

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE

ENGLISH 694.1 (R, 18:00-20:45 in SS1153)

Winter 2016

COURSE TITLE: Studies in Creative Writing: Prose Fiction

“One Hundred Pages in One Hundred Days”

Instructor: A. van Herk

Office: SS 1132

Phone: 403 220-5481

E-mail: vanherk@ucalgary.ca

Office hours: Tuesdays, 15:00 – 16:00

 Thursdays, 15:00 – 16:00

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

I. Course description: **English 694** is a graduate course in Creative Writing, intended to offer the advanced writing student an opportunity to work intensively on a long prose piece. Students at this level must be thoroughly familiar 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 literary events.

This course requires students to work toward completion of a polished prose manuscript of 100 pages. Students who have been given permission to register in this class will already have a clear sense of the project they wish to undertake; and they will bring to the class a description of their project. This project might consist of a series of 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 within the limit of the 100 days of the winter term. This course requires critical acumen, editorial focus, and steady writing and reading—a page a day for 100 days. Students must be prepared to read and critique approximately 1200 pages of workshop material.

II. Texts and readings:

Margaret Atwood, *I’m Starved for You*

Julian Barnes, *Flaubert’s Parrot*

Alan Bennett, *The Uncommon Reader*

Nicole Brossard, *The Aerial Letter*

Jerome Beaty, ed. *The Norton Introduction to the Short Novel*

Marion Engel, *Bear*

Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair*

James Joyce, *The Dead*

Stephen King, *On Writing*
Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*
Gabriel García Márquez, *No One Writes to the Colonel*
Michael Ondaatje, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*
Jill Talbot (ed). *Metawritings: Toward a Theory of Nonfiction*
Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

III. Assignments and Evaluation:

Completion of roughly a 100-page work of prose: 70%
Presentation: 10%
Paper (1000 words) on brevity and form in one short prose work: 10%
Participation, editing, critiques: 10%

TOTAL 100%

There will be NO final exam in this course. Students will be given graded feedback on each submission and on their presentations.

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

Writing: Students must plan their term, taking the course schedule into account. Students will choose their own deadlines to submit work to be critiqued by the class, but must do so twice per term. The last day to submit your final draft to Professor van Herk is **April 22, 2016**.

Editing, critiques: Editing and criticism is a part of this class. Students **MUST** keep up with critiques of their colleagues' writing. Written 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.

Presentation: Each student will select a primary work from the reading list, 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.**

Paper: The subsequent paper on brevity and form must be handed in one week after the presentation. It should examine a formal property of the text that contributes to its creative achievement. 1000 words.

Participation: Your attendance and participation are part of your grade. You are expected to attend class and to contribute to class discussion, having read your colleagues' work and having read the primary work. But participation is also graded on fluency, relevance, background knowledge and literary expertise.

Please submit hard copies of critiques and writing to the instructor, and virtual copies for posting on D2L, where the class will access them. 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 much debated, but this is an academic course, and must fulfill academic requirements. Your Final grade will consist of an evaluation of the work you perform and hand in, taking into consideration your project’s goal. All writing is graded (using the letter system) and returned to you. You will be given a mid-term evaluation at the end of February. 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 100 pages) should demonstrate development and improvement of your writing.

Grading system:

Grades are calculated according to the 4 point scale used in the *Graduate Calendar*:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-g-1.html>

Grade	Grade Point Value	Graduate Description
A+	4.00	Outstanding
A	4.00	Excellent-superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter
A-	3.70	Very good performance
B+	3.30	Good performance
B	3.00	Satisfactory performance
B-	2.70	Minimum pass for students in Faculty of Graduate Studies
C+	2.30	All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted towards Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements.
C	2.00	
C-	1.70	
D+	1.30	
D	1.00	
F	0.00	

Please note: A B- is considered a minimum pass for students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

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.

In the case of Instructors using numerical marks in the grading of term work, the departmental conversion chart applies.

90 + %	A+	4.0
85 – 89 %	A	4.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7
67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
64 – 66 %	C	2.0
60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
50 – 54 %	D	1.0
0 – 49 %	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.

IV. FURTHER EXPECTATIONS:

Each student comes to this course having submitted a portfolio of work and with the aspiration of completing a specific work or project. Projects do evolve as the writing proceeds, but the initial outline that the student prepares is useful as a template. A vague “I want to write some stories” is not sufficiently definite to direct the term’s work; students must proceed with a clear sense of the work they wish to complete. By the end of the course, each student should have about 100 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 twice per term. Students are expected to re-write as the course progresses, for submission of their final project, due April 22, 2016.

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 expected. 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 7 pages in an hour. Students who work steadily throughout the term, and who work with the template of a page a day will 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 large clear font so that it can be read easily. 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 D2L. You **MUST** give the instructor **TWO** hard copies of each submission, in a large clear font, on 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 one reading over the course of the term. 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. 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.

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, and we will look at the work under scrutiny on the screen. 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.

IX. Making Material Available

Students will send me electronic copies of their work in docx form, and I will put a pdf of the work to be critiqued up on D2L 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.

X. Additional information

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>

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/graduate>. 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>

Library and Research Support:

Melanie Boyd, Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact: maboym@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 Department of English's graduate website for courses, departmental deadlines, and other related program information at <http://english.ucalgary.ca/node/245>. Consult the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar for university and faculty regulations, dates, deadline, fees, and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar is <http://grad.ucalgary.ca>.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact the Graduate Office at 403 220 5484 or visit us in Social Sciences Tower 1148 in the first instance.

For program planning and advice, contact the Graduate Program Administrator at enggrad@ucalgary.ca to make an appointment with Dr. Aruna Srivastava, Graduate Program Director.

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>.

Academic Accommodation:

It is the students' responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodations and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact them at 403-220-6019. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services are not eligible for formal academic accommodations. More information about academic accommodations can be found at www.ucalgary.ca/access.

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/>

Contact for the Graduate Student Association: <http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/>

Contact for Students Ombudsman's Office: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

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.