

WRT583, Online Multigenre Workshop IV
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Introduction

This installment of the OMG! Workshop will provide students with additional opportunity to write new work in multiple genres and to gain expertise at responding to work in multiple genres. Thesis students will have an opportunity to receive feedback on their proposals, abstracts, and thesis work. Pre-thesis students will get some valuable practice on a couple of thesis process elements such as proposal and abstract writing.

This semester you will submit work in small groups, respond in writing to each other's work, and determine on an individual basis whether it is worthwhile to apply those discussions to your work in revisions.

A Note on the Multigenre Workshop: In this course, you are expected to engage (that is, read and respond to) multiple genres, and you may be outside your comfort zone with some of those genres. *That's part of the point.* Professional writers must be adept at reading and communicating across genres, and one can cultivate that ability only by practicing it. Therefore, "I don't understand poetry" and "I don't know much about plot structure", etc., are irrelevant and counterproductive comments. *I expect no one to use these excuses/apologies in the course.* We are all intelligent readers and capable of making useful comments based on our reading experiences. I *do* expect all members of the course to commit full attention to the work of their peers and to engage themselves fully in honest and thoughtful commentary.

What does that mean specifically? In the past I have simply asked everyone to interpret "commit full attention to the work of their peers" as best they could, but that seems to have resulted in some laziness in responding to peer work. So this semester I am going to ask for specific word counts in your responses. If you do not meet the word counts in a thoughtful way and *on time*, your grade will suffer. Sorry to be that way, but I have to have a way to differentiate between those who apply themselves and those who don't.

As we discussed at the residency, I also expect this semester's extended discussions (both in response to assignments and in free discussions on the Miscellaneous thread) to be fuller and more involved (and, at times, more lighthearted!) than last semester. This expectation will manifest itself in a requirement that you all post at least two non-assignment-related items to the Miscellaneous thread that might interest your peers.

As ever, I expect all responses to be considerate, thoughtful, engaged with the text, and brilliant.

Requirements

- I. Submit your work by the deadlines and in the amounts indicated in the **Assignments** section.
- II. Respond to peer writing by the deadlines in the **Assignments** section.

III. Log in to the course on a regular enough basis to keep engaged in the flow of discussion and to keep aware of any course-related news, information, and changes. Please see the **Evaluation** section. *Please note: some students have been disappointed by grades in OMGW's resulting from lack of attention to this requirement.*

IV. From time to time, respond to spontaneous discussion questions or surveys posted by the instructor, who will indicate clearly in the post whether or not everyone is expected to respond.

V. Post at least two non-assignment-related items to the Miscellaneous thread that might interest your peers.

Learning Outcomes

Students will become more proficient at reading and responding to the work of their peers with critical acumen and with tact.

Students will become practiced at shaping shorter pieces or segments of work into the context of a book or production-length script.

Students will become more adept at writing about their own work and about published work.

Students will gain practice writing pitch letters.

Assignments

I. If you are a thesis student this semester:

No later than end of day on Monday, January 25:

Post a draft of your thesis proposal (you should already have drafted your proposal in your previous OMG).

If you are not a thesis student this semester:

No later than the end of day on Monday, February 1:

Post a draft of your (future) thesis proposal or write an exploratory essay of at least 1000 words on the topic of what you might do with your thesis project.

A note to anyone who did not attend the Thesis Q&A at the residency:

Consult the Thesis Advising Guide on the MFA website for thesis proposal expectations.

Whichever group you fall into, post this assignment in the **Thesis Proposal** thread.

II. **No later than end of day on Monday, February 8:**

Read and provide a quick response to each thesis proposal/essay posted. These do not need to be in-depth responses. We are looking here for formatting, grammatical, bibliographical errors that might trip up our peers in the Thesis Committee review process. That is, we are proofreading each other's work.

Note: **If you are a thesis student**, you are only required to comment on the proposals of the other thesis students. Pre-thesis students are required to comment on all proposals/essays.

III. No later than end of day on Monday, February 15:

If you are a thesis student this semester:

Submit your completed Thesis Proposal via the Digital Thesis System (see instructions in the Thesis Advisement Guide).

If you are not a thesis student this semester:

Post to the **GROUP 1** thread 10-20 pages of work from your thesis project. DO NOT re-post work that you posted or submitted last semester for any course (not even a revision). In your post, please pose 3-5 questions to which you would like your readers to respond.

IV. No later than end of day on Monday, February 22:

If you are a thesis student this semester:

Post to the **GROUP 2** thread a brief essay of at least 500 words (and as long as you want beyond that) outlining the challenges you have faced in finishing your thesis project and the process you intend to use to get finished. If you are already finished with your thesis project, please write an essay of at least 500 words reflecting back on the same elements of your thesis process.

If you are not a thesis student this semester:

Post a detailed response of *at least* 250 words to each of the **GROUP 1** posts. You are not expected to restrict yourself to the response questions. Read the **GROUP 2** posts (you do not need to respond to them, but you may do so if you like).

V. No later than end of day on Monday, March 14:

Post to the group to which you are assigned in **GROUP SCHEDULE** at the end of the syllabus work in a genre other than your thesis genre that touches on the subject matter of your thesis. For example, if your thesis is a novel about horse racing in Louisiana, you might write an essay or a magazine feature on that topic. If you are a poet writing about Rome, you might write a travel piece about Rome. If you are a screenwriter doing a pilot, you might write a short story using the same characters. These are just examples. Thesis students might want to consider writing something here that will be useful post-degree in establishing "platform." Whatever you choose to do, the assignment here is to strive for *publishable quality*.

VI. No later than end of day on Monday, March 21

Post a response of at least 250 words to each of the pieces posted in your March 14 group. In your response, answer these questions: "Is this publishable work? Why or why not? Where?"

VII. No later than end of day on Monday, April 4

If you are a thesis student this semester:

In a single file, post to the ABSTRACT thread your Abstract (which is due with your thesis submission) along with the first five pages and the last five pages of your thesis book.

Note: the Abstract should be a one-paragraph, objective description of your book. It is not marketing copy. It is used by researchers who are trying to determine whether or not your book is appropriate for their attention.

If you are not a thesis student this semester:

Work on your flex paper.

VIII. No later than end of day on Monday, April 11

If you are a thesis student this semester:

Work on getting your thesis submission ready.

If you are not a thesis student this semester:

Read each of the "first five/last five" posts in the ABSTRACT thread. Your assignment is to read the posts the way an editor/agent/producer would read them. Begin your response of at least 250 words to each post with "I would [or would not] like to read the rest of this book/script because..."

IX. No later than end of day on Friday, April 18:

If you are a thesis student this semester:

You should be doing some heavy-duty copy editing right now. Make sure your thesis is in tip-top shape and ready to submit in the new digital submission system.

If you are not a thesis student this semester:

Submit 10-20 pages of *new* work to **GROUP 5** thread. This work may be from your thesis, or it may be other work. Do not post work that has been submitted to any class before, whether current or past version.

FRIDAY, APRIL 29: THESIS DUE DATE

X. No later than end of day on Monday, May 2:

If you are a thesis student this semester:

Post to the QUERY thread a pitch letter to an agent, editor, or producer. Include any supplemental materials you would normally include with a pitch letter (for nonfiction, for example, more materials and information would be expected). Assume that the agent wants to see your first 10 pages with the query letter.

If you are not a thesis student this semester:

Respond with at least 250 words to each of the posts in the **GROUP 5** thread.

XI. **FLEX ASSIGNMENT—Submit to the FLEX thread at any time during the semester, but no later than end of day on Monday, May 9:**

Read one of the following:

- Stanley Fish, *How to Write a Sentence*: 978-0061840548, \$20
- Marion Roach Smith, *The Memoir Project*: 978-0446584845, \$12
- John Gardner, *On Moral Fiction*. 978-0465052264, \$18.50
- Tracy Kidder and Richard Todd, *Good Prose: The Art of Nonfiction*. 978-1400069750, \$26 (but available at time of syllabus composition for \$15.50 on Amazon)
- Dean Young, *The Art of Recklessness*. 978-1555975623, \$12 [for poets]
- Richard Walter, *Essentials of Screenwriting*. 978-0452296275, \$17.
- Steven Pinker, *The Sense of Style*. 978-0670025855, \$27.95.

And write a paper of 750-1250 words that:

- a) analyzes the strengths and/or weaknesses of the book's argument
- b) discusses whether the book's approach will be useful to you in thinking about your approach to your own work.
- c) explains why, in your opinion, the book might or might not be useful to your peers in OMGW

Obviously, not everyone will be reading the same books for this assignment, so our discussion will revolve primarily around (a) and (c), but (b) is perhaps most important to each of you.

If you have already read one of these books, please do a different book this time.

Evaluation

75% Assignments submitted on time and ***as instructed***

25% Regular, engaged contributions to the discussion board (in response to instructor discussion questions, in response to comments/questions posts by your peers, and *above and beyond the minimum number of posts required in the Assignments*)

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the representation of another person's work as your own. Plagiarism in the MFA program is punishable by course failure and dismissal from the program. For more information, please see university policies and procedures for Academic Honesty.

Accommodations

Any student who requires accommodations for successful completion of this course should consult with WCSU's Accessibility Services office and speak with the instructor.

A Note about Communication

If you need to get in touch with me immediately, the best way is to email me at clements@wcsu.edu.

The Email option in the course sends messages to the recipient's WCSU email address.

GROUP SCHEDULES

March 14 Groups

Group 3

Turley, Fernandez, Hayes, Mukherjee, Moffett

Group 4

Sogunro, O'Donnell, Bernier, Seibert