

**City University of Hong Kong  
Course Syllabus**

**offered by Department of English  
with effect from Semester A 2017/2018**

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**Part I Course Overview**

**Course Title:** Fiction Writing

**Course Code:** EN3572

**Course Duration:** 1 Semester

**Credit Units:** 3 credits

**Level:** B3

**Proposed Area:**  
*(for GE courses only)*

Arts and Humanities  
 Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations  
 Science and Technology

**Medium of Instruction:** English

**Medium of Assessment:** English

**Prerequisites:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* Nil

**Precursors:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* Nil

**Equivalent Courses:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* Nil

**Exclusive Courses:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* Nil

## Part II Course Details

### 1. Abstract

(A 150-word description about the course)

This course aims to introduce students to the techniques of fiction writing. Students will study the various elements of fiction including character, plot, setting, and point of view, and apply this knowledge to writing their own short stories. The course will be taught in a ‘workshop’ format in which students will read and critique one another’s work.

### 2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs	Weighting* (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Describe the elements and techniques of fiction, including character, setting, plot, point of view, voice, and diction, and identify these elements and techniques in works of short fiction by published writers.		X	X	
2.	Evaluate and critique the fiction of others, pointing out strengths and weaknesses, giving reasoned arguments for their judgments and offering concrete suggestions for revision.		X	X	
3.	Apply their knowledge of fiction to the writing and revising of their own short stories.		X	X	X
...					
		100%			

\* If weighting is assigned to CILOs, they should add up to 100%.

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

### 3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.						Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4			
Reading representative works of short fiction in English and analyzing and critiquing them in class discussions and in written assignments.	Using relevant concepts and terms, students will analyse and reflect upon an array of texts in small group and whole-class settings.	X	X	X				
Listening to lectures on the elements and techniques of fiction writing.	Students will actively engage with lecture materials by responding and discussing in various ways	X	X	X				
Participating in in-class writing exercises designed to develop the mastery of specific techniques.	Evaluating and critiquing the work of classmates and offering suggestions for improvement.	X	X	X				
Writing and revising a collection of three short stories.	In small peer-review groups, students will read and respond to one another's writing as a way to reflect upon and develop various stages of the writing process.	X	X	X				

### 4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.						Weighting*	Remarks
	1	2	3					
Continuous Assessment: 100%								
Class participation, especially in workshop sessions in which students are expected to present cogent arguments regarding their evaluation of classmates' work and offer concrete suggestions for revision.	X	X					20%	
Portfolio of three short stories (of at least 1,500 words each) each of which has undergone			X				60%	

revision based on suggestions of the instructor and classmates.								
Written critique of a published story which describes and analyzes the various techniques used and the effectiveness of those techniques.	X	X	X				20%	
Examination: _____% (duration: _____, if applicable)								
* The weightings should add up to 100%.							100%	

## 5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. <b>Fiction</b>		<p>Fiction demonstrates superior application of elements of craft specific to the chosen form and genre of the work(s) produced, including well developed and believable characters; the ability to collapse time and storyline to the most urgent and necessary scenes for the drama; dialogue that serves the action; the right balance between front and back storylines for the drama at hand; no excess language. Regardless of form, the prose must demonstrate a solid command of language as well as suitable style and voice. With respect to</p>	<p>Fiction demonstrates good application of elements of craft specific to the chosen form and genre of the work(s) produced,. The work produced must encompass an overall artistry, creativity and depth.</p>	<p>Fiction demonstrates average but competent application of elements of craft specific to the chosen form and genre of the work(s) produced.</p>	<p>Fiction demonstrates weak application of elements of craft specific to the chosen form and genre of the work(s) produced.</p>	<p>Fiction lacks competent application of elements of craft specific to the chosen form and genre of the work(s) produced,</p>

		genre, the writing must demonstrate a mastery of the traditions of the chosen genre or show innovation in a creative reworking or subversion of established traditions, which can be in terms of language or theme or elements of craft.				
<b>2. Class Participation</b>		Contributions to class discussions and workshop demonstrate a thorough and careful reading of the piece under discussion, the ability to insightfully apply knowledge of the craft of fiction in identifying strengths and weaknesses, and useful comments and suggestions for the author. The contribution is expressed in a clear, detailed, tactful and professional manner.	Contributions to class discussions and workshop demonstrate a careful reading of the piece under discussion, the ability to adequately apply knowledge of the craft of fiction in identifying strengths and weaknesses, and useful comments and suggestions for the author. The contribution is expressed in a clear, detailed, tactful and professional manner.	Contributions to class discussions and workshop demonstrate an adequate though not always careful reading of the piece under discussion, the ability apply knowledge of the craft of fiction in identifying some strengths and weaknesses, and moderately useful comments and suggestions for the author.	Contributions to class discussions and workshop demonstrate cursory or incomplete reading of the piece under discussion, and the ability apply some knowledge of the craft of fiction in identifying some strengths and weaknesses, though these may not be accurate, insightful or helpful.	Contributions to class discussions and workshop demonstrate little understanding of the piece under discussion, and little ability apply knowledge of the craft of fiction in identifying strengths and weaknesses. The contribution may be expressed in an unclear or unprofessional manner.

<p><b>3. <i>Short Story Critique</i></b></p>		<p>The critique demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the elements, techniques and traditions of fiction and the ability to apply this knowledge in identifying and evaluating features in the story. The analysis is insightful, convincingly argued and clearly expressed.</p>	<p>The critique demonstrates good knowledge of the elements, techniques and traditions of fiction and the ability to apply this knowledge in identifying and evaluating features in the story. The analysis is relatively insightful, convincingly argued and clearly expressed.</p>	<p>The critique demonstrates some knowledge of the elements, techniques and traditions of fiction and the ability to apply this knowledge in identifying and evaluating some relevant features in the story. There may be some problems with the way the argument is presented or the quality of the language.</p>	<p>The critique demonstrates little knowledge of the elements, techniques and traditions of fiction and little ability to apply this knowledge in identifying and evaluating some relevant features in the story. There may be major problems with the way the argument is presented or the quality of the language.</p>	<p>The critique demonstrates no knowledge of the elements, techniques and traditions of fiction and no ability to apply this knowledge in any useful way. There may serious problems with structure, grammar or usage.</p>
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**Part III Other Information** (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

**1. Keyword Syllabus**

*(An indication of the key topics of the course.)*

**Introduction to Fiction** – The different types and forms of fiction. Where to find inspiration and ideas. The importance of craft.

**Character** – Where to find characters. Making characters dimensional through desire and contrasts. Creating character profiles. Showing vs. Telling. Methods for showing characters.

**Plot** – Finding a major dramatic question. Shaping a beginning, middle, and end. The difference between short story and novel plots. Pros and cons of outlining.

**Point of View** – POV defined. Exploration of the many types of POV.

**Description** – Using the senses. Specificity. Techniques for creativity. Finding the right words. Merging description with point of view.

**Dialogue** – The importance of scene. Dialogue’s illusion of reality. Quotation marks and tags. Stage directions. Summarized dialogue. Characterization through dialogue. Subtext. Dialect.

**Setting/Pacing** – Time. Place. Weather. Description of setting. Merging character and setting. How to manipulate time through pacing. Flashbacks.

**Voice** – Voice defined. Exploration of the various types of voice. Tips for finding your voice. Understanding style—syntax, diction, and paragraph length.

**Theme** – Theme defined. Types of theme. Weaving theme into a story.

**Revision** – Exploration of the various stages of revision.

**2. Reading List**

**2.1 Compulsory Readings**

*(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)*

1.	Required readings will be distributed by the course leader.
2.	
3.	

**2.2 Additional Readings**

*(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)*

1.	Jauss, D (2011) <i>On Writing Fiction</i> . Writer’s Digest Books.
2.	Clark, R (2013) <i>How to Write Short</i> . Little, Brown & Company.
3.	Pinker, S (2014) <i>The Sense of Style</i> Allen Lane.
4.	New York Writers Workshop (2006) <i>The Portable MFA in Creative Writing</i> Writer’s Digest Books.
5.	King, S. (2002) <i>On writing</i> . New York: Pocket.