

## 2020–2021 Syllabus

### Writing Seminar

Tentative Date of Speech Night: Friday, May 21, 2021

#### General Description of Course

Students will study the principles of good writing, create various types of popular works—essay-blogs, short stories, poetry, autobiographical writing, plays/screen plays, novel writing—, and learn the publishing process.

## SEPTEMBER

### Week 1

Lecture topics will include the purpose of writing, how to keep motivated in writing, and the cardinal rules that govern all kinds of writing. Students will learn their responsibilities for the year, including keeping a weekly blog, submitting works for publication, and publishing an end-of-the-year project. We will begin the year by writing social, cultural and political commentary. We will ask for volunteers to be the editor-in-chief of the publication. Each week we will discuss current events, social trends, and other areas of interest so that the assigned writer of the week can write a piece for the blog. Each person will have to write at least six to seven essays/blogs for the web site.

#### Assignment 1

Read William F. Buckley's essay on economics "Oh, for the Simple Transaction"; Leonard Read's "I, Pencil"; Roger Kimball's "Shall We Defend Our Common History?" and be prepared to discuss the works. Students should think of their own topic.

### Week 2

Lecture topics will include the following: "Writing is thinking" and "If you wouldn't say it, don't write it."

#### Assignment 2

Write first draft of essay.

### Week 3

Lecture topics include "Reduce, reduce, reduce," "How not to write," and "Would a 12-year-old understand what I have written?"

#### Assignment 3

Write second draft of essay and submit. The essay should be typed in 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with the title of the essay before the student's name and date. Student will also have to submit the essay in a WORD document to me. Think of another essay topic.

## OCTOBER

### Week 4

Lecture topic is “Achieving an effect: using rhetorical devices in writing.”

#### Assignment 4

Write first draft of second essay/blog.

### Week 5

Lecture topics include “Using figures of speech in our writing without sounding contrived” and “Using concrete, specific language.”

#### Assignment 5

Write second draft of second essay/blog and submit. The essay should be typed in 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with the title of the essay before the student’s name and date. Student will also have to submit the essay in a WORD document in an email to me (do not use google drive).

### Week 6

Lecture topics on short-story writing include: “Plot and theme and how they both work together” and “The importance of character development.”

#### Assignment 6

Read the assigned short story; revise first essay, if necessary and submit one more time; and think of topic for short story.

### Week 7

Lecture topics include “Creating interest in your reader by using words and devices” and “Creating powerful dialog and character interaction.”

#### Assignment 7

Write the first draft of your short story.

### Week 8

Lecture topic is “Creating interest in your reader by using words and devices, Part 2” and “Creating humor in your narrative through characters, dialog, slapstick, and irony.”

#### Assignment 8

Write the second draft of your short story and submit. The short story should be typed in 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with the title of the essay before the student’s name and date. Student will also have to submit the short story in a WORD document to me.

## NOVEMBER

### Week 9

Lecture topics include “Plays as Social Commentary, Parody and Satire,” “Creating interesting characters,” and “Discussion of Arthur Miller’s *Crucible* and *Death of a Salesman*.”

### Assignment 9

Read Homeschool Play “The Wilsons” as student model. Begin writing first draft of play.

### Week 10

Lecture topics include “Creating clever Dialog” and “Reading Excerpts from The Importance of Being Earnest.”

### Assignment 10

Continue writing first draft of play.

### Week 11

Lecture topics include “Creating set and props”

### Assignment 11

Finish writing first draft of play.

## November 27 Thanksgiving Break

## DECEMBER

### Week 12

Lecture Topics include: “Choosing an appropriate poetic form”

### Assignment 12

Read assigned poetry, choose a topic for your poem and an appropriate form and write your first draft.

### Week 13

### Assignment 13

Write your second draft and submit. The poem should be typed in 12 pt. font, single-spaced, with the title of the essay before the student’s name and date. Student will also have to submit the poem in a WORD document to me by email (not Google Documents).

### Week 14

### Assignment 14

Write a second draft of your play and submit.

## December 25 Christmas Break

## JANUARY

### January 1 Christmas Break

#### Week 15

Lecture on “Writing the personal narrative to explain and argue a point.”

#### Assignment 15

Read and study George Orwell’s essays “Revenge is Sour” and “Such, Such Were the Joys” and begin the first draft of your personal essay.

#### Week 16

Lecture on “Using detail effectively.”

#### Assignment 16

Complete the first draft of your personal essay.

#### Week 17

Lecture on “Following Orwell’s editing process.”

#### Assignment 17

Complete the second draft of your essay and submit. The essay should be typed in 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with the title of the essay before the student’s name and date. Student will also have to submit the essay in a WORD document to me.

#### Week 18

Lecture on “Writing to bring awareness to a problem.”

#### Assignment 18

Read “How the Poor Die” and begin writing the first draft of your essay.

## FEBRUARY

**Week 19** Lecture topics include “Creating mood and tone in accordance with your theme,” “Writing using humor” and “Writing for entertainment.”

#### Assignment 19

Complete the first draft of your second personal essay.

#### Week 20

Lecture topics include “A look at what Dickens, Hardy, Austen and others based their novels on.”

### Assignment 20

Complete the second draft of your essay and submit. The essay should be typed in 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with the title of the essay before the student's name and date. Student will also have to submit the essay in a WORD document to me.

### Week 21

Lecture topics include “Planning your novel,” “Best ways to get inspired by Isaac Asimov,” and “Choosing 1st or 2nd person—omniscient or limited—point of view.” We will look at several examples of 1st person and 2nd person fictional narratives in class.

### Assignment 21

Listen to two online lectures on how to go about planning and publishing a novel. We will begin writing a novel, which you will finish during the summer, if you wish.

### Week 22

Lecture topics include “Write about what you know.” We will review the basic plot lines of the most famous novels and look to them for guidance and inspiration.

### Assignment 22

Read the introduction to Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*. Begin writing a simple outline of your novel using a newspaper story, a basic story line from a classic work, or from your own experience. Also think of the central idea of your work.

## MARCH

### Week 23

We will read excerpts of good novel beginnings and outlines of other novels.

### Assignment 23

Continue writing a simple outline of your novel.

### Week 24

We will go over techniques on how to keep your reader interested in your writing.

### Assignment 24

Write the first chapter of your novel.

### Week 25

We will read in class what you have written and I will give suggestions on how to improve.

### Assignment 25

Begin memorizing your part in the play. We will be going over it in class.

### Week 26

Lecture topics include “Finding an agent and a publisher.”

### Assignment 26

Finish memorizing your part in the play. We will be going over it in class.

## APRIL

### April 2 Easter Break

#### Week 27

Play practice

#### Assignment 27

Work on your part in the play. Write the second chapter of your novel.

#### Week 28

In addition to practicing the play, we will be going over incorporating character development, dialog, descriptive detail and how all of these composition details can support the theme.

#### Assignment 28

Write the third chapter of your novel

#### Week 29

In addition to practicing the play, we will be looking at trends in novels, what sells and what does not—and whether a novelist should care.

#### Assignment 29

Write the fourth chapter of your novel.

#### Week 30

We will listen to a professional editor's advice on writing and publishing in class.

#### Assignment 30

Practice for Speech Night and work on novel.

## MAY

#### Week 31

Lecture topics include "Writing a query letter and a synopsis of your book."

#### Assignment 31

Practice for Speech Night and work on novel.

#### Week 32

Play Practice

### Assignment 32

Practice for Speech Night and work on novel.

### **Week 33**

Play Practice

### Assignment 33

TBA

### **Week 34**

Last day of class. Now that you have begun your novel, finish it over the summer, and submit it to a publisher according to the procedures that you learned in class.