

Optional Residency MFA Courses

2021 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 (506H 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 – 2021/22 Academic Year

CRWR 501F D01 (term 1): 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 may 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.

CRWR 501G D02(term 1): Advanced Writing of Poetry (3 credits per section)

TBA

Tuesday 9AM – Wednesday 12PM PST

CRWR 501H D02(term 1&2): 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.

CRWR 503F D01 (term 1) / 503G 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). 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 take part in craft discussions all term, and to read alongside the course and share lightly annotated lists of your reading at least three times. 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 short reflection on your revision process along with an (optional) revision of one of your pieces.

This course is part of the Optional Residency program. It is text based and asynchronous. I will ask to meet with each of you individually over Zoom or the phone twice during the term, once in the first two weeks and again after your first workshop.

CRWR 505F D01 (term 1) / 505G D02 (term 2) Advanced Writing of Creative Non-Fiction (3 credits per section)

Doretta Lau

Thursday 9AM – Friday 12PM PST (term 1) / Wednesday 9AM – Thursday 12PM PST (term 2)

Course description to come.

CRWR 505F D02 (term 1) / 505G D04 (term 2): Advanced Writing of Creative Non-Fiction (3 credits per section)

Lindsay Wong

Thursday 9AM – Friday 12PM PST

“How is it possible to bring order out of memory? I should like to begin at the beginning, patiently, like a weaver at his loom. I should like to say, ‘This is the place to start; there can be no other.’” Beryl Markham

“You own everything that happened to you. Tell your stories. If people wanted you to write warmly about them, they should have behaved better. ~[Anne Lamott](#)

“I believe that the memoir is the novel of the 21st century; it’s an amazing form that we haven’t even begun to tap...we’re just getting started figuring out what the rules are. ~[Susan Cheever](#)

Memoir is sometimes known as the ugly step-sister of fiction. It is a genre that confuses literary critics and has its practitioners swearing that they will never write another memoir as long as they live. Why is this genre so daunting to writers and so popular with readers?

In this creative nonfiction workshop, we will focus on drafting and revising powerful, moving, and engaging short form autobiographical pieces and/or chapters from long-form memoir projects. We will explore aspects of technique, structure, voice, and the creative process of crafting successful first-person narratives, including the use of scene-setting, retrospection, imagery, and humour. The course will include a brief historical overview of the genre, and we will discuss the ethics of memoir writing; the challenges and limitations of the form, including the responsibility of telling our versions of the truth. Students will learn to shape real-life events and distill memories into compelling narratives.

Your work will form the primary texts for the course. Excerpts from memoirs by excellent memoirists such as Terese Marie Mailhot, Jenny Heijun Wills, Antonio Michael Downing, Augusten Burroughs, Suzanne Calahan, Mary Karr, Yasuko Thanh, Dave Eggers et al, will be recommended for craft purposes. Students will be responsible for submitting a minimum of **two** workshop pieces (no more than 10,000 words each, 20 pages double space, size font 12) and providing thoughtful feedback on their peers' work.

Risk-taking and experimentation in your prose are encouraged. This workshop is for anyone who is interested in starting a memoir project or has written chapters/excerpts that they would like to workshop in a safe and supportive online learning environment. Depending on class interest/availability, there can be an option for synchronous Zoom group meetings to discuss issues of craft, pathways to publication, public recognition, libel, and the social and legal risks of publishing a successful memoir. There will also be ongoing opportunities to meet online one-on-one with your instructor to discuss your project and creative progress during the semester.

As this is an Opt-Res MFA workshop, students should be fairly independent, committed, and motivated to improve their craft. *Late workshop submissions will NOT be workshopped.*

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

TBA

Wednesday 9AM – Thursday 12PM PST

Course description to come.

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

Sara Graefe

In this advanced, online screenwriting workshop, we focus specifically on writing for film. We will explore techniques for creating, developing and writing a long-form screenplay, from initial pitch to treatment to draft. You 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, craft and business skills.

Filmmaking is a collaborative art involving other creatives, where the script serves as the blueprint for the finished film. In this course, we will be learning and applying North American film industry rules and conventions to arm you with skills you need to survive and thrive as a writer in this collaborative business, working from the premise that it is helpful to first know the rules in order to break them.

CRWR 507G 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.

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

Sarah Leavitt

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 (text 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.

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.

CRWR 509F D01 (term 1): Advanced Writing of Fiction (3 credits per term)

Doretta Lau

Thursday 9AM – Friday 12PM PST

Course description to come.

CRWR 509F-D03 (term 1) / 509G D02 (term 2) : Advanced Writing of Fiction (3 credits per term)

Nancy Lee

Thursday 9AM – Friday 12PM PST

In this online workshop, writers will submit two pieces of new work and a rewrite. A peer response framework will ensure that feedback is productive and craft-based, while a structured workshop format will keep the discussion focused on the writer's most pressing concerns. As this course will include a blend of new and returning students, the craft and process seminar materials from Term 1 will be available for writers to work through at their own pace. During interactive bi-weekly Zoom Hangouts, the instructor will address technical topics specific to student work, and craft and process questions that have arisen during the workshop. While the workload will be manageable, a high level of engagement with submitted work is expected. This course is asynchronous with flexible participation options for the bi-weekly real-time hangouts.

CRWR 509G-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 intensive weekly exercises, readings, and prompts that will enhance our understanding of craft. You may be required to submit your response to the craft assignments to the instructor and post them for class discussion.

We will investigate both the writing and the revision process, and you will be expected to deeply consider your writing process as well as 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. You may be required to post a short presentation on an aspect of craft during the course.

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, its strengths and challenges, and that you will take this forward in all your writing.

CRWR 514H 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

CRWR 514F 001 (term 1) / 514G 002 (term 1) - Advanced Writing for Television: The Half-Hour TV Series Pilot (3 credits per session)

Linda Svendsen

Synchronous/Zoom: Friday, Sept 10, 2021 – Friday, December 3, 1-3 pm Pacific

Class will be held on **Zoom**.

The purpose of the workshop is to create your own original half-hour TV series concept and pilot script, via three peer and instructor reviewed assignments: Assignment #1 Concept, Assignment #2 pilot beat sheet (brief outline), and Assignment #3 draft pilot script. Concurrently, your peer review reflections and contributions in the writers' room group/s will build your TV story editing prowess. Essentially, while you are creating a brand-new TV series, you're also a creative producer/story editor on @ eleven other series. While the class is not prescriptive, per se, the mission of a writer's room is to creatively and speculatively engage, to bring your years of TV-series chops to the table, to brainstorm, to ask "what if?" while always striving to bolster the creator/writer's vision.

Canvas course site: the course is built upon 3 modules (concept, beat sheet, pilot script) and is front-loaded with dramaturgical grids, rubrics for each assignment, readings on structure, and articles re issues in TV (including #metoo, BIPOC, "old-school" dramaturgical templates) and genre-hybrid pilot scripts. Each of the weekly readings and any pilot screenings will be attached to the modules and assigned weekly.

Participation: written feedback prior to the workshop discussion and verbal peer review feedback and breakout (synchronous) writers' rooms

Office hours: I'll be story conferencing with you individually by appointment many times throughout the term. Linda.svendsen@ubc.ca

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

Doretta Lau

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. There are four assignments over the term in addition to participation in weekly discussions: personal bio, literary CV, personal business plan, and text for your author website.

CRWR 550F-D01 – Teaching Creative Writing (3 credits, term 1)

Bronwen Tate

Tuesday 9AM – Wednesday 12PM PST

In this hands-on course, students will design, try out, and reflect on assignments and lesson plans for a prospective creative writing class. Drawing on perspectives from writers, teachers,

and education scholars including Mathew Salesses, Liz Lerman, Paisley Rekdal, Carol Dweck and James Lang, we'll think together about how to teach each part of the writing process. We will explore strategies for inclusive teaching and weigh the benefits of various workshop structures, and as well digging into thorny issues like how to handle challenging classroom dynamics and how to grade creative work.

Throughout the course, we'll keep the student experience at the heart of our inquiry, and consider how our teaching goals and methods might vary depending on different formats (small workshop or large lecture, in-person or online) and contexts (university, public library, private workshop, prison, or community center). Students will support one another in developing a teaching persona and practice informed by scholarship on teaching and learning and enriched by individual experiences, strengths, and commitments. This course is open to students in both the Optional-Residency and On-Campus MFA streams. Students who have completed their first year of the MFA will receive priority. The course will be held asynchronously via Canvas with a few optional synchronous small-group sessions.

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.