

FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
COURSE OUTLINE

ENGLISH 598, A & B  
W 18:00-20:45 SS 1015

Fall/Winter, 2016-2017

THE BOOK-LENGTH MANUSCRIPT

Instructor: A. van Herk

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 15:00 – 16:00

Wednesdays, 16:00 – 17:00

Thursdays, 15:00 – 16:00

Homepage/course website: <http://english.ucalgary.ca/profiles/aritha-van-herk>

**I. Course description:**

**English 598** is a senior course in Creative Writing, intended to offer the advanced writing student an opportunity to work intensively on a book-length prose manuscript. Students at this level must be comfortable with the various elements and theories of narrative intervention or the development of a sustained investigation, and should be prepared to work creatively and imaginatively in applying those theories to their own writing, as well as to their colleagues' writing. Participants are also expected to read widely as part of their background work, and to engage with community literary events.

This course requires students to work toward completion of a book-length prose manuscript. Each student who has been given permission to register in this class should already have a substantial amount of work begun on his/her project, and will bring to the class a description of the particular project s/he wishes to undertake over the course of the year. This project might consist of a short novel, a collection of short stories, a novella, a series of interconnected tales, a prose-poem, a work of prose non-fiction, or a work of ficto-criticism. Genre is not a rigid consideration, but the object of this course is to enable each student to realize that project in its greatest possible configuration. This course requires critical acumen, editorial focus, and an enormous amount of writing and reading. Students must be prepared to read and critique approximately 1200 pages of workshop material.

Students gain from this course an ability to plan and to execute a larger work, as well as to critique and to benefit from critical thinking. Most of all, this class will enable students to hone their writing to a level close to or at the publishable range. Skills acquired are writing clarity, oral eloquence, and linguistic dexterity.

## II. Texts and readings:

The following are texts to inspire and challenge the writer who seeks to complete a book. You may use any edition.

Margaret Atwood, *Murder in the Dark*

Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*

Ann Beattie, *Walks with Men*

Frederick Busch, *A Dangerous Profession*

Alain de Botton, *A Week at the Airport*

Marian Engel, *Bear*

Timothy Findley, *Famous Last Words*

Jonathan Franzen, *How to be Alone*

Camilla Gibb, *The Beauty of the Humanity Movement*

Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories*

Robert Kroetsch, *A Likely Story*

Robert Kroetsch, *What the Crow Said*

Helen Humphries, *The Frozen Thames*

Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir Of The Craft*

Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading*

Alice Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women*

Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family*

Jan Morris, *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere*

bpNichol, *Selected Organs: Parts of an Autobiography*

Francine Prose, *Reading Like A Writer: A Guide For People Who Love Books & For Those Who Want to Write Them*, 2007

Carol Shields, *The Stone Diaries*

## III. Assignments and Evaluation:

Writing (Minimum 120 pages toward a complete book): 60%

Editing, analytical skills, critiques: 20%

Presentation: 10%

Participation: 10%

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**TOTAL      100%**

**There will be NO final exam in this course. Students will be given graded feedback on each piece of work, and an overall graded evaluation at Christmas.**

**ALL WORK MUST BE COMPLETED IN ORDER TO PASS THIS COURSE.**

**Writing:** Students must plan their year, taking the course schedule into account. In September, students will set their own deadlines, but can expect material to be critiqued twice per term or four times per year, with the option of longer sections being workshoped three times. Each student must workshop at least one segment before Christmas. The last day for submission of

work to be critiqued is March 29, 2017. NO EXCEPTIONS. The last day to submit your final draft to Professor van Herk is April 19, 2017.

**Editing, critiques:** Editing and criticism is a part of this class. Students MUST keep up with critiques of their colleagues' writing. Critiques of the material being workshopped are due the night they are workshopped. It is unacceptable to hand in late critiques; these will be penalized. Late critiques will lose a third of a grade (an A- to B+) for each business day [not class] overdue. See guidelines below.

**Academic conduct:** Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offence and is considered plagiarism. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Under no circumstances are students to copy, employ, or to plagiarize their colleagues' work, in this class or in the future; "accidentally" appropriating a colleagues' work is academic misconduct. Further, although the work that is circulated in the class deserves your full attention, it does not deserve the attention of your cousins, roommates, or friends. You are to keep your colleagues' work confidential, and treat it with respect, as you would wish your writing to be treated. Material will be made available on D2L only as an uncopyable pdf; and when the class is over, you are to delete your colleagues' work.

**Presentation:** Each student (in consultation with me) will select a primary work, of particular relevance to his/her project and will make a writerly presentation on that text. Students' in-class presentations should engage with a work by virtue of its value as writerly exemplar, apprehending the text not as a critic or reader, but as a writer. What issues does this text raise about writing? Presentations will follow, without exception, the **PechaKucha** powerpoint format: 20 slides shown for 20 seconds each (six minutes and 40 seconds in total). This format will keep presentations concise and fast-paced. Students will be graded on their sophisticated critical response to the work within this format. **Only one slide may contain words.**

**Participation:** Your attendance and participation are part of your grade. You are expected to attend class and to contribute to class discussion. But participation is also graded on fluency, relevance, background knowledge and literary expertise.

Please submit critiques and material directly to the instructor. If it is not possible to do so, take your assignment to SS 1152 and put it in the dropbox. Your work will be date-stamped and placed in the instructor's mailbox. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of all assignments in case of loss by any cause. Assignments cannot be returned by staff in the Department office.

### **Grading system:**

Assigning grades for creative work has been debated, but this is an academic course, and must fulfill academic requirements. Your Final grade will consist of an evaluation of all the work you perform and hand in, taking into consideration your planned trajectory. All writing is graded (using the letter system) and returned to you. You will be given a mid-session evaluation at the end of term in December. Your attendance and participation are part of your participation grade;

you are expected to attend class and to contribute to class discussion. The final portfolio (your book draft) should demonstrate development and improvement of your writing.

Following is a description of how grades are derived. Please read and note.

**A (4): Consistently exceptional work**

The work is moving toward publishable level. Use of language is concise and precise; figures of speech are imaginative and original; the content is interesting, the approach is fresh, and the form chosen the best possible, every element of fiction engaged with sophistication and elegance. A+ is a grade earned only in very rare instances, by work that is absolutely stellar.

**B (3): Consistently good work**

The work is good, above average, but could use more refinement or development, and usually more revision. It shows at least in part a heightened use of language, several striking aspects of imagery or story, and an interesting perspective or point of view. Word choice and description are generally exact and thoughtful.

**C (2): Consistently average work**

The work is satisfactory, but relies on ordinary use of language, and is not formally innovative. The writing is competent and shows promise, but definitely needs more work and greater focus. Images or plot are sound but may verge on the clichéd, predictable, or derivative. Vocabulary is adequate but may be limited.

**D (1): Minimal pass**

The work shows some effort but is carelessly constructed and may have grammatical problems. Use of language is undistinguished and clichéd; ideas are ordinary.

**F: No Credit**

Work shows no effort; no work has been done at all, or is always late.

The University of Calgary's four-point Undergraduate Grading System, as described in the Calendar (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-2.html>), will be used in this course.

A+/A (4.0); A- (3.7); B+ (3.3); B (3.0); B- (2.7); C+ (2.3); C (2.0); C- (1.7); D+ (1.3); D (1.0); F (0)

Please note that, according to the University Calendar (F.1), instructors may use their discretion when rounding upwards or downwards when the average of term work and exams is between two letter grades.

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

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#### **IV. FURTHER EXPECTATIONS:**

Each student comes to this course having submitted initial material toward a particular book-length writing project, as well as a description of that project. Projects will likely be honed as the year progresses, but the initial description is useful as a template for the work that writers set out to accomplish. A vague “I want to write some stories” is not sufficiently definite to direct the year’s work; students must proceed with a clear sense of the project they wish to complete. By the end of the year, each student should have about 130 pages (MINIMUM 120 pages) of a manuscript, sufficiently framed as a revised and polished draft.

Along with their project description, students must outline a plan, including a set of self-established deadlines. Each student can count on having 30 pages workshopped four times a year (twice per term); however, that guideline can be adjusted (a student can workshop 40 pages or 60 pages three times over the year) if responses to a longer section of work will be more useful to the writer. Students are expected to re-write as the year progresses for submission of their final project at the end of the year, due April 19, 2017.

Every student is expected to critique and to edit his/her colleagues’ work with care and in some detail. Workshopping takes place in class, orally, while the writer whose work is being discussed takes notes. All students submit to the writer (with a copy to me), a written critique on each of their colleagues’ submissions. Critiques should offer both appropriate critical analysis and suggestions for improvement, engaging with the text from the position of both writer and reader. Students thus develop critical acumen, and must be able to read varieties of writing with an objective and critical eye.

Students will submit work to be critiqued at least ONE WEEK before class. If work is distributed less than seven days before class, it will be bumped to the following week. NO EXCEPTIONS. Please take this into consideration in your planning. Your disorganization is not the class’s emergency.

Each student (in consultation with me) will select a primary work, of particular relevance to his/her project and will make a writerly presentation on that text. Students’ in-class presentations should engage with a work by virtue of its value as writerly exemplar, apprehending the text not as a critic or a reader, but as a writer. What issues does this text raise about writing? Presentations will follow, without exception, the **PechaKucha** powerpoint format: 20 slides shown for 20 seconds each (six minutes and 40 seconds in total). This format will keep presentations concise and fast-paced. Students will be graded on their sophisticated critical response to the work within this format. **Only one slide may contain words.**

#### **V. How to do well in this course**

1. Class attendance is required. You will have difficulty passing this course if you do not attend, if you do not write regularly, and if you do not read your colleagues’ work with care and diligence. Keeping up is essential. Organize your time to get the most out of this course.

2. If you are to make good progress, it is essential that you set aside time for writing every day. It is folly to try and write half a novel in one week. Students who work steadily throughout the year perform better than students who binge-write. Special pleading (dry spells or broken fingers) is irritating and ineffective. Writing is a matter of discipline, not excuses. However, if you are ill or are experiencing other difficulties, do let me know so that appropriate consideration can be given to your circumstances.
3. Material **MUST** be double-spaced and must use a clear font so that it can be read easily. The pages **MUST** be numbered. Students are responsible for supplying electronic copies of their work to their colleagues, who can download the material to be critiqued from Blackboard. You **MUST** give the instructor **TWO** hard copies of each submission, in a large clear font, one-sided pages. You must provide **TWO** hard copies of your critiques of your colleagues' work, **ONE** for Professor van Herk and one for the author of the text under consideration.
4. This is a course in literary writing, not a course in how to get published or what is trendy. We are more concerned with exceptional writing than we are with its marketing.
5. The schedule for this class, as the attached outline makes clear, sometimes varies. A class may be cancelled, but it will always be replaced, if not by a class, then by a literary event. Please let me know if this flexibility creates difficulties for you. Use the schedule to plan and to make effective use of your time.
6. Students often labour under the misguided notion that they do not wish to be "influenced" and that reading outside material or hearing writers read is not relevant. In fact, literary context provides students with invaluable inspiration and experience. You are expected to attend at least two readings over the course of the year. You are also expected to read widely. You do **NOT** have to submit reading reports.
7. Class participation (discussion) is a requirement, part of the graded component of this course.
8. Students will set out their own deadlines, expecting material to be critiqued twice per term or four times per year, with the option of longer sections to be workshopped three times over the year. While deadlines are not cast in stone, if you are late, your work will be discussed last. It is unacceptable to hand in late critiques; these will be penalized.
9. The work that is circulated in the class deserves your full attention. However, it does not deserve the attention of your cousins, roommates, or friends. Please keep your colleagues' work confidential, and treat it with respect, as you would wish your writing to be treated. Under **NO** circumstances are you to copy or use your colleagues' work at present or in future.
10. Work is to be discussed in class with intelligence, using literary terminology. See VI.
11. If you are having difficulties of any kind, or if you have questions, please feel free to meet with me. If you cannot make an appointment during my regular office hours, I am happy to arrange to meet at another time. Do not hesitate to inform me of potential difficulties because I may be able to help you solve them.

## VI. Guidelines for in-class discussion

From the language that holds sway in daily conversation, a nuanced vocabulary may seem archaic, but in fact, is increasingly desirable. The current reliance on “thing,” “you know,” and “like” are especial markers of a lazy tongue. In this class, we will focus on improving your eloquence and wit and moving beyond dull or limited vernacular. Please take notes on our discussions of oral fixatives, and add your favourites to the list as the year progresses. In terms of evaluative positions and their critical expression, your personal tastes are a less useful benchmark than objective evaluation. When reading any text, the questions you must confront are not whether or not you “liked” the material, but whether it is convincing, effective, and interestingly developed. If you determine that some aspect of the writing works well, explain what and why. And if you feel some aspect of the story does not work well, explain what and why. Abusive or personal comments will not be tolerated.

## VII. Guidelines for Written Critiques

The same care and attention holds for the critiques that you will write in response to your colleagues’ stories. Students are expected to read and comment on colleagues’ work with courteous objectivity. As part of your critical acumen, all students are required to write a one-paragraph double-spaced critique in response to every segment of material discussed in class. These written critiques are due on the evening of class discussion; your reading should thus not be a re-hash of what is said in class, but your own initial response to the work you have read. Late critiques will be penalized. Critiques **MUST** include the name of the piece being analyzed, the author’s name, your name, and the date, with two paper copies, one for Professor van Herk and one for the student whose work is under scrutiny and who will value your suggestions.

Critiques should focus on what strikes you, the reader, as the most intriguing element of the writing you have read. They should cover two aspects: what works well and what does not work well, and **why**. Begin with what is effective, then address what worked least well, and **why**. Critiques should avoid, at all costs, general or self-evident comments, or spurious praise. “I liked this piece,” is not useful. Critiques should **NEVER** be personal or in any way derogatory--such comments are considered academic misconduct. Students must address the work on the page and **NOT** the writer who has created the material. Nor should critiques consist of hollow praise without substantial editorial comment.

Constructive criticism analyzes both the merits and the flaws of a creative work, the point being to help the writer improve the work. It is a cruel fact that every piece of writing in this class is a work in progress; not one of you will be at a level where you produce perfect writing. And because every writer must edit and critique his or her work, the more critically a writer can read, the better a self-critic and consequently the better a writer s/he will become. Receiving constructive criticism from careful readers enables every writer to improve his/her writing, and is one of the most useful aspects of this course. As well, in-class discussion of material enables every student to develop his/her critical ability as well as his/her own writing. Learning to be a discerning reader is an important step in developing into a better writer, but it is also a skill that translates from this class into your other courses and your daily life. Critiques will be marked for

usefulness, consistency, consideration, skill, literary knowledge, critical acumen, and creativity. They are part of each student's final grade.

### **VIII. Guidelines for Electronic Devices**

We are all at the mercy of social networking, cell phones, text messages and e-mail, but in this class we need to concentrate on writing.

- a) We will be in a wireless-access classroom. You may take notes and work on a laptop in class. If the context is relevant, we may use the Internet to search for a particular item of information together. You are to use your laptop or tablet as a tool to accompany the context of what we are learning and discussing. You are not to surf the net, text message your friends, or do assignments for a different class.
- b) Cell phones are to be turned off in class.
- c) Portable media players, like iPods, are not to be used in class.
- d) I check and answer e-mail regularly, but do not expect me to reply to a query within minutes. I usually answer e-mails within 48 hours.

### **VIII. Making Material Available**

Students will send me electronic copies of their work in pdf form, and with their names on every page. I will put that pdf of the work to be critiqued up on Blackboard for all students to access. Because of the issue of deadlines and because of the requirements of evaluation, you must submit TWO HARD copies of your writing to Professor van Herk, and bring TWO HARD copies of your critiques, giving one to Professor van Herk and one to the author of the work. Missing work can lead to failure.

#### **Plagiarism:**

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

#### **Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:**

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events <http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse-english-club>. Our email address is [smecuofc@gmail.com](mailto:smecuofc@gmail.com).



**English Department Website:**

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

**Writing support:**

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

**Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:**

<http://www.enough.utoronto.ca/computeruse/etiquette.htm>

**Library and Research Support:**

Christie Hurrell, Interim Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact:

[christie.hurrell@ucalgary.ca](mailto:christie.hurrell@ucalgary.ca).

Find The English Pages research guide here: <http://libguides.ucalgary.ca/english>

**Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:****Academic regulations and schedules:**

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

**Grade appeals:**

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

**Deferral of term work and final examinations:**

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>,

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

**Student Accommodations:**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at [http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy\\_0.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf).

**Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points:**

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>;

**Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act:**

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

**“Safewalk” Program:**

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

**Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:**

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students' Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at [ascarts@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ascarts@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

**Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:**

[arts1@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts2@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts2@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts3@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts3@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts4@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts4@su.ucalgary.ca)

**Contact for Students Ombudsman's Office:**

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

**Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):**

"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses ([www.ucalgary.ca/usri](http://www.ucalgary.ca/usri)). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys."

## **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

## **DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT**

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>) "The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, ..., to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community". The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a "positive and productive learning and working environment." This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that "seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff". Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.