ENGL 584, Winter 2022

Graduate Prose Workshop

SYLLABUS

MW 12:30-2:20, Savery 167

Office Hours: W 2:30-4:30 pm and by appointment (over Zoom, at least to start)

mayas@uw.edu

**Curiosity is the antidote to judgement**

This graduate prose workshop is a place for you to generate new work, take risks, and question yourself and others about your writing.  As you do so, you should be developing a good sense of your own passions, obsessions, and fears as writers.  In order to achieve these goals, you will generate new writing, use the Critical Response Process to comment on each other’s writing and, undertake a study of prose style.

“The term *style* derives from the Latin *stilus*, a pointed instrument for writing. *Style* conjures up the little black dress, a world of haute couture and Audrey Hepburn, but it also invokes William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White’s *Elements of Style* and the grammatical prescriptions of the style sheet; though grammar may seem less glamorous than fashion, *glamour* is etymologically speaking a corruption of *grammar*, by way of a set of related terms (*gramarye*, *grimoire*) that refer to a body of occult knowledge.  The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that *style* may refer to the manner in which something is written, including a writer’s characteristic mode of expression, but a pattern of tension soon emerges from its series of definitions. Is style merely something superficial, referring to features “which belong to form and expression rather than to the substance of the thought or the matter expressed”? Or do we instead adopt the wisdom embodied in the old adage “The style is the man,” which implies that every aspect of character is written into each sentence a person writes?”    --Jenny Davidson, *Reading Style: A Life in Sentences*

**Requirements**

* **3 submissions of new fiction or literary nonfiction**.  This should add up to about 12,000 word (40 pages). If you are working on a novel or book length work of nonfiction, I will also expect you to produce a detailed outline so that we can read your writing in context. You may submit any kind of prose this quarter--traditional short stories, lyric essays, personal essays, novel sections, memoir, highly experimental hybrid prose, scifi- or fantasy-inflected fiction. The only provisos are that you do not submit work in which you have written about me or any of your classmates, unless you have their express permission, and that you do not submit verse.
* **5 Prose style exercises**—grammar, syntax, rhetoric, music, figurative language, and others.  Prepare to learn and think a lot.  Your brain may hurt.
* **Spring Break Reading List**—write one entry to share. 250 words. See Canvas assignment for details.
* **Thoughtful consideration of each others' writing**, as evidenced in class discussion and written comments.  As this is a small group, I will expect all of you to participate in all aspects of class discussion.  See below for a description of written comments.

**Formatting**

* **Fiction/Nonfiction**: will be submitted via Discussions on our class Canvas website, by midnight on Wednesdays for discussion the following week. You must submit writing as Word attachments but may use .doc or .docx; either works fine. The first page **must** include **your name** and **the date the piece is to be discussed** in class.  Please remember to include **page numbers**.  Unless specific formatting is intended to add meaning to your work, use Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, double spaced, and 1 inch margins.
* **Written Responses to Each Other’s Work**: see below for details.
* **Prose Style Exercises**: submitted on paper in class or uploaded to Canvas.

**Required Texts**

* Course reader, available at Professional Copy'n'Print, 4200 University Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105, (206)634-2689
* A good dictionary
* A thesaurus

**Recommended Texts:**

Bacon, Wendy. *The Well-Crafted Sentence: A Writer’s Guide to Style*. Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009.

Calvino, Italo. *Six Memos for the New Millennium*. Vintage Contemporary, 1993.

Clark, Roy Peter. *The Glamour of Grammar*. Little, Brown and Company, 2010.

Clark, Roy Peter. The Art of X-Ray Reading: How the Secrets of 25 Great Works of Literature Will Improve Your Writing. Little, Brown and Company, 2016

Danticat, Edwidge. *Create Dangerously*. Vintage Book.s, 2011

Davidson, Jenny, *Reading Style: A Life in Sentences*. Columbia University Press, 2014.

Dillon, Brian. Suppose a Sentence. New York Review Books, 2020

Florey, Kitty Burns. Sister Bernadette’s Barking Dog: the Quirky History and Lost Art of Diagramming Sentences. Melville House, 2006.

Forsyth, Mark. *The Elements of Eloquence: Secrets of the Perfect Turn of Phrase*. Berkley Books, 2013

Landon, Brooks. *Building Great Sentences: How to Write the Kinds of Sentences You Love to Read*. Plume Books, 2013

Lanham, Richard. *Analyzing Prose*. Continuum, 2003.

Lanham, Richard. *Style: An Anti-Textbook*. Paul Dry Books, 2007.

Le Guin, Ursula. *The Wave in the Mind*. Shambhala, 2004.

Livesey, Margot. *The Hidden Machinery*. Tin House Books, 2017.

Martone, Michael, and Susan Neville. *Rules of Thumb: 73 Authors Reveal Their Fiction Writing Fixations*. Writer’s Digest Books, 2006.

Morrison, Toni (ed.). Burn This Book: Notes on Literature and Engagement. Harper, 2009.

Oliver, Stephanie Stokes (ed.). Black Ink: Literary Legends on the Peril, Power, and Pleasure of Reading and Writing. 37 INK/Atria, 2018

Pinker, Stephen. *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*. Penguin Books, 2014

Prose, Francine. *Reading Like a Writer*. HarperCollins, 2006.

Tufte, Virginia. *Artful Sentences: Syntax as Style*. Graphics Press, 2006.

Vitto, Cindy L. *Grammar by Diagram: Understanding English Grammar through Traditional Sentence Diagramming*. Broadview Press, 2006.

Watson, Cecelia. Semicolon: the Past, Present, and Future of a Misunderstood Mark. Ecco, 2019.

Woods, Geraldine. 25 Great Sentences and How They Got That Way. Norton, 2020.

**Workshop Etiquette**

This quarter we will use the Critical Response Process developed by choreographer Liz Lerman as the basis for our workshop sessions.  I imagine that you may find these workshops different from those you have experienced in the past—more formal and more geared towards the writer’s needs.  In past workshops, you have probably sat silently while others discussed your work, a fly on the wall until the end when you were suddenly expected to ask intelligent questions.  Or perhaps you’ve participated in workshops where the writer was allowed to speak and had to sit through endless defenses of the work at hand.  While the Critical Response Process allows for readers’ responses and opinions, it focuses on questions rather than statements, questions from both the readers and the writer.  I have decided to use this method because, too many times in the past, I have encountered unhelpful workshop sessions—as a student, as a writer, as a teacher.  I’d wager that the helpfulness or not of the session had little to do with the ratio of negative to positive feedback, but rather with the relationship between the response and the writer’s concerns about his or her own work.  This method allows us to include those up-front.  It also calls for greater responsibility on the writer’s part.  You may no longer feel that wash of relief after you turn in your story; instead you’ll need to prepare for workshop too.  And your work itself will need to be at the right point in its development—ready for questioning, ripe for development.

**Written Comments**

**Logistics**

These are to be completed before the work is discussed. Unless you must miss class due to illness, I do not accept these late.

We will be going semi-analog this quarter. While writers will still upload their work to Canvas, each reader is responsible for printing out the work to bring to class for discussion. If accessing a printer will be particularly difficult for you, please let me know.

You may make comments through track changes in Word and then print out the manuscript, or you may print out first and write comments by hand. I personally prefer the former, just in case I change my mind later or realize my tone is unhelpful, but you may do either.

In either case, I will be collecting all the manuscripts with written comments at the end of each workshop and returning them to the author at our next class meeting. This will accomplish three things: I will easily by able to see that you are all providing written comments; discussions in class can focus on questions and answers, rather than on opinions already shared; and the author will have time to digest workshop questions and answers on their own before reading additional comments.

I will be keeping track of your written peer reviews but will not be grading them--or even commenting on them, unless I see things in particular to praise or areas that could be improved.

**Content**

**Margins:** I will expect to see an average of one substantive comment per manuscript page. By "substantive," I mean more than a checkmark or "loved this!" I find the margins a good place to track immediate responses, ask questions, and note moments of confusion.

**Line-edits:** I am not against these, but it’s also important to remember that it’s not your job to revise the story or essay for the writer. I find line edits most useful when I’m trying to explain something about prose style. I might do line-edits and then explain in the margin why I made those changes. Sometimes taking the time to make a specific line edit will actually help you articulate that point you were going to make in the margin.

**Grammar:** Please do not “fix” each other’s grammatical “mistakes.” Instead, I’d like you to start with the assumption that things you read as “mistakes” are either typos or intentional choices. That doesn’t mean you need to agree with the choices or assume the author will notice the typos, however. It should affect how you present feedback though. Let’s say you notice a wide variety of issues and are pretty sure they’re typos. You might simply say that you noticed a lot of typos and hope the writer has time to address these in later drafts. If you think the “mistakes” are intentional choices, consider them in light of what you think the goals of the piece are, then ask yourself if you think they further those goals. If you are curious about this, you might ask a question in class along the lines of “How do you want the numerous sentence fragments [or whatever else you noticed] to contribute to the voice of this piece?” If you want to express an opinion in writing, you might phrase it this way: “I noticed that your piece includes many sentence fragments. For me, these helped the piece achieve to goal of XX because…/For me, these impeded my reading because…."

**End Comments:** Should include:

* **One brief statement of meaning** (the piece’s main concern, focus, heart, “aboutness” as you see it; not be a summary but a consideration of what you think the piece is trying to get you to experience, focus on, feel, or think about).
* **One affirmation** (not an assessment of what is "good" or "bad" but something that got you excited, things it made you think about, things you loved).
* **200 words on one** of the following topics so that you can go into detail. Relate your statements to your general sense of the piece’s main concern and refer to specifics in your peer’s text: characterization, movement (including plot, if appropriate), tone or voice, sentence construction, imagery, structure or form (particularly noting any connections or disconnections between form and content).

**For Writers**

In the most general sense, deciding what to do with the feedback you receive on your creative work is a balancing act between being true to your original intentions and your own style and being open to others' ideas. This is true for both oral and written feedback, and extends beyond your time in grad school.

* **Save a clean copy of your work someplace**. I believe that this simple act will help you be more open to any comments you receive—you can always go back to the original! My mother was a painter, and when she was in college, her art teacher would come over and paint on her canvas. This meant that if she didn’t agree with his suggestions, she would end up scraping off her own paint in addition to his. Luckily, writers do not need to be in that position. We can always return to our original creative work.
* One of the most important things we learn in workshop is how to figure out which sorts of criticism are most helpful to us—not just whether we appreciate getting specific ideas for revision or seeing line edits, but more importantly which types of specific revision suggestions or which types of line edits we find useful. In the long run, this learning process may be even more important than the feedback you give or receive on any particular piece of writing, but the only way to engage in this learning process is *through* the feedback you give and receive on particular pieces of writing.
* **Line-edits** in general: remember that you can always ignore the line-edits you receive, but be open to the idea that there might be something you find useful in there months or even years down the line.
* **Grammar**: If you receive comments on grammatical issues and they were not actually either typos or intentional, or if they were intentional but don’t seem to be working the way you intended, please ask your peers for help. Please also come speak with me. I am more than happy to work through any issues like this with you.

**Prose Style**

In our workshops, we often want to talk about a story’s or essay’s or writer’s style but are stymied because we don’t have a shared vocabulary. This study of style attempts to provide you with a vocabulary, as well as give you additional writerly tools.

**Grades**

I will be grading on completion this term. If you turn in the required work and participate fully in class, you receive credit. I will not grade your writing, your written peer reviews, or your prose style exercises based on "quality," although I will certainly provide some suggestions for improvement in my comments! If, at any point and for any reason, you feel you are falling behind, please get in touch so that we can work something out.

Points below add up to 400, for a grade of 4.0

* 12,000 words (approx. 40 pages) of fiction or nonfiction: 200 pts
* First 2 prose style exercises: 30 pts (15 pts each)
* Last 3 prose style exercises: 60 pts (20 pts each)
* Literary-Artistic Family Tree: 10 pts
* Spring Break Reading List: 20 pts
* Written peer reviews: 40 pts
* Participation: 40 pts

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

I am committed to making this class a welcoming place for all, and a place where all can engage in lively, respectful conversation--and even respectfully disagree. I aim to present you with a wide range of writers, from a wide variety of backgrounds, writing in a wide variety of styles and genres. Some may choose to explore the most heated topics of our day, while others delve deeply into topics we might consider more personal. I hope that each of you will discover a writer or a piece of writing that speaks to you and that inspires to read and write more.

**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.

**English Department Statement**

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 Information**

I am so sorry that we will need to start the quarter remotely but still hopeful that we will get to meet in person later this quarter. As you all know, things are not quite back to "normal." Please see below for details. For even more details, I strongly suggest you bookmark [UW's COVID-19 Prevention and Response webpage (Links to an external site.)](https://www.ehs.washington.edu/covid-19-prevention-and-response/covid-19-health-and-safety-resources) as that will contain the most up-to-date information.

If I need to contact you regarding any COVID-related class issues, I will do so via a message sent out through Canvas. If there is a truly urgent issue, I will also make an Announcement via Canvas. **Please make sure that you have configured your Canvas notifications so that you get updates for these things immediately**. You can do so by clicking on "Account" and then on "Notifications."

Please read to the bottom for information on making up work if you need to miss class due to illness, isolation or quarantine requirements, or if you are simply awaiting negative test results.

**Meeting**

**This class will end up being conducted in person (I hope)**. 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 (see link to the left).

**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! I will also build in a mid-class break.
* 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 (Links to an external site.)](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. After students complete their attestation, the University will verify students’ vaccination status through the state’s vaccination database and/or through requests for additional documentation.

**The University (and I) urge you to get a booster as soon as you are eligible.**

**Feeling Sick?**

If you are sick with any potential illness, have been exposed to COVID-19, or exhibit possible COVID symptoms, **you must stay home, regardless of your vaccination status. Do not come to class and get tested for COVID as soon as possible.**  You should not plan on returning to class until you have received news that your test is negative. I will provide ways for you to engage with class activities on a temporary basis while you are ill, quarantining, or simply awaiting that negative test. Please read to the bottom for current plans.

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 EH&S as soon as possible so that they can start contact tracing**. I will appreciate hearing from you with an estimate of how long you will be out of class, but a doctor's note is **NOT** required and you do not even need to tell me it's COVID-related.
* If I need to quarantine or isolate, I will send out a message through Canvas (and possibly through a Canvas Announcement) and we will hold class over Zoom.
* If someone does test positive, EH&S will provide guidance. Quarantining may not be necessary in all cases for the rest of us.
* If UW deems that exposure necessitates that our individual class needs to switch to remote learning, if the COVID situation in our community means that the entire university must switch to remote learning, or if a large number of students need to miss class. we will continue to meet over Zoom. I will contact as soon as possible via Canvas with all the necessary information. We will use the same Zoom link (to the left!) as we do during the first week of class.
* [Quarantine & Isolation Flowchart (Links to an external site.)](https://www.ehs.washington.edu/system/files/resources/COVID-19-public-health-flowchart.pdf?_ga=2.174758690.1853876359.1640024279-1662574592.1624051671) for a visual guide to these requirements.

**Attendance policy and making up class work**

* Since this is a graduate class, I expect you to attend every session. However, our in-flux new-normal COVID-related situation calls for flexibility, and I understand that you may need to miss class due to illness or needing to wait for a negative COVID test.
* I have created a [Canvas page (Making up work](https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1515693/pages/making-up-work-when-you-are-ill)...) with information about making up in-class work that contributes toward your participation grade.
* If you do become seriously ill, due to COVID or another cause, or if you have any sort of family emergency that will keep you from class for more than a day or so, please let me know so that we can try to work out an alternate plan.

**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 (Links to an external site.)](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/) (Links to an external site.)](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/) (Links to an external site.)](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).