# ENGL 484: Advanced Prose Workshop

Fall 2021, MW 12:30-1:50

## Contact

Professor Maya Sonenberg

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Office Hours: W 2:30-4:30 pm (Zoom) and by appointment (email to set up a time)

## Description

Curiosity is the antidote to judgement.

"I have not failed 1,000 times. I have successfully discovered 1,000 ways to NOT make a light bulb. When I have eliminated the ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work."

--Thomas Edison (allegedly)

Working writers often face two excruciating questions: How do I start? How do I finish?

Facing, with terror, the blank page, we wonder where to find the form, idea, and language to begin. Facing our complete drafts, we wonder how to bring them in line with those dreams of form, idea, and language which inspired us.

This advanced prose writing workshop will focus on the creative process, from inspiration to revision. By the end of the quarter, you should have a short story or personal essay as close to completion as you can possibly bring it in just 10 weeks. Along the way, you'll find challenging but playful exercises, and many guided opportunities to explore the revision process.

As this is an advanced writing workshop, be prepared to do a lot of reading and writing. I’ll expect you to approach all of it—your own writing, your classmates’ writing, the published stories and essays we read—in the spirit of curiosity. Instead of asking “Is this good or bad?” ask “How and where is this interesting? What happens if I make this change? What does the author want to accomplish?”

## Learning Objectives

By the end of the quarter, students will be able to:

* demonstrate their self-reflection and playful engagement in writing exercises
* demonstrate their ability to plan aspects of their story or essay
* draft, revise, and complete a short story or essay
* explore content and form of their choosing, following up on the implications of those choices
* contribute constructively to class and small group discussions
* demonstrate the ability to critique and analyze creative writing produced by their classmates in a constructive, forward-looking way
* examine and assess their writing and revision process

## Required Materials

* An active UW email address and UW Google Drive account. Nearly all the writing assignments in this class will be submitted to Google Drive folders and you must access them, you must be logged into Google using your UW NetID. If you need a refresher on how to log in to Google with your UW Net ID, [here's a quick video tutorial](https://youtu.be/LWZvbJ7E-2E).
* A good dictionary and thesaurus

## Reading Assignments

* All readings will be linked on Canvas.
* Whenever possible, I have provided a photo of each author, and you can always find more information about them by clicking on their names.

## Grades

We will be using contract grading. See below for details.

## Writing Assignments

* One short story or personal essay draft & three revisions of that story or essay, including a 7-10 (1750-3000 wd) “final” version **OR**
* Two short story or personal essay drafts & two revisions of one of those, including a 7-10 (1750-3000 wd) “final” version
* Two short writing exercises
* An artistic/literary family tree
* A reverse outline of a classmate’s story or essay
* Various short, informational surveys and questionnaires
* Written peer reviews of your classmates’ prose.

## Content for written assignments

You may write about anything in this class, with just a few caveats spelled out below. You may write fiction or creative nonfiction. You may write genre fiction (sci-fi, fantasy, etc.), although some genres (detective, thriller) are very hard to pull off in just a few pages, and some genres (Romance) are very hard to present in new, fresh ways, without relying on clichés. If you’re writing nonfiction, you may write memoir, personal essay, lyric essay.

Here are the caveats:

1. You may not write about me or anyone else in this class without getting their permission first. In order to get their permission, you must share every detail you plan to include with them, and if they say no, you will have to drop that approach and start another.
2. You may not use violence simply in order to generate or resolve conflict. It is the easy way out!
3. You may not write academic papers, lab reports, manifestos, or straight forward journalism.

## Format for written assignments

* Nearly all assignments will be turned in via Google Docs this quarter. If you usually generate writing within Google Docs, you are, of course, free to do so. If you usually use Microsoft Word or another word processing program, continue to do what works for you and simply upload the document.
* Each assignment will have a link to a separate Google Drive folder.
* Include your full name and a title for the story or essay on the first page.
* Include page numbers!!!!
* Double space and use 12 point font, with 1 inch margins.  Exceptions (of course!) can be made when font style and size, and spacing add to the meaning of your piece.

## Class Policies

### *Land Acknowledgement*

We acknowledge the people – past, present, and future – of the Dkhw’Duw’Absh, the Duwamish Tribe, the Muckleshoot Tribe, and other tribes on whose traditional lands we study and work.

### Attendance

We will be meeting in person this quarter and we need you here!  This course depends on you—a community of dedicated writers and readers.  Every day we will be doing something essential to your development as a writer.

You may skip one or more class, depending on the grade you contract for (see Contract Grading below). Please plan for these carefully in case you are struck by a minor illness or other emergency late in the quarter.

Should you suffer a major illness, family emergency, or need to isolate due to our COVID situation, please let me know as soon as possible.

**If you are feeling sick, do not come to class**.

### *Participation*

This is largely a discussion class and therefore cannot succeed without participation from each and every one of you. I will expect you to thoughtfully complete the reading and writing assignments, contribute insightful comments to class discussion, and participate in all class activities with consideration, openness, and a sense of humor.

### Late Work

### Assignments in this class are designed to build upon each other, and you will benefit from doing them on time and in the order presented. It is especially important to turn in rough drafts and written feedback on your classmates’ drafts on time so that you can all move on to revising. Nevertheless, I know that we are living in stressful times and that we all have a many things to deal with right now. The possibility for turning in some late work is built into each grade you can contract for. As long as you follow the instructions for your grade, you do not need to ask me for an extension.

### Access and Accommodations

Your experience in this class is important to me. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please activate your accommodations via myDRS so we can discuss how they will be implemented in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), contact DRS directly to set up an Access Plan. DRS facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations. Contact DRS at [disability.uw.edu](http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/).

### Religious Holidays & 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 [Religious Accommodations Policy (https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/)](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form (https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/)](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).

### Plagiarism

While I whole-heartedly agree that great writers “steal” from the work of others, they do NOT do this word for word, line for line. If I find that you have been using another writer’s (including another student writer’s) words without attribution, we will need to have a serious chat and you run the risk of failing this class.

That said, you are certainly free to plagiarize yourselves—and I hope you do so! In other words, feel free to expand on or combine our short exercises to write your longer pieces, or feel free to use text you’ve already written as the text of your book.

## ****Student Support** (you can find links to even more general UW support services and to services at UW Libraries through links on our Canvas site.)**

List of all [Student Services](https://www.washington.edu/students/servicesforstudents/)

[UW IT Connect](https://itconnect.uw.edu/?utm_medium=partner&utm_source=uwit-external&utm_campaign=menu-itc), your hub for all questions about technology, Canvas, email, software, etc.

[Odegaard Undergraduate Library Writing and Research Center](http://depts.washington.edu/owrc/)

[University of Washington Libraries](https://www.lib.washington.edu/?_ga=2.4863867.973686619.1599431987-1481131824.1596340928)

English Subject Area Librarian, [Elliott Stevens](https://guides.lib.uw.edu/prf.php?account_id=115813)

[CLUE and Academic Support Programs](http://webster.uaa.washington.edu/asp/website/)

[Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity](https://www.washington.edu/omad/)

[The Q Center](https://depts.washington.edu/qcenter/wordpress/)

[Financial Aid](https://www.washington.edu/financialaid/)

[Merit Scholarships, Fellowships & Awards](https://expd.uw.edu/scholarships/)

[Novel Coronavirus & COVID-19 Information](https://www.washington.edu/coronavirus/)

[Disability Resources](http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/)

[Health Services](https://wellbeing.uw.edu/)

[Counseling Center](https://www.washington.edu/counseling/)

[LiveWell Center](https://depts.washington.edu/livewell/), including Suicide Intervention Program, Survivor Support & Advocacy, and information about Alcohol & Other Drugs

## ****Department of English**** Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The UW English Department aims to help students become more incisive thinkers, effective communicators, and imaginative writers by acknowledging that language and its use are powerful and hold the potential to empower individuals and communities; to provide the means to engage in meaningful conversation and collaboration across differences and with those with whom we disagree; and to offer methods for exploring, understanding, problem solving, and responding to the many pressing collective issues we face in our world--skills that align with and support the University of Washington’s mission to educate “a diverse student body to become responsible global citizens and future leaders through a challenging learning environment informed by cutting-edge scholarship.”

As a department, we begin with the conviction that language and texts play crucial roles in the constitution of cultures and communities, past, present, and future.  Our disciplinary commitments to the study of language, literature, and culture require of us a willingness to engage openly and critically with questions of power and difference. As such, in our teaching, service, and scholarship we frequently initiate and encourage conversations about topics such as race, immigration, gender, sexuality, class, indigeneity, and colonialisms. These topics are fundamental to the inquiry we pursue.  We are proud of this fact, and we are committed to creating an environment in which our faculty and students can do so confidently and securely, knowing that they have the backing of the department.

Towards that aim, we value the inherent dignity and uniqueness of individuals and communities. We acknowledge that our university is located on the shared lands and waters of the Coast Salish peoples. We aspire to be a place where human rights are respected and where any of us can seek support. This includes people of all ethnicities, faiths, gender identities, national and indigenous origins, political views, and citizenship status; nontheists; LGBQTIA+; those with disabilities; veterans; and anyone who has been targeted, abused, or disenfranchised.

## ****COVID-19 Information****

I am extremely happy that we get to meet in person this quarter. However, things are not quite back to "normal." Please see below for details. For even more details, see [UW's COVID-19 Prevention and Response webpage](https://www.ehs.washington.edu/covid-19-prevention-and-response/covid-19-health-and-safety-resources).

### Meeting

**This class is conducted in person**. Therefore, unless you meet the criteria for an  
accommodation from Disability Resources for Students (DRS) or other special  
arrangement approved by the instructor that allows you to take the course  
remotely you should only register for this class if you can attend in-person.  
Please contact UW Disability Resources for Students (DRS) directly if you feel  
you may be eligible for an accommodation based on your status as an immunecompromised  
individual or based on other diagnosed physical or mental health  
conditions that might prevent you from being able to take classes in-person.

**Office Hours will be conducted over Zoom**, at least for the time being.

### Our Room

Windows will be open all quarter, so please make sure you have some warm layers. You might even want a pair of gloves or fingerless mittens.

If we have an air purifier, it will be running.

### Masking

Students are required to follow the University’s COVID-19 Face Covering Policy  
at all times when on-site at the University, including any posted requirements in  
specific buildings or spaces. Basically, you need to mask up whenever you're indoors, no matter your vaccination status. You must mask up outdoors as well, if you are in a crowd, and it is highly recommended that you mask up outdoors anywhere you can't maintain distance from your fellow humans.

I will expect you to wear a mask that fits snugly over your nose and mouth at all times in this class. There are no exceptions! Not even for actively eating or drinking, not even for sips of water. If you are really thirsty and need to hydrate, please step outside the class for a few moments--no need to ask permission!

If you forget to put on your mask or are wearing one incorrectly, I will remind you gently. I will bring a handful of disposable masks to class every day in case anyone needs one. Please do not take my reminders personally. I truly want all of us to stay safe.

If a student refuses to comply with the policy, the  
student can be sent home (to an on or off-campus residence). Student Conduct  
offices are available for consultations on potential violations of student conduct if  
needed. University personnel who have concerns that a student or group of  
students are not complying with this policy should speak with their supervisor, a  
representative of the academic unit, or report it to the Environmental Health &  
Safety Department.

See UW's [COVID-19 Face Covering Policy](https://www.ehs.washington.edu/system/files/resources/COVID-19-face-cover-policy.pdf) for more details.

### Vaccination

All UW students are expected to complete their vaccine attestation before  
arriving on campus.

### Feeling Sick?

If you feel ill, have been exposed to COVID-19, or exhibit  
possible COVID symptoms, **you should not come to class**. If you need to  
temporarily quarantine or isolate per CDC guidance and/or campus policy, you  
are responsible for notifying your instructors as soon as possible by email. If you  
have a known exposure to COVID-19 or receive a positive COVID-19 test result,  
you must report to campus Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S).  
All UW community members are required to notify EH&S immediately after:  
● Receiving a positive test for COVID-19  
● Being told by your doctor that they suspect you have COVID-19  
● Learning that you have been in close contact with someone who  
tested positive for COVID-19  
You can notify the COVID-19 Response and Prevention Team by emailing  
covidehc@uw.edu or calling 206-616-3344.

### Oh no! Someone tested positive.

There are various scenarios in which a positive COVID-19 test might influence your experience of this class.

If you, yourself, need to quarantine or isolate, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can accommodate your absences.

If UW deems that exposure necessitates that our individual class needs to switch to remote learning, or if the COVID situation in our community means that the entire university must switch to remote learning, we will continue to meet over Zoom. I will contact as soon as possible via a Canvas Announcement with all the necessary information.

## ****Contract Grading****

### **Overview & Rationale**

In this course, your work will be evaluated through “contract grading.” In a nutshell, that means I specify what you have to do to earn a particular course grade, and you decide what you’re willing and able to do and then sign up for the contract that works best for you. There are no surprises: if you fulfill the obligations of your contract, you get the grade you signed up for.

I am using grade contracts in this class because I would like your final grade to reflect your **learning** and **work** rather than just my evaluation of your writing. This class asks you to take real risks with your writing—quickly producing two different stories/essays or attempting a deep revision which might make your draft “worse”! Grades will reflect your thorough completion of the assignments, rather than my assessment of how well you completed them.

That said, there will be ample opportunity for us to discuss what makes a “good” story or creative essay, especially as we approach the final revision assignment of the quarter. I will not refrain from making comments about aspects of your work that could be improved, but I aim to make these with your own goals for your writing in mind.

If you aim to apply to MFA programs in creative writing or to seek publication for your writing, I do strongly suggest we speak about how your work might line up against expectation external to this class—the committees reading graduate school applications or editors.

**This method of evaluation gives you more ownership over your grade, but it also requires special responsibilities**: to choose the grade carefully at the beginning of the quarter and to keep careful track of any late or skipped assignments during the quarter so that you fulfill the obligations of your contract.

### **Here’s how this will work:**

* Take a careful look at the contracts listed and definitions of terms below
* Take a careful look at the various assignments referred to in the contracts
* Perhaps compare the due dates and amount of work required to the due dates and work in the other classes you’re taking this quarter
* Decide which of the grading contracts will work best for you
* Submit the grading contract [quiz](https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1434357/quizzes/1359890) by its due date
* After you agree to one of these contracts, I will expect you to fulfill all its requirements.
* But… if you decide to aim for a different grade—either higher or lower than the one you originally contracted for—you do NOT need to discuss this with me. I will simply readjust and give you the grade you fulfilled at the end of the quarter.
* You may want to consider using your available late and skipped assignments wisely in case a minor illness or other issue arises later in the term.
* If you suffer a major illness or have another emergency which influences your ability to attend class or submit work on time, contact me.
* If you ever have any questions about any of this, please contact me!

#### **For a grade of 4.0**

1. Complete all 4 Big Assignments.
2. Complete all 5 Medium Assignments on time
3. Complete all 4 Small Assignments on time
4. Two medium/small assignments may be turned in late.
5. Complete all but 1 written peer review (not 1 group of them, just 1)
6. Attend all but 1 day of workshop (not your own!)
7. Attend all but 1 other day of class

#### **For a grade of 3.7**

1. Complete all 4 Big Assignments. 1 may be turned in late.
2. Complete all 5 Medium Assignments. 1 may be turned in late.
3. Complete all 4 Small Assignments. 1 may be turned in late.
4. Complete all but 2 written peer reviews (not 2 groups of them, just 2)
5. Attend all but 1 day of workshop (not your own!)
6. Attend all but 1 other day of class

#### **For a grade of 3.4**

1. Complete all 4 Big Assignments. 1 may be turned in late.
2. Complete 4 Medium Assignments on time. You may skip 1 & turn in 1 other late.
3. Complete 3 Small Assignments on time. You may skip 1 & turn in 1 other late.
4. Complete all but 2 written peer reviews (not 2 groups of them, just 2)
5. Attend all but 1 day of workshop (not your own!)
6. Attend all but 2 other days of class

#### **For a grade of 3.0**

1. Complete all 4 Big Assignments. 1 may be turned in late.
2. Complete 3 Medium Assignments on time. You may skip 2 & turn in 1 other late.
3. Complete 3 Small Assignments on time. You may skip 1 & turn in 1 other late.
4. Complete all but 3 written peer reviews (not 3 groups of them, just 3)
5. Attend all but 2 days of workshop (not your own!)
6. Attend all but 2 other days of class

#### **For a grade of 2.7**

1. Complete all 4 Big Assignments. 2 may be turned in late.
2. Complete 2 Medium Assignments on time. You may skip 2 & turn in 1 other late.
3. Complete 1 Small Assignments on time. You may skip 2 & turn in 1 other late.
4. Complete all but 3 written peer reviews (not 3 groups of them, just 3)
5. Attend all but 3 days of workshop (not your own!)
6. Attend all but 2 other days of class

#### **For a grade of 2.0**

1. Complete 3 Big Assignments. 2 may be turned in late.
2. Complete 1 Medium Assignment on time. You may skip 3 & turn in 1 other late.
3. Complete 1 Small Assignments on time. You may skip 2. & turn in 1 other late.
4. Complete all but 4 written peer reviews (not 4 groups of them, just 4)
5. Attend all but 3 days of workshop (not your own!)
6. Attend all but 2 other days of class

NOTE: I reserve the right to award a grade below a 2.0 to anyone who fails to meet a contractual obligation in a systematic way. A 1.0 grade denotes some minimal fulfilling of the contract. A grade of 0.6 is absence of enough satisfactory work, as contracted, to warrant passing of the course. These grades signal a breakdown of the contractual relationship.

### **Definitions of terms:**

#### **4 Big Assignments**

* Draft of story or essay
* Deep Revision or draft of a second story or essay
* Standard Revision
* Final Version

#### **5 Medium Assignments**

* Getting Started Exercise
* Family Tree Exercise
* Tailored Exercise
* Revision Questionnaire & Conference
* Reverse Outline of a classmate’s story or essay

#### **4 Small Assignments**

* What you bring to reading and writing (positionality)
* Syllabus Annotation
* Grading Contract quiz
* Question about “Quarry Games”

#### **Peer Review Assignments**

* Individual written comments/peer reviews on classmates’ stories or essays
* Individual days of participation in workshop

#### **Complete**

* Meets all requirements described in the assignment. For the writing assignments, these will be clearly shown in a rubric or list.
* Work that is not complete will be graded "incomplete," and you will have until the “late” due date (see below) to complete the assignment as required.
* I will be grading your work based on completion, not on my interpretation of its quality outside of that. However, I may address issues of quality and make suggestions for improvement in our comments.

#### **Late**

If the grade you have contracted for allows for the late submission of assignments, you may have until Friday, December 10 to do so, with the following provisos and warnings:

* As most assignments in this class are designed to build on each other, you will not reap the benefits if you turn them in out of sequence. For example, I’ll accept your Getting Started exercise late but won’t comment on it and doing in the middle or end of the quarter won’t help you write your story or essay.
* Leaving many assignments until the end of the quarter will seriously diminish what you get out of this class.
* If you need an extension on the Final Version of your story or essay, you must contact me before it’s due on December 15
* Assignments that impact your classmates must be turned in by the dates below
  + What you bring to reading & writing—October 11
  + Reverse Outline—December 1
  + Written peer reviews—these will NOT be accepted late, as they will then not be useful to your classmates. If a classmate fails to submit a draft or revision on time, you are not responsible for submitting a written peer review. Of course, if you have time to write one, I know your classmate will appreciate it!

As long as you are following these guidelines, you do NOT need to ask me for an extension.