



ENGL/WRIT 2221

Creative Writing

... something that for an instant joins the ear, nose, skin, tongue, and heart with the eye and the mind.

- Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*



Instructor

Clare Goulet

Contact: email clare.goulet@msvu.ca

Course messages are read and responded to once daily, Monday to Friday.

Students also can see me at the end of any online class together, send me an online Moodle message, or make an appointment to chat.

Class location: McCain 105. This learning space and all of MSVU is in Kjipuktuk, which is part of Mi'kma'ki, the unceded ancestral homelands of the Mi'kmaq Nation.

Texts

1. One volume of contemporary poetry, limited choice. Print and online options. Email was sent to enrolled students before our course start date and will be posted in "Course News" on our Moodle site. **In Module 1, each student chooses and works with a different book by a living writer.**
2. For Module 1 (Poetry) - book - *Sôhkêyihta: The Poetry of Sky Dancer Louise Bernice Halfe* (Wilfred Laurier UP, 2018). Under \$20. Mount Bookstore.
3. For Module 2 final project – book - Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life* as a companion for the major project. MSVU Bookstore.
4. For Module 2 (Narrative) - audio: Thomson Highway on storytelling & cosmologies: [Laughing with the Trickster CBC Massey Lectures](#) (free to stream or download)
5. Additional audio and video links, podcasts, and readings are available on the course Moodle site.

Course Description

In this university-level creative writing workshop, you'll explore lyric and narrative as modes of thinking in language, via specific writing assignments in poetry, micro fictions, and creative nonfiction. This happens in an online workshop environment that explores both theory and technique. This course aims to extend your ability to *think* analogically, musically, and in an integrated way (in contrast to and in addition to analysis) as well as to *write* in these styles. Reading and written discussion of—and guest visits or public readings by—contemporary writers/artists is central to the course. As a university course and credit, we draw on peer-reviewed literary journals as texts and for techniques and disciplinary standard.

How we accomplish this

English 2221 is a workshop-style course. Classes target specific ideas and techniques, beginning with basic principles and ear-training poetry exercises, moving into longer, more complex practice pieces in diverse forms, and concluding with one major original polyphonic (multi-voiced) work – open form. The emphasis is on writing regularly, reading others, and trying new approaches, on process rather than producing 'perfect' work.

This course is designed as an active, immersive experience that combines workshops as a class and instructor prompts and mini-lectures with deep and sustained solo practice. **In Module 1, classes and**

podcasts with hands-on exercises take you through a specific concept (Moodle Topic box). This is followed by a Reading and Writing Assignment (solo practice) on that topic, which you complete and submit before the next topic begins. **In Module 2, these lectures and small assignments stop, and you spend the rest of term creating and completing one major piece, with support.** You'll develop your ability to edit your own work and that of others in the course and receive detailed feedback.

Course Expectations

1. Attend workshops and listen to Topic podcasts and related links: follow the checklist.
2. Complete reading & writing assignments for each topic, to the given deadline. This keeps your work moving and growing.
3. Submit some polished, original work in your final portfolio with a short, detailed essay on your full process.



Grading

- 25% Reading and Writing assignments for Topics 1 to 5 (Sept 4 – Oct 7)
- 5% Deadlines met for Topics 1 to 5 (Sept 9 – Oct 7)
- 10% Topic 6 work and forum posts (Oct 9-13)
- 10%* Peer editing (in person during class time) (Sept 30, Oct 7*, Nov 4, Nov 18*) – Oct 7 and Nov 18 peer edits take place in exam-like conditions
- 50% Final portfolio: new creative nonfiction piece + artistic process essay. Revision of past work may be included.
Your portfolio work is submitted after peer and individual instructor feedback. (final due Nov 25 / exception: Access. Extra Time final due Dec 2)

Assignments and Feedback

Your final grade for this course will reflect your progress and performance as a writer and a reader and a commentator/peer editor and a workshop participant. It will *not* be a simple measure of talent, “which is,” says Canadian writer, literary editor and (founding) publisher Don McKay, “an angelic, rather than an academic commodity.”

At the end of the course you’ll pass in a polished, original, typed portfolio: revision of some past work, plus one piece of new original work, followed by an essay on the process of making that new piece. This portfolio follows written feedback to the class, and to you, and an individual instructor meeting. Originality: Unless AI / machine generated language apps are assigned, they aren’t used for assignments. For any work to be graded you must be able if asked to meet with me and to competently discuss its ideas and approach and your writing process. See me for exceptions.

In the first half of the course, Topics 1 to 5, you’ll have assignments due for each topic. The point is to make your best effort, complete the task, and meet the deadline. These raw drafts also help to build your final portfolio. These early assignments receive a formal grade *once* for their overall quality and completion to deadline (assessed midterm, after Topic 5 is complete).

You’ll see detailed class feedback after each assignment about the work in Module 1. Please be prepared for intentional instructor silence on your individual work in the first few assignments. The emphasis in early classes is to introduce technique while all students read and write regularly and have a stress-free chance to immerse and practice new technique.

Each student receives individual detailed feedback for a creative piece and for a short essay in Module 1 and again on their major project in Module 2, before that work undergoes significant revision. The purpose of detailed feedback is revision of creative work.

Course Schedule

Please see our course Moodle site for class topics and task checklists for each topic, assignment details and audio/video materials. Class topics may change without notice if needed (if assignment deadlines change you'll be notified in advance via our Moodle site and/or your Mount email).

Module 1 basic concepts, practice, revision, prep for major project - via poems + poetics

Topic 1 (Sept 4 – 9)

Introduction: course outline / book information /

Reading and Writing Assignment 1 due Mon Sept 9 before 1:30 pm (due date always means due before class start time that day)

Topic 2 (Sept 11 – 16)

lyric and narrative / Reading & writing assignment 2 due 16th (Module 1 books needed for this)

Topic 3 (Sept 18 – 23)

silences / Reading & writing assignment 3 due 23rd

Topic 4 (Sept 25 – 30)

sound / Reading & writing assignment 4 due 30th

Topic 5 (Oct 2 – 7)

metaphor / Reading & writing assignment 5 due 7th

Topic 6 (Oct 9 – 16)

storytelling in miniature: prose poems & postcard stories / Writing assignment 6 due 16th

Module 2 - creative nonfiction, open style - one project

Topic 7 (Oct 16 – 21) – major project assigned, begins

final project assigned / tentative new writing assigned +begins for that final piece / new writing posted on Moodle Oct 21

Required independent reading from now to course end: The Writing Life (segments assigned in class to read on your own and discuss as well as bring into your final commentary essay on your creative process.)

Topic 8 (Oct 21 – 28) – instructor meetings / writing continues / new writing posted on Moodle Oct 28 / group reading response

Topic 9 (Oct 28, 30) – Mon - on polyphony / Wed - class readings: past poems + work-in-progress / group reading response

Prepare, print and bring a full rough draft (messy, unpolished, but done) to class for class start time Nov 4, for peer workshopping in class.

Topic 10 (Nov 4, 6) – full rough draft due Nov 4 for peer editing / workshopping of pieces / group reading response

No classes Reading Week Nov 11, 13. Revise your full draft using any useful feedback received, print, and bring to class Nov 18 for peer editing.

Topic 11 (Nov 18, 20) – peer editing Nov 18 in class / guest writer/artist visit / last group reading response

Make final changes to your creative piece and submit on Moodle Nov 25 – with all rough drafts submitted previously and with written peer feedback received.

Your short process essay may be submitted with it or up to Dec 2. Accessibility-registered for extra time - final project is due midnight Dec 2

Topic 12 (Nov 25 – Dec 4) – Q&A session / Dec 2 class readings (yours!) / peer and course evaluation / + the writing life (yours): **optional** roundtable on submitting work, Writer's Fed, Arts Councils, next-level courses and workshops, and grants.

Grades delivered within 5 business days after classes end.

*"Like bird song, languages make our planet a beautiful place,
a fascinating place – indeed, a miraculous place – to live on.
Without language, we are lost creatures...
...which is why we tell stories."*

- Thomson Highway