**ENGL 284: Beginning Prose Writing**

**Spring 2020**

Virtual Office Hours: Thursday 12 -1:00pm (Or by Appointment)

Email: prusse@uw.edu

Course Website: https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1372445

**Land Acknowledgment**

*“This course acknowledges that the University of Washington, like all of our businesses, institutions and our lives, exists on Indigenous land. We’re gathered on the homelands of the Duwamish people, and the shared homelands of other Coast Salish people. Such land acknowledgements are important as we push for justice and liberation in institutions and a broader society that continue to live out the settler colonial legacies of land theft, genocide, and enslavement.” -Rae Paris*

**Course Description**

As the title of the course suggests, this is a beginning to prose writing class that will be exploring both fiction and creative nonfiction writing throughout the quarter. In this course you will not only be writing short stories and creative essays, but you will also be reading a plethora of established writer’s work across both genres, in addition to your classmates’ writings.

The land acknowledgment above should signify that our workshop will proceed with an awareness that the writing you’re submitting and all of our discussions take place on Native land, specifically Coast Salish homelands. This awareness that we’re writing in a particular place at a particular moment in time, which is also connected to past(s) and future(s), will be part of our discussions of your work, as will other aspects of craft.[[1]](#footnote-1)

While you will hopefully be challenged in this course to think critically on how plot, dialogue, character, setting, and voice are utilized by writers in their work; you will also be pushed again and again to think about the ways in which race, sexual orientation, gender, language, religion, and other forms of identity are imprinting onto our work and speaking out to the world around us. That is to say, I will be asking you to think about your writing as it engages with the world around us. Despite the online classroom setting that we will be meeting in—which I will foster to be a safe space where we can work through our ideas with one another—the work we create isn’t made in a vacuum. Our various positionalities *do* impact the work we create whether we are conscious of these biases or not. One of the benefits of having such a diversity of backgrounds entering the space we will be meeting in every week is that we will be exposed to a wide array of experiences and backgrounds. The hope is that we can push each other to constantly (re)think the work we are creating to make it the best it can be.

You can expect to work within both fairly “traditional” modes of storytelling as well as experimental approaches that not only reconsider the ways we deliver our stories and ideas on a sentence level, but also on a formal level. Some questions you might think about are: how does the “form” (whether that be the structure in combination with an array of other rhetorical modes) of a piece influences content? Who is the audience (who are you envisioning when writing your piece) for my piece? Where is the “heat” (the portion of the work that draws you in) of the piece? Etc.

\* It is my intention to hold a weekly informal meeting space for our class (over Zoom), but if you are unable to attend *for any reason* the course can be completed asynchronously (on your own time). I hope that this weekly meeting can be utilized as a way for us to discuss the readings and any other concerns that you all might have. While not required, I would appreciate it if you could email me before a class meeting if you are unable to attend. You don’t have to provide a reason for your absence (although you can if you’d like).

**Required Course Texts and Materials**

* **Diary** (I would like the size to be at least 5 x 8.25”) A standard Moleskine would be perfect but don’t feel obligated to get that brand.
* **Laptop or computer or tablet is required for this course.**
* **UW Email Account** and **Regular Internet access** to submit assignments and stay connected through email and the class webpage.
* **All primary readings for the course will be provided for you through Canvas.**
* A collection or anthology of **your choosing** to write about in your Diary.

**Suggested Book List for Further Reading**

* *Best American Short Story Writing 2020*
* *Best American Nonfiction Writing 2020*
* *Lost in the City* by Edward P. Jones
* *A Lucky Man: Stories* by Jamel Brinkley
* *Before You Suffocate Your Own Self* by Danielle Evans
* *Heavy* by Kiese Laymon
* *Bad Behavior* by Mary Gaitskill
* *Girl, Interrupted* by Susanna Kaysen
* *What is Yours Is Not Yours* by Helen Oyeyemi
* *Lizard* by Banana Yoshimoto
* *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri
* *How to Writer An Autobiographical Novel* by Alexander Chee
* *Lost Wax* by Jericho Parms
* *Cleanness* by Garth Greenwell
* *In the Dream House* by Carmen Maria Machado
* *What Doesn’t Kill You Makes You Blacker* by Damon Young
* *Notes from No Man’s Land* by Eula Biss

**Expectations**

Throughout this class, we will be engaging with a variety of texts, all creative, but some more focused on “craft.” You will be expected to read a fair amount of work a week in addition to any writing you will be required to do, so planning will be key to your success throughout the quarter.

You will be submitting your work through Canvas, again, prior to the start of class. This is a discussion and forum-based class, that means that you will be asked to be an active participant during class discussion (whether that be through discussion boards or otherwise), and especially during workshop as we reach the latter half of the quarter. I am aware that talking and answering questions in class can be a daunting task for some students, and of course we all have our “off days.” I will still be pushing you to voice your ideas and opinions about the work we are reading each class period and my hope is that we can cultivate a class environment where we feel comfortable voicing our opinions. That also means that I will not be tolerating aggressive, derogatory, disrespectful, racist, etc. behavior or dialogue in my classroom. I expect that you will treat your classmates with respect and care in, and hopefully beyond, our meeting times.

You will be writing many entries into something that I’ve called, “The Diary,” throughout the quarter. You will get an official document detailing what this is, but look at is as an informal space for you to write through your ideas around the readings we talk about in class, as well as your own ideas around the writings you’re working on in your life outside of this course. I will also have you turn in this Diary throughout the quarter and ask that you note a certain amount of entries (determined during the given due dates) for me to look at. Of course, this means that I will be reading some of your diary entries, so you will have to be okay with the class reading some of the work that is placed within those pages.

The first half of the quarter will be focused on developing a language around talking through creative work, in addition to targeted writing exercises that will get you thinking more deeply about various mechanics in the writing process. The latter half of the course will be exclusively allotted for workshopping your classmates’ work in a large group setting. You will be giving written and verbal feedback during these workshops.

At the end of the course, you will be submitting a final manuscript of a short story or creative nonfiction essay. This will be a revision of a piece that you have submitted to be workshopped during the quarter. Alternatively, if you would like to work on a different piece, I would ask that you talk with me prior to it being turned in, so we can work on things together. In your final manuscript, you will also include a short reflective essay about the process of revising the piece.

**Course Breakdown**

This section of English 284 utilizes a points-based assessment system, with 400 points equaling a 4.0, 300 points equaling a 3.0, and so on. Each component of the course is worth the following number of points:

* The Diary: 50 pts.
* Short Exercises: 100 pts.
* Exercise Packet: 50 pts.
* Final Story/Essay: 150 pts.
* Participation: 50 pts.

**Assignments**

**Revised Workshop Manuscript**

* One (1500-2500 words) short story or creative nonfiction essay.
* Submitted at the end of the quarter with reflection about the revision process.

**Workshop**

* Responsible for facilitating **one** workshop about a classmate’s piece. This will be done in small groups.
* **Submit your manuscript to workshop one week before it will be workshopped in class.**
* Active participation during discussion in workshop.

**Short Exercises**

* These will be (500 words) in length and engage with some aspect of discussion for the given week they are assigned.
* If there are alterations or new ideas you’d like to attempt in these pieces, please talk with me first.

Writing exercises will be graded full credit/no credit if they meet the guidelines determined in the assignment sheet.

**Diary**

* You will complete **one entry a week** (of varying length) for a total of 10 entries by the end of the quarter.
* You will submit **two entries** from your Diaries **3 times throughout the quarter (due on Fridays)** for me to review.

**Exercise Packet**

* You will complete one exercise packet of your choosing by the end of the quarter for your portfolio.
* There are three packets to choose from and you will complete all of the prompts listed in the individual packet.

**Participation**

* Occasional Group work
* Peer feedback
* Discussion Board

Most of the participation will be through discussion board posts and attending some small group work meetings throughout the quarter.

* Turning in the Diary when assigned
* Engaging with Writing Group through canvas/zoom.

This will entail that you are completing assignments to specification on time and turning them in to the right place. You will also be assigned “writing groups” throughout the quarter that you will meet with during class to discusses certain exercises. You will have read these pieces before class and provide a few questions to consider ahead of the in-class activity.

**Workshop**

Again, I often hope people leave workshop feeling energized, challenged, and supported. I hope you emerge from the end of a workshop feeling as if we’ve met your work where it is, and I hope you feel as if we offered comments and questions that assist you in whatever next steps you need to take going forward. But again, this doesn’t always happen. We’ll discuss possibilities for workshop, and ways to conduct workshop that doesn’t require the writer to be completely silent as others discuss their work. I’d like to encourage you to think about what model of workshop might work best for you. We don’t have to stick to one model. In other words, if there are specific ideas, lenses, activities, questions, etc. that you feel would be beneficial for engaging with your piece, I ask that you provide us that context before the class so people can think about these ideas prior to walking through the door.

Something else to consider: **Free Speech and** **the Public Nature of Class Writing and Discussions.**

In this course, we’ll be creating a reading and writing community—always a complicated and wonderful endeavor. Please be open to listening to perspectives other than your own. This does not mean you aren’t entitled to an opinion but that you adopt positions responsibly, contemplating the possible effect on others. Unless I state otherwise, every piece of writing you do for this class may, at some point, be shared. Please avoid writing about things you may not be prepared to subject to public scrutiny, or things you feel so strongly about that you are unwilling to listen to perspectives other than your own. Our craft discussion will cover a wide range of topics (please see Course Description). Additionally, **no** writing that is about someone else in this class will be permitted. [[2]](#footnote-2)

**Feedback on work**

Due to the volume of writing we will be producing throughout the quarter, I will not be able to give feedback on everything. For “in-class exercises” (which will be submitted through canvas) I will not be providing feedback, they will be pass/fail based on completion. For the “Short Exercises,” I will provide written feedback in some form for these. In addition, there will be written feedback for your final story/essay. I am happy to talk about work further during office hours if you have further questions.

**Late Work**

Late work will not be given any written feedback. Students submitting late work are welcome to come to office hours to receive oral feedback.

If you find yourself having serious difficulty with completing an assignment on time, you should let me know as soon as possible (at least 24 hours in advance of the assignment’s due date). Extensions may be given on a case by case basis.

**Canvas**

We will use Canvas for all assignment submissions. If you have not used Canvas before, and have any problems submitting, please email me your questions (my email is at the top of the syllabus). I will explain, in class, how workshop assignments are handled, since it is a bit different from normal Canvas assignments.

**Writing Resources**

The **Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC)** offers free, one-to-one, 45-minute tutoring sessions for undergraduate, graduate, and professional writers in all fields at the UW. The tutors will work with you on any writing or research project (as well as personal projects such as applications or personal statements). For more information or to schedule an appointment, please see our website (<https://depts.washington.edu/owrc>), or come visit us in person on the first floor of Odegaard Undergraduate Library.

The**CLUE Writing Center** offers free one-on-one tutoring and workshops, and is open from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., Sunday to Wedrsday in Mary Gates Hall, throughout the regular school year (Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters). It's first come, first served — so arrive early and be prepared to wait if necessary! CLUE also offers tutoring on a range of other subjects, including math, science, and so on.

**Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people's thoughts and writing--as long as you cite them. As a matter of policy, any student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be immediately reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review.

**Complaints**

If you have any concerns about the course or your instructor, please see the instructor about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the instructor or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the following Creative Writing Program staff in Padelford: Director David Nikki Crouse. If, after speaking with the Director, you are still not satisfied with the response you receive, you may contact Acting English Department Chair Anis Bawarshi; [bawarshi@uw.edu](mailto:bawarshi@uw.edu), (206) 543-2690.

**Accommodations**

If you need accommodation of any sort, please let me know so that I can work with the UW Disability Resources for Students Office (DRS) to provide what you require. This syllabus is available in large print, as are other class materials. More information about accommodation may be found at <http://www.washington.edu/students/drs/>.

**Religious Accommodations**

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at Faculty Syllabus Guidelines and Resources. Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the Religious Accommodations Request form available at <https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/>.

## **Departmental Commitment to Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy**

We at the English department are committed to valuing the lived experiences, embodied knowledges, and scholarship produced by people of color, queer and trans people of color, disabled people of color, immigrants, refugees, Indigenous peoples, and other targeted identities who have historically been excluded from sites of knowledge production; denied access to wealth, resources and power; and forced to negotiate multiple interlocking forms of structural and institutional oppression and violence. This commitment emerges from and reflects our shared vision for a just and equitable world that actively affirms and values the humanity of every individual and group. It is this vision that informs our pedagogical practices.

**Campus Safety**

Preventing violence is everyone's responsibility. If you're concerned, tell someone.

* Always call 911 if you or others may be in danger.
* Call 206-685-SAFE (7233) to report non-urgent threats of violence and for referrals to UW counseling and/or safety resources. TTY or VP callers, please call through your preferred relay service.
* Don't walk alone. Campus safety guards can walk with you on campus after dark. Call Husky NightWalk 206-685-WALK (9255).
* Stay connected in an emergency with UW Alert. Register your mobile number to receive instant notification of campus emergencies via text and voice messaging. Sign up online at [www.washington.edu/alert](http://www.washington.edu/alert).

For more information visit the SafeCampus website at [www.washington.edu/safecampus](http://www.washington.edu/safecampus).

**FIUTS**

Foundation for International Understanding through Students: FIUTS is an example of a campus organization that can bring together your social and academic learning. "FIUTS is an independent non-profit organization which provides cross-cultural leadership and social programming for UW's international and globally minded domestic students. FIUTS is local connections and global community!" FIUTS also offers a free international lunch on the last Wednesday of every month beginning with a lunch on September 28 from 11:30-1:30 in the Kane Hall Walker-Ames room. Consult FIUTS' web site for a detailed calendar of events and links to many resources [http://www.fiuts.washington.edu](http://www.fiuts.washington.edu/).

**Counseling Center**

UW Counseling Center workshops include a wide range of issues including study skills, thinking about coming out, international students and culture shock, and much more. Check out available resources and workshops at: <https://www.washington.edu/counseling/>

**Health and Wellness**

Health & Wellness provides support, advocacy, consultation, and education to the University of Washington campus community. Services are free for UW students, faculty, and staff. You can work with advocates on your behalf or on behalf of someone you know. Programs include Alcohol & Drug Consultation and Education, Suicide Intervention, Sexual Assault, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Harassment Advocacy, and Student Care Program. For more information: <http://depts.washington.edu/livewell/>

**Q Center**

The University of Washington Q Center builds and facilitates queer (gay, lesbian, bisexual, two-spirit, trans, intersex, questioning, same-gender-loving, allies) academic and social community through education, advocacy, and support services to achieve a socially-just campus in which all people are valued. For more information, visit <http://depts.washington.edu/qcenter/>.

**Any Hungry Husky**

The Any Hungry Husky program helps mitigate the social and academic effects of campus food insecurity. By providing students, staff, and faculty with access to shelf-stable, non-perishable goods and community resources at no cost, this initiative aims to lessen the financial burden of purchasing food and supplement nutritional needs. This resource is for everyone in the UW community. Learn more here: <http://www.washington.edu/anyhungryhusky/>

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **WEEK 1** |  | **Homework** |
| Tuesday 3/30 | First day of instruction  Syllabus discussion. |  |
| Thursday 4/2 |  | Readings:  (Optional) Ann Lamott “Shitty First Drafts” |
| **WEEK 2** | Topic: Plot |  |
| Tuesday 4/7 |  | Edward P. Jones’s *“*The First Day” |
| Thursday 4/9 | Discussion: Plot  **Discussion Board Response due.** | Readings:  Jamel Brinkley’s “No More than a Bubble”  (Optional) Jhumpa Lahiri’s “A Temporary Matter” |
| **WEEK 3** | Topic: Race and Identity in Writing |  |
| Tuesday 4/14 |  |  |
| Thursday 4/16 | Discussion:Race and Identity in Writing  **Short Exercise #1 due.** | Readings:  Claudia Rankine’s “On Whiteness and the Racial Imaginary”  Kiese Laymon’s “How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America”  (Optional) Eula Biss’s “All Apologies” |
| **WEEK 4** | Topic: Experimental Forms |  |
| Tuesday 4/21 |  |  |
| Thursday 4/23 | Discussion: Experimental Forms  **S.E. #2 due.**  **Diary Submission #1 due.** | Readings:  Leslie Jamison’s “Morphology of the Hit”  Brenda Miller’s “The Shared Space Between Reader and Writer: A Case Study”    (Optional) Randon Billings Noble’s “The Heart as a Torn Muscle” |
| **WEEK 5** | Topic: Perspective |  |
| Tuesday 4/28 |  |  |
| Thursday 4/30 | Discussion: Perspective  **S.E. #3** “Home as Triptych” **due.** | Readings:  Antonya Nelson’s “Ft. Despair”  David Jauss’s “From Long Shots to X-Rays” |
| **WEEK 6** | Topic:Dialogue |  |
| Tuesday 5/5 |  |  |
| Thursday 5/7 | Discussion: Dialogue  **S.E. #4 due**  **Diary Submission #2 due.** | Readings:  Kathleen Collins’s “How Does One Say”  Garth Greenwell, “Mentor” |
| **WEEK 7** | **On Workshopping: What we want, what we need** |  |
| Tuesday 5/12 | Discussion: Workshopping | Classmates’ manuscripts. |
| Thursday 5/14 | Workshop (3) | Classmates’ manuscripts. |
| **WEEK 8** |  |  |
| Tuesday 5/19 | Workshop (3) | Classmates’ manuscripts. |
| Thursday 5/21 | Workshop (3) | Classmates’ manuscripts. |
| **WEEK 9** | Topic: Revision  **TW*wrap up second sequence*** |  |
| Tuesday 5/24 | Workshop (4) | Classmates’ manuscripts. |
| Thursday 5/28 | Workshop (4)  **Diary Submission # 3 due.** | Classmates’ manuscripts. |
| **WEEK 10** | *don’t forget to give course evaluations* |  |
| Tuesday 6/2 | Workshop (4) |  |
| Thursday 6/4 | Discussion:  **Last day** |  |
| Final Week | **Final manuscript due.** |  |

1. This portion is borrowed from Rae Paris’s academic work. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This portion was borrowed from Rae Paris’s Graduate Creative Writing syllabus. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)