

369744: Power Up Your Writing: Deeper Characters, Deeper Truths

WRITING-X 461.2E

Fall 2019 Section 1 2 Credits 10/30/2019 to 12/10/2019 Modified 11/20/2019

Description

How do writers create work that electrifies readers and stays with them long after they have turned the last page? One key is that they create characters who live on in the readers' minds; another is that they dig into their own hearts and minds to reveal deeper truths. Whether you're writing fiction, poetry, memoir, or essay, this course helps you to do both. The process of being able to create memorable characters includes building the vivid worlds they live in, and exploring how they reveal who they are—and what they want—through action and speech, as well as through what they own, wear, value, and desire. The body as a metaphor for feelings about ourselves and others is explored, and visual arts—painting, sculpture, photography—offer pathways to get at your own truths. In revising your work, you gain tools for going deep into the story to reveal rich, new insights. Suitable for beginners and experienced writers.

Objectives

You will learn to write prose that is alive, that uses all your senses, and keeps your readers entranced.

Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will have at least one final draft that you have revised and is ready to send out into the world.

Materials

All materials are included in the class. Nothing else is needed.

Evaluation

Grading Policy:

A = 90 – 100 points

B = 80 – 89 points

C = 70 – 79 points

F = 69 or below

Each week I will give you a grade on your reading assignments and your writing assignment. Included in that grade will be your responses to two of your classmates in both the reading and the writing. Each week there will be a short exercises that is fun, but not graded. You will only be compared to yourself—where you began and where you landed.

LATE WORK POLICY

If you are late with an assignment, I will take off a point for each day late unless you contact me with an explanaton. If you miss an

entire module and don't make it up, since the class is only six weeks, you will not receive a passing grade. You can always take the class for No Grade if you think that you might be missing classes.

To help the UCLA Extension Writers Program better serve our students, at the end of the course, you will be asked to complete an evaluation. They are 100% anonymous and help shape the curriculum. Please take the time to fill out the forms, and don't be afraid to be candid.

If you wish to change your credit status to pass/fail or not for credit, you can contact the Registration Office up to the midpoint of the class. You can call the Registration Office at (310-825-9971) or email at enroll@uclaextension.edu After the midpoint, you can contact me directly to make that change.

GOALS

My intention is to give a supportive space for writers who long to get their deepest feelings on the page.

In the lectures, I analyze writing samples from other authors to give you tools to electrify your own writing, make it clear, passionate, and possibly publishable.

You will learn to be a keen observer who is able to write in a way that allows readers to see and feel your words and this class will enable you to begin/and or keep up a writing practice.

* Course Policies

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each week you read a lecture which contains writings from other authors as well as my lesson.

Assignments: Each week you will have a short **reading assignment** which you respond to. You will also have a **writing assignment** based on the lesson. Your writing assignments should be no more than 600 words or we won't be able to read them all. The form your writing takes is up to you: flash fiction, essay, or a piece of memoir. Only hand in poetry if you've already taken at least one poetry class. You will read and respond to at least two of your classmates' assignments each week. You will also have a short reading assignment to respond to.

Here's How We'll Proceed: Everything you need is in **MODULES**. Don't be distracted by the left columns that say assignments, etc.

A new module begins on Wednesday each week.

Here's How We'll Proceed:

- Read the lectures first.
- Read and respond to the reading assignments by Sunday, 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST.)
- Do the short exercises right after you do your reading. They just take a New York minute. :). Your writing assignments are due Tuesday, 11:59 p.m. (EST.)
- Respond to at least two classmates work each week. Try to choose different people each week for the greatest benefit to all. Class begins on Wednesday each week, but I post all lectures and assignments because sometimes people travel for pleasure or business and might need to go ahead.
- Your writing must be posted by these deadlines, so that everyone can comment on your work in a timely fashion.
- Feedback on your classmates' work should be done as quickly as possible. It makes the course more exciting. We all look forward to seeing what others think about our work. Post early, respond early for the most exhilarating course.

IMPORTANT: Your written assignment must have your name and the week on top. For example, YOUR NAME, Week 2. Cut and paste your WRITING assignment onto the blackboard space for it AND also add it as an attachment saved as a Word doc or rft. The title of the attachment should have your name and the assignment. Shapiro, Week2.doc is an example. BUT PLEASE DON'T USE MY NAME. USE YOURS.

How to Critique

1. When you respond to your classmates' work, only comment on the writing. Do not give any psychological advice (even if you're a psychologist) or religious advice (even if you're a cleric.) Do not ask personal questions such as "So, how did your

marriage work out?" Stay focused on the writing. Do not tell the writer what to take out. This can cause a lot of confusion.

2. Tell the writer **what is working instead of what isn't**. Too many times people disagree on what they think should be added or omitted and then the writer is left baffled. We build on what's working.
3. Feedback needs to be specific.
"I loved it," doesn't help the reader.
"This didn't work for me," likewise.
4. Here is an example of positive feedback.
"I loved your comparison of the sound of the sea to rashers of bacon sizzling in a pan. It really brought home the sound for me and it was so unexpected. Bacon and sea. Definitely not cliched."
"You made the scene in the kitchen so alive with the whistle of the kettle, the colors of the curtains and walls, the dialogue between the father and mother." (You can cut and paste to show which lines mean the most to you.)

Truly, you will all benefit from this and will be more and more eager to write. (I've been in workshops so scathing that I tore up my work. Wish I had it back.)

Institutional Policies

Student Conduct

Students are subject to disciplinary action for several types of misconduct or attempted misconduct, including but not limited to dishonesty, such as cheating, multiple submission, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University; or theft or misuse of the intellectual property of others or violation of others' copyrights. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with policy provisions which proscribe these and other forms of misconduct at:

<https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentConduct.jsp> (<https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentConduct.jsp>)

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, UCLA Extension provides appropriate accommodations and support services to qualified applicants and students with disabilities. These include, but are not limited to, auxiliary aids/services such as sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices for hearing-impaired individuals, extended time for and proctoring of exams, and registration assistance. Accommodations and types of support services vary and are specifically designed to meet the disability-related needs of each student based on current, verifiable medical documentation. Arrangements for auxiliary aids/services are available only through UCLA Extension's Service for Students with Disabilities Office at (310) 825-7851 or by email at access@uclaextension.edu. For complete information see:

<https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentswithDisabilities.jsp>
(<https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentswithDisabilities.jsp>)

Incompletes

Your instructor may post the interim grade *Incomplete/I* if at the end of the class your overall work is of passing quality but a portion could not be submitted for understandable reasons (e.g. illness). It is your responsibility to petition your instructor for permission to submit work late and to provide an explanation, and it is his or her sole decision whether to accept the explanation. If permitted, the *Incomplete/I* grade will be posted and a time frame defined for you to submit the missing work, ranging from one to twelve weeks. *Incomplete/I* grades that remain unchanged after twelve weeks will lapse to *F*, *NP* or *U*. Receiving an *I* grade entitles you to submit only the missing work your instructor has agreed to accept late, and does not allow other work to be retaken or oblige UCLA Extension to provide continuing access to course materials via Canvas. The *Incomplete/I* grade is not an option for courses that do not bear credit, such as 700, 800, or 900-level courses. For complete information, see:

<https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/grading.jsp> (<https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/grading.jsp>)

All Grades are Final

No change of grade may be made by anyone other than the instructor, and then, only to correct clerical errors. No term grade except *Incomplete* may be revised by re-examination. The correction of a clerical error may be authorized only by the instructor of record communicating directly with personnel of Student and Alumni Services.

Sexual Harassment

The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in

University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Every member of the community should be aware that the University prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that such behavior violates both law and University policy. The University will respond promptly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will take appropriate action to prevent, to correct, and when necessary, to discipline behavior that violates our policy.

All Extension students and instructors who believe they have been sexually harassed are encouraged to contact the Department of Student and Alumni Services for complaint resolution: UCLA Extension, 1145 Gayley Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90024; Voice/TTY: (310) 825-7031. View the University's full Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence at <http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000385/SHSV> (<http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000385/SHSV>).

Additional Items

Course and Instructor Evaluation

UCLA Extension values your feedback on course and instructor evaluations. We ask all students to take a few minutes to complete an end-of-course evaluation survey. Updates to the course and instruction are influenced by your feedback. Understanding your student experience is essential to ensure continuing excellence in the online classroom and is appreciated by your instructor and the UCLA Extension academic leadership.

Your participation in a survey is voluntary, and your responses are confidential. After instructors submit grades, they will be given an evaluation report, but this report will not contain your name.

About Your Online Course Materials

Please note the following about online course components at UCLA Extension:

- Students must have basic computer skills, including the use of word processing software, email, and the ability to use internet browsers, such as Safari, Firefox, or Chrome.
- Students are responsible for meeting the technical requirements of Canvas and familiarizing themselves with the Canvas Learning Management System.
 - What are the basic computer specifications for Canvas? - <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10721> (<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10721>)
 - Which browsers does Canvas support? - <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10720> (<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10720>)
- Students are responsible for keeping a copy of all assignments and work submitted, and to be aware of all assignments, due dates, and course guidelines.
- Students are encouraged to keep and/or download a local copy of their assignment files, as access to the online environment of a specific course is limited to 30 days after the final course date, as listed in the course catalog.

If you need assistance downloading student materials from your course, please contact Canvas Support or the UCLA Extension Learning Support Team.

UCLA Extension Canvas and Learning Support

For immediate 24/7 Canvas technical support, including holidays, click on Help (located on the menu to the left) where you can call or chat live with a Canvas Support representative.

UCLA Extension Instructional Design and Learning Support

The UCLA Extension Learning Support staff assists both students and instructors with Canvas-related technical support, as well as general and administrative questions.

Learning Support staff is available Monday through Friday, from 8 AM to 5 PM (Pacific Time), except holidays:

- Email: support@unexonline.zendesk.com
- Website: <http://support.uclaextension.edu> (<http://support.uclaextension.edu/>)

Schedule

When	Topic	Notes
Week One	INTRODUCE YOURSELF	<p>INTRODUCE YOURSELF: Introduce yourself in the module INTRODUCE YOURSELF HERE. Tell us where you live, what you do for a living, a little about your family life, and what your writing experience has been. Then go to the first lecture:</p> <p>Read the lecture WHERE ARE YOU: THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF SETTING</p> <p>You'll learn how to make setting a major character in your writing. We'll be reading selections of prose from Eudora Welty, and poetry by Langston Hughes, Reese, Millar, and others to see how they did it.</p> <p>Week Reading Assignment:</p> <p>We're going to read an excerpt of Donna Fischer's, <i>The Seed Man</i> to find what literary tools she used to make the landscape come alive and be just as dynamic as the main character.</p> <p>Writing Assignment: Remember a setting from your childhood that's very clear to you. Think of every specific you can about it—how it smells, looks, what sounds you hear, what are the specific names of the plants, birds, clouds, brand names, or anything that helps show this place to your reader. Childhood is a time when our senses are most alive, when things make the deepest impression in our psyches. Write about something dramatic that back then, never losing sight of the setting and its impact on the narrator. The setting can be outside or inside or both. If it's an interior, even if you are sitting at a table, the teacup and the tablecloth are part of the setting. The key is that something needs to happen in the setting. <i>We're not just doing descriptions. Something needs to happen.</i></p> <p>Set the date without telling it outright by using things from that time—TV shows, clothing, presidents, etc.</p>
Week Two	CHARACTERS: THE NOBLE, THE IGNOBLE, AND THE SCHMO	<p>We're going to learn how to build unforgettable characters (even if we're writing about ourselves) through an understanding of motivation, agency, flaws and quirks, put them in a scene, set them into action, and create reader sympathy for them (including the villains.) We'll be looking at examples from Mary McGarry Morris, Theodore Roethke, and Claude Brown.</p> <p>Reading Assignment:</p> <p>Read the excerpt from <i>Manchild in the Promised Land</i> carefully. Notice when he unspools information, such as the boy's age. How did Brown begin his story? How did he create sympathy for his character (in this case, himself)? Did you feel sympathy for the Woman of the Lord who was sermonizing? Why or why not? Do you see any similarity between the way Morris created sympathy for Martha Horgan and the way Claude Brown did for himself?</p> <p>Writing Assignment:</p> <p>Remember a dangerous situation that you've been in. Begin with the action, a scene, which means you have to think of the setting of this event, and reveal the character by how he/she copes with it. Show, with specific sensory detail, where you are, when (without telling us 1986, say, but by giving the specifics of the time—TV shows, clothes, etc.) Let's see, clearly, the actions you and others take, to get to safety. Ask yourself the questions that reporters must. Who? What? When? Where? Why? Dialogue is an important way to get to know a character and to show us what's going on. Make us sympathetic to the character, even if he is as odd as Martha Horgan.</p>
Week Three	THE BODY AS METAPHOR	<p>Our bodies are with us wherever we go, except with our final departure to the great beyond. A body represents so many things to us. We'll see how poets such as Whitman, Sharon Olds, Lucille Clifton, Yehuda Amichai, Whitman, and prose from Margaret Duras and John Updike have used metaphor to create, as Whitman would say, "The Body Electric."</p> <p>Reading Assignment:</p> <p>At the Geriatrician's by Rochelle Jewel Shapiro. (This is a poem, but PLEASE do not write a poem unless you've had classes in poetry.)</p> <p>Writing Assignment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. think of a part of your body that you're most embarrassed or proud of, or that has been giving you some trouble, and make a metaphor of it that you develop into an essay or (only if you have taken poetry classes), a poem, and let it reveal your character.

When	Topic	Notes
Week Four	THE ANIMAL HUMAN	<p>Observing animals is another way of looking inside ourselves. We'll take a look at how writers such as Walt Whitman, May Swenson, Blake, Tennyson, Mary Oliver, and Kafka, have been moved and inspired by animals, and the art their loving attention has produced.</p> <p>Reading Assignment:</p> <p>Read Kafka's, <i>The Metamorphosis</i> and answer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does Kafka make the Gregor's transformation into an insect believable? Cut and paste the lines that you feel achieve this wonder. 2. Why do you think that Kafka transformed Gregor into a bug rather than, say, a gazelle? 3. After Gregor's metamorphosis, how do the members of his family change their lives? 4. Is there an underneath cautionary tale about family life? If so, what is it? 5. What else would you like to say about this story that I might not have mentioned? <p>Writing Assignment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you were transformed into an animal now or at some other time in your life, which animal would it be? Once you get the answer, write about you as that animal, as if you are truly transformed. Set the scene. Let there be other people in it, their reaction to you. Have action, dialogue. Even Oliver's poem about the turtle is active, the journey it takes, no matter how slowly. 2. If you find that too hard (and it is), write about an animal that you know well from now or your past. Again, set a scene for it. Think of where it is. Who else is there with you? Let there be a conflict of some kind.
Week Five	FAMILY	<p>"Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." --- Leo Tolstoy <i>Anna Karenina</i></p> <p>We're going to be looking at what writers such as Gluck, Li-Young Lee, Hodgen, Tennessee Williams, Richard Hyden, Hirshfield, Auden, and Plath have to say about their families, and see what it dredges up for us. Drama is conflict. As any of you know, given the heat or the lack of money or someone drinking ...a rip in a screen door can become a big hoo-hah. And yet, that's the stuff of literature.</p> <p>Reading Assignment:</p> <p>Read: <i>The Way I Know It</i> by Rochelle Jewel Shapiro</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To tell a whole life in a short form (or even a long one) you have to be able to make leaps in time, otherwise you lose your reader. How was this accomplished in this memoir slice? (Be specific). 2. How do I get the reader to have sympathy for the father? For the daughter? 3. A story (even a poem) needs to have conflict. What would you say the conflict or conflicts are in this piece? <p>Writing Assignment:</p> <p>Choose a family event—the dinner table, a wedding, a funeral, and let the family members at each other. Remember, there to use conflict, clear gestures, dialogue, specifics, to create a family unit that could pop and roll away into the furthest corners like pop-it beads. Limit your work to 1,000 words. You can write it in the third person or from the point of view of a fictional character. But it must feel real and the way you do that is being SPECIFIC.</p>
Week Six	REVISION	<p>Revision means re-seeing, not just tinkering. Revision is the hallmark of a working writer unlike someone just jotting notes in a journal. It's the craft. If we tell someone a story verbally, we have the luxury of nuanced facial expressions, body languages, pregnant pauses. When we tell a story on the page, we have to work at creating fluidity, clarity, mood, gesture, and specific details so that the reader can experience it with us. We'll be getting advice from Stephen King, Elmore Leonard, Kurt Vonnegut, Colette, and others.</p> <p>Writing Assignment:</p> <p>Revise one of your writings from this class, but please do choose one that you want to make big changes in, not just correct a few commas. You can extend it to 1,500 words. Make sure that you've studied all the feedback you've been given, including mine. Make sure that your grammar and spelling are perfection.</p>