

AS.490 (WRITING)

Courses

AS.490.652. Contemporary American Writers. 3 Credits.

This foundation course surveys issues and trends in recent fiction and nonfiction, with emphasis on the diverse work and methods of American writers publishing today. Students read and discuss contemporary writing and hear from accomplished writers. This core course focuses on developing skills to read as a writer, and it explores the similarities and differences between factual and nonfactual writing, including the roles of truth, accuracy, and reader expectation. This core course is required for all incoming fiction and nonfiction students and usually must be completed before students in those concentrations enroll in a writing workshop.

AS.490.654. Fiction Techniques. 3 Credits.

In this foundation course, students explore the elements of fiction, including point of view, plot, character, setting and the forms of short stories and the novel. The course also introduces students to the writing process, the techniques of reading as a writer, and the workshop process. Readings usually include short stories, one or more novels, and books or articles on craft. Writing assignments involve exercises, response writings, and one complete piece, either an original short story or novel chapter. Revisions also may be required. This core course is required for all incoming fiction students as a prerequisite to any workshop. Nonfiction students may take it as an elective, although the program may limit the number of registrants from outside the fiction concentration.

AS.490.656. Nonfiction Techniques. 3 Credits.

The intensive reading and writing exercises of this foundation course help students gather information and transform it into clear, creative prose – whether in literary essay and memoir or journalistic forms such as profiles, reviews or opinion. Reporting techniques include interviewing, personal observation, and examining documents. Writing techniques include structure, quotation, detail, word choice, transition and revision. This core course is required for all incoming nonfiction students prior to enrolling in a workshop. Fiction students may consider this course as an elective.

AS.490.657. Speculative Fiction Workshop: Writing New Realities. 3 Credits.

The term Speculative Fiction encompasses a broad array of subgenres: science fiction, fantasy, urban fantasy, supernatural, alternate history, horror, etc. This Zoom-based workshop is designed for students who want to bring speculative elements into their fiction, even if they may not yet have deep knowledge of the genre. In addition to workshoping each other's stories, students will read and discuss published fiction that demonstrates how contemporary authors are examining human lives and relationships through alternate realities. Prior knowledge of science fiction and fantasy is not required, but a willingness to step outside the bounds of our current reality is essential. This class counts toward Workshop credits. Prerequisites: Fiction Techniques

AS.490.660. Fiction Workshop. 3 Credits.

Fiction Workshops concentrate on intensive writing and revision, with some required reading. As members of a general workshop, students submit short stories or novel chapters to their instructor and peers for critiques. Typically, two or three stories or chapters are submitted during a semester; revisions are usually required. Workshop participants also submit detailed critiques of their fellow students' writing. We recommend, but do not require, that students take at least one general workshop before progressing to more specialized workshops, and we urge students to take workshops from different instructors, if possible. Students may take Fiction Workshop up to three times, although specialized workshops also can count toward the requirement of three workshops for a master's degree. The 660-1-2 sequential numbering of workshops relates only to the three annual academic terms and does not indicate cumulative coursework.

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AS.490.663. Crafting the Past: Approaches to Historical Fiction. 3 Credits.

This craft elective is meant primarily for fiction writers, especially those writing or wishing to write historical fiction. The course offers an intensive focus on a writer's analysis of historical fiction – short stories, novellas, and novels – and includes a close examination of historical fiction writing techniques, as well as methodologies for conducting background research using primary and secondary sources. Topics include definitions of historical fiction; research methodologies; and the uses, in the crafting of historical fiction, of point of view, voice and style, characterization, dialogue, setting, form, and structure (including the Aristotelian Arc, Freytag's Pyramid, and experimental models, as well as the uses of scene vs summary, present action and backstory, and their effects on pacing). Class assignments include response writings to assigned readings by contemporary, diverse practitioners of historical fiction; original fiction written by students; and oral presentations. Readings include works of historical fiction, representing a range of forms from short stories to novellas to novels and a variety of aesthetic approaches. Readings might also include books or essays on the craft of fiction writing.

AS.490.669. Combined Workshop in Nonfiction and Fiction. 3 Credits.

This course allows students in nonfiction and fiction to earn a workshop credit in the same class. Students in both concentrations and from either are urged to enroll. Students from both concentrations will be expected to critique work across genres and learn the intricacies of craft in both fiction and nonfiction.

AS.490.670. Nonfiction Workshop. 3 Credits.

These general workshops give students extensive experience in writing and revising their factual work, regardless of topic or form. Submissions are critiqued by peers as well as by the instructor. Students typically submit two to four essays, articles or book chapters. Revisions, exercises and readings also are required. Students may take this general workshop or any specialized workshop to meet the requirement of three workshops for the MA in Writing. The 670-1-2 sequential numbering of workshops relates only to the three annual academic terms and does not indicate cumulative coursework.

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These general workshops give students extensive experience in writing and revising their factual work, regardless of topic or form. Submissions are critiqued by peers as well as by the instructor. Students typically submit two to four essays, articles or book chapters. Revisions, exercises and readings also are required. Students may take this general workshop or any specialized workshop to meet the requirement of three workshops for the MA in Writing. The 670-1-2 sequential numbering of workshops relates only to the three annual academic terms and does not indicate cumulative coursework.

AS.490.676. Sentence Power: From Craft to Art. 3 Credits.

This craft elective focuses on revision at the sentence and paragraph level and is open to fiction or nonfiction students. Through close reading and brief exercises, students learn various techniques to assemble sentences and establish syntactic relationships within paragraphs. Students imitate other writers, as well as revise, exchange and discuss revisions of their own work. Authors to be studied may include Updike, Munro, and Welty in fiction, and Dillard, McPhee, or Didion in nonfiction.

AS.490.678. Novel Form, Style, & Structure. 3 Credits.

This craft elective is meant primarily for fiction writers, especially those writing or wishing to write a novel. The course focuses on a writer's analysis of novels, expanding the study of fiction into techniques and issues relating to the longer form. Topics include structure, character arcs, style, consistency of voice, techniques of backstory and plot management. Class assignments may include response writings and original fiction as well as oral presentations. Readings usually include a number of novels, plus books or essays on novel craft.

AS.490.684. Heritage of Literature--Examining the 20th Century. 3 Credits.

This course is a brief survey of an enormous subject: the English-language novel in the 20th century. The first half of the course will explore the Modernist movement and the development of new fictional techniques in the 1920s; the second half of the course will focus on novels written after World War II. Though such a syllabus could easily include hundreds of books, this one is limited to half a dozen novels to prioritize quality of reading (i.e. close-reading) over quantity of reading. Class discussions will focus on historical context as well as technical craft discussion, with special attention to the evolving use of interiority, taboo subjects, and modern ideas of human psychology. There will also be frequent in-class writing exercises inspired by the texts on the syllabus. Our goal is to deepen our knowledge of the 20th century literary canon, sharpen our reading skills, and ultimately find creative inspiration for our own writing.

AS.490.685. Writing the Body. 3 Credits.

This course will look at how writing about the body documents and manifests the relationship between experience and consciousness. It will examine questions of self, politics, and genre as questions of craft: How can we shape the physical worlds of our writing? How is the self – and the way we write about the self – shaped by its physical vessel? How can paying attention to the body affect the way we write, and what we write about? Using major bodily experiences like eating, movement, illness, intimacy, and ecstasy as a frame, students will read and analyse work by writers such as Eula Biss, Garth Greenwell, Sinead Gleeson, and James Baldwin, as well as complete creative writing exercises. This elective is open to both fiction and nonfiction students.

AS.490.686. Writing Identity: Race and Ethnicity in Fiction and Nonfiction. 3 Credits.

This cross-concentration elective presents intensive readings in fiction and nonfiction from various racial and ethnic communities in the United States. By studying marginalized and diverse voices, students learn how different cultures, experiences, and histories create a rich and vibrant American literary tapestry. Students also learn methods and techniques for expressing their own cultural perspectives in their creative work. Fiction and nonfiction students earn elective credit in this course, which focuses on craft analysis and discussion. Students will choose whether their final project will consist of creative or analytical writing.

AS.490.688. Heritage of literature: Intention and Form in 19th Century Fiction and Nonfiction. 3 Credits.

First we read, and then we write," said Ralph Waldo Emerson, advocating that a deep and proactive immersion in the written page was an essential prerequisite of the creative life. The books and essays we write today are in conversation with those written in the past, and to contribute to this rich, ongoing literary dialogue, we must not only know what came before us, but understand how and why. Our objective is not to reassess or decolonize the canon but—through lectures, discussions, and close readings—to study and compare 19th century literary forms and intentions to contemporary practice and invigorate our own work. This course requires extensive reading and considerable online participation. Students will read either *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy or *The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James, in addition to numerous texts selected from a broad list of 19th century writers. Although there will be a greater emphasis (due to time constraints) on fiction rather than nonfiction, the craft techniques under discussion are critical for all literary forms; therefore, all students are invited to enroll.

AS.490.690. Travel Writing Workshop. 3 Credits.

The best travel writers weave a rich "sense of place"—a trait also crucial to literary fiction, memoir, and creative nonfiction. The telling detail, apt metaphor, historical reference, cultural connection, and vivid character sketch, coupled with reflections that link these observations to broader themes, can elevate travel writing beyond the guidebook. In this specialized nonfiction workshop, students complete exercises, hear guest speakers, and analyze the works of acclaimed writers such as Jan Morris, Barry Lopez, Ian Frazier, and Jonathan Raban. Students may be asked to visit an assigned nearby location to prepare writing. This workshop counts as one of the three required for a nonfiction degree. Enrollees must have completed or waived the nonfiction core courses. Fiction students may enroll only with program permission.

AS.490.693. Writing Memoir & Personal Essay Workshop. 3 Credits.

Writers have long enjoyed a major impact on contemporary thought by producing compelling essays about personal experiences, feelings, or ideas. In this specialized nonfiction workshop, students experiment with memoir and the personal essay as distinct forms and as explorations of the self. Seminal essays are read to clarify students' thoughts and to help them develop their own voice and style in personal nonfiction. This workshop counts as one of the three required for a nonfiction degree. Enrollees must have completed or waived the nonfiction core courses. Fiction students may enroll only with program permission.

AS.490.701. Advanced Workshop. 3 Credits.

An advanced workshop is offered occasionally to select students, depending on enrollment and available faculty. The course may focus on a special form or topic, or it may be led by a visiting writer, special instructor or other experienced faculty member. The concentration in which this course is offered varies. In most cases, enrollment will be competitive, and new writing samples may be required. This workshop counts as one of the three required for the degree. Interested students should discuss this course with their advisor. Application information and other details for each Advanced Workshop will be presented in the appropriate term's Course Schedule. Prerequisite: At least one workshop in the student's concentration or permission of the program director or assistant director, plus approval through any special application process.

AS.490.714. Essence of Place: Description, Detail, and Setting. 3 Credits.

This craft elective, designed for students from any program concentration, focuses on how detail and setting combine with other techniques to create a sense of place in fiction, nonfiction or other forms. Readings come from travel, short fiction, memoir, science, novels, nature, poetry and creative nonfiction. Through reading, discussion and writing exercises, students learn how to enhance the sense of place in their own writing. This course counts as an elective in nonfiction or fiction.

AS.490.715. Noticing as a Writer. 3 Credits.

In this craft elective, fiction and nonfiction students will take as a premise the words of novelist Alice LaPlante: "[O]ur first job as writers" is "to notice." We all notice things as we make our way through each day, but "noticing" as a writer is different. Whether working on fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or any other genre, the writer needs to pay attention to the very small, to zoom in on the specific detail or insight that can make even the most mundane moment feel entirely new and surprising. Noticing in this way is a skill that, like most skills, is developed with practice. In this class, students will practice with weekly writing prompts designed to help them describe their physical and emotional worlds in concrete language. Along the way, students will review each their writing as a group and read works by great contemporary noticers, including Karl Ove Knausgaard, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ben Lerner, and Weike Wang.

AS.490.731. Film & Screenwriting Workshop. 3 Credits.

This intensive writing course is designed to provide students with a broad foundation in the fundamentals of screenwriting and visual storytelling, from idea to story to structure, character, dialogue, and beyond. Readings, screenings, and weekly writing assignments will provide students with the basic theory and practice of screenwriting as an art and a craft, contextualize the form within the history of storytelling, and enable students to put that knowledge to practical use in the development of their own feature-length screenplay. This craft elective is open to fiction and nonfiction students, but nonfiction students should be prepared to develop a fictional feature rather than any documentary work.

AS.490.734. Digital Storytelling and Multimedia Journalism. 3 Credits.

As news organizations increasingly require journalists to work on multiple platforms, this digital storytelling class will help you move your narrative journalism off the page and onto the screen or into the earbud. In this hands-on, experiential course students will learn the basics of audio recording and editing as well as video recording and editing. Students will do multiple projects including developing a short podcast series and several short videos. They may wish to invest in some audio-video recording equipment or rent some for the course but can also use cell phones for these basic exercises.

AS.490.745. Voice in Fiction and Nonfiction. 3 Credits.

In this cross-concentration craft elective, students examine aspects of voice in fiction and factual writing, considering how style, point of view, tone, structure and culture all contribute to an author's or narrator's individual writing personality. Students use exercises to strengthen their individual styles or the voices of the characters they portray. Readings include novels, short stories, essays, articles and nonfiction books, as well as articles on craft. Class assignments may include response writings and original fiction or nonfiction as well as oral presentations. This course is the dual-concentration version of 490.683 Voice in Modern Fiction, which covers only fictional works, and 490.705 Crafting a Nonfiction Voice, for factual writers.

AS.490.747. Advanced Revision Techniques in Fiction. 3 Credits.

This elective course is designed to hone skills in the elements of fiction through an intensive revision process. The course explores in depth exercises and techniques such as expanding/slowing down, mapping structure, defining and refining character and characterization, and using syntax and word choice to strengthen sentences. Students improve the use of these and other techniques by reviewing and revising their own writing and the writing of their classmates. While some workshop methods will be employed, this course focuses more on specific revision techniques and exercises than a workshop-style evaluation of student writing. Pre-requisite: Fiction Techniques.

AS.490.765. Children's and YA Writing Workshop. 3 Credits.

This elective course focuses on writing fiction and nonfiction for children and young adults. Students will study the markets, trends, genres, and publishing opportunities for this age group and read several novels, memoirs, and other current works. The majority of class time will be spent reviewing craft elements and workshopping original material. The course is designed as an elective for fiction and nonfiction students, who are urged to complete Fiction Techniques and Nonfiction Techniques before enrolling.

AS.490.766. Constructing the Novel. 3 Credits.

Many writers begin novels, but far fewer finish them. This course will focus on fiction elements that are specific to book-length works—novel structures, chapter structures, and craft elements such as deepening character development and B plots—and then will move to the process of selling novels in general, creating an author brand, and developing a sustainable writing practice. The goal is that writers will feel more confident constructing not just this novel, but many novels to come. The class will also include some workshop components for chapters from the novels in progress. Students should have completed Contemporary American Writers and Fiction Techniques before enrolling.

AS.490.767. Writing the Nonfiction Book Proposal. 3 Credits.

This fully online course is designed for writers who have a specific nonfiction book project in mind and are looking to secure an agent or publisher based on the well-drafted proposal. Students can be working on a book based on reporting, a memoir, or a collection of essays but they should register for the class only if they already have an idea for a book and have two or three chapters completed. (Ideally those chapters have been workshopped and refined in other classes before enrolling in this course.). Over the course of the semester, students will draft, revise, and refine a 15-page proposal, will develop a chapter outline, and will refine a sample chapter or two. Based on feedback from the instructor and fellow students, each writer will complete the course with a polished proposal based on publishing industry standards.

AS.490.770. Writing the Other. 3 Credits.

Writing the Other focuses on practical approaches to writing characters who you identify as different from yourself. As such, we examine dominant paradigms of otherness, drawing from a worldview that is shaped by our own biographies. We explore fiction/non-fiction in which writers have successfully and unsuccessfully bridged cultural and other socially constructed differences, with the goal of bridging these differences successfully in our own fiction/non-fiction writing. To that end, we will conclude the course with a fiction/non-fiction workshop, sharing our own attempts to write the other and critiquing the attempts of our peers.

AS.490.773. Off-site Residency. 3 Credits.

Krakow, Poland Residency—Literature Against the Autocracy: Eastern European Writers on the World Stage Throughout the literary history of the Eastern European region, writers of poems, novels, stories, and plays have created work that understands politics to be as important an aspect of the human experience as religion, love, poverty, or death. Poland, in particular, has plowed this field. This Polish literary tradition of speaking truth to power stems in part from the number of times the country has been governed or occupied by totalitarian or autocratic forces. Many of the country's artists have spoken against those oppressions through their work. In the Czech Republic, Russia, Ukraine, and other countries, the history is similar, and so is the literary tradition. Now, as autocracy spreads in the contemporary world, the rise of literary arts that confront absolute power is seeing a resurgence. But how to do that without becoming didactic, without resorting to cut-out characters or contrived plots, without trafficking in a kind of rebellious propaganda? How has literary art in Central and Eastern Europe challenged autocratic rule in subversive or obvious ways while remaining true to itself as art? And what are the risks for the writer? What are the moral obligations? Students in this residency course will, over eight days, come to understand the ways that literary artists assert their objections to autocratic rule while staying true to their craft to create lasting works of art. In this course—through guest lectures, discussions, writing exercises, and readings—students will explore how politics and art mix, and where, how, and why they might find footing in that locus.

AS.490.784. Online Residency: Powerful Prose, a Focus on Structure, Voice, and Style. 3 Credits.

Powerful nonfiction and fiction requires not only a good story, but impeccable storytelling. In this seven-day, online residency, students will hone their ability to deliver powerful prose through a focus on sentence structure, voice, and style. Students will be required to do some advance reading in preparation for the residency. The residency will take place via Zoom from July 28-August 4. It will include analyses of published works in the mornings, generative exercises in the afternoons (and some workshopping), as well as guest lectures in the evening. This course fills an elective requirement.

AS.490.786. Online Residency: Finding the Drama in Memoir. 3 Credits.

This class will be conducted as a generative writing seminar and will run as a seven-day online residency taking place via Zoom. Every day, the instructor will offer guided prompts, discuss craft techniques, and invite students to talk about writing challenges they're facing. The class will cover concepts such as: the self on the page, narrative and reflective arcs, characters other than ourselves, scene-building, artful telling, research tactics, and backstory and front story. Together, students will explore the possibilities of dramatic presentation—how to take a seemingly small-stakes memory, and very little action, and methodically create the conditions for conflict. To accomplish this, students will study excerpts from contemporary memoirs and follow writing prompts inspired by each. The course will run from July 24-July 31 and Zoom-based attendance is required each day, with time set aside for generating work. This course fills an elective requirement.

AS.490.800. Independent Study in Writing. 3 Credits.

An independent study is a special project that an advanced student proposes to complete within a single semester, for either elective or workshop credit. Most independent studies in the Writing Program involve a student working one-on-one with a faculty member or other writer or editor. The project must involve writing, reading or writing-related work equivalent to a full-semester, graduate-level course, and the project should not duplicate any course or other part of the program's curriculum. Students usually are not eligible to propose independent studies until they have completed at least five courses, including at least one workshop. The tuition for an independent study is the regular, single-course rate for the term in question. Proposals for an independent study should be submitted in writing to program leadership no later than 60 days before the start of the target semester. Proposals are evaluated competitively after that date, and only a small number of proposals will be approved. This course number is only for Writing Program students. Science Writers should consider 490.807.

AS.490.801. Thesis And Publication. 3 Credits.

This final course is required for all degree candidates in fiction or nonfiction and is offered only in the fall and spring terms. The two course goals are the completion of a successful thesis and an enriching, challenging capstone experience for the entire program. The creative writing thesis will contain portions of a novel or a nonfiction book, and/or a collection of short stories, essays, or articles. We recommend that students select their best work and the work they most want to work on revising during the thesis semester; not all program writing will become part of a thesis. Students taking this course are required to submit a full thesis draft early in the course; the author spends the term working one-on-one with a thesis advisor to revise this draft. In addition, thesis students meet as a class. During classes, students engage in forward-looking discussions on the writing life, participate in a program-capping roundtable discussion, and rehearse and conduct a public reading. Prerequisite: All other required and elective courses. Students may take a second course during their thesis term with the program director's permission; such a course must be in addition to program requirements.

AS.490.803. Independent Study. 3 Credits.

An independent study is a special project that an advanced student proposes to complete within a single semester, for either elective or workshop credit. Most independent studies in the Writing Program involve a student working one-on-one with a faculty member. The project must involve writing or writing-related work equivalent to a full-semester, graduate-level course, and the project must not duplicate any course or other part of the program's curriculum. Students usually are not eligible to propose independent studies until they have completed at least five courses, including at least one workshop. The tuition for an independent study is the regular, single-course rate for the term in question. Proposals for an independent study must be submitted in writing to the program's independent study coordinator no later than 60 days before the start of the target semester. Proposals are evaluated competitively after that date, and only a small number of proposals will be approved.

AS.490.809. Independent Study. 3 Credits.

An independent study is a special project that an advanced student proposes to complete within a single semester, for either elective or workshop credit. Most independent studies in the Writing Program involve a student working one-on-one with a faculty member. The project must involve writing or writing-related work equivalent to a full-semester, graduate-level course, and the project must not duplicate any course or other part of the program's curriculum. Students usually are not eligible to propose independent studies until they have completed at least five courses, including at least one workshop. The tuition for an independent study is the regular, single-course rate for the term in question. Proposals for an independent study must be submitted in writing to the program's independent study coordinator no later than 60 days before the start of the target semester. Proposals are evaluated competitively after that date, and only a small number of proposals will be approved.

AS.490.888. Thesis Continuation.

This course is for students who completed 490.801 Thesis & Publication or 490.802 Thesis and Careers in Science Writing but failed to finish an approved thesis and were not approved for an Incomplete. If both conditions are met, students must register for this course and pay its accompanying fee for every term (including Summer) until a final thesis is approved.

AS.490.890. Humor Writing Workshop. 3 Credits.

This writing workshop examines the art of humor writing from a craft perspective, emphasizing the genre's fundamental elements including premise, voice, and point of view. Students learn to appreciate how published humor writers employ cultural, historical, and social contexts, as well as precise syntax and diction. The course will also explore the "X Factor" in humor and the element of surprise. As members of a general workshop, students submit humor writing pieces to their instructor and peers for critiques. Typically, two or three pieces are submitted during a semester; revisions are usually required. Workshop participants also submit detailed critiques of their fellow students' writing. The course requires extensive reading and writing, and it will culminate in a portfolio of written work. Both nonfiction and fiction students are invited to enroll.