
CRW 3374

Narrative Techniques: The YA Novel

Spring 2024

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Office Hours:

Wednesdays: 10:00 to 1:00 pm

Overview

This course grew out of a desire to bring attention to evocative young adult fiction that reinforces the idea that the personal is political. We will expand our notions of techniques and strategies by reading, discussing, and writing young character-based fiction.

Our class is organized by the idea that writing requires imagination, craft, as well as a critical observation of social, political, gender, and racial issues that shape our identities.

Goals

- ❖ The analysis of young adult fiction from a living archive of multicultural texts.
- ❖ Observe and experiment with narrative techniques.
- ❖ Study one another's writing to enhance our understanding and appreciation of the genre(s).
- ❖ Engage in weekly writing sessions.
- ❖ Workshop using a co-writing practice.

Course Expectations

Reading as well as exercising voice and craft are the two main activities of the course, therefore the student must be committed to:

- ❖ Read and analyze the assigned texts and those personally chosen.

- ❖ Write and submit each one of the etudes and exercises assigned in class.
- ❖ Prepare letters to author for each workshop.

Evaluation

This course will evaluate three main activities: written assignments, participation and a portfolio, percentages are:

- 30 % Workshop Submissions.** Three etudes for in class or online workshop.
- 10% Creative Experiments.** To be written in class or as homework.
- 10% Participation.** Prepare questions and comments for each session.
- 40% Final Project.** Young adult fiction. Three chapters of a novel or three sections of a long short story.
- 10% Reviews or blurbs.** Based on the three novels or stories we read.

Methodology

We will learn three workshop tools for co-writing practice created by Liz Lerman, Anna Joy Springer and Joy the Clown (yes, she is a clown), together we will choose one, or a mix of all of them.

This course is part lecturing, part practicing, and part discussing with critical thinking strategies and empathy.

Readings

I will be providing stories or excerpts from a variety of authors, such as; Lesley Nneka Arimah, Sandra Cisneros, Jennifer Egan, Gene Luen Yang, Marjane Satrapi. You are in charge of buying the following books either as paperback or ebook. We will read them in this order:

- ❖ *We Need New Names I*. NoViolet Bulawayo. Little Brown, 2013.
- ❖ *The Cholo Tree*. Daniel Chacón, Arte Público 2017.
- ❖ *Afterparties, Stories*. Anthony Veasna So. Ecco, 2022.

Final Project

For your final project you will “design” a character facing a situation regarding his/her/their adaptation to life. I am interested in reading stories that not only introduce us to the life of your protagonist, but also to the politics that –subtly or not— intersect their lives. Race, gender, health, rights, class, as well as issues resulting from this like domestic violence, alienation, precariousness, may frame, but not define, your protagonist’s life.

You will submit two submit two pieces of two moments of the life of your character, this may turn into two sections of a short story, or two chapters of a novel, novel in verse or novella. You have liberty and creative freedom for this project in terms of genre and form (graphic, epistle, diary, etc.).

We will workshop both of your submissions in class. I expect 6-8 pages (up to 2600 words), 1 ½ line space. For the final version you will submit a revised version of the first two pieces and a tentative ending in a final piece, 20 pages in total and a preface.

You will: 1) present a proposal, 2) create a map/outline, 3) a draft for workshop, 4) submit final version with a preface.

Preferred Mode of Address

The Department of Creative Writing at UTEP supports students’ right to define their identity in terms of name, pronoun, and mode of address. This class will provide each student the opportunity to let their preference be known, and will support and respect that preference. Should you need to discuss this issue with your instructor, make an appointment early in the semester.

Disabilities Statement:

I will make any reasonable accommodations for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please, email me during the first two weeks or make an appointment to discuss any special needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require special accommodations, you will need to contact the Disable Student Services Office in the East Union Building, Room 106. Refer to: <http://www.utep.edu/dsso>

Texas Senate Bill 17:

The recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Protection for Pregnant and/or Parenting Students:

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973,

as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations.

Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

CALENDAR

(tentative)

SPRING 2024	
Week 1 January 17th	Introduction to course. Young Adult and Coming of Age Fiction Today Critical Response: How to provide rich feedback Homework: Read “The Future Looks Good” and “War Stories” by Lesley Nneka Arimah Get: <i>We Need New Names I.</i> NoViolet Bulawayo (pages 3 to 90 to be discussed on week 4)
Week 2 Jan. 22nd & 24th	Who: About protagonists YA and Coming of Age Characters & Characterization in Lesley Nneka Arimha’s stories The situation and The Story, Vivian Gornick Exercise 1: Who am I? Homework: Bring a profile of your protagonist, name, nickname, age, family tree or current situation. Read <i>We Need New Names I.</i> NoViolet Bulawayo (pages 3-148)
Week 3 Jan 29th & 31 (this class will be via Zoom)	How: About Genres and Forms in YA Your Protagonist Graphic, Episodic, In verse, Memoir Letters, diaries, Photos, and more Hybrid forms Luen Yang and Satrapi: Just kids? Exercise 2: This is me. Homework: Conversation with Frank Baez, Ed 101, 3:00 pm. Read <i>We Need New Names I.</i> NoViolet Bulawayo (bring topics and questions for next class).
Week 4 Febr. 5th & 7th	How: About Research for Writing Annotated Bibliographies, Interviews, Field Research Exercise 3: A List of Sources Darling, her friends, her town Your Final project Homework: Research the phrase: the personal is political. <i>We Need New Names I.</i> NoViolet Bulawayo (pages 149-292)
Week 5 Febr. 12th & 14th	Where and When: About Setting What Place and Time mean for teens The Personal is Political: teenagers minds and worlds Darling hits America (or viceversa) Map of Emotions No homework, happy Valentine’s etc. BUT start reading <i>The Cholo Tree</i> by Daniel Chacón (to be discussed on week). Read Jennifer Egan’s excerpt of <i>A Visit From a Goon Squad</i> .
Week 6 Febr. 19th and 21st.	Why: About Plotting Narrative Structure & Narrative Tension A story in power point, seriously? Yes, seriously Scene, summary, backstory, flashback, text and subtext.

	<p>Exercise 4: You got there, then? Reading in Class: “Eleven” and “Mericans” by Sandra Cisneros</p> <p>Homework: Submit creative blurb for <i>We need new names. The Cholo Tree</i> by Daniel Chacón (to be discussed next class)</p>
<p>Week 7 Feb 28th</p>	<p>How: About Drawing with Words <i>The Cholo Tree</i> by Daniel Chacón online discussion. Narration, Description/ Abstraction, Concretion Show and Tell/ Rhetoric vs. Adjectives Conversation with Sara Uribe, 6:30 pm at _____</p> <p>Homework: Create a googledocs with questions for author, submit BLURB. Read “Cherry Auction” by Daniel Chacon (you will discover a secret!)</p>
<p>Week 8 March 4th & 6th</p>	<p>Say What? About Monologue & Dialogue Strategies for Dialogue and Monologue Slang, Cuss, Spanglish and More Victor dies but not really: <i>The Cholo Tree</i> by Daniel Chacon Author’s visit</p> <p>Homework: First Submission for Workshop by Thursday, March 10th before 6:00 pm.</p>
<p>Week 9</p>	<p>SPRING BREAK Go to parties and read <i>Afterparties</i> by Anthony Veasna (not necessarily at the same time)</p> <p>Homework: Check Bboard for readings and calendar for workshop.</p>
<p>Week 10 March 18th & 20th</p>	<p>Workshop Groups 1 and 2 Monday: Wednesday:</p>
<p>Week 11 March 25th & 27th</p>	<p>Workshop Groups 3 & 4 Monday: Wednesday:</p> <p>Homework: Get <i>Afterparties</i> by Anthony Veasna (pages ____ to be discussed on week 13)</p>
<p>Week 12 April 1st & 3rd</p>	<p>Writing Week Exercise 5: individual prompts by everybody for everybody Two goals this week: To incorporate the comments and ideas from workshop and to start working on your second submission, due on April 12th</p>
<p>Week 13 April 8th & 10th</p>	<p>Poetics Who are you as a writer? YA Short Fiction</p> <p>Homework: Research in teams, genre YA Fiction, Horror, Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Romance, etc.</p>
<p>Week 14</p>	<p>Workshop 2: Groups 4 & 3</p>

April 15th & 17th	Monday: Wednesday:
Week 15 April 22nd & 24th	Workshop 2: Groups 2 & 1 Monday: Wednesday: Homework: Upload presentation
Week 16 29th & May 1st	Genres in YA Teams 1,2 Teams 3, 4
	Final Submission: May 8th