

# Optional Residency MFA Courses

## 2020 Winter

Please note that the [UBC Course Schedule](#) is the definitive list of courses available. Be sure to select the correct term when viewing, as it defaults to the current term (in summer it will show summer courses rather than fall/winter courses).

Optional-Residency MFA courses are distinguished by a section number beginning with “D”. For example, CRWR 509-001 is an on-campus section and CRWR 509-D01 is a distance education section. If a course is offered in term 1 and term 2 with separate numbers you do not have to take both sections. Several other courses are two-term courses (501X for example) and for these you will be in the class from September to April.

### **A Note on Optional-Residency Course Scheduling**

All courses are held asynchronously. Students are expected to spend a total of 3 hours online participating each week. Class preparation, reading and writing time is not included in this number. The class runs across 27 hours to accommodate the schedules of students in different time zones. All classes run from 9:00AM Pacific time on day one to 12:00PM Pacific Time on day two.

To register, go to the [Student Service Centre](#). We recommend new students watch the help videos to learn how to create a worklist of courses in advance.

## Expanded Course Descriptions – 2020/21 Academic Year

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### **CRWR 501A D01 (term 1) / 501A D02 (term 2): Advanced Writing of Poetry (3 credits per section)**

Bronwen Tate

*Tuesday 9am – Wednesday 12pm, PST*

This generative workshop-based course invites students to explore the diverse voices, styles, and techniques of contemporary poetry. We will spend the first section of the course reading work by Ross Gay, Jos Charles, Hoa Nguyen, and others, discussing why these writers choose to engage with love, loss, history, queer identity, technological alienation, or systemic racism through poetry. In particular, we will look at how these poems work on the eye, the ear, the mind, the heart. Students will write poems drawing on specific craft elements and compositional approaches modeled by these texts with an aim of expanding their formal toolkits and discovering new possibilities for their work. During the second section of the course, students will design prompts for one another, reflect critically on their influences and inspirations (literary and otherwise), and revise a cohesive chapbook-length project. Throughout the term, our work together will be enriched by reflection, dialogue, and

experimentation with our writing habits, processes, and (perhaps implicit) beliefs. This course will take place asynchronously via Canvas.

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**501C D01: Advanced Writing of Poetry (6 credits, two terms)**

Susan Musgrave

*Tuesday 9am – Wednesday 12pm, PST*

In this asynchronous workshop (course is accessible online within a timed framework) my aim is a) to help those who have grown up in fear and loathing of poetry change their minds, and b) to pass on what I know about line breaks, the meaning of life, a good title (one that has sex, power and travel in it) why rhyme must contain some element of surprise, the misuse of adverbs, found poetry, prose poetry, abstractions (for and against), the stanza, poetic forms, revision, getting published, and so much more. Engaging discussions on craft and entertaining, instructive writing assignments.

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**CRWR 503A D01 (term 1) / 503B D02 (term 2): Advanced Writing for Children / YA (3 credits per section)**

Maggie de Vries

*Wednesday 9AM – Thursday 12PM PST*

Whether young people are a new audience for you, or you have published several books for children or teens, this course is a place for you to explore and grow with the enthusiastic support of your peers and me. In this workshop-based course, you will be asked to submit two substantial pieces of writing (which can both be from the same project, but must be new, never workshopped before), and you will have the opportunity to be a peer editor once. Week by week and as they arise, we will review elements of craft as well as common children's and YA genres—kinds of fantasy, historical and contemporary realistic fiction—and forms—including picture books, early readers, and middle-grade and YA novels. In addition to weekly workshopping, you will be expected to choose and complete at least three writing exercises, to lead one craft discussion rooted in the children's or YA book of your choice, and to take part in peer- and instructor-led craft discussions all term. Throughout, we will address questions of audience, the challenges inherent in writing for people at stages of life that for us are past, and strategies for getting that writing past the gatekeepers and into readers' hands. At the end of the term, you will be asked to submit a revision of one of your pieces along with a short reflection on your revision process.

This course is part of the Optional Residency program. It is text based—though it will include some video—and asynchronous.

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**CRWR 505A D01 Advanced Writing of Creative Non-Fiction (3 credits term 1)**

Bronwen Tate

*Thursday 9AM – Friday 12PM PST*

In this generative workshop-based course, students will draw on Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House*, Anne Boyer's *The Undying* and selections from other daring and lucid writers

to explore memory, observation, research, and form as starting points for crafting compelling creative non-fiction. We will think together about how to move between inner and outer worlds, how to dilate and contract time, and how to sustain, swerve, and leap through syntax. During the second part of the term, students will compile writer's research portfolios of sources and models to support final projects guided by their own thematic engagements and formal preoccupations. Throughout the term, our work together will be enriched by reflection, dialogue, and experimentation with our writing habits, processes, and (perhaps implicit) beliefs. This course will take place asynchronously via Canvas.

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**CRWR 505A D02 Advanced Writing of Creative Non-Fiction (3 credits term 1)**

Mandy Catron

*Thursday 9AM – Friday 12PM PST*

In this course, we will focus on the fundamental techniques of Creative Nonfiction. We'll spend the first half of the term focusing on craft through reading, discussion, lecture, and specific writing exercises. In the second half of the term, students will share and respond to one another's work through structured peer workshops. The course will be offered on Canvas with an asynchronous format.

We will take risks, try new techniques, borrow from established writers, share our work, and experiment with everything from voice to style to structure. You'll finish this term with a polished essay draft and deeper insight into how form and content intersect in the genre.

This course welcomes those who are new to creative nonfiction as well as experienced CNF writers.

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**CRWR 505B D02: Advanced Writing of Creative Non-Fiction (3 credits, term 2)**

Jenny Ferguson

*Wednesday 9AM – Thursday 12PM PST*

We will focus on drafting and workshopping three kinds of creative non-fiction: a flash essay in the style of Brevity (750 words); a lyric essay that engages with the personal, memoir, research, and poetry (2000-4000 words); and, a short literary journalism feature (2000-4000 words). With a focus on form (how we tell true stories; what form is best suited to telling this true story) and content (what facts to include; what facts to leave out; how to structure scenes so they are compelling; etc.), we will consider how to address both text and subtext in CNF, and how to use the techniques of fiction to structure true stories. We will also talk about truth (what truth? whose truth? emotional truth?), the ethics of telling true stories, and complications that arise while doing research.

Your writing is our main text. We will however read example essays from writers such as Brenda Miller, Ira Sukrungruang, Deesha Philyaw, Alicia Elliott, Marcos Gonzalez, Sherry Simpson, and if needed, a few others. Through mini-lectures and friendly, accomplice-framed group workshops, you will learn to take risks in your writing. Additionally, you will substantially

revise one essay during the term. You may be assigned to read work by a specific writer, or assigned a specific craft book to help push your writing further, on a case-by-case basis. This course is open to writers who have never written CNF as well as writers who have published essays—and anyone in between. The course will be offered on Canvas with an asynchronous format.

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**CRWR 505B D04: Advanced Writing of Creative Non-Fiction (3 credits, term 2)**

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*Wednesday 9AM – Thursday 12PM PST*

Course description to come.

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**CRWR 506C D01: Advanced Writing of Drama for Screen (6 credits, two terms)**

Sara Graefe

*Wednesday 9AM – Thursday 12PM PST*

This advanced screenwriting workshop focuses specifically on writing for film. Students will explore techniques of creating, developing and writing a long-form screenplay, from initial pitch to treatment to draft. Students will work on the first draft of a new feature-length project (90-120 minutes) over the fall and winter terms. Original stories only please; no adaptations, as this goes beyond the scope of the course. We will also screen movies and examine screenwriting structure, formatting and craft, working from the age-old adage that a writer must first know the rules in order to break them.

This course is offered asynchronously, following the standard 27-hour Opt. Res. format. Workshop and craft discussions will be held on Canvas.

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**CRWR 507B D02: Advanced Stage Playwriting (3 credits term 2)**

Stephen Hunt

*Tuesday 9AM – Wednesday 12PM PST*

During the course, you will explore playwriting through working on a script of your own, whether one-act, musical, monologue or full-length play. In the weekly workshops, you'll participate in peer critiques, write reviews and each student will take a turn hosting a forum discussion. Students learn dialogue, how to develop complex characters, scene endings and other elements of effective stage storytelling. You'll also read a sampling of some contemporary drama, by a variety of playwrights, including Michael Healey, Carmen Aguirre, Tennessee Williams, Tony Kushner, Sarah Ruhl, Djanet Sears, Anna Deavre Smith, Tomson Highway, Wajdi Mouawad and others. In past classes, some of the plays read included *Angels in America*, *Scorched*, *Blue Box*, *Kim's Convenience*, *The Drawer Boy*, *Another Home Invasion*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cloud Nine*, *The Clean House*, *The Romeo Initiative* and *Harlem Duet*. The course will be offered on Canvas with an asynchronous format.

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**CRWR 508A D01: Advanced Writing for Graphic Forms 1 (3 credits, term 1)**

Sarah Leavitt

*Wednesday 9AM – Thursday 12PM PST*

What are comics and how do they work? How do you make a good comic? In this class we'll examine the building blocks of comics (words and image combinations, panel and page composition, and more) and practice the skills needed to create clear, compelling, memorable comics. By the end of the term, you'll be a more insightful comics reader and a more skillful comics maker. This course involves not only workshops, but also readings, discussions and exercises. No drawing skills or experience are required. (Fact: You can make great comics even if you "can't draw.") That being said, you do need to draw your comics in this course, so you should be open to experimenting with and developing your drawing skills.

It's very important to me that this class is both a safe place for playing and experimenting and also an environment in which students are encouraged to challenge themselves, take risks and push their work further. Students at all levels of skill and experience have produced excellent comics in this class, and many have continued to make comics after completing the course. Even if you don't intend to continue making comics after this class, students often find that the skills learned in comics class help them with their work in other forms. Students who plan in future to write comics scripts for others to draw will gain insights into the writing process from the experience of drawing. **Most of the course will be asynchronous; there may be a few synchronous full-class or small-group activities.**

Note: If you're taking the course for the second time, or if you're already an experienced cartoonist, I've included alternatives for assignments you may have done before. If you're working on a longer project or have a particular aspect of comics you want to work on this term, let me know; I want to make sure the class works for you. If you're new, don't worry – you'll fit right in. Everyone is welcome in comics class, whether new or returning.

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**CRWR 509A D01: Advanced Writing of Fiction (3 credits, term 1)**

Jenny Ferguson

*Thursday 9AM – Friday 12PM PST*

In this workshop we will write in three possible fictional forms: flash fiction (under 1000 words), more traditional short stories (up to 4000 words), and the first chapters of new, in-progress, never-before workshopped novels. We will focus exclusively on literary and literary-genre mash-up fiction—where you change, alter, and play with established genre tropes until they become something hybrid, something new—as we discuss story structures for fictions, the different kinds of conflict, how loud or soft these conflicts can be in a scene, the use of scene vs. summary, how character drives plot and how plot drives character, as well as things like point of view, setting, dialogue, metaphor, symbol, subtext, and developing your voice as a writer.

Your stories are our main texts. Each week, we will read and talk about (usually two) writers' work in depth. We will however read example fictions from writers such as Roxane Gay, Natanya Pulley, Oyinkan Braithwaite, Tommy Orange, and possibly a few others as needed.

Over the course of the term, we will workshop two pieces: the first will be flash fiction; the second workshop piece will be your choice (either a traditional length short story, or the first chapter(s) of a new, in-progress novel) up to 4,000 words. You may be assigned to read work by a specific writer, or assigned a specific craft book to help push your writing further, on a case-by-case basis as I begin to learn your specific strengths as well as the places where you have space to grow or develop or change. Through friendly, accomplice-framed group workshops, you will learn to take risks in your writing, and significantly develop your fiction. The course will be offered on Canvas with an asynchronous format.

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**CRWR 509A D03 (term 1) / 509B D02 (term 2): Advanced Writing of Fiction (3 credits per term)**

Nancy Lee

*Thursday 9AM – Friday 12PM PST*

This online course combines the structures of seminar and workshop to explore the art and craft of writing fiction. Weekly seminar content will alternate between a) craft and process presentations designed to be generative, foster technical development, and encourage engagement with contemporary writing issues through concepts, examples and exercises, and b) interactive Google Hangouts during which the instructor will address technical queries specific to student work and questions arising from the seminar sessions and exercises. While students will submit and receive peer feedback on two pieces of new work, the workshopping process will be contained and economical, focusing on key aspects of craft and the writer's most pressing concerns. This course is asynchronous with participation options for the bi-weekly real-time hangouts.

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**CRWR 509B-D04– Advanced Writing of Fiction (3 credits, term 2)**

Maureen Medved

*Thursday 9AM – Friday 12PM PST*

This is a workshop for graduate writers of all forms of short and long fiction. During this workshop, you will complete two submissions (adding up to approximately 40 pages) of either short stories, narrative fragments or chapters from a novel or novella. This course accommodates all forms of fiction writing (short stories, novels, novellas, flash, micro-fiction, genre-crossover, and others). While content is the writer's choice, strong literary prose is the standard. You are welcome to explore any form of fiction with the exception of formula or genre writing – romance, science fiction, crime, mystery – unless you spin the genre and make it new.

We will explore advanced aspects of craft – fiction techniques, including structure, point of view, character development, voice, dialogue and so forth, and I will ask you to participate in exercises that will address these aspects, so that we can enhance our understanding of craft. We will investigate the revision process, and you will be expected to deeply consider a revision of your own work. Excellent works of fiction will be our texts for analysis and discussion. We will explore the writing process and getting published.

This is a workshop about taking creative risks while honoring your unique potential, literary aims, and writerly voice. My hope is that you will leave this workshop with more tools and a more deeply felt understanding of your work, and its strengths and challenges, and that you will take this forward in all your writing. The course will be offered on Canvas with an asynchronous format.

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**CRWR 514C D01: Advanced Writing for Television (6 credits, both terms)**

Zac Hug

*Tuesday 9AM – Wednesday 12PM PST*

This advanced workshop takes a strong look at creating serialized television: from idea to development to outline to draft. Using television writer's room methodology, students will workshop the world of their TV shows on three levels: series, season, and finally, a pilot that students will generate over the fall and winter terms. Term One will focus on the development and outline stage of television writing, while Term Two will focus on a first draft of a pilot episode (two episodes for half hours). Students will also screen various television shows and scenes that illustrate things like character development, projecting future story, tying theme to a plot, and the ins and outs of a solid act out. The course will be offered on Canvas with an asynchronous format.

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**CRWR 530 D01: Preparation for a Career in Creative Writing (3 credits, term 2)**

Doretta Lau

*Tuesday 9AM – Wednesday 12PM PST*

How do you build a sustainable career as a writer? This course covers the basics of book publishing, print and online publication, screen, as well as branding and marketing, promotion, grants, residencies, entrepreneurship, and self-care. As you complete each assignment, you will hone the skills necessary to handle the business side of your writing career. The main text is *The Business of Being a Writer* by Jane Friedman, with additional materials to be posted on Canvas. The class will be asynchronous with an optional component to meet on Zoom for live discussion weekly.

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**CRWR 550B-D01 – Teaching Creative Writing (3 credits, term 2)**

Nancy Lee

*Tuesday 9AM – Wednesday 12PM PST*

This online seminar-style course introduces MFA students to the fundamentals of teaching creative writing craft and process. From large format lecture courses to small workshops, we will explore the preparation necessary to thrive and inspire as a creative writing instructor in academic and community settings. Participants will develop and hone their own teaching philosophies as they examine approaches and methodologies for teaching craft concepts, facilitating critique of creative work, and leading students through a creative process. Other topics will include managing challenging workshop dynamics, dealing with sensitive issues in the classroom, understanding contemporary classroom climate, preparing a professional teaching package, and finding work as a creative writing teacher. This course is asynchronous with firm weekly deadlines and a substantial workload. **This course is not open to first year MFAs** in order to prioritize students closer to the end of their degree

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### **Enrolment Note**

We use the UBC enrolment system through the [Student Service Centre](#) for all workshop enrolment. Thesis enrolment must be carried out directly through the program support, Alexandra Tsardidis, with the prior permission of your thesis advisor.