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ENG 5020-600: Workshop in Creative Writing

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ENG5020-600: Graduate Workshop in Creative Writing
Online
Spring 2021

Instructor

Dr. Bess Winter

bwkosinec@eiu.edu

Zoom Office Hours: MW 2pm-3pm, T Th 3:15-4:15 pm or by appointment – access office hours

Zoom room through this link, or link on our d2l page: <https://eiu.zoom.us/j/2392840392>

If I'm in a conference with someone, you'll be placed in the waiting room.

Required Texts

Braithwaite, Oyinkan. *My Sister, The Serial Killer*

Clarke, Susanna. *Piranesi*

Domet, Sarah. *90 Days to Your Novel*

Hobson, Brandon. *Where the Dead Sit Talking*

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Remains of the Day*

Supplemental readings as assigned

Course Description

Writing a novel is much like building a house; you have to plan and lay the foundations before you can build the walls, decide on finishes, and choose your furnishings. This workshop-intensive course focuses on the practical work of planning and writing a novel. You will work on developing a plan for your novel and making significant headway on its first act. You will also read several contemporary novels with a view to understanding structure, and engage deeply with your own work and the work of your peers in the form of high-level workshop. The ultimate goal is to get you on the path to finishing a novel-length work that is of publishable quality.

You will be graded on your participation in class discussion and novel imitations, participation in the English Studies Conference, and a final portfolio, as well as workshop participation and workshop advocacy.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course students will:

- Be able to plan a sustained writing project;
- Have written the first 75-100 pages of a novel-length work;
- Be able to imitate and analyze the craft-based decisions of published novel-length works;
- Possess a greater understanding of the craft of novel writing.

Assignments & Grading (out of 1000 points)

Participation (discussion, workshop participation, etc) – 250

Discussion (8x12.5)—100
Workshop Participation (5x30) – 150
Workshop Advocacy – 150
Novel Imitations & Explanations—250
English studies conference participation – 100
Final portfolio – 250

Workshop Submissions

You will workshop twice. Novel excerpts are roughly 25 pages in length, double-spaced, and saved as .docx files (please do not submit them as links to MS Word online), and should be submitted by the Sunday preceding the beginning of that module via d2l discussion board. Please submit your excerpts in chronological order (ie. begin with the first 25 pages and continue with the next 25).

Workshop Responses

You will be prepared for every workshop by doing the following:

- 1) Write comments in the margins of story up for discussion.
- 2) Write a 1-page critique for each peer-written story we read this semester. This is a letter to the workshoppee, and should be both engaged and generous with constructive, craft-based criticism and praise. Do not skimp on this, as it is both key to your, and your peers', success in the course, and it counts toward a significant portion of your grade. Submit workshop responses as a reply to the workshopper's post on d2l.
- 3) Keep the conversation going by replying thoughtfully and thoroughly to your peers' posts.

Workshop Advocacy

You will be responsible for advocating for at least one other workshop piece this term. You'll introduce your peer's excerpt by a) summing up your understanding of the novel/excerpt's plot, goals, literary influences, and possibly its relationship to the writer's previous work and b) presenting the class with 2-3 questions/concerns you'd like us to address during the workshop. Your questions and insights should be respectful and deeply considered. Your workshop advocacy may be completed in written form, as a Kaltura video, or in audio format.

Novel Imitations

You will rewrite the beginning of your novel in the form of a 2-3 page imitation of the openings of each of the books we read for class. Pay attention to elements of craft: structure, voice, POV, character, sentence structure and cadence, etc. You will write a 1-2 page explanation of the craft-based choices you made that details how they reflect the original author's choices. This is not a journal entry; I'm looking for craft terms, here, and for you to talk about this like a craftsperson/working writer. You'll turn in your imitations via d2l dropbox.

English Studies Conference Presentation

You'll participate virtually in the English Studies Conference on April 8, either in the form of a reading or a presentation surrounding writer's craft. You may choose to do this in groups, if you

wish, though, because this is a large class and time slots are limited, you won't all be able to take part in the same presentation.

Final Portfolio

Rather than revisions, this portfolio will contain an extension of the work you've developed over the course of the semester. You will turn in 25 more pages of the novel, as well as a 4-5 page artist's statement detailing your craft-based choices (the statement can also connect your own work to any of the readings we've done for class) and how they relate to your workshop experience and feedback. The artist's statement should also refer back to your novel structure, the readings, and the synopsis you write for class.

Course Policies

Technical Requirements

To take this course, you must be able to do the following:

- Regularly access the Internet, using a laptop or desktop computer
- Download and upload email attachments
- Use Microsoft Word
- Use Collaborate Ultra and Kaltura for audio/video communications
- Use Adobe Reader (free download) or Preview (for Mac) to read PDF files
- Install software
- Stream online video
- Use a webcam and microphone

Digital Decorum, or 'Netiquette'

Constructive university learning environments require professors and students to respect differences—of background, thought, opinion, and belief. This notion holds special significance in our online writing course, where you will be asked to routinely engage with your classmates' perspectives, experiences, and ideas. Therefore, respect will serve as the guiding principle and bedrock expectation of our work together this semester.

Here are some best practices for communicating in our online classroom:

- Healthy discourse provides room for differences of opinion; however, disagreements should, without exception, be respectfully expressed.
- Keep in mind that sarcasm is more difficult to understand without tonal cues and body language.
- When you're replying to a discussion board post, please summarize the portion of the original post that has inspired your response.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition. Privilege concision and rely on the substance of your ideas to meet suggested word counts.

- Since our discussions will draw extensively from stories and craft essays, be sure to clearly indicate direct quotes and, when possible, provide page numbers.

The following content will not be permitted and will, furthermore, be referred for disciplinary action:

- Illegal materials
- Harassing or threatening comments
- Harmful, abusive, or sexually explicit statements

Submitting Assignments

Stories will be uploaded to discussion boards or d2l dropboxes as MS Word files (please do not link to MS Word online documents—export the document as .docx and attach the file to your submission).

Instructor Response Time

I will check the course daily Monday through Friday and periodically during weekends. You can expect an email response from me within 48 hours (please use panthermail or Slack, not d2l email—I can't guarantee I will see an email sent through d2l).

Learner Interaction and Participation

Your engagement in this course will be measured, more than any other way, by the quality and quantity of your discussion board posts. Discussion board prompts and expectations will vary throughout the term; however, each discussion module will require you to post original threads and provide thorough, thoughtful responses to your classmates.

In addition to the discussion board, your participation will be evaluated based on the regularity and depth of your engagement with course materials, your participation in digital conferences/meetings, your engagement with workshop (either on discussion boards or face-to-face) and your D2L activity.

EIU Policies:

Plagiarism

EIU English Department's Statement on Plagiarism: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Accommodation for Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and are in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Stop by McAfee 1210 or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

The Student Success Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (<https://www.eiu.edu/success/>) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to McAfee 1301.

Schedule (note that I may make small changes to this schedule, all of which will be announced beforehand)

Module 1, Jan 11-24: Introductions, Starting the Novel, workshop 4 excerpts

Module 2, Jan 25-Feb 7: Planning the novel, *Where the Dead Sit Talking*, additional readings, workshop 4 excerpts

Module 3, Feb 8-21: Synopses, *Remains of the Day*, additional readings, workshop 4 excerpts

Module 4, Feb 22-Mar 7: Novel structure and synopsis due, workshop 4 excerpts

Module 5, Mar 8-21: *Mrs. Bridge*, workshop 4 excerpts, additional readings

Module 6, Mar 22-Apr 4: workshop 4 excerpts, readings and exercises TBD

Module 7, Apr 5-18: *My Sister, the Serial Killer*, workshop 4 excerpts

Module 8, Apr 19-30: Workshop 4 excerpts

Final portfolio due May 5 by 11:55pm