



**Course Title: NOVEL 1: The Powerful Beginning**  
**Course Code: OWC 303 A**  
**Instructor: Martha Conway**

## Course Summary

The goal of Novel 1 is to help you write an opening of your book that will give you a sturdy jumping off point to move forward with the rest of your novel.

Writing a novel can be exciting, daunting, frustrating, and empowering. Questions arise even before you write the first sentence. Who is the protagonist? Who is telling the story? Is the story told in present or past tense? In first person or third? You may already know the answer to some of these questions, and others you'll discover (or change) as you go along.

You won't know the full scope of your story until you write all the way to the end of it. As you write, you learn what works or doesn't work, and you come to know more about the story and characters.

For this reason, this section of Novel 1 is focused on just that: writing. I've assigned two books on craft, and we will have a directed discussion on a different writing topic each week, but mostly I want you to write.

To that end, students are required to submit 500 words of new writing each week. We will also have ten minutes of "silent writing, together" via Zoom every Monday for those who can attend (not a requirement).

Other sections of Novel 1 offer the opportunity to get feedback on longer submissions (4,000-plus words). In this section, although you will give and receive feedback on your shorter submissions (via small groups), we concentrate instead on the weekly routine of writing. There will be NO long submissions.

## Textbooks

### Required

Ursula Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*

*The Writing Life: Writers on How They Think and Work*; A Collection from the *Washington Post Book World*

### Recommended

Nina Schuyler, *How to Write Stunning Sentences*

## Discussions

Every week there will be one or more discussion questions related to the assigned reading and/or lecture topic. You are required to post a short response to each question (25-200 words).

## Zoom Meetings

- Monday, 9:00-9:10 am Pacific Time, *Silent Writing, Together* (10 minutes, not required)
- Thursday, 4-5 pm Pacific Time, *Class Meeting* (recommended but not required)

## Due Dates (quick overview)

### Monday to Thursday

Post your discussion responses

### Wednesday by end of day:

Post your 500-word submission

### Thursday

Class Zoom session

### Friday by the end of the day:

Post responses to *all* the submissions in your small group.

## Grading

- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - Students will be required to submit at least 500 words (scenes, chapters, or partial scenes or chapters) per week.
  - Students will be required to give feedback on their peers' submissions (in small groups) every week.
  - Students must also participate in 90% of weekly discussions and/or Zoom sessions.

## Tentative Weekly Topics

(Note that we will also be looking at a variety of novels' opening pages throughout the course)

### Week 1: Beginning Strategies

### Week 2: The Tripwire

### Week 3: Character and Point of View

**Week 4: Building and Sustaining Tension**

**Week 5: Time in Fiction**

**Week 6: Language as Lens**

**Week 7: Story World**

**Week 8: Theme and Meaning**

**Week 9: Narrative Design/Structure and Outlining**

**Week 10: Moving Forward**