

HL2020 Creative Writing Workshop: *Out of Place*

Division of English, Nanyang Technological University

Semester: September – December 2026

Day: TBA

Location: TBA

Office: TBA

Seminar Leader: Momtaza Mehri

Contact Details: mumtazamehri@gmail.com (university email needed)

Out of Place is a course focused on writing that invokes the texture and feeling of a place through characterisation, dialogue, tone, and voice. We will delve into the literary tools and techniques that stir an uncanny confrontation with the essential truth of a place, a hometown, a country, an inheritance. Setting is more than just the backdrop to experience. Writing about place offers a window into memory, imagination, and identity, inviting us to observe, imagine, and create with more freedom.

Crucially, writing about place helps develop our voices. We often speak of an authorial voice as something to find and refine. Across genres and geographies, this course demystifies this process. Students will be encouraged to explore place and placelessness as a point of departure, a key that can unlock the specificity and distinctiveness of our voices. Through poetry and prose, we will learn from canonical and contemporary writers, as well as from each other, responding to our surroundings with curiosity and sensitivity.

Through it all, we will also discuss the practicalities and challenges of a writer's life, with useful insights into building a portfolio, editing, publishing, and networking.

REQUIRED READING

A Map to the Door of No Return, Dionne Brand

Selected chapters from *Of Cities and Women*, Etel Adnan

Selected poems from *POOR*, Caleb Femi

When My Brother Was an Aztec, Natalie Diaz

Ban en Banlieue, Bhanu Kapil

Selected poems from *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy*, Kamau Brathwaite

SEMINAR REMINDERS

- Readings are launchpads for our discussions and assignments. Make time for them, and let me know if you are struggling to keep up.
- Limited phone use expected in the classroom.
- If you have any accessibility requirements, do let me know. I, and the university, will do my best to accommodate your needs. This applies to both within the classroom and the work set outside it.
- Of course, please be present and show up on time. Lateness by more than 20 minutes will count as an absence.
- Bring your full selves, while respecting others. Don't be afraid to share hesitant thoughts, tangents, instincts, and suggestions. Claim the classroom as a space of play and experimentation.

LEARNING OUTCOME

Guided by critique and conversation, students will develop their voices and increase confidence in themselves as budding writers. They will also work towards the foundations of a writing process and portfolio.

ASSESSMENT

Grades will be determined according to:

Two works of fiction or creative non-fiction, or a portfolio of 10–15 poems	70%
Class participation and critique	20%
A Statement of Poetics (1000 words)	10%

ASSESSMENT NOTES

- Assignments should be printed in a plain, legible 12-point font, either Times New Roman or Arial or similar. where your creative intentions demand otherwise. When it comes to spacing and layout, there is room for creative flexibility.
- Include a word count at the beginning of each assignment.
- Ensure you are familiar with NTU guidelines on plagiarism and AI use. The penalties for plagiarism will follow NTU policy, and consequences can include a zero mark for the assessment, a formal academic misconduct record, and further disciplinary action for serious or repeated offences.
- No Generative AI should be used for assignments. **Work found to contain unauthorised AI-generated content will receive a 50% deduction from the awarded mark.** We will have time and space to explore prompts, get inspired, receive feedback, and tackle creative stumps. Let's do that together, without AI tools.
- If you are using extensive paraphrasing, remember to cite your sources.
- Creative writing gives us and our imaginations more leeway, but basic standards still apply. You can draw from, transform, and play with the works of others, but the writing you produce must be yours.

- Please contact me as soon as possible if you have any difficulties completing assignments or keeping up with the workload. I am here to assist you throughout. Extensions for medical and personal emergencies require documentation. The earlier you ask for help, the better.
- Late assignment submissions will be penalized. **10%** of the assignment mark will be **deducted** per day late.
- Assignments should be submitted in hard copy to my assignment box at the English Division office. Please also send a word/pdf file version.