

Course Last Updated 4/1/2024



## Writing the City: London

### Section I: Course Overview

**Course Code:** ENG317LHR

**Subject Area(s):** English Language & Literature

**Prerequisites:** None

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Total Contact Hours:** 45

**Credits:** 3

**Course Fees:** N/A

### Course Description

The course explores the craft of creative writing in relation to the city across a variety of genres and illustrates the particular challenges of writing about place by examining different aspects of the city in relation to London narratives including the river, travel, urban spaces, solitude, ethnicity, particular boroughs and characters (both fictional and real) as well as making use of practical exercises and field studies. Throughout this process writing skills are developed and honed utilizing drafts and final works. The course encourages self-reflection and critique to consider the writer's evolution in constructing a meaningful piece of writing. To enhance the writing experience, extracts from literary texts and the settings are embedded in the course.

### Learning Objectives

- Identify various writing styles and narrative devices to locate and critically evaluate different types of writing about the city of London.
- Describe, interpret, and respect the differences within the classroom and wider diverse urban setting as well as between the home and host country.
- Demonstrate your own creative writing and editorial skills.

## Section II: Instructor & Course Details

### Instructor Details

Name: TBC

Contact Information: TBC

Term: TBC

Course Day and Time: TBC

Office Hours: TBC

### Grading & Assessment

The instructor assesses students' mastery of course learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted toward the final grade. The Assessment Overview section provides further details for each.

**Engagement - 20%**

**(P1) Poem/Presentation - 20%**

**(A1) Short Story - 20%**

**(A2) Short Story - 20%**

**(A3) Self-reflective Essay - 20%**

### Assessment Overview

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Forms of assessment may be slightly modified in the term syllabus.

**Engagement (20%):** Students are expected to be engaged in class, to have read the [CEA CAPA Engagement Policy](#), and to understand the [Class Engagement Rubric](#) that outlines how engagement is graded.

This course is designed to engage your creative and critical mind. Class participation and engagement will be expected via note-taking, class discussion, self-expression as well as meaningful and respectful critique from every member.

**Poem/Presentation (20%):** In groups of 1-3

- Identify a place in London e.g. London Bridge, Regents Park Zoo, your local café etc.
- Find a poem/news article/play or other piece of writing associated with this place. Briefly analyse this text, not necessarily in the sense of literary criticism, but rather to identify the links, both emotional and physical, between the place/location you have chosen and the piece of writing, and also the differences you find between them.
- For example: The description of the River Thames at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, and the Thames as you find it today. You will, therefore, need to visit the place, preferably at the same time of day as the piece is set.
- Then write a poem or short creative writing piece (1000 words) inspired by this place and/or process. Remember that we don't necessarily know either the place or the work that has inspired you so give some context, background, so we know what we are looking at and why.

You will share this piece of writing and the work/place that inspired it with your classmates. Feel free to use photographs, maps, etc. in your presentation.

The reason this assignment appears first is because the sooner you identify your source place/material the easier it will be!

You will be graded according to both the written work 10% and your engagement with the process 10%.

**1400-word short story inspired by a "Blue Plaque" in London (20%):** The plaques commemorate people who have at some time lived in London and made enough of an impression during their lifetime for someone else (anyone) to nominate their former homes for receipt of a blue plaque. Under the original English Heritage scheme (founded 1866) at least 20 years needed to have passed since the recipient's death. Today there are many different plaque providers including Nubian Jak Community Trust, several UK regional town councils, and most of London's administrative boroughs.

Several fictional characters (e.g. Sherlock Holmes) have also obtained the honour. However, over 100 years after women obtained the vote in Britain only 14% of the plaques celebrate women.

You can find more information here:

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/blue-plaques/> Links to an external site.

<https://study.soas.ac.uk/nubian-jak-community-trust-blue-plaques/> Links to an external site.

<https://blackplaqueproject.com> Links to an external site.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/oct/06/the-guardian-view-on-blue-plaques-time-to-redress-the-balance> Links to an external site.

Your work can be a fictional recreation from the life of the subject of a plaque or proposed plaque, or of the place where the plaque is situated, or a work of life writing e.g.

memoir/travelogue/biography/reportage. Eg. Sherlock Holmes at 221B Baker Street, Beatrix Potter on Old Brompton Road, Jimi Hendrix in Brook Street, Mayfair. In terms of genre, this can be a work of memoir, fiction or travelogue (see above) – the choice is yours.

VISIT THE PLACE OR PROPOSED PLACE OF YOUR CHOSEN PLAQUE! Bring it alive – make it your own – do NOT simply use Wikipedia instead of actually visiting the place you have chosen! Look for the story.

This assignment will be handed in to be critiqued and subsequently rewritten, before being graded. I will give you notes. The grade will be based on your final submission.

**1400-word short story (20%):** fiction/life writing/screenplay/play situated in the city of London or a place you have visited while living in the UK, but otherwise the subject is yours to choose. This is an opportunity for you to explore an aspect of your time here that interests you. You may want to write a historical piece, a contemporary short story or a piece of memoir or travel writing, a story inspired by the Underground tunnels or an object in the V&A Museum. You will have plenty of time to decide on your subject – ask for guidance if this level of freedom seems daunting and you would rather be given a specific project / title.

**1400-word self-reflective essay (20%):** This is an opportunity for you to examine how far you have travelled since leaving the United States – emotionally, literally, metaphorically – and is delivered in your last week. It is a memoir piece, so familiarize yourself with this genre. Imagine it will be read by someone who picks it up on a park bench, or who finds it published in an in-flight travel magazine. You are – always – writing for a reader, not [only for] yourself.

Work is graded according to the following criteria:

- 1) Your use of language; whether it's crisp and new or tired and second hand.
- 2) Style: the originality, and authenticity, of your voice.
- 3) Your understanding of, and success in, inhabiting your chosen form, the genre (what kind of writing is it?)
- 4) Your content, its originality, relationship to the brief.
- 5) Your awareness of your reader.
- 6) Presentation – punctuation, spelling, grammar, your use of conventions for dialogue, paragraph breaks etc.

Please submit all work in a user-friendly font, size 12, double-spaced, or 1.5 spaced. Please include the WORD COUNT.

I will allow a 10% margin in word count after which you will be penalised. PLEASE SUBMIT DRAFT 1 VIA CANVAS.

FINAL SUBMISSION VIA CANVAS.

Please submit work ON TIME. Late work will be penalised by 3% per day without an approved extension. If you require an extension then contact me to arrange this at least two days in advance of the delivery date.

## Active Learning

Experiential learning is an essential component of education abroad, and participation in field studies is a required part of coursework. In this course, students explore the city in which they are studying using a variety of methods. This provides the opportunity to gain nuance and perspective on the host context and course content, as well as to collect information and resources for assigned papers, projects, and presentations.

- An exploration of the River Thames and its literature as the river runs through the square mile that constitutes the historic City of London.
- A tour of the East End of London with particular attention to the landscape inhabited by the notorious Kray twins, Jack the Ripper, Spring-Heeled Jack and more, and an exploration of the myths that have grown up around these characters. (TBC)
- A psycho-geographical exploration of the landscape of J M Barrie's Peter Pan.
- A visit to a museum for the purpose of making character studies.

Students are also strongly encouraged to participate in co-curricular program activities.

## Readings and Resources

The below readings and resources are representative of what will be assigned as required in this course but may vary slightly in the term syllabus.

All students are given access to the online library of the University of New Haven (UNH), accessible [here](#), and are expected to comply with [UNH Policies](#) regarding library usage.

Wherever possible, required readings are made accessible through the online library or Canvas. Students are responsible for obtaining all required readings.

Each course utilizes Canvas as its LMS. Students are expected to check Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines. Canvas is also the primary platform for contacting your instructor in case of questions or concerns about the course.

### Required Readings

Barrie, J. M. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. Modernista, 2023.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

Cowan, Andrew. *The Art of Writing Fiction*. Routledge, 2024.

Deane, Seamus. *Reading in the Dark*. Vintage International, 1998.

Dickens, Charles. *Night Walks: And Other Essays*. Read & Co., 2020.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *A Study in Scarlet*. Filiquarian, 2007.

Grahame, Kenneth. *The Wind in the Willows*. Aladdin Books, 1989.

Macfarlane, Robert. *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot*. Penguin Books, 2013.

Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando*. Harcourt, 1992.

### Recommended Reading(s)

- Ali, M. *Brick Lane*. Black Swan, 2004. 512p.  
Arnott, J. *The Long Firm*. Sceptre, 2000. 352p.  
Barrie, J.M. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. OUP Oxford, 2008. 288p.  
Benson, F. *Vertigo & Ghost: Poems*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2022. 112p.  
Brontë, C. *Jane Eyre*. Penguin Classics, 2006. 624p.  
Conan Doyle, A. *A Study in Scarlet*. Wordsworth Editions, 2001. 224p.  
Deane, S. *Reading in the Dark*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1998. 256p.  
Dickens, C. *Night Walks*. Penguin Classics, 2010. 128p.  
Dickens, Ch. *A Tale of Two Cities*. Penguin Classics, 2003. 544p.  
Dunn, N. *Up the Junction*. Little, Brown and Company, 1991. 160p.  
Graeme, K. *Wind in the Willows*. Farshore, 2021. 272p.  
Greene, G. *The End of the Affair*. Vintage Classics, 2004. 192p.  
Harrison, M. *Clay*. Bloomsbury Paperbacks, 2014. 272p.  
Ishiguro, K. *Never Let Me Go*. Faber & Faber, 2010. 304p.  
Lichtenstein, R., & Sinclair, I. *Rodinsky's Room*. Granta Books, 2000. 352p.  
Macfarlane, R. *The Old Ways*. Penguin, 2013. 448p.  
Malkani, G. *Londonstani*. Harper Perennial, 2007. 362p.  
Pinter, H. *Betrayal*. Faber & Faber, 2013. 128p.  
Smith, Z. *NW*. Penguin, 2013. 384p.  
Thomas, E. *Collected Poems*. Faber & Faber, 2004. 320p.  
Thomson, R. *Dreams of Leaving*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 1996. 448p.  
Woolf, V. *Mrs Dalloway*. Penguin Classics, 2019. 288p.  
Woolf, V. *Orlando*. Penguin Classics, 2020. 240p.

### Recommended Textbooks

- Bell, J., & Magrs, P. *The Creative Writing Coursebook* Edited. Macmillan, 2016. 449p.  
Gardner, J. *The Art of Fiction*. Vintage, 1991. 240p.  
Goldberg, N. *Writing Down the Bones*. Shambhala Publications, 2016. 244p.  
Le Guin, U.K. *Steering the Craft*. Mariner Books, 2015. 160p.  
McGilchrist, I. *The Master and his Emissary, the Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. Yale University Press, 2019. 616p.  
Strunk, W., & White, E. *The Elements of Style*. Pearson, 1999. 128p.  
Wood, J. *How Fiction Works*. Vintage, 2009. 240p.

## Course Calendar

<b>Session 1</b>	
Topics	<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE AND WRITING FIRST DRAFTS.</b>
Activity	Go through course syllabus. Discussion about the importance of observational writing, of keeping notebooks and/or journals. Discussion about writing first drafts. Exercises that explore the use of memory and of current experience.
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> Cowan, A. <i>The Art of Writing Fiction</i> , Chapter 2. It is recommended that you obtain a copy of this book <b>Assignments:</b> Research and write first draft of A1. Keep a regular notebook.

	Start working on your first short story (A1). Start to think about your presentation (P1). Begin to identify a place and a piece of writing associated with that place.
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<b>Session 2</b>	
Topics	<b>WHAT IS STRUCTURE?</b>
Activity	Film (SHERLOCK S1 Ep1) followed by discussion on Structure, based on the 'Architecture of Action' attributed to Ed Stern.
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> Cowan, A. The Art of Writing Fiction: Chapter 9 'Middles, Ends, Beginnings: Structure' <b>Assignments:</b> Keep notebook. Deliver A1, D1 (Assignment 1, Draft 1).

<b>Session 3</b>	
Topics	<b>FIELD TRIP: WRITING ABOUT PLACE: RIVER THAMES</b>
Activity	Field trip: walk from Covent Garden along the River Thames as far as Tower Bridge. This is an approximately two mile walk. We remember that the city of London has been and continues to be the location for thousands of literary works. We will start to close the gap between preconceived ideas about the city as we find it in literature or on the tube map, and as it appears before us.
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> Dickens, C. Night Walks Graeme, K. Wind in the Willows Woolf, V. Orlando. <b>Assignments:</b> Write up field notes of your thoughts regarding the river, original observations that you have made on the day (up to 500 words) focusing on the information from all your senses, not just sight, and bring them to the next class. Keep notebook. Read! PLEASE DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR THE WEATHER. If the weather forecast is very poor I may switch the classes so please check your emails.

<b>Session 4</b>	
Topics	<b>EXPLORING POINTS OF VIEW</b>
Activity	Exploring points of view. Deciding on who narrates a given story, and from what position, in terms of both time and space, is one of the first decisions the writer must make. We will do a number of exercises that explore this concept. Revisit SHERLOCK Act 1 to see how the writer achieved this goal.
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> (Excerpts from) Deane, S. Reading in the Dark Brontë, C. Jane Eyre Conan Doyle, A. A Study in Scarlet <b>Assignments:</b> Keep notebook. I will give you notes on A1.

<b>Session 5</b>	
Topics	<b>EXPRESSING IDEAS</b>

Activity	Expressing ideas in concrete terms: Show Me don't Tell Me. We will do a number of exercises which explore this concept. Film: DIRTY PRETTY THINGS.
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> Macfarlane, R. The Old Ways, Prologue <b>Assignments:</b> Notebooks! Submit A1 via Turnitin.

<b>Session 6</b>	
Topics	<b>FIELD TRIP: EAST END</b>
Activity	Field Trip to the East End. We will take a tour of the neighborhood frequented by the Kray twins, Jack the Ripper and more. The purpose of this trip is to observe the way in which legends and mythologies spring up so that real people transcend their histories to become semi-mythological characters.
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> Find and watch YouTube footage of Ronnie and/or Reggie Kray's funerals. <b>Assignments:</b> Keep notebooks. You should by now be considering the place and work of literature for your presentation (P1). Ask me if you need help with this.

<b>Session 7</b>	
Topics	<b>Midterm Break</b>

<b>Session 8</b>	
Topics	<b>EDITING</b>
Activity	A visiting writer will come to talk about their recent work. Conversation about editing. Exercises in editing.
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> TBC

<b>Session 9</b>	
Topics	<b>CHARACTER</b>
Activity	We will meet in class and discuss CHARACTER. The second part of the class will be spent at the Victoria and Albert Museum (TBC) on a field trip. Bring notebooks and pens as we will be observing, with great respect for the privacy of the staff and visitors to the museum, what we see and hear and discover in the museum. Think of it as an exercise in watching the world go by. We will be using these observations as the basis for character sketches next week. NB Write what you SEE, HEAR, SMELL not what you imagine or speculate. Think rather that you are a detective or undercover police officer. In other words, make notes that will bring your observations back to you factually when you re-read them.
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> TBC <b>Assignments:</b> Deliver A2, D1 (Assignment 2, Draft 1)

<b>Session 10</b>	
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Topics	
Activity	Bring your notes made in the museum with you to the classroom. Be prepared to read these out in class. I will then give you 20 questions based on Andrew Cowan's exercise with which we will begin the transition from observed life writing to fictionalized character. At this point you may speculate all you wish about your characters!
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> Cowan, A. The Art of Writing Fiction. '20 Questions' adaptation by Norbury K. <b>Assignments:</b> Notebooks! Your presentation is in 3 weeks. Identify the place and text for this.

<b>Session 11</b>	
Topics	<b>BEARING WITNESS</b>
Activity	Discussion and exercises about the importance for a writer of bearing witness inspired by the film PRIDE (2014). What is it? Why do we do it? What is the writer's purpose?
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> TBC <b>Assignments:</b> Notebooks! I will give you notes on A2, D1.

<b>Session 12</b>	
Topics	<b>FIELD STUDY.</b>
Activity	We will visit Kensington Gardens as a psycho-geographic exercise and compare chapter 1 of J.M. Barrie's 'Peter Pan In Kensington Gardens' with the gardens as we find them today. This will be a very different experience to that of the East End field trip earlier in the semester, where the landscape had been devastated by a combination of bombing and slum clearance. We will be comparing one of the wealthiest with one of the most disadvantaged parts of the city.
Readings and Assignments	<b>Readings:</b> Barrie, J.M. Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens, Chapter 1. <b>Assignments:</b> Prepare for your presentation next week! Submit A2 via Turnitin.

<b>Session 13</b>	
Topics	<b>CLASS PRESENTATIONS</b>
Activity	P1. A ten to fifteen minute presentation, including your own poem, that compares a place you have found within London with a text or work of literature associated with it. You will have written a poem that is born out of this experience, and your presentation can be about your process in writing this poem, or the insight you gained into your chosen writer, or the place, or a combination of all three. Please bring a hard copy of the poem with you on the day, and ALSO upload it to Turnitin. You may use maps, photographs, music, but please don't make a film instead of a presentation. It must be live! Please submit your written work as a word doc.x via Turnitin.
Readings and Assignments	<b>Assignments:</b> Submit P1 (written work) via Turnitin. Deadline: 15 April, midnight.



<b>Session 14</b>	
Topics	<b>WRITING WORKSHOP</b>
Activity	In class workshop to peer review memoir piece
Readings and Assignments	<b>Assignments:</b> Bring memoir draft

<b>Session 15</b>	
Topics	<b>WHY ARE WE DOING THIS? WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STORY TELLER?</b>
Activity	FILM (Living 2022) Discussion of spaciousness in the work of Kazuo Ishiguro and the purpose of story-telling. How has your thinking on this changed over the course of the semester?
Readings and Assignments	<b>Assignments:</b> TURN IN YOUR LAST ASSIGNMENT, a 1400-word MEMOIR PIECE that looks back at your experience of the last twelve weeks, via Turnitin.

## Section III: Academic Policies and Standards

### Academic Policies

Students are expected to review and understand all CEA CAPA student policies, including our [Academic Policies](#) and [Engagement Policy](#). CEA CAPA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time. Additional requirements that may be associated with a specific course or program are addressed in the term syllabus.

### Student Learning & Development Objectives

CEA CAPA has identified [Student Learning and Development Objectives \(SLDOs\)](#) for all programs in all locations: content in context, navigating differences, power and equity, critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, career and professional development, and sustainability and migration.

These are meta-level learning objectives that transcend coursework and are infused across all elements of program delivery, beyond specifics of course offerings, addressing student learning holistically and framing it a larger learning context.