

Writing 4880G (Winter 2021)
Theory and Creative Writing
Online/Asynchronous

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Course description and objectives

This isn't a theory course. Some background in literary theory might help, but this course is neither a replacement for a theory course nor a course that requires any prior knowledge of theory. Think of it as a series of creative writing assignments with different kind of constraints, much like constraints of form in composing a villanelle or a sonnet. We will read passages from over 2000 years of theoretical work, ranging from such thinkers as Aristotle and Longinus to Gerard Genette, from classical considerations of rhetoric to discussions of what constitutes the fantastic. The graded work of the course will be four creative exercises in different genres based on our critical readings, and the objective is to become better writers by having more tools at our disposal.

Required texts

None. Everything that I'd like you to read will be available on the course website, and we won't be reading all that much. We will, in addition to considering theoretical approaches, read some shorter works (poetry and prose) that model the effects we are trying to achieve.

Recommended texts

Should you have time and wish to read some works that will help you with two of the modules in the course, you might read Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* or *As I Lay Dying*. Let me stress that this is entirely optional!

Course requirements and grade allocations

The course will be divided into modules. Each module will have the same structure: in the first week, we will read and discuss some literary theory and/or a short work. For the second week, we will draft our own creative responses to our readings, submit the draft on Wednesday, and discuss our work. In the third week, we will revise and submit a final version of our creative responses and a discussion of the process by which we arrived at that final version. In the four modules, students must write at least one work of poetry and at least one work of prose. The initial expectation for the creative responses is that they will be between 500 and 1500 words each, but assignments outside that range can be negotiated.

Module 1 (25%; due January 31)

Our first module will take as a starting point the definition of literature. From there, we'll consider defamiliarization or estrangement, language as material, and détournement.

Module 2 (25%; due February 28)

Our second module will consider other ways of making strange. Todorov's definition of the fantastic, his notion of hesitation, will be combined with ideas of the uncanny.

Module 3 (25%; due March 21)

Our third module will consider the sublime (largely through Longinus' discussion) and some literary examples of the sublime.

Module 4 (25%; due April 18)

Our fourth module will be about narratology, specifically focalisation and different kinds of discourse. We will experiment with different narrators and different styles of narration.

Course Policies

Assignment Format

All assignments are to be "typed," and must have your name, course name, section number, and instructor's name on the first page. Do not use a cover page; these are particularly unnecessary for online submissions. When using sources (unlikely, but not impossible!), you will be expected to follow MLA, APA, or Chicago citation practice.

Submitting Assignments

Assignments are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Late work **will be penalized at 2.5% per day unless** I have permitted an extension of the due date. You must contact me ahead of time for an extension (see also the section "Accommodation Policy" below).

Attendance/Participation

This is a senior-level seminar course. I expect you to be "present" and participating, but the only penalties revolve around missing peer review. *Peer review is an important part of the course. Students who do not participate in the peer review or who fail to submit drafts for peer review will receive a 10% deduction on their assignments (5% for each component). That could be 10% on the each of the four modules.*

STUDENT CONDUCT

This ought to go without saying, but please remember, especially as we conduct our conversations remotely and asynchronously, that *the use of racist or any language that works against the values of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will not be tolerated.*

SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES, INCLUDING PLAGIARISM

The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on course outlines:

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers

submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

PREREQUISITES

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

“Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

The prerequisite for this course is permission of the Department (consult the Undergraduate Program Director, Writing).

ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Note: the official Western Accommodation Policy appears below. This is in effect, but may be modified temporarily by the university during the academic year as conditions change.

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student’s final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors by email within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student’s final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

SPECIAL REQUESTS: SPECIAL EXAMINATIONS, INCOMPLETE STANDING, AEGROTAT STANDING

Please refer to the “Information for All Students in a Writing Course” for more detailed information. Briefly, remember that your instructor does not have the discretion to initiate, consider, or grant (or not) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean’s office of your home faculty.

OTHER RESOURCES

Registrarial Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 11-17): Introductions/Module 1 readings on the sublime

Week 2 (Jan 18-24): Module 1 draft creative responses [draft due January 20]

Week 3 (Jan 25-31): Module 1 final creative responses due [January 31, 11:55pm]

Week 4 (Feb 1-7): Module 2 readings on hesitation/the uncanny

Week 5 (Feb 8-12): Module 2 draft creative responses [draft due February 12]

Reading Week (Feb 13-21)

Week 6 (Feb 22-28): Module 2 final creative responses due [February 28, 11:55pm]

Week 7 (March 1-7): Module 3 readings on the sublime

Week 8 (March 8-14): Module 3 draft creative responses [draft due March 10]

Week 9 (March 15-21): Module 3 final creative responses due [March 21, 11:55pm]

Week 10 (March 22-28): Module 4 readings on focalisation and discourse

Week 11 (March 29-April 1): Module 4 draft creative responses [draft due March 31]

Week 12 (April 5-12): Module 4 final creative responses due [April 18, 11:55pm]