This course is designed to give you experience and support in the development of a sustained writing project towards publication or production standard. The course can accommodate a variety of projects in poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, and scriptwriting, but will focus on developing only one project throughout the semester, such as a themed or stylistically or formally linked collection of poems or short stories; or a single longer short story. Through this course, you will demonstrate your commitment to a program of writing, reading and revision, which will be enriched by group feedback and discussion. You will learn through practice about the pleasures and challenges of managing longer writing projects, and about the business of taking work to publication and production.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

SEMINARS:

Discussion & Readings

Students will attend one three-hour seminar per week during the semester. Seminars will include discussion of concepts and texts, including those in the weekly readings. Your active engagement in the discussion is strongly encouraged, as it will contribute to both your own development as a writer and the development of your fellow students.

Exercises

During the seminars, we will participate in generative and planning exercises. These exercises are designed to help you conceptualize, develop and refine your major project. Not every exercise will connect directly to your project in its current moment of development. Regardless, bring your full attention to them and think laterally about how to make them work for you. At the very least you will expand your ‘writer’s toolkit’, and you may be surprised at the new directions that emerge for your work.
Workshopping

Each student will also be allocated workshop slots during seminar time, for which you are required to bring your own work (to be distributed a week in advance) for group discussion and feedback. We will work hard to make a culture of workshop discussion that is constructive, respectful, informed and imaginative.

The thought of letting other people read and discuss your writing may seem frightening if you have not done this before. Please remember, though, that a workshop is not a place for the presentation of perfect work; it is a place where we can learn from our own and each other’s experiments and adventures, including those that don’t ultimately satisfy us. You are advised to bring work that you are receptive to hearing feedback on. You are also invited to discuss this work in the context of the project’s broader intentions, and to prepare questions for your fellow students on the effects your work is generating.

Required Reading

Readings for each week will be posted on Blackboard. There may be additional readings but they will be available on Blackboard or through links to relevant web journals and magazines.

SEMINAR NOTES:

- Please be present, and please be on time. If you enter late, there’s no need to apologise, but settle into the class with the minimum disruption.

- Do not eat in class.

- Turn phones off, and if you use a laptop, please don’t do your social networking during class time.

- Your comments, questions and contributions are very much invited and welcome. You don’t need to know a correct answer to offer your thoughts. Please also try to listen as well as speak, and to respect writing time as silent time, unless otherwise advised.

- Let me as soon as possible if you have any disability or other issue that requires special accommodation in class (examples: you need to sit in a special position so you can see or hear well; you need to leave your phone on in case of a family emergency; you need to leave class early to attend a medical appointment, etc.).

BEYOND THE SEMINARS:

Writing time

Your participation in this course needs to be supported by substantial time spent writing outside of class. This is necessary for basic completion of the assignments.
For those of you who wish to have creative writing as an active part of your lives in the future, success in this course will not be measured by grades, but by how effectively you set up the physical and intellectual habits of writing, reading and engaging with new ideas. Dedication to these habits will show results in your grades, but also in the richness of your writing, and in the quality of your broader life experience. Enjoy this rare opportunity.

**Writing sources**
Language is shared; texts always bear the traces of the texts that surround and precede them. You are encouraged to make conscious and creative use of source texts of many kinds and in many ways. You might, for example, re-situate in a poem the fragments of a conversation you've overheard, or use the narrative structure of a song you know as the basis for a story. Be aware of (and avoid) the problems of plagiarism, but also partake in the ever-generating ecology of language around you. You can use your Reading & Writing Journal as a place to collect source material if you wish, or keep other notebooks.

**Revision**
Even though publishing writers occasionally (very occasionally) write work that achieves all its aims on the first draft, this is not a skill that can be learned in a semester. More often published work has gone through many phases of revision – and learning to revise is central to the aims of this class. Keep early drafts of your work, and take risks as you make new versions. Not everything you try will work, but if you are only willing to change the odd word or punctuation mark, you will miss at least half of the adventure of writing.
## Course Schedule and Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Week beginning</th>
<th>Lecture Topic &amp; Assessment at a Glance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11/1/2021</td>
<td><em>The Writing Life</em> / Craft</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Raymond Carver’s “On Writing”, Annie Dillard’s <em>The Writing Life</em>, and Archibald MacLeish’s “Ars Poetica” and other <em>ars poetica</em> poems</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>18/1/21</td>
<td><em>Paying Attention</em></td>
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<td>Annie Dillard’s “Teaching a Stone to Talk” and Barry Lopez’ “The Passage of Hands”</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>25/1/21</td>
<td><em>Writing and Memory 1</em></td>
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<td>Elizabeth Bishop’s “In the Waiting Room”, William Matthews’ “A Happy Childhood” and excerpt from Patricia Hampl’s <em>I Could Tell You Stories</em>, Ted Kooser’s “Small Rooms in Time” and Bernard Cooper’s “Burl’s”</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1/2/21</td>
<td><em>Writing and Memory 2</em></td>
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<td>Tobias Wolff’s “Bullet in the Brain”, Jess Row’s “Heaven Lake” and Richard Ford’s “Communist”</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>8/2/21</td>
<td><em>A Sense of Movement 1</em></td>
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<td>Tim O’Brien’s “The Things They Carried” and Alice Munro’s “Miles City, Montana” and Sherman Alexie’s “This is what it means to say” Phoenix, Arizona</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>15/2/21</td>
<td><em>A Sense of Movement 2</em></td>
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<td>Elizabeth Bishop’s “The Moose” and Philip Larkin’s “The Whitsun Weddings” and Tobias Wolff’s “The Rich Brother”</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>22/2/21</td>
<td><em>A Sense of Place 1</em></td>
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<td>Seamus Heaney’s “A Sense of Place” and his poems. Poems by Elizabeth Bishop, Frank O’Hara and others.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>8/3/21</td>
<td><em>A Sense of Place 2</em></td>
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<td>Tim O’Brien’s “On a Rainy River” and Raymond Carver’s “Cathedral” and “Air Mail” by Jeffery Eugenides</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>15/3/21</td>
<td><em>Deep Imagery</em></td>
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<td>Kevin Brockmeier’s “Deep Space” and Barry Lopez’ “The Passage of Hands” and Adrienne Rich’s “Planetarium” and “Diving into the Wreck”</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>22/3/21</td>
<td><em>What Are We Talking About</em></td>
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<td>Anton Chekhov’s “About Love” and Raymond Carver’s “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>29/3/21</td>
<td><em>Endings</em></td>
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<td>Tobias Wolff’s “The Night in Question” and “Bullet in the Brain,” Raymond Carver’s “A Small Good Thing” and Richard Bausch’s “Aren’t you happy for me?”</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>5/4/21</td>
<td><em>Writing as Rewriting</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Raymond Carver’s “The Bath” and “A Small Good Thing”</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>12/4/21</td>
<td><em>The Art of Revision</em> (no class, revision tips posted online)</td>
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**Note:**

Final creative work and reflective essay due Friday 7th June. Submission to Turnitin and Shortland Hub
* The first half of the class will be devoted to a lecture/discussion on the topic/readings of the week. The weekly readings will be posted on Blackboard.

* The second hour is for workshopping. Any work to be critiqued should be circulated at least 3 days before being workshopped. It should be read at home and a brief critique prepared for the workshop. This allows more discussion time.

* The golden rule to be observed in the sessions is respect, for the tutor and for fellow writing students. Respect and humility are essential in the writing life. Criticism should be constructive and directed at the text, not the author. The poem or story should be evaluated objectively, paying close attention to the craft.

* The weekly discussion topics in the course outline are divided into critical and creative sections. The critical section focuses on literary analysis and appreciation of the stories and poems. You will acquire critical tools and concepts such as genre, form, literary devices etc and apply them to the texts being read. The creative section consists of writing exercises related to the themes, requiring you to look closely at the skills and techniques covered in the readings. You may use them as prompts for your own creative work if they inspire you.

**ASSESSMENT**

**Course Assessment Summary**

20% - Participation: Participation in discussion; contribution of examples to topic under discussion, helpfulness in critiquing other students’ work.

60% - Creative Project: Prose (Fiction, Non-fiction, Other): 4500 words, or equivalent for Poetry: You will produce an extended project in a chosen genre in consultation with the lecturer.

20% - Reflective Essay: 1000 words (and bibliographic details for any readings referred to beyond the course texts). This component comprises a number of possible genres. Each represents a “place” for you to reflect on and contextualize your writing process. You should show your thinking about your creative aims, the discoveries and problems of craft you are encountering, and the links you are making between what you read and what you write.

**Warning**

Plagiarism is an unacceptable practice in universities. See Appendix 3 for the English Division policy on plagiarism and additional notes for creative writers.

**ASSESSMENT NOTES:**

- Please contact me immediately if you think you will have difficulty completing any of the requirements or submitting your work on time. Extensions are only granted in exceptional circumstances (for example, for medical reasons or in cases of family emergency), and
documentation is required. However, support or resources may also be available to help you manage more minor difficulties, so please don’t hesitate to contact me for an appointment to discuss anything that comes up.

- Please include the grading sheet from your syllabus with each submission.

- Assignments should be printed in a plain, legible 12-point font, except where your creative intentions demand otherwise (for concrete/visual poetry, for example). Choosing a fancy font can make your work harder to read – use them with caution.

- *Fiction* assignments should be 1.5-spaced.

- Assignments should be stapled.

**APPENDIX 1: Workshop Learning Agreement and Feedback Guide**

In the first week of seminars you will be assigned dates to distribute work, and to workshop the following week. You should have two opportunities to do this during the semester.

All students must make sure to read all the work that is due to be workshopped that week, make notes on the work to help you participate in discussion, and bring your copies of the work back to class.

Workshops are an integral part of any creative writing class. At least twice during the semester you will present written work to your colleagues for discussion and critique. Use this workshop time to help you prepare for assessment. A schedule of allocated dates for these workshops will be drawn up within the first few classes. If you forget to bring in work to class, you will be responsible for distributing this work by email. Ensure you have your class’s email addresses at the start of the semester.

**Learning Agreement**

The purpose of creative writing workshops is not only to provide your work with an audience, though this is important. It is always useful to test the success of your writing on a community of readers in order to gain an idea of what works (what communicates or “carries”) and what doesn’t. You can then think about why some things succeed and others don’t. This process of workshop-generated reflection is key to good revision and to informing the critical self-commentaries that form part of all assessed assignments.

But there is more to it than that. In submitting your work for discussion you are providing us – the group – with an opportunity to think about some of the key issues in creating stories, poems, novels, and scripts. These issues may be technical, ethical, perceptual, philosophical… And it isn’t just you – the author – who benefits. In analysing your work, we are all pressed in to thinking about the issues your work raises.

The workshop provides us all with an opportunity to learn, regardless of whose writing is under discussion. For this reason it is crucial that you participate in every session. Your participation will benefit you as much as the person whose work is being discussed.
Although undertaking studies in creative writing demonstrates willingness to engage in the workshop process, not everyone enjoys having their work discussed, let alone dissected; not everyone feels comfortable in the spotlight. It can be a trying experience. It can also seem quite at odds with the day-to-day reality of writing, which usually involves silence and solitude. Even those of us who do feel at ease may struggle to cope with certain kinds – and levels – of criticism. It is therefore important that your criticism be constructive.

In order for your criticism to be constructive, you should endeavor to identify and praise what does succeed before you go on to talk about what might not. And in discussing what works less well, you should try always to think about solutions, remedies, the ways in which a difficulty might be resolved. What is the problem exactly? How do you think it might be fixed? Bear in mind that the improvement of technique and structure – insofar as these can be separated from theme and from one’s personal philosophy – is our primary focus.

Needless to say, whatever your feelings about the writer, it is the work you should be focused upon. The workshop is not a place to air personal grievances and the work itself should never become a pretext for other kinds of criticism. This guideline for conduct should, naturally, apply to correspondence outside the classroom as well. Moreover, the confidentiality of someone else’s written work must be respected; that which is meant for discussion in the workshop should not be shared elsewhere.

**Feedback guide**

The writing workshop is an opportunity for you to share your creative writing in progress with the group, but also an opportunity for you to aid in the development of others’ work. There are a few guidelines for giving and receiving feedback which will make the sessions as productive and useful as possible, so please bear them in mind. Refer to this list if you get stuck when giving feedback.

**Giving Feedback:**

- Give an overall response at the end that is positive and supportive and balances criticism with praise. Think ‘critical sandwich’ – a positive comment, followed by a more critical, questioning comment, followed by another positive comment.
- Everyone is expected to contribute in class, bear in mind the above when making comments in class.
- Avoid psycho-analysing the writer, assuming their work is biographical, or giving comments that are personal in any way.

**Things to consider when giving feedback:**

**Initial impressions:**

- What’s your ‘gut feeling’ about the piece, what first impressions do you have?
- When you have read it, what remains, are there certain images or ideas that linger in your consciousness?
- What are the most significant aspects of the piece?
- What were the strongest images or ideas?
• Did it feel fresh, original or distinctive?
• Was it hard to put down?
• What are its strong points? Its weaker areas?
• Does it feel complete?
• Are you left with a sense of satisfying mystery, or confusion?
• What do you think the piece is about?
• Did the piece provoke thought?
• Does the piece feel complete, rounded, or like a fragment?

After the initial impressions, you need to focus on more technical areas:

• Does the piece locate the reader?
• Do you know whose point of view the piece is written from? Is this the right choice for the story?
• What is the narrative voice like – distinctive and clear, or confusing or vague?
• Is the setting well-evoked? Is it appropriate for the story?
• Does it begin well, or could it lose its first paragraph?
• Does it end well, or could it lose its last paragraph? Is the ending resonant, leaving you thinking about the story? Is it satisfying? Does it ‘tie’ everything up too well, or does it leave frustrating questions?
• Does the writer ask the reader to connect emotionally and physically?
• Does the writer make good use of silence and absence, as well as description?
• Are the characters convincing? Do they have complexity, motivation and feel like real people, or are they stereotyped and one-dimensional?
• Are character actions plausible and interesting?
• Are there too many characters?
• Is the dialogue effective? – do voices feel distinctive from one another, as though they belong to characters? Does the dialogue ‘do’ anything in terms of moving the plot along? It’s worth checking the dialogue to see that it does at least 2 things, e.g. forward the plot, illustrate motivation.
• Use of metaphor and simile – are these clichéd, or do they feel fresh and appropriate, or are they too oblique?
• Is there a good use of the senses, or do certain senses dominate?
• Is the piece overwritten – too much density of description?
• Are there moments of particularity and specificity, or moments of generalisation? Are these appropriate?
• Does the piece have a sense of rhythm?
• Is it well-paced?
• Does the piece use the same ‘mode’ too much (dialogue, description, action) or switch between them appropriately to inject energy?
• What is the form of the piece, how does this work with its content?
• Think about overall structure – is it coherent? How does the piece handle forward and backward movement in time?
• Does the piece give away too much or too little – how does it ask the reader to participate?
Please make sure you read all the work that is due to be workshopped that week, make notes on the work to help you participate in discussion, and bring your copies of the work back to class.

Receiving Feedback

• Remember you are in the privileged position of having a cross-section of your potential readership spending lots of time looking at your work in detail.
• During feedback in class it’s useful to stay silent for the initial feedback. This avoids leading the reader towards a particular interpretation of your work, and means you will get an outside view of your writing.
• Be open to feedback and see it as a positive way to improve your work.
• Don’t take more critical comments personally, instead think constructively about how you can use that information to improve your work.