In poetry, the cadence is an integral part of the meaning of the poem. A clipped, fast cadence may reflect excitement while a slow ponderous rhythm usually implies melancholy. In good prose, the rhythm is effectively harnessed to the mood and meaning of the work.

Critical

1. How essential are the prose rhythms to the themes in Ilse Aichinger's "The Bound Man" and Mario Vargas Llosa's "The Challenge."
2. Examine in detail the prose rhythm in Albert Camus' "The Adulterous Woman" or Flannery O'Connor's "The Artificial Nigger." How does the rhythm reflect the existential theme of the story?

Creative

1. Write about a character on a journey. He or she may be lost, struggling and panicky or at peace in the landscape, contemplative and in reverie. Use the prose rhythm to reflect the movement and the inner thoughts of the character.
2. Write a story about a prisoner or somebody living in a confined space. Evoke the character's past, the present condition, through the prose rhythm and other means.

Week 10 – Making It New/ Avoiding Clichés

Art refreshes our way of seeing. It makes us look at things anew, see the everyday with a sense of wonder. Good writing is able to seize our attention, often not so much because it has new things to say, but because it says what we know in different ways, in ways that make us rethink, revise. There are a few ways to make your writing more arresting: avoid clichés; use strong and vivid verbs; use concrete nouns, avoid abstract and vague nouns; use minimal adjectives and only precise and arresting ones; use strong imagery, similes, metaphors and symbols.

Critical

1. Read John Updike's "Separating." Examine his use of language, how he renders everything so vivid and immediate. Note the revealing similes and metaphors. How do they influence the reader's response?

2. Read Ian McEwan's "First Love, Last Rites" and Richard Ford's "Communist." What images and symbols do you find in the stories? How do they relate to the themes?

Creative

1. Create a character from one of these: a librarian, a bookstore owner, a travel writer, a gardener, a professor of dead languages, and an unemployed person. Describe the person using similes and metaphors. Describe the gestures and actions using strong vivid verbs. Avoid adverbs and use minimal adjectives. Use metaphors to describe the occupation.
2. Describe a place that fascinates you. Describe the smells, sounds, sight, the aura using similes, metaphors, vivid verbs and adjectives.

Week 11 – Style – Maximalist vs Minimalist

The minimalist style is sparse, restrained and dispassionate in tone. Raymond Carver is the most famous modern example. Like Hemingway, he lets the reader infer from the scene and the dialogue the meaning of the situation and story. In contrast, the maximalist style is rich, poetic, metaphorical and visionary. John Updike is a representative; he packs his stories with sensory details, influencing the reader's response.

Critical

1. Read Nabokov's "Spring in Fialta" and describe his style. How does it enhance the theme?
2. Now read Carver's "Fat" or Doctorow's "The Hunter." Describe the style. Show how different it is from Nabokov's style with concrete examples.

Creative

1. Write about two characters travelling. Describe their arrival at a new place. It can be an old city or a natural setting. Write it first in the minimalist style. Rewrite it in the maximalist style.
2. Review the stories you have written so far. Is there any piece that is too rich, saying too much, too sentimental, or too controlled? Rewrite in the minimalist style.

Week 12 – Endings

Ending is probably more difficult than beginnings. We tend to resolve things too neatly, close off the story as though the characters' lives stop at the last sentence. Chekhov's stories challenge this mode of ending. They are often ambiguous, nothing resolved, and often conclude more like a musical composition. Many of the stories in the anthology are open-ended, leaving the reader contemplating the meaning. There are also those with closed ending, as in Truman Capote's "Children on their Birthdays" which comes back to the beginning at the end. Cesare Pavese's "Suicides" delivers a sudden and shocking ending. Tobias Wolff's ending in "Hunters in the Snow" is both open and closed. Whichever way you end, it delivers the final note and decides the meaning of the story. John Updike says: "The ending is where

the reader discovers whether he has been reading the same story the writer thought he was writing.”

Critical

1. Choose any three stories with totally different kinds of ending from the anthology. Examine how the ending relates to the other parts of the stories and how they determine the meanings of the stories.

Creative

1. Review the short stories you have written. Is there any story that is rounded off too neatly. Would it do better with an open ending, a resonant image or scene?
2. Write a story in which the ending returns to the beginning, as in Capote’s “Children on their Birthdays.” You could also use an image, an object that appears at the beginning and end.

Week 13 – The Art of Revision

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

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

Revision is an intensive process. Horace, when he wrote the *Ars Poetica*, recommended that poets keep their poems home for ten years. When Pope wrote “An Essay on Criticism” seventeen hundred years after Horace, he cut the waiting time in half, suggesting that poets keep their poems for five years before publication. 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.

Recommended Readings

- Beattie, Ann. *Park City: New and Selected Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1999.
- Burroway, Janet. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative*. Addison Wesley Longman, 2002.
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- Leavitt, David. *A Place I've Never Been*. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Moore, Lorrie. *Self Help*. London: Faber, 1987.
- Munro, Alice. *The Progress of Love*. London: Fontana, 1986.
- O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carry*. London: Flamingo, 1991.
- Shields, Carol. *Various Miracles*. London: Fourth Estate, 1994.
- Updike, John. *Problems and Other Stories*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1980.
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