UCLA Extension

380527: Fiction: Essential Beginnings

WRITING-X 410

Summer 2021   Section 1   2 Credits   07/28/2021 to 09/07/2021   Modified 06/25/2021

🕐 Meeting Times

Online

July 28, 2021 to September 7, 2021
Online

🖥 Description

Do you aspire to write creatively but don't know where to start? This supportive workshop provides you with many techniques to motivate and guide you. You learn how to transform observation and personal experience into imaginative prose, create dynamic characters and dialogue, and write from different points of view. By the end of the course, you have in hand a series of short sketches or a draft of a short story and the key tools you need to write creatively.

◎ Objectives

The course objectives for participants, covering the elements itemized above, are therefore:

1. Learning that well-written and clear prose can not only help the writer understand the issue(s) addressed in his or her stories but also appeal to readers in a way that is enlightening and interesting.
2. Learn that Fiction writing differs from "business or technical writing" in that is important not to be didactic or instructional in ones stories. Fiction should be thought of as an art form, not a means of communication.

Participants will

1. learn fiction craft elements related to story (structure and plot), character, conflict, point-of-view, and dialogue.
2. appreciate the benefits of collaboration regarding the creative process (in the on-line workshop setting)
3. learn specific ways to lessen or work through writer's block.

📶 Outcomes

Participants who complete the course will therefore be able to write a complete short story with a beginning, middle and end following a classical structure somewhat like:

A. Action
B. Background
C. Development
D. Crisis
E. End.

📘 Materials

Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft

Author: Janet Burroway, Stuckey-French and Stuckey-French
Edition: Any Edition Will be All Right
Optional

To order textbooks through UCLA, visit: [www.uclastore.com (http://www.uclastore.com)](http://www.uclastore.com) or phone UCLA Lu Valle Commons at (310) 823-7283. Many textbooks are also available for purchase online through such sites as [bookshop.org (https://bookshop.org/)](https://bookshop.org/) or [amazon.com (https://uclaextension.campusconcourse.com/amazon.com)](https://uclaextension.campusconcourse.com/amazon.com).

✔ Evaluation

Criteria

Completion and submission of at least four of the written assignments: 48 points (You get credit in this category for completing the assignments. Levels of excellence are not a factor for this basic component.)

Participation in class discussion board commentary on the work of other students (comment on two students per week), general discussion topics, and discussion of required weekly outside readings: 36 points

Overall quality of work evaluation by instructor: 16 points

Breakdown

Grade:	Range:	
A+	100 %	to 97.0%
A	< 97.0 %	to 94.0%
A-	< 94.0 %	to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 %	to 87.0%
B	< 87.0 %	to 84.0%
B-	< 84.0 %	to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 %	to 77.0%
C	< 77.0 %	to 74.0%
C-	< 74.0 %	to 70.0%
F	< 70.0 %	to 0.0%

✳ Course Policies

Workshopping Guidelines and Netiquette

As you probably know, participation in writing classes involves submitting pieces of your own written work for scrutiny by others in the class. Other students read your work and give you written feedback. As the instructor, I will provide you with my own comments. And you read the work of other students and give feedback to them.

John Irving tells the story of taking workshop classes from Kurt Vonnegut, years ago in the Iowa Writers Workshop. Vonnegut reviewed Irving's submissions, pointing to parts of them and saying: This works more effectively than that. So as you go on with your work, why don't you do more of this and less of that? And you'd have figured this all out for yourself eventually. I've just speeded the process up.

And Ethan Canin, also of Iowa, insists in his workshops that no one can offer negatives until he or she has first identified what is positive about a piece. And I will provide constructive suggestions about how your work can be shaped and honed, but I'll do it in this positive context, not in a negative one. This rule also governs the type of feedback you provide to others students. Students will learn faster and write more when the Vonnegut and Canin methods are in effect. They feel safer. Students are comfortable taking the risks that lead to better writing, faster. And they learn to be discerning critics of their own work.

Writing well is risky business. It places a chunk of the writer's bare soul on display, and we must be ever-cautious about the risk of damaging tender sensitivities. Rather than saying: "Your piece just didn't work for me" or "what I didn't like about your piece was ..."' here are a few proper positive responses:

1. "I really was moved by (quote the line or lines from the writer's submission that were most effective, and tell the writer specifically why you liked it, what it did to you, how it made you feel. Sometimes a line or two stand out from a good piece).
2. "The way you handled (dialogue, description, style etc.) in this piece was particularly effective.." (Point to the element the writer used best and tell the writer why you liked it, how it made you feel.)
3. "You really got my attention at (and identify what did it for you, so that the writer knows exactly).

Be creative in framing your positive responses. Include substance, so that the writer has something to go on in figuring out how she is reaching you. This lets the writer determine for herself what falls short, after receiving all the comments from everyone.

All of this intensifies in the on-line situation. Some liken it to having to learn to kiss or shake hands through a closed window. New skills and subtleties have to be learned in order to make it work the way it does when the window isn't there. It's more apt to compare the experience to learning to ride a bicycle on a roof top (a more complex metaphor), but everyone comes to figure it out as they go along. I'll talk more about this during the course.

Be aware that in an online class that is driven by written words, there's a particular danger of misunderstandings unless words are carefully chosen. In your comments with others, be careful how you frame your words. In a real life situation you'd be able to sense from facial expressions and body language whether your words were being correctly understood or whether you were offending someone's sensitivities. When in doubt, don't press 'send.'

The Writers' Workshop

Instruction in the Writers' Program follows the guidelines established by the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) guidelines for the teaching of creative writing, which include a "challenging writers' workshop" as a hallmark. They define this as

…a seminar in which students critique one another's work under the mentorship of an accomplished writer-teacher. The workshop is writing intensive, offering each student multiple opportunities for submission and revision of creative work. (AWP)

This method of instruction is considered the gold standard for developing writers at all levels of expertise, and workshopping is a key learning tool in nearly every course offered by the Writers' Program. Workshopping teaches you to read and respond to written work from a variety of perspectives, and hearing critique of your own writing will help you understand how successfully your work achieves your goals. Every student is expected to participate fully in workshopping activities as defined by and guided by Writers' Program instructors.

Late Work

When life intrudes, care will be taken by me (the instructor) to make allowance for late work. However, ALL late work requires my approval to receive credit. This means we must have a conversation before the assignment is late. Work that is not turned in receives no credit. Work turned in late without permission receives no credit. Work that is turned in early in anticipation of an absence will receive full credit. Discussion posts and responses to students submitted after the deadlines will not receive credit.

Scope of Work for Instructors

Each Writers' Program instructor has signed an agreement to teach the curriculum in their course, following a syllabus of their own design with approval by the Writers' Program director. Instructors are never obligated to read, review, critique, respond to, or otherwise address student work that has not been developed for their course or in response to specific assignments in their

course. Individualized instruction like this falls into the category of a consultation, which is a separate service your instructor can provide through special arrangement with the Writers' Program.

Underage Students

As UCLA's principal provider of continuing education, the majority of UCLA Extension courses are designed for the post--baccalaureate professional level student. Enrollment is therefore normally reserved for adult students 18 years of age and older. The Writers' Program may consent to enroll younger students based on special academic competence and approval of the instructor. Minors who enroll in a Writers' Program course without first receiving permission from both the department and the instructor are subject to withdrawal. To request approval, please contact the Writers' Program at 310/825-9415.

🏛 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

Protecting Privacy and Data During Live Instruction

Live meeting sessions for this class, when applicable, are being conducted over Zoom. As the host, the instructor may be recording live sessions. Only the host has the ability to record meetings, no recording by other means is permitted. Recorded sessions will be posted in the Videos area of this class unless otherwise notified. Due to privacy, recordings are not available for download and are only accessible via Canvas for the duration of the class. If you have privacy concerns and do not wish to appear in the recording, do not turn on your video and/or audio. If you also prefer to use a pseudonym instead of your name, please let the instructor know what name you will be using so that the instructor knows who you are during the session. To rename yourself during a Zoom meeting, click on Participants, click on your name, click on More, click on Rename. If you would like to ask a question, you may do so privately through the Zoom chat by addressing your chat question to the instructor only (and not to ""everyone""). Additionally, chat may be used and moderated for live questions, and saving of chats is enabled. If you have questions or concerns about this, please contact the instructor via Canvas Inbox.

Pursuant to the terms of the agreement between Zoom and UCLA Extension, the data is used solely for this purpose and Zoom is prohibited from re-disclosing this information. UCLA Extension also does not use the data for any other purpose. Recordings will be deleted when no longer necessary. However, recordings may become part of an administrative disciplinary record if misconduct occurs during a video conference.

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.

  To download all your assignment submissions in Canvas, please refer to the online support guide.

(https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10606) for more information or contact Canvas Support via the help menu within Canvas.

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	Module Title	Notes
Week One	Finding Story	Finding Story; exploring creative resources. During this first week of the online class, students are asked to provide a short and informal biographical piece for the Introductions forum. There is then a quick "free writing" warm-up exercise, followed by the actual writing assignment for the week. I hope that students will do the introduction piece as quickly as possible, so that people can get to know each other. There is a "lecture" selection to read, on the topic of Story Structure, as well as a few comments on the creative process.
Week Two	Character	Character. This session will focus upon the important topic of narrative voice in Character. Students will be asked to do an exercise that develops the first-person voice and persona of a new narrative character and then translates that new voice into a third-person narrative voice.
Week Three	Dialogue	Dialogue. Getting characters to say the right literary things isn't as easy as one might think. This session explores some of the nuances and difficulties of writing effective and interesting dialogue.
Week Four	Plot and Structure	Plot and Structure. In this session, we will explore how plot grows from character and conflict. The conflict can be against another character, nature, society, fate, or ones (the character') own self.
Week Five	Writer's Block	This session explores various ways in which we can get our fiction going when are fighting something often referred to as "writer's block." You will use photographs and items you find around the house that appeal to the senses, (flowers, spices, sandpaper, clothing, etc.) and provoke a response or memory that you can write about.
Week Six	Short Story Writing	Using the prior assignments or starting fresh class participants will be required to write a short story beginning of several pages.