Course Title: Novel III: Subtext, Theme, and Language  
Course Code: OWC 305 D  
Instructor: Nami Mun  
Pronouns: she/her

In this course, we will continue to build on the foundational elements of storytelling that have been laid down in the previous courses. We will home in on the relationships among present action, backstory, and subtext. We will ponder the crucial collision point between plot and characterization. Your novel’s subconscious concerns will slowly rise to the surface as we delve deeper and try to uncover your theme. This course will have an extensive workshop component, so the focus will stay on the students’ novels. The goal will be for each student to complete a draft—however rough it may be—of their novel before thesis instruction.

This is the official course description, as it appears in the Continuing Studies catalogue and website.

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Course Summary:

The overarching strategy for this course is to come at your novel-in-progress from two perspectives: macro- and microscopically.

Our work on the micro-level will involve (among other things) reading your prose with a keen, surgical eye, and trying to find the beautiful “weirdness” buried deep beneath the sentences. The goal here is not to show you how to chisel beautiful lines (though we’ll touch upon that at the end of the course) but how to read the lines you’ve already written so you can see what your sentences are trying to tell you. Let’s call this “prosody and potential.”

On the macro level, we’ll study the fabula of your novel (think “raw materials”), and the syuzhet (the manner in which you’re choosing to display your raw materials to the reader). In addition to covering the major aspects of novel writing, we’ll take stock of what you’ve written so far. You might ask yourself a few questions, namely, is the way I’m telling the story the best way to tell this story? Have I, for example, designed the right structure, created enough conflict, and weaved in enough obstacles, revelations, suspense and tension to catapult the reader to the novel’s end? What can I do to make the story thrum, to make the readers sit up, to make myself sit on the edge of my seat while writing? We’ll
see how we can complicate your characters further and, we’ll also do our best to unearth all of the complexities that live between characters, switching the focus from “characterization” to “relationships” as this approach can lead to characters developing more naturally and interestingly. Most importantly, we’ll ask the big question: what is this novel about and why.

Here’s our super-objective in a nutshell: Do everything in our power to propel our stories forward while remaining porous to new discoveries.

Overview

Do your best to read the below sentence in a stern but loving and supportive voice:

We only have 10 precious weeks to dive into crucial material and workshop MSS. So please be prepared to go from 0-80 mph, starting from day one. (Actually, even prior to day one.)

The course contains SIX components:

- Reading assignments before the course begins.* (Two novels, two short stories)
- Writing assignments during weeks 1 – 3 (various lengths)
- Workshops during weeks 4 – 10
- The Writing: 3500 words for Workshops and 4500 words for private submission solely to instructor
- Zoom Sessions/Zoom Workshops every Tuesday evening**

*My hope (read assumption) is that you will read both novels and the two short stories before our course begins. Both novels are quite short, as are the stories. If you need to be reading while we are in session, just know that there will be numerous spoilers.

**Zoom Sessions/Zoom Workshops are an integral part of this course. To get the absolute most out of our time together, do your best to block out Tuesday nights, from 6pm – 8pm (PDT) for our Zoom Sessions. Attendance is strongly encouraged, but if you can’t join us, please watch the recordings.

Writing Assignments: Weeks 1 - 3
Short writing assignments, usually 500 words or less.

Manuscript Workshops: Weeks 4 – 10

- ALL workshop manuscripts (word-max of 3500 words for this workshop) should be uploaded one week prior to the workshop date, giving everyone ample time to read and comment
- Each student has the option of submitting a mini synopsis to accompany their MS.
• I ask my students to read workshop MSS in a very particular manner. Prior to workshops, I’ll provide a lecture on this topic.

• In addition to each MS receiving written feedback on the discussion boards, each MS will also be workshopped live, via Zoom, on Tuesday evenings. I will ask specific questions with the goal of unearthing certain aspects of the MS that warrants further investigation.

• All Zoom-Workshops/Sessions will be recorded for those who cannot attend. (See note below about Zoom sessions.)

• One week after workshop, students will provide a second submission (word-max of 4500) but this time to the instructor only. The instructor will provide feedback via one-on-one telephone or Zoom conference. (A separate Canvas thread will be created for students who want to share these additional pages with the class, but please note: student feedback will be made completely optional.)

Readings:

Novels:
  • The Hole, by Hye-Young Pyun (208 pages)
  • Signs Preceding the End of the World, by Yuri Herrera (128 pages)

Stories:
  • “Bullet in the Brain,” by Tobias Wolff (from The Night in Question)
  • “The First Day” by Edward P. Jones, (from Lost in the City)

Weekly Routine:

Mondays: Work through that week’s lecture and assignments
Tuesdays: Attend Zoom Session or Zoom Workshops, 6PM (PDT)
  *If you were workshopped, please email me about our one-on-one conference
Wednesdays: Work on assignments and/or work on Workshop MS
Thursdays: Post assignments and/or written feedback onto Canvas
Fridays: New lectures/assignments will go live (on Canvas) by 5pm PDT
  I will post my feedback onto Canvas AFTER we’ve held our one-on-one conference
Weekends: Write as though you’re on fire. Read as though you’re getting paid to do so.

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.
Grade Options and Requirements:

- No Grade Requested (NGR)
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.

- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - Students must participate in at least 70% of work for this class, such as: reading assignments; writing assignments; peer-review/written feedback; viewing or attending Zoom sessions, etc.

- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - Students must participate in at least 70% of work for this class. (See above.)
  - Students must complete a draft of a short story or a fully developed novel chapter (to be discussed further in class).

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.

Zoom Session/Workshop Schedule*: (Attendance is encouraged.)

- Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m. PDT

Reiteration: Zoom Sessions/Zoom Workshops are an integral part of this course. To get the absolute most out of our time together, do your best to block out Tuesday nights, from 6pm – 8pm (PDT) on your calendar. Attendance is strongly encouraged, but if you can’t attend, please watch the recordings.

Tentative Weekly Outline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1:</th>
<th>Conflict: Chronic and Acute Conflicts; “3-2-1 Synopses”; Goals and Expectations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2:</td>
<td>The Fabula and the Syuzhet; Prosody and Potential, Obsession</td>
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<td>Week 3:</td>
<td>Events and Obstacles; Writing Goal Posts</td>
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<td>Week 4:</td>
<td>Codes of Suspense; Narrative Transportation</td>
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<td>Week 5:</td>
<td>Characters and Their Relationships</td>
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<td>Week 6:</td>
<td>Psychogeographica</td>
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<td>Week 7:</td>
<td>The Dialogue and the Dialectic</td>
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<td>Week 8:</td>
<td>Two Lectures in One: Writing Obsessions; Writing Past the Ending</td>
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<td>Week 9:</td>
<td>Characters, Redux</td>
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<td>Week 10:</td>
<td>Prosody and Effect</td>
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**Module Content**

Each module typically includes lecture content as well as readings, discussions, an assignment, and optional supplemental materials. Announcements will also be posted from time to time so consider setting your "announcement" notification preference to "notify me right away" to immediately receive the information via email.

- **Discussions:** I will provide Discussion Questions each week. These will be centered around the lecture, craft concepts, and readings. The Discussion board is there for the students to share ideas with one another. I’ll of course read everyone’s comments (I’ll hit the “like” button to let you know that I’ve read your comments) but my presence will be kept to a minimum.

  There is also a "Class Comments and Questions" discussion that is open throughout the course. This is a great place to post thoughts or questions related to the course topics, that don't seem to fit in any of the other discussions. Or questions about the structure of the course, assignment expectations, class grading requirements, and so on.

- **Assignments:** Our main focus will be on workshopping our novel pages (3500-word max). However, pertinent writing assignments will also be offered. After workshop, students will provide a second submission (word-max of 4500) but this time to the instructor only. The instructor will provide feedback via one-on-one telephone or Zoom conference. (A separate Canvas thread will be created for students who want to share these additional pages with the
class, but please note: student feedback for these additional pages will be made completely optional.)

• **Live Class Meetings:** A live class meeting, via Zoom, will be held each week on Tuesdays at 6:00pm (PDT). I’m obviously repeating myself here, but...these sessions/workshops are an integral part of this course. To get the absolute most out of our time together, do your best to block out Tuesday nights, from 6pm – 8pm (PDT). Attendance is strongly encouraged but ultimately optional. Each session will be recorded for those who are unable to attend. Please refer to the "Live Class Meeting (Zoom Session)" page each week for specific information (e.g., day and time, connection links, agenda) regarding the meeting for that particular week.