

## The Fiction Writer's Workshop

WRCR6206 - 010

### Course Outline – Winter 2019

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**Description:** Writing fiction is an art form and requires a strong, unique voice. Maybe you already entertain your co-workers or family members with your stories. But can you be creative on paper? This class will nurture and develop the skills you need to get writing. And re-writing. In this workshop you will work with supportive, like-minded people committed to getting their best stories down on paper – 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 classmate's work to expand your knowledge of the editing process.

Do you have a piece of writing that is giving you trouble? Bring it along to class. 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.

Along the way, we will discuss and review the key elements of fiction; character, scene, narrative voice, point of view, plot and dialogue. You will also read from your favourite works of fiction.

**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 characters, scene, point of view, setting, dialogue, theme and plot. As well, there will be weekly in-class exercises to help hone writing skills. We will also read from great works of fiction to reinforce the topics discussed in each class. 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.

**Texts:** None

#### 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 One

# Western Continuing Studies

We will discuss what you want from your writing, how this class will help you and how you can support your fellow students with their work. We'll talk about story architecture, how your story will evolve from an idea and the simple ways to achieve a disciplined writing life. There will be an in-class writing exercise and lively discussion of your favourite works of fiction.

## **Week Two**

Your characters are the heart of good fiction. How are your characters developing? Have you made them complex, and given them something to do? What is the one thing they want more than anything else? What is the tension of their predicament? Do *you* know enough about them to get inside their hearts and minds? We'll discuss techniques for bringing a character to life. Also, we'll discuss point of view – who tells the story. A recap of first, second and third person points of view.

## **Week Three**

You will learn the many variations of plot and why plot is important to story craft. Does your plot have enough action? Do your characters have something to do, or do they simply sit or stand around and talk? We will learn how to give your characters a conflict that make readers want to turn the page. I will distribute “start, stop and continue” sheets.

## **Week Four**

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. We will discuss the importance of narrative summary to move your story forward.

## **Week Five**

We will focus on the tried and true ways to write dialogue and use correct punctuation and format. Dialogue allows you to choose the right words for your characters and move the story forward. We will also define the use of beats – those little bridges that are essential to every narrative. We will practice creating believable dialogue and beats.

## **Week Six**

We will discuss the importance of theme in fiction and how your character's thoughts advance plot and involve conflict. We will 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 Seven**

You will learn why setting is important? We will also discuss the importance of imagery and why you must allow your readers to fill in the blanks: a little description can go a long way.

## **Week Eight**

We will review weeks one to seven with an opportunity to share your writing work. We'll take a look at publishing markets and talk about where you go from here with your writing life. You will leave with a resource package to help keep your writing craft sharp and to find publishing markets for your stories.