

## The Fiction Writer's Workshop

WRCR6206

### Course Outline

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**Description:** You have a strong and unique voice. Maybe you tell a story to co-workers or family members - and they want to hear more. But can you be creative on paper? Writing is an art form. This class will nurture and develop your original voice and get you writing. And re-writing. You've covered the basics – dialogue, scenes, beats, plot, characters and setting. But now in this workshop you will take the nuts and bolts of good writing and put them to use. This course will make you feel positive about your writing. You will work with supportive, like-minded people committed to getting their best work on paper. Here's an opportunity to join a community of writers who will listen and encourage you to write from the heart. In this class, you will present your writing for valuable discussion and feedback. As well, you will read and comment on your classmates' work – a process which expands your knowledge of the fiction craft, and the revising and editing process. Along the way, we will continue to discuss and review the key elements of fiction.

Do you have a piece of writing that is giving you trouble? Bring it along to class. But the expectation is that you will write actively each week. We want you to share your work, share your ideas, be inspired and keep your project going – or start a new one. You will feel safe because we stress the importance of confidentiality and mutual respect. And you will have fun too, as we learn more about the art of shaping lively narrative.

**Course Goals:** This course aims to further aid a fiction writer to move beyond fear, self-doubt and procrastination, and to allow the writer to create a well-crafted story. The student will learn more about all aspects of fiction writing, including characterization, scenes, point of view, setting, dialogue, theme and plot. We will read selections from a variety of short stories. As well, there will be short, in-class exercises to help hone writing skills. The student will be coaxed and supported to feel comfortable sharing his or her writings in the classroom, and beyond.

**Course Objectives:** At the completion of this course, the student will be able to plan, draft, edit, write and share well-crafted fiction. Motivated students will be able to complete a short story over the course of eight weeks or polish up a section of a longer piece of fiction. Come prepared each week to share your work – there will be regular opportunities to read aloud as your work progresses.

### Attendance Requirements:

Students must miss no more than two classes to receive a completion for this course. A grade report can be printed from myWCS.

### Code of Student Conduct:

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed, and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For the complete Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>.

## **Course Schedule:**

### **Week 1**

Student introductions and class discussion: what do you want from your writing? The class will hear from everyone about their hopes and expectations. We will discuss what this class will do for you, what your writing will do for you, and how you will help your fellow students with their writing. We'll talk about story architecture and how you can imagine a piece of fiction evolving from an idea. And we'll discuss current writing projects and how to achieve a disciplined writing life. We will do an in-class writing exercise about character.

### **Week 2**

How are your characters developing? Have you made them complex, and given them something to do? What is the tension of their predicament? Do you know enough about them? We'll discuss techniques for bringing a character to life. Also, we'll discuss Point Of View: whose story is it? A recap of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person points of view.

### **Week 3**

Plot. There are many plot variations and we will review a wide range of styles. Does your work involve enough action? Do your characters have something to do, or do they simply sit or stand around and talk? Give your characters conflict – inner and outer.

### **Week 4**

What is a scene, and why do we need scenes in fiction writing? Does each scene contain action? Show and tell: do you have trouble seeing the difference in your writing? We will discuss how to show readers how your characters feel, instead of telling them. A discussion about narrative summary: when to use, and when not to use. How much is enough? Mid-workshop review.

### **Week 5**

Dialogue: definition. What length is correct? Choose the right words for your characters. Beats: definition and use. How do you create believable dialogue? How do you express theme? Why is it important in fiction? Your characters' thoughts: how they advance plot and involve conflict. Get deep inside your character's head by using internal monologue. Voice and tone: the difference between a character's internal voice and narrative voice.

### **Week 6**

Create and place your characters in settings. Why is setting important? What is the importance of imagery? How much is enough? You must allow your readers to fill in the blanks: a little description can go a long way.

### **Week 7 – Special Workshop**

This class is an opportunity to learn from local published authors how they turned the seed of inspiration into a finished manuscript. The workshop panelists will also discuss how to execute a marketing plan and get your work published.

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## **Week 8**

We will review weeks 1-7 with an opportunity to share your writing work. Enjoy our final readings with some healthy snacks for energy. We'll take a hard look at publishing markets and opportunities and talk about where you go from here.