

HZ 301/HZ9301: Advanced Creative Writing

Division of English, Nanyang Technological University

Semester 2, 2019/20

Seminars:

Writer-in-Residence: Tash Aw

Contact details:

Office:

This course is designed to give students experience and support in the development of a sustained writing project with a view towards publishing in the near future. The class concentrates on prose fiction (both long and short form, ie short stories and novels) and non-fiction (of all kinds, from memoir to historical narratives and so on), but those experimenting in cross-genre forms blending fiction, non-fiction and/or poetry are also welcome. All aspects of writing will be covered, from the philosophical and ethical underpinnings of writing to technical considerations such as voice, structure, characterisation etc.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

SEMINARS:

Discussion & Readings

Students will attend one three-hour seminar per week during the semester. Seminars will be based on readings of work by each participant, as well as texts – short stories and excerpts from texts. At the start of term, we will discuss as a group the kind of writing that we feel is important to each of us, and students will then present on various texts throughout the semester (One of the principal aims of the class is to broaden our reading with a view to nourishing our writing). The text or writer selected by each student should ideally have a special relevance towards their major project, and students will make short presentations on the text in the second half of the semester.

The texts/writers selected by students will form the basis of a short (up to 500 word) piece submitted at the end of term, along with their major projects, in which they discuss the impact and development of their writing in the context of their reading throughout the semester.

Exercises

During seminars we will also engage in exercises that focus on particular technical aspects of writing.

Workshopping

Students will also be allocated workshop slots during seminar time, for which they are required to bring their own work (to be distributed a week in advance) for group discussion and feedback.

Workshops for advanced level students are robust but lively, creative and constructive. The aim of our workshops will be to train not just our ability to write, but our ability to read outside our comfort zone. The skill of reading, and of providing feedback on other people's work is an important to the writer as their ability to write.

Required Reading

The Frog King and Harbor (available from the New Yorker online), Garth Greenwell

Gold Boy, Emerald Girl, Yiyun Li

History of Violence, Édouard Louis

Ponti, Sharlene Teo

Unaccustomed Earth, Jhumpa Lahiri

Night Sky with Exit Wounds, Ocean Vuong

Fascinated to Presume: In Defense of Fiction, Zadie Smith (essay in NYRB – to be distributed at the start of term)

SEMINAR NOTES:

- This is an informal workshop and participation is strongly encouraged. Please bear in mind that there is rarely a right and wrong answer in creative writing, and that others may not share your opinion. Throughout the semester, we will examine any divergence in opinion as a way to improve ourselves as writers. This class will also encourage ways to discuss the issues surrounding writing, as well as writing itself.
- 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.
- 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.).

ASSESSMENT

Course Assessment Summary

1. Class Participation: 15%
2. Major project proposal and sample 5%
3. Major project, 70%
4. Reading and Writing Development/Personal Essay 10%

1. Participation

Requirement: Your participation mark will reflect your attendance and your willingness to participate in discussions during workshops. The liveliness and quality of your contributions—the way you read your colleagues' work, the sensitivity and insightfulness of your comments, the courage to speak up on difficult topics, etc—will all be taken into consideration.

Assessment weighting: 15 %

2. Proposal

Requirement:

- a) A one-page (double-spaced) description of your intentions for your project. This should be specific, and should address form, content and style. It is a provisional document: your intentions will evolve as you write the work, but crystallizing your current intentions is an important part of getting this process started.
- b) A sample of the work-in-progress. Fiction/Non-fiction: 1000 words/Poetry: 300 words/Script: 600 words.
- c) The name of the author you have selected for your Author Study and a brief description of the relation of his or her work to your own (1 paragraph).

As well as handing proposals in for grading, we will discuss these in class. Be prepared to read from your sample and describe a, c and d CONCISELY. Expect to discuss your work for 15 minutes.

Assessment weighting: 5%

Due date: Monday, 2nd February

3. Major project

Requirement: Fiction/Non-fiction 3000-5000 words OR

Poetry 800-1500 words

PLUS draft material towards your major project of half the required word-count for your genre.

The project word count may be divided between individual fictions or individual poems as you wish. Students who wish to work in cross-genre or multimedia forms should consult with the lecturer regarding a suitable word-count.

Assessment weighting: 70%

Due date: Monday, 13th April

4. Personal Essay

Requirement: The essay is free-ranging but will usually include the following:

- a) Critical Self-Commentary – how you feel your writing has developed throughout the semester, what aims you have as a writer.
- b) Responses to the writers you have paid particular attention to during the semester, and their influence on your work, if any.

Assessment weighting: 10%

Due date: Monday, 13th April

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.
- Prose fiction and non-fiction assignments should be 1.5 or double-spaced.
- Assignments should be submitted to my assignment box at the English Division office.

Workshop Notes

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.

On the day you are due to distribute your work, bring copies for the class of up to five pages of your work towards your major project. You may include notes to your class members on particular questions or difficulties you have.

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. Please ensure you have your class's email addresses at the start of the semester.

APPENDIX 1: ASSESSMENT SHEETS**STUDENT:****ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: 1. Participation**

CRITERION	SCORE / GRADE RANGE
	F D C B A
Attendance	/ 13
Distributed workshop copies on time	0 1 2 3 4 5
Attended own workshop session	0 1 2 3 4 5
Discussion contributions	-----
SUMMATIVE GRADE:	PLEASE NOTE: Criteria may not be equally weighted in their assessment value.

STUDENT:

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: 2. Major project proposal and sample

DATE SUBMITTED:

CRITERION	GRADE RANGE				
	F	D	C	B	A
1. Description of intentions is clear, specific, achievable and evocative of the spirit of the project	-----				
2. Sample of the work in progress shows creative liveliness and focused intentions	-----				
3. Author study is carefully and appropriately selected	-----				
4. Journal study is carefully and appropriately selected	-----				
SUMMATIVE GRADE:	PLEASE NOTE: Criteria may not be equally weighted in their assessment value.				

STUDENT:

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: 3. Major project

DATE SUBMITTED:

CRITERION	GRADE RANGE				
	F	D	C	B	A
1. Work is both conceptually original and demonstrates (implied) awareness of established work within the genre/style.	-----				
2. Demonstrates control at a structural level, and sustained creative application over the whole.	-----				
3. Shows awareness and control over the technical specifications of the genre (e.g Fiction: character, plot development, point of view. Poetry: voice, image, line. Script: Dialogue, scene development)	-----				
4. Exhibits care with language: demonstrates interesting word choice and dynamic sentence or phrase variation.	-----				
5. Demonstrates control of grammar , punctuation and presentation, including any intentional manipulation of received conventions.	-----				
SUMMATIVE GRADE:	PLEASE NOTE: Criteria may not be equally weighted in their assessment value.				

STUDENT:

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: 4. Development portfolio

DATE SUBMITTED:

CRITERION	SCORE / GRADE RANGE				
	F	D	C	B	A
1. Critical self-commentary clearly supports and contextualizes the creative work in a thoughtful manner.	-----				
2 Author study (close reading) shows careful selection and technical analysis of material	-----				
3. Author study (reflections) shows depth of reading and thoughtful, useful connections made to student's own work	-----				
4. Journal study shows alert reading and thoughtful connections made to student's own work (and possible publication intentions)	-----				
5. Correct and complete citations (MLA-style) are included.	-----				
SUMMATIVE GRADE:	PLEASE NOTE: Criteria may not be equally weighted in their assessment value.				

