Craft of Writing Courses Booklet

Books, Authors and Advice for 2007-08

Instructors of any Craft of Writing Course should consult the official outlines for these courses. They provide description of the general approach, particularly the integration of writing assignments with close "writerly" readings of the required texts. However, the distribution of the texts to be used by instructors is different from the sample listings indicated on the outline. The lists below should be used in planning the syllabus for the four Craft courses. In addition, there are suggestions here that, when used in conjunction with the outline, should further clarify the objectives of each of these courses.

Bear in mind the readings should be accompanied by writing assignments that call on students to exercise the inspiration and skills they derive from the assigned texts. This is not literary criticism but creative imitation. The texts are to be used as models, prompts and inspirations.

Any adjunct teaching one of these courses should work with a full-time member to make sure that the approach is consistent for the goals of the course and the program.

The department intends to revisit the reading list at the end of the academic year, so please record any suggestions you have for texts.
Craft of Writing I: Conversations with Predecessors

Key to this course: "old," traditional or canonical texts that have been rewritten through the ages—either by extending the canonical text as a sequel (as in Tennyson’s poem "Ulysses" to extend the Odyssey), borrowing the form or style, or rewriting the story for a new age.

1-4 are required. Pair with one or more of the texts listed below the required texts.

1. Homer, *The Odyssey*
   - Coen Brothers, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*
   - McCarthy, Cormac, *The Road.*
   - Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver’s Travels.*
   - Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*
   - Tennyson, *Ulysses*
   - Updike, *Rabbit Run*
   - Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*
   - Kubrick, *2001, A Space Odyssey*
   - Least Heat Moon, *Blue Highways, a journey into America*
   - *Star Trek*

2. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*
   - Stoppard, Tom. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.*
   - For a look at what Shakespeare himself was rewriting consider: Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy*
   - Quentin section of *The Sound and the Fury*

   - Genesis Chapters 1-7
   - Genesis Chapter 27
   - Blake, William. “The Lamb” and “The Tyger.”
   - Matthew: Parable of the Sower
   - Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower.*
   - Emily Dickinson poems

4. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*
   - Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein.*
   - Kafka, Franz. *The Metamorphosis*
   - Stevenson, *Jekyll and Hyde.*

If there is time, use any of the following

5. *Beowulf* (Heaney translation)
   - Gardner, *Grendel*
6. Whitman, from *Leaves of Grass*
   - Allen Ginsberg and/or Whitman's other many poetic heirs

7. Plato, *The Republic*
   - Moore, *Utopia*
   - Huxley, *Brave New World*
   - Orwell, *1984*
   - Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*
   - Hilton, *Lost Horizon*—film or novel
   - Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium"

8. Petronius Arbiter, *The Sytaricon*
   - Fellini, "The Sytaricon"
Craft of Writing II: Conversations with Contemporaries

Keys to the course: Different from Craft of Writing I, this craft course has a broader focus connecting its texts. Whereas Craft I focuses on direct imitation of some significant aspect(s) of prior canonical texts, Craft II examines competition and influence as well and focuses specifically on 20th and 21st century writers, though it may reach back to bring in sources from earlier centuries. These writers may be working within a tradition (the vampire/horror tradition) or writing within a modernist or postmodernist "school" that is attempting to describe a new perception.

The instructor for Craft II is free to choose the cluster(s) of texts for the course, bearing in mind the following guidelines:

1. A substantial portion of the texts (whether poetry, film, fiction, nonfiction or even painting or music) should be canonical texts recognized as enduring.
2. The course is a 200-level course open for humanities credit, so the texts should be fairly readily accessible to students at that level.
3. The instructor should make use of his/her knowledge of the writers' biographies and understanding about schools and traditions to show that there is a substantial and real (as opposed to merely lit crit) connection of influence between and among the texts presented.
4. The texts should be chosen to facilitate good writing assignments. Again, these are not literary criticism writing assignments, but exercises in trying to do what the texts do: to have a writer's 'conversation' with them.
5. There should be a mix of at least three genres in the clusters of texts selected for the course.

The clusters below are not in any order of importance and are to be considered

Sample Cluster 1—Writing in the vampire tradition
  Keats, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci"
  Coleridge, "Christabel"
  Le Fanu, "Carmilla"
  Stoker, Dracula
  Rice, Interview with the Vampire

Sample Cluster 2—The tradition of the Double, the Doppleganger
  Poe, "William Wilson" (prior to 20th century source)
  Conrad, The Secret Sharer
  Stevenson: The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
  Paul Auster: "City of Glass" (in New York Trilogy)
Sample Cluster 3—The tradition of mad science
Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein*
Stevenson: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
H. G. Wells: *The Island of Dr. Moreau*

Sample Cluster 4—The tradition of nature poetry
Ted Hughes, *Hawk in the Rain*
Robert Frost
Mary Oliver

Sample Cluster 5—The school of new journalism
Capote, *In Cold Blood*
Tom Wolfe, *The Purple Decades* or other collection of articles
Gay Talese, "Frank Sinatra has a Cold"
Defoe, *Robinson Caruso* (source of novel from journalism)
Novels or stories using interior monologue and other fiction techniques
New journalism on the web
Herr, *Dispatches*
Marianne Moore, poems using "facts" to make metaphor
Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio*

Sample Cluster 6—Modern workplace tragedy
Miller, "Death of a Salesman"
Mamet, "Glengarry Glen Ross" (play or film)

Sample Cluster 7—Conjectural, and achronological narration to piece together a mystery
William Faulkner: *Absalom, Absalom*
David Lynch, film, *Mulholland Dr.*

Sample Cluster 8—Conrad's influence on the next generations
Conrad, *Youth* or *Nigger of the Narcissis*
Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*
Faulkner,
Hilton, *Lost Horizon*
*Note: Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway all spoke of Conrad's important influence as a symbolist writer.***

Sample Cluster 9—Writing about war
Hemingway, "Soldier's Home"
Hedges, *War Is the Force that Gives Us Meaning*
O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*
Woolf, *Jacob's Room*
Mason, *In Country*

Sample Cluster 9—Literary speculative stories
Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*
Also look at Kubrick adaptation
T.C. Boyle, *A Friend of Earth*
Wachowski, "The Matrix"

**Sample Cluster 10—Tradition of portraying the world without God**
Dostoyevsky, *The Underground Man*
Beckett, "Waiting for Godot"
Bergman, "The Seventh Seal"
Sartre, *Nausea*
Fellini, "La Dolce Vita"
Camus, *The Stranger*
Duras, *The Malady of Death*
Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*

**Sample Cluster 11—Moderns playing with the structure of language**
Stein, *Three Lives or Others*
ee cummings' poetry
Magritte, "Ce n'est pas une pipe" and other paintings

**Sample Cluster 12—The McGuffin**
Hitchcock, "Notorious"
Welles, "Citizen Kane"
P.T. Anderson, "Magnolia"
O'Connor, "Revelation," "Everything that Rises Must Converge"

**Sample Cluster 13—Discovering Asian poetry or orientalism**
Chinese and Japanese poems as source material
Pound, Cathay poems and Cantos
Stevens, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" and other poems
Contemporary haiku

**Sample Cluster 14—Writing in the literary mystery tradition**
Source of tradition
Doyle, from the canon of Sherlock Holmes
Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"
Sayers, detective novels
Borges, "Death and the Compass"
Auster, *The Book of Illusions*, or *The New York Trilogy*

**Sample Cluster 15—School(s) of Surrealism, Dada, the Absurd and Magical Realism**
Kafka, stories
Borges, stories
French surrealists: Breton, Rimbaud, Jarry, Appolinaire, Lautreamont, Aragon
Surrealist painters
Ionesco
Corso, 
Bob Dylan
Rushdie
Grass
Kundera
Heller
Angela Carter
Marquez
Vargas Llosa
Cortazar
Neruda
Paz

Sample Cluster 15—Imitation/Inspiration one generation to the next
Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway
Cunningham, The Hours

Sample Cluster 16—Competition for the best hunting story
Melville, Moby Dick
Faulkner, The Bear
Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea
Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front

Sample Cluster 17—Trickster Stories
Ojibaway trickster cycle
Hyde, Trickster Made This World
Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound
Heller, Catch 22

Sample Cluster 18—The Realists
Capote, In Cold Blood
Hemingway, In Our Time
Abbey, Desert Solitaire
Golding, Lord of the Flies

Sample Cluster 19—Magical Realism
Cervantes, Don Quixote
Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote"
Marquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude
Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being

Sample Cluster 20—Stylistic Influences
Fellini 8½ and Allen Deconstructing Harry
Faulkner and McCarthy
Conrad and Hilton
Frost and Oliver
Joyce and O'Brien
Many possibilities here

Sample 21—The Absurd
Havel, Largo Desolato
Ionesco, Rhinoceros
Kafka, stories
ee cummings, poems
Beckett, Krapps Last Tapes

Sample 21—The influences on and from James Joyce
Joyce, Dubliners ("The Sisters," “Eveline,” and “The Dead.”)
  · Book XI, Voyage to the Kingdom of the Dead, The Odyssey.
  · Moore, Thomas. "O, Ye Dead!" from Irish Melodies.
  · Flaubert, Madame Bovary
  · Synge, "Riders to the Sea" and/or "The Playboy of the Western World"
  · O’Brien, Tim. The Things They Carried
  · Huston, John. "The Dead" (film)

Note: The instructor could use some of the above to teach the Joyce. Joyce's "The Dead" is very close to Book XI of The Odyssey, especially the ending of Joyce's story. Ellman says Joyce got the idea of the living and the dead in conversation with one another from Moore's poem. Also the naturalism of Flaubert's Madame Bovary underlies Joyce's treatment in "The Dead." Ellman says Joyce was greatly affected by Synge while writing "The Dead," especially with regard to Synge's use of the West of Ireland. The O'Brien and the Huston are recent treatments of the story. So we have influence with reference to Homer and Moore, conversation with contemporaries (more or less) in Flaubert and Synge, and then later influence on and appropriation by O'B and Huston. The Huston movie makes great use of 19C painting.
Craft of Writing III: Writing Identity

Key to this course: This is writers writing about identity, which includes ethnicity, class and gender. Use 20th and 21st century canonical texts, including films. The three required literary texts and a menu of other literary texts to choose from. Choice of any films would be up to the instructor.

Review the way texts are clustered in the course outline.

Required texts:
Shakespeare, William. 1 Henry IV
Ellison, Ralph. Invisible Man
Morrison, Toni. The Bluest Eye

To fill out the course choose from among:
Whitman, Walt. Song of Myself
Rossetti, Christina. “Goblin Market”
Ginsberg, Allan. “America”
Ibsen, A Doll’s House
Anaya. Bless Me, Ultima
Hurston, Zora. Their Eyes Were Watching God
Chopin, Kate, The Awakening
Walker, Alice, The Color Purple
McDermott, Alice, Child of My Heart
Bronte, Charlotte, Jane Eyre
Marlow and/or Goethe, Dr. Faust, Faust (the rise of the idea of the self)
Alexie, Sherman, Smoke Signals (film)
Browning, "My Last Duchess"
Sylvia Plath poetry
Wild, The Picture of Dorian Gray
Silko, Ceremony
Williams, "A Streetcar Named Desire"

Still Others Are Possible (list supplied by Kathy Brady):
Oscar Hijuelos: Empress of the Splendid Season
Larry Kramer: The Normal Heart, The Destiny of Me (they can be ordered as a single book)
Michael Cunningham: A Home at the End of the World
Alice Elliot Dark: In the Gloaming (The title story can be excerpted)
Jamaica Kincaid: Girl (widely anthologized)
Susan Griffin: A Chorus of Stones (Chapter IV: “Our Secret”)
Leland Bardwell: “”The Dove of Peace” (from Territories of the Voice, Eds. Louise DeSalvo, Kathleen Walsh D’Arcy& Katherine Hogan)
Key to this course: Several items should be covered here in terms of the five required texts.
1. Prosody, metaphor, irony and figurative language in general.
2. The structure of a story, including characterization.
3. What is inspiration and how does it need to "fit" the form? In "The Tempest," for instance, ask, "How did Shakespeare model traditional stagecraft to tell this dream story?"
4. Attention should be paid to nonfiction as well as poetry, drama and fiction. With Orwell, study of the form of the essay. Here, too, the link should be made between how the inspiration fills out the form and is informed by it. This can be applied to the news story as well.
5. Consult course outline for insight into how to organize the course around form in different genres.
6. Form can be interpreted in different ways:
   - Genre
     - The form that derives from figurative and metaphoric language characteristic of literature.
   - Technical aspects of form and narrative strategies: e.g. prosody, free indirect discourse.

Required texts:
- Shakespeare, "The Tempest"
- Aristotle, *The Poetics*
- Sophocles, "Oedipus Rex"
- Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*
- Orwell, Three essays

The instructor is free to supplement these required texts with others.