

GLS 816: The Art of Writing

Spring 2025 | ZOOM | Mondays 18:30 – 21:20

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TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Simon Fraser University respectfully acknowledges the x^wməθk^wəy^əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh), q̓ícəy (Katzie), k^wik^wəłəm (Kwikwetlem), Qayqayt, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo and Tsawwassen peoples on whose unceded traditional territories our three campuses reside.

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

Students will engage in a close study of form and technique in order to better understand the fundamental elements of writing. This study will be enhanced by a writing workshop, where students will improve their ability to write and critique extended work. Genres may include academic, non-fiction, and fiction, with an emphasis on the relationship between established literary/academic traditions and the production of original work.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The act of writing is in radical conflict today. It is undervalued in our training for professions while drawing enormous financial investments in Large Language Models. Our own writing is devalued when used to train Artificial Intelligence, and yet the commercial business of selling words flourishes. When we say “creative writing,” the term evokes feelings of freedom, expressivity, transformation, and something about our individual identity, but we divide the same writing into genres, forms, and styles that contain or define it more than ever. Identity also doesn’t go away... That “I” while writing, whether real or imagined, haunts all of what we write, as if selfhood cannot be separated from words. This class invites students to develop their own writing, creative and scholarly, with attention to all of these issues. We will consider how writers across different fields respond to each other’s works and, consequently, how our writing does the same.

We will read creative and critical works in combination to observe how writers change their style to suit different forms. Sometimes popular authors are also scholars, and sometimes academics write for mainstream audiences. When they cross those boundaries, what happens to form? Internal structure? Voice? We will explore where poetry and the essay overlap, how the novel blurs with creative non-fiction, and why reporting or public communication blends with autobiography. In other words, we will seek out where our expectations and habits of genre break down in order to better understand the radical potential of writing today.

Students will work toward a final written project through a series of workshops. This could be academic writing, creative non-fiction, fiction, or even poetry, but regardless of the form, we will all produce work that is aware of its radical moment of writing.

Readings

Delany, Samuel R. *Tales of Nevèrjon*. Wesleyan UP, 1993.

Durrell, Lawrence. *Justine*. Intro. André Aciman. Faber & Faber, 2020.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Tombs of Atuan*. Atheneum, 2012.

Pagels, Elaine. *Why Religion? A Personal Story*. Ecco, 2018.

Van Camp, Richard. *The Lesser Blessed*. Douglas & McIntyre, 2016.

(other required and optional readings are included in Canvas via the SFU online library)

Assignments

Critical Summary Presentation: 10%

Critical Summary Document: 10%

Workshop Participation: 20%

Draft submission: 20%

Final Assignment: 40%

*Note: All assignments must be completed to achieve a passing grade.