

UU CW SUMMER SCHOOL 2021 | 05-07 / 09-07

Writing creatively, in any genre, is the ultimate way to explore the possibilities for expression and innovation in language. In this course you will focus on **structure, style, and genre** to improve your writing skills, and learn how to critically engage with your own work and that of others by way of collaboration.

During this course five-day summer school, the students will:

- Have developed an understanding for the building blocks of narrative and how to apply them; from small instances of storytelling to larger projects
- Develop skills such as understanding and applying pacing, shaping a voice, creating a solid structure, understanding a story's emotional arc, etc.
- Come into contact with their own strengths and weaknesses in terms of writing, and will be given the tools to learn how to best apply or overcome them
- Be writing every day! Individually and collectively
- Learn how to become a critical yet supportive and helpful reader of their peer's work (as well as their own)

	10:00 - 11:30	11:30 - 12:00	12:00 - 13:30	13:30 - 15:00
05/07	Intro + what's narrative? What's style?	BREAK	Reading assignment	Writing workshop
	10:00 - 11:30	11:30 - 12:00	12:00 - 13:00	14:00 - 15:30
06/07	Structure + plot	BREAK	Writing room (optional)	Feedback workshop
07/07	Genre + story	BREAK	Writing room (optional)	Feedback workshop
08/07	Life writing: CNF + poetry	BREAK	Writing room (optional)	Feedback workshop
09/07	Revision revision revision!	BREAK	Writing room (optional)	Feedback workshop
				TBA: final presentation show

GOALS

- **To get you thinking** about the nitty-gritty of what makes a good story: what are the elements that, when put together, make for magic. We'll be looking at style, structure, genre and life-writing as various expressions of narrative.
- **Get you practicing** in applying those elements in the form of assignments: each student will receive feedback on these assignments from their fellow students as well as specified feedback from their mentor
- Practice with **writing as a communal exercise**: how do you both give and receive feedback in a productive way? How do you then *apply* this feedback to make a workable second draft?

BEFORE CLASS:

- **Self assessment**: before we start this week, we'll ask you to hand in an assessment of a previously-written work. At the end of the week, during our 'big revision' class, we'll return to this assessment to reflect on each students' learning objectives.
- Each day (bar Monday) the students will be expected to **come to class having read the assigned piece**. We'll be doing most of our writing and feedback in-class, and encourage you to spend your time after the final session focussing on the readings. They're not long, but they're important!
- **Students will be expected to keep a story journal**. Think of this as playing scales on the piano, or doing stretches before a run: you're training your muscle memory by way of narrative. The story journal will have two main purposes.
 - ◆ Every morning, finish the sentence: "Beverly knew not to look in the corner, and yet . . ."
 - ◆ Throughout the day, write down everything. *Everything*: flashes of images that you like, that inspire, colours, smells, phrases that come up. Anything!

IN-CLASS

- **Each day will be divided into two main portions**: the morning lecture, and the afternoon feedback session. Between the two, you will be given the time to write for the assignments given at the end of the morning lecture. For those who are interested, there will also be a communal writing room.
- **The morning lecture**: during the morning lecture we'll discuss the reading that we've done for that day, and try to pull apart the piece to see what *elements* drive the thing along: how does the mechanism work, what makes it tick, and what can we learn from looking at the part separate from one another—and what can we learn from looking at them as a working whole? At the end of each morning lecture, the students will be given their daily writing assignment.
- **The Writing Room**: an hour 12:00 and 13:00 every day where you'll be welcomed to write communally and under the guidance of your mentor. That is to say: everyone in the same Zoom room, working on their own document, with occasional check-ins by the mentor and the possibility of asking questions if needed.
- **Feedback sessions**: each day will end on a feedback session. We'll start the session with a brief reflection on how the writing has been for us that day, followed

up by a discussion of the kind of feedback we'll be giving that day. Then, students will be divided into groups/pairs, and given a half hour to read and reflect on the other students' piece. This will be followed by each pair discussing their feedback in a breakout room. The mentor will be checking in on each group and providing feedback as well.

- **Remember: don't be too harsh on yourself while writing!** Remember: this week is about stretching your writing muscles, not about creating something perfect. Your daily assignments are allowed to be messy, incoherent, not-exactly-what-you-had-in-mind. The most important part is to have something down on paper. Or, well, screen, in this case. As the ancient, ancient (2006, Jodi Picoult) saying goes: "You might not write well every day, but you can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page."

FINAL PRESENTATION

- At the end of our week, our goal will be to present our writing to each other (and to anyone else who you'd like to invite!): think of it as both a celebration of having made it through, as well as a moment for yourself to reflect on what you've achieved.
- More info forthcoming re: time, technicalities, etc! We (the students & the mentors) will give shape to the programme together as we go along.

05/07 | DAY 1 | Intro + narrative, style

PREPARE:

- **A short excerpt of one of your favourite writers or one of your favourite works.** This should be:
 - No longer than a page (500-700 words)
 - Make sure you have either a digital version or a scan of this page
 - Answer for yourself beforehand: why this section? What appealed to you? What does it do, what is it about the voice that's employed here, what is it about this *specifically* that appeals to *you, specifically*?

IN CLASS:

10:00 – 11:30 | Intro, narrative + style

- Intro
- Narrative theory intro
- Style and voice intro

11:30 – 13:30 | BREAK

- **Read:** [“Exercises in Style” by Raymond Queneau](#) (p. 21-26) (for those who want the full version, see [here](#)).

13:30 – 15:00 | Writing assignment

- Collective writing assignment in style! Keep your chosen excerpts at hand.
- Discussion + cooling down

06/07 | DAY 2 | Structure

PREPARE:

- **Read:**
 - Joyce Carol Oates' short story, "Heat"
 - While reading, **consider structure:** where does the story start, and why does it start there? Where does it go, and how does it GET there?
 - **Always note: heat lines!** Lines that you like, that jumped out at you, words that made you go, *mmm*.

IN CLASS:

10:00 – 11:30 | Structure

- **Story analysis!** Discuss JCO's "Heat" through the lens of structure:
 - Build-up, connective paragraphs, chord progression, conclusion/moral?
 - Could this have been a novel?
- **Classic structure → short story vs the novel**
 - Three acts/tension arch/4-chord I-V-vi-IV (desire, getting, complication, denouement)
- **Structure through character-building**
 - In-class assignment: how do we build narrative arch through character development?
- **Students receive individual assignment**

11:30 – 12:00 | BREAK

12:00 – 13:00 | WRITING ROOM (optional: online room where we all write together. I'll be present for questions etc. Students are also welcome to take this time to write offline, of course.)

Students upload work before 14:00!

14:00 – 15:30 | Feedback workshop

- Intro re: how to provide feedback
- Pair up: 30 mins for reading & taking notes
- 30 mins for inter-group discussions
- Reflection

07/07 | DAY 3 | Genre

PREPARE:

- **Read:** “The Husband Stitch” by Carmen Maria Machado
 - Ask and answer (for yourself):
 - How’s the story told? Technically: events, the order in which they’re told, etc.
 - What’s the story about?
 - How is the ‘unsaid’ used in this story? How’s it put to work to make you ask questions, wonder, come to conclusions?
 - Heat lines!

IN CLASS:

10:00 – 11:30 | Genre

- **Story analysis** → CMM through the lens of GENRE/STORY
 - Moral, message, and genre → how do we choose form/genre?
- **Defining genre through pacing & distance**
 - How close are we to a focaliser?
 - How fast is the piece moving along? What does that say about the genre?
 - Action vs suspense vs tension
- **Short in-class assignment**
- **Students receive individual assignment**

11:30 – 12:00 | BREAK

12:00 – 13:00 | WRITING ROOM (optional: online room where we all write together. I’ll be present for questions etc. Students are also welcome to take this time to write offline, of course.)

Students upload work before 14:00!

14:00 – 15:30 | Feedback workshop

- Pair up: 30 mins for reading & taking notes
- 30 mins for inter-group discussions
- Reflection

08/07 | DAY 4 | CNF & poetry

PREPARE:

→ TBA!

IN CLASS:

10:00 – 11:30 | The personal as creative

- The personal as creative
- How to find narrative in own life / the world around us
- How to translate narrative to poetry
- Magpie theory, collective theme in the random

- **Students receive individual assignment**

11:30 – 12:00 | BREAK

12:00 – 13:00 | WRITING ROOM (optional: online room where we all write together. I'll be present for questions etc. Students are also welcome to take this time to write offline, of course.)

Students upload work before 14:00!

14:00 – 15:30 | Feedback workshop

- Pair up: 30 mins for reading & taking notes
- 30 mins for inter-group discussions
- Reflection

08/07 | DAY 5 | Revision

No reading assignment.

IN CLASS:

10:00 – 11:30 | The Big Revision

- In-class assignments:
 - Editing through restrictions
 - Editing through expansion
 - Editing for pacing
 - Editing at random
- **Students receive individual assignment**

11:30 – 12:00 | BREAK

12:00 – 13:00 | WRITING ROOM (optional: online room where we all write together. I'll be present for questions etc. Students are also welcome to take this time to write offline, of course.)

Assignment:

- **Pick one of the pieces** you've written for this week (or an older piece!)
- If you've received feedback on it over the course of this week: **sit with that feedback** for a moment and consider for each comment: what is the reader telling me? Are they telling me something ISN'T working, or that something IS working, or that there's a certain tension in a section and they can't figure out whether it's good or bad tension?
- **Take notes as you go along!** Longhand, on a piece of paper
- Answer for yourself: **what do you want the piece to do?** The perfect most ideal version of your work—what would it give the reader, what knowledge, what understanding, what *emotion*?
- **Also take notes of THAT!**
- **Now, begin editing.** A slow round, at first: go through the piece quickly, and highlight the sections you know need Big Work (rewriting, re-structuring, etc)
- Decide **what kind specific editorial work the WHOLE of the story needs:** remember our in-class assignments—restriction, expansion, pacing, etc. Now, **go through the story again**, editing toward that goal. Make small edits to the sections that aren't highlighted, and really focus on the highlighted section
- **Go through it again, and this time, look for cohesion!** Now that you've made changes, that you've tweaked here and there—is the piece still a whole? Does it need fillers, connective tissue, etc?
- **Students upload work before 14:00!**

14:00 – 15:30 | Feedback workshop

- Pair up: 30 mins for reading & taking notes
- 30 mins for inter-group discussions
- Reflection

EVENING – FINAL PRESENTATION! More info TBA!