

# CREATIVE WRITING 522

## “Teaching Creative Writing”

or “The Writer as Teacher” • Mondays 10-12 (Term 1 & 2, 2010/2011)

Creative Writing 522 Instructor: Ray Hsu  
“Teaching Creative Writing” Office Hours: After class or  
or “The Writer as Teacher” by appointment  
Mondays 10-12 (Term 1 & 2, 2010/2011) Email: ray.hsu@ubc.ca  
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## Course Description:

The classroom is our work of art. How do you teach in a discipline that has no explicit theory or methodology? Is there any truth to the adages, “Writing can’t be taught”? Or, “Those who can’t, teach”? In this course, you will develop your own teaching philosophy. Over the course of the year, you will feel increasingly prepared to teach in a variety of contexts by balancing intuition and knowledge.

This course, I should mention, is pass-fail and does not count towards your required number of “workshop” courses towards your degree. This course is hybrid: 50% seminar, 50% practicum, and 50% work of art. We’ll survey the scholarship of teaching and learning in the Creative Writing classroom. We’ll learn about the fundamental skills needed to run a Creative Writing classroom, including how to draft a good writing assignment, how to design a workshop, how to facilitate group critique, and how to hold an office hour. We’ll discuss the teaching of Creative Writing across different contexts, including primary and secondary schools, undergraduate and graduate programs, medical school, and ESL. We will invite exemplary teachers to discuss tips and strategies

Because this is one of the few full-year courses in Creative Writing, we can develop an arc beyond those of other courses. Because this is a graduate class rather than an undergraduate class, I will bring you to the edge of my thinking, where questions remain open. I will provide a framework within which you will collectively and individually direct your own learning. This course involves not only collaboration with community partners, but also collaboration with me: as we negotiate new challenges, you will vote on course policy in ways that will shape course development.

Since this is a class about teaching, I expect criticism about my own teaching. We will also analyze the teaching styles of other faculty members. You will examine your own simultaneous identities as both student and teacher: how does your experience of being a student inform your thinking and practice as a teacher?

At the end of every class I may ask for anonymous feedback based on what went well in the class as well as what suggestions you have for future classes.

# Course requirements:

Your final grade will be determined as follows

50%

Teaching portfolio

50%

Other work (including participation and peer critiques)

## **Attendance: Required Texts**

I spend the first few minutes of class going over administrative items. If you arrive after administration is done, then I must mark you as late. Notify me in advance of any absences. You get one absence free, no questions asked. If you miss two classes, then your final grade drops by 5%. Creative Writing policy is that if you miss three weeks worth of classes, you fail the course.

(available at UBC Bookstore, but feel free to order them online if you'd like):

Graeme Harper and Jeri Kroll, eds. *Creative Writing Studies*  
Paul Dawson, *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*

## **Course materials: Teaching Portfolio:**

Keep 1) a standard journal such as a bound book and 2) a binder for supplementary readings so that loose materials cannot be lost. These readings will be available on the course website.

The final project will be a Teaching Portfolio that will be organized according to what would best advance your teaching needs. Sample portfolios of alums of this course are available in PDF form. Here is an online sample from an alum:

<http://elizabethross.wordpress.com/about/>

You will include in your **teaching journal** (which you will not need to share):

- in-class weekly reflections, including such “question lists” for guest teachers, lists of future reading material, and conceptual tools that you cull from your writing
- goals and reflections for each of your teaching sessions. Write down non-binding goals before each class and write down reflections immediately after each class. Do not save these for later.



Your Teaching Portfolio may include:

**Your syllabus:** Each of you will draft a syllabus for your course. Do you want to work with children? Adults? Women? Which specific communities? What do you feel most equipped to teach?

**An interview** with a teacher who intrigues you: Each of you will interview a teacher who intrigues you.

**Annotated bibliography:** Keep a complete list of books read during the course, taking extensive notes on which assignments and readings most spoke to you.

# Time line:



The purpose of this timeline is to identify major steps for the Learning Exchange, Course Instructor, and students to take in order to establish placements with non-profits or schools. The timetable is based on you as a student delivering courses in October and then again during the second half of the course. It is expected that the first course would be mini-version of the winter course.

## Month

## Tasks

## Who

## Major Outputs

**Sept 13th**

1st week of class – In class orientation for students. Orientation to include:

- Overview of possible partner non-profits and schools
- Importance of students to contact Ray for support
- 1~2 students speak about their experiences last year
- Emphasize importance of being flexible in the placements
- Q&A

Ray

Students get a better understanding of non-profit or schools. Students begin envisioning their course design and target audience

**September 20nd**

2nd week of class:

- Further clarification of expectation/process for all parties
- Follow-up questions for placements.

Ray, Students,  
Ray to facilitate debrief with learning objectives.

Students more informed about teaching partnerships.

**September 27th**

4th week - Teaching Symposium

- Students submit short paragraph on their ideas for both mini course content and design to deliver in October. Students meet/email Ray to discuss potential placements and clarify any details
- End of September – Students approaches non-profit or school to coordinate final placement ideas that they have identified to do mini courses

Ray, Students

Students submit paragraph on their idea for course

List of students and their ideas for courses

List of potential placements for students based on their course ideas

# Month

# Tasks

# Who

# Major Outputs

**October 4th**

Note: Students to identify timetable changes that take place in January just in case)

Non-profit or school

Students have group meetings to share ideas and gain feedback (?)

Ray, Students

Students have one-on-one sessions with Ray to further refine their ideas;

Ray, Students

Students set up workshops to deliver in October and November as Mini sessions

2nd & 3rd week – Students develop/ negotiate/finalize placements.

Non-profit or school

Tentative list of placement matches, including contact information of all parties

Students contact non-profit or school depending on situation. Students finalize their ideas for courses to deliver in January

**October 25th**

## **Teaching Symposium**

**November**

- Early-November - First meeting between students and non-profit or school for January course:
- Meet to introduce student to non-profit or school.
- Discuss main idea for the

Students, Non-profit or school

Students to revise their syllabus based on meeting with Non-Profits/ Schools

## Month

## Tasks

## Who

## Major Outputs

course.

- Students can also ask about background of the course participants to get a sense of whom they will be teaching.
- If teaching in schools:
  1. Determine timetable for January and February
  2. Meet with classroom teacher as well. It is helpful when teacher “gets it” (i.e. Classroom teacher lets UBC students teach on their own and learn for themselves)
  3. UBC students need to learn what kids like/dislike, in order to cater to their interests

Mid-November – all placements for January have been finalized. Students to confirm with non-profits/schools.

students

Final list of placement matches

End of month – **Teaching Symposium**

Students to raise any concerns to Ray, Ray responds (on-going)

Students, (Ray)(Non-Profits/Schools)

## **Winter Break**

Students develop detailed plan for each session they will teach

students

Course plan is in place

# Month

# Tasks

# Who

# Major Outputs

## **January**

1st week of class – (may not be necessary) Third meeting between students and non-profits/schools. Go over final course outline and logistics. If possible, student meets with course participants.

Students, Non-Profits, Schools

2nd week of class – Begin students' courses

students

Students to raise concerns/issues with Ray

Ray

## **February**

Students continue their courses

students

Students to get in touch with Ray if facing any difficulties (on-going)

## **March**

End of month – Students wrap up their courses

students

Ray and students set dates for debrief sessions

Ray, Students, Non-Profits/Schools

## **April**

Debrief sessions:

Ray, Students, Non-Profits/Schools

1. Nonprofits/Schools and Student
2. Student and Ray
3. Ray and Nonprofit/School
  - Discuss how this year went.
  - Discuss possibilities for placement again next year.

Meeting minutes outlining what

went well this year, what could be improved next year

Students fill in evaluation of placements

students

Completed evaluations to be used for next year