



Course Title: Fiction Writing—From Imitation to Inspiration

Course Code: FICT 72

Instructor: Angela Pneuman

Class Sessions and Recording

Meeting days and times: 8 Tuesdays, June 21 - August 16*, 6:30 - 9:20 pm (PT)

*No class meeting on July 26

Meeting location: Zoom (details will be shared with registered students prior to first class meeting)

The class sessions will be recorded. Weekly attendance is optimal for best participation, but if you need to miss a class the recording will be available.

Course Features

- Live session
 - Lecture, discussion, in-class writing, Q&A
- Assignments & Coursework
 - Assignments and course materials posted in Canvas and via email
 - Students will submit one piece for workshop
 - Instructor will provide brief feedback on weekly assignments
- Instructor available by appointment for office hours

Course Summary

According to Oscar Wilde (and a few others since him), “Good writers borrow, great writers steal.” In this spirit, developing writers should be encouraged to study and try out the approaches of authors they admire in order to add to the “toolbox” of their craft. When we experiment with another author’s style, we end up with an interesting marriage of their influence and our own sensibility, and this expands the way we think about approaching our own fiction projects. In this class, each week we’ll look carefully at several samples from one fiction writer to identify key elements of their style, including how they use language, how they establish character, how they get plot moving, what types of dramatic tension are in play, how they use humor, and more. Weekly creative exercises will give students a chance to try out the style of each author up for discussion—including Jesmyn Ward, Stuart Dybek, Lorrie Moore, Tommy Orange and others. The course will also include an opportunity to submit a longer selection of fiction—either a short story or part of a novel—for peer and instructor feedback during workshop. This class is suitable for any fiction writer eager to take a deep dive into studying the styles of well-known authors with an eye to enhancing their own work.

**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 complete four in-class or take-home weekly assignments, submit a piece for workshop, and respond briefly, in writing, to the workshop pieces of the group.
- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
 - Students must complete eight in-class or take-home weekly assignments, participate in live discussion (attendance necessary), submit a piece for workshop, and respond in writing to the group's workshop pieces.

**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.*

Textbooks/Required Materials

Since we will be reading short excerpts from a different author each week, our materials will be online links or handouts.

Pre-Class Assignment

Make a list of three favorite authors and try to identify three things that stand out to you as defining qualities of their style. You might note the use of lyrical or figurative language, or—on the other hand—very spare language; you might note sentence length or variation; you might note the types of places and people they choose to explore in their work, and whether the work moves forward with lots of dramatic, faced-paced event or more leisurely, with lots of reflection.

Tentative Weekly Outline

During each of our 8 weeks, we will look closely at excerpts from a single writer and discuss their approach and what we can learn from it. Classroom discussion of the reading will segue into brief, in-class and take-home fiction writing assignments where we attempt to practice one of the techniques we've identified and explore how we might use this expanded repertoire of techniques in our own fiction. Students will have the chance to share their exercises aloud. This class will also be a workshop, and students will have the opportunity to submit up to 10 pages of a short story or a novel excerpt for full or partial class feedback.

Instructor Bio

Angela Pneuman is the author of the novel *Lay It on My Heart* (Mariner/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) and the short story collection *Home Remedies* (Harcourt). Her fiction has appeared in *Best American Short Stories*, *Iowa Review*, *New England Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Glimmer Train*, and the *Los Angeles Review*, and she is a contributor to *Salon*, *The Believer*, and *The Rumpus*. She is a former Wallace Stegner Fellow in fiction at Stanford, and she holds an M.F.A. in writing and a

Ph.D. in English. She has taught fiction writing at Stanford University, Indiana University, SUNY Albany, and in the MFA program at Sarah Lawrence College. She directs the Napa Valley Writers' Conference.