

# COURSE SYLLABUS



## Creative Writing: The Art and Craft of Narrative Fiction

**COM 351 – Fall 2019**  
**Wed. 8:15-11:00 (room 311-L1)**

Lecturer: **Anthony Marais, M.A.**  
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Office hours: after class or by appointment

<b>Semester Credits</b>	3	<b>Language of Instruction</b>	English
<b>ECTS</b>	6	<b>Level</b>	Introductory
<b>Length</b>	15 weeks	<b>Pre-requisites</b>	Composition 2
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	HSC, JC, PS Elective

### 1. Course Description

The aim of COM 351 is to improve your creative writing and critical thinking skills, enable you to generate writing in the future, and to impart the methodology necessary for a career as a creative writer. To accomplish this, students will receive training in practical and theoretical aspects of creative writing through lectures, critical readings and exercises, focusing on narrative fiction in four types: essays, screenplays, novels and short stories.

### 2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be well-versed in a variety of creative writing genres, will better be able to recognize successful versus unsuccessful creative writing, will be able to identify problems in weak writing, and will have composed and edited a manuscript consisting of 5 pieces of original writing, including a 10-page story.

### 3. Course Materials

Required reading material and notes will be posted on NEO and must be printed and brought to class.

### 4. Teaching methodology

“Seria Ludo” – motto of the Society of Dilettanti, implying that serious matters should be approached in a playful vein. Active participation is encouraged by means of lectures, discussions, writing exercises, critical readings, public speaking and exams.

## 5. Course Schedule

### Lesson 1 – September 4 – Introduction

Lecture: Syllabus Review, Teaching Creative Writing, Art vs. Science, Rules of Writing  
Writers in focus: Friedrich Nietzsche, Woody Allen  
Screening: *Husbands and Wives* (USA, 1992)  
Practice: Diagnostic Essay

### Lesson 2 – September 11 – Aphorisms

Lecture: Art & Creativity, The Aesthetics Schematic, Aphorisms vs. Truisms, Five Laws of the Aphorism, Narrative Structure (1)  
Writers in focus: Oscar Wilde, Abraham Maslow, Douglas Shields Dix  
Screening: *Deconstructing Harry* (USA, 1999)  
Read: *The World in a Phrase* by James Geary  
Homework: Writing Assignment #1: 15 aphorisms

### Lesson 3 – September 18 – Word Choice

Lecture: Ethics of Vocabulary, Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, Artistic Ethos, Narrative Structure (2)  
Writers in focus: Rainer Maria Rilke, Rudyard Kipling, Orson Welles  
Activity: Vocabulary building  
Screening: *F for Fake* (USA, 1973)  
Read: *The Xenophobe's Guide to the Californians* by Anthony Marais

### Lesson 4 – September 25 – Memes and Archetypes

Exam 1:  
Lecture: Pet Rocks, Memes and Archetypes  
Writers in focus: Richard Dawkins, CG Jung, Franz Kafka  
Read: *The Selfish Gene* (Chapter 11) by Richard Dawkins  
Homework: Writing Assignment #2: Creating a Character

### Lesson 5 – October 2 – Literary Archetypes

Public Reading 1: Read from your own work  
Lecture: The Charles Bukowski Archetype  
Screening: *Factotum* (USA, 2005)

### Lesson 6 – October 9 – Aristotle's Poetics (part one)

Public Reading 2: Read from your own work  
Lecture: Story Development, Aristotelean concepts: *hamartia*, *anagnorisis*, *peripeteia*, *catharsis*  
Writers in focus: Theodore Dreiser, William Friedkin  
Homework: Writing Assignment #3: A scene with no dialogue

### Lesson 7 – October 16 – Aristotle's Poetics (part two)

Lecture: Components of Tragedy, Elements of Plot, Qualities of Character  
Writers in focus: Stefan Zweig  
Text analysis: *Wondrak* by Stefan Zweig  
Exercise 1: crafting dialogue  
Homework: Writing Assignment #4: Finishing Wondrak

### MIDTERM BREAK

### **Lesson 8 – October 30 – Character Development (part one)**

Lecture: Psychology and Art, The Alchemical Process, Character Arcs, Empathy  
Writers in focus: Carl Jung, Theodor Dreiser, Ida Lupino  
Activity: Psychological types

### **Lesson 9 – November 6 – Character Development (part two)**

Lecture: The life and death of Antal Szerb, Aspects of Character  
Writers in focus: Antal Szerb, Orson Welles  
Read: *The Pendragon Legend* by Antal Szerb  
Screening: *Chimes at Midnight* (USA, 1964), Orson Welles Interview

### **Lesson 10 – November 13 – Plot Structure**

Exam 2:  
Writers in focus: Joseph Stefano and Robert Bloch  
Screenplay analysis: plot and character: *hamartia, anagnorisis* and *peripeteia*  
Read: “*Psycho*” by Joseph Stefano (based on the novel by Robert Bloch)  
Screening: *Psycho* (USA, 1960)  
Homework: Writing Assignment #5 (part 1): 3-act structure for a 10-page story

### **Lesson 11 – November 20 – Sex and Violence**

Lecture: The invisible Art: novels vs. film, Modernism, Beauty vs. Novelty, Catharsis  
Exercise 2: “Boy meets Girl”: Romantic Comedy  
Writers in Focus: Billy Wilder, Vladimir Nabokov, Milan Kundera, David Lynch  
Screening: *A Man and a Woman* (1966), *Blue Velvet* (1987)  
Workshop 1: Peer review and text analysis  
Homework: Writing Assignment #5 (part 2): 10-page story (first draft)

### **Lesson 12 – November 27 – Reviewing and Editing (part one)**

Lecture: Dalton Trumbo and the Importance of Words  
Exercise 3: Crafting dialogue  
Screening: *Spartacus* (USA, 1960)  
Workshop 1: In-Class Peer Review  
Homework: Writing Assignment #5 (part 3): 10-page story (second draft)

### **Lesson 13 – December 4 – Reviewing and Editing (part two)**

Lecture: Poetry in Cinema: The Films of Albert Lewin  
Writers in focus: Omar Khayyam  
Screening: *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* (1952)  
Workshop 2: In-Class Peer Review  
Homework: Writing Assignment #5 (part 4): 10-page story (final draft)

### **Lesson 14 – December 11 – Public Reading**

Presentation: Public reading of original work  
Due: Final draft: 10-page short story

## **5. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Workload (average)</b>	<b>Weight in Final Grade</b>	<b>Evaluated Student Learning Outcomes</b>
Attendance and participation in class discussions and activities	42	10%	Students are expected to be present, timely, and to contribute constructively to discussions.
Writing assignments (4)	20	40%	Ability to engage in the writing process resulting in cohesive, coherent writing with appropriate structure, style and syntax, and showing evidence of creative thinking and originality.
Mid-term Exams (2)	20	20%	Comprehension of course material, and key concepts and their application in writing
Final Paper	40	20%	Ability to engage in the writing process resulting in cohesive, coherent writing with appropriate structure, style and syntax, and showing evidence of creative thinking and originality.
Presentation	18	10%	Ability to read from one's own work before an audience employing various means of delivery and dramatic effect
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150 hours</b>	<b>100%</b>	

## 6. Detailed description of the assignments

<b>Assessed area: Attendance and participation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Presence, timeliness, and preparedness	50%

Active engagement in discussion	
Positive, constructive contribution to discussions and presentations, and the application of relevant course concepts	50%

<b>Assessed area: Class assignments</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Completion and comprehension of assignments	40%
Evidence of reflection and critical thinking	40%
Positive interaction with peers and response to feedback	20%

<b>Assessed area: Presentation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Organization: clarity and logical development	30%
Content: relevance, interest with evidence of reflection and critical thinking	30%
Delivery: language quality and stylistic appropriateness	20%
Positive interaction with peers and response to feedback	20%

<b>Assessed area: Midterm / tests</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Comprehension and application of course material	100%

<b>Assessed area: Writing assignments</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Structure: organization, unity and cohesion	25%
Content: topic sentence, coherence and development of supports, evidence of reflection and critical thinking.	25%
Style: appropriate register, word choice, syntax, concision and clarity	25%
Accuracy: spelling, grammar, usage and punctuation and citation format and bibliographic technique	25%

<b>Assessed area: Final Essay Exam</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Structure: essay and paragraph organization, unity and cohesion	20%
Content: thesis, coherence, development, logic and supports, evidence of reflection and critical thinking.	20%
Style: appropriate register, word choice, syntax concision and clarity	20%
Accuracy: spelling, grammar, usage and punctuation	20%
Incorporation of sources: citation format and bibliographic technique	20%

## 7. Writing Assignments

Writing assignments must be typed, paginated and double-spaced, in a font and point size designated by the instructor. Assignments will be submitted electronically on NEO and may be required in hard copy by the instructor. Essays will be evaluated in accordance with the AAU writing rubric, which includes: organization, content, language and style, mechanics and citation. Corrected essays will include substantive and appropriate instructor feedback.

## 8. General Requirements and School Policies

### *General requirements*

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules available in the Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

### *Electronic communication and submission*

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication. It is strongly recommended that any email communication between students and instructors take place in NEO LMS.

Each e-mail sent to an instructor that is about a new topic (meaning not a reply to an original email) shall have a new and clearly stated subject and shall have the course code in the subject, for example: "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question".

All electronic submissions are carried out through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

### *Attendance*

Attendance is required. Students who are absent 35 percent of classes will be failed (or administratively withdrawn from the course if most absences are excused). Students might also be marked absent if they miss a significant part of a class (by arriving late or leaving early) as specified in the syllabus.

### *Absence excuse and make-up options*

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he must submit to the Assistant Dean an Absence Excuse Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence. The form and documents must be submitted within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Assignments missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up which may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows for a make-up. Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

**Late work:** No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

### *Electronic devices*

Electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops...) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams.

*Eating* is not allowed during classes.

### *Cheating and disruptive behavior*

If a student engages in disruptive or other conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment of an institution of learning, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the activity or for the day and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating (e.g. whispering or passing notes) will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misbehavior the student will be expelled from the exam and the exam will be marked as failed.

### *Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center*

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages – without citation – in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

As the minimum policy the types of plagiarism from 1 through 8 results in the failing grade from the assignment and must be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU. If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult their papers with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

### *Students with disabilities*

Students with disabilities are asked to contact their instructor as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodation.

### Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95 - 100	<b>Excellent performance.</b> The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90 - 94	
B+	87 - 89	<b>Good performance.</b> The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83 - 86	
B-	80 - 82	
C+	77 - 79	<b>Fair performance.</b> The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73 - 76	
C-	70 - 72	
D+	65 - 69	<b>Poor.</b> The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60 - 64	
F	0 - 59	<b>Fail.</b> The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by and when:

Approved by and when:

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