Course Title: Becoming a High-Velocity Writer: National Novel Writing Month
Course Code: NVL 21
Instructor: Chris Baty

Course Summary:

For this class, students will write their own 50,000-word (or longer) novel drafts in November. This is a tough but doable creative challenge, even for people with busy lives and zero novel-writing experience. To unleash the magic that occurs when a group works towards the same ambitious goal, we ask that you only enroll if you're committed to writing a 50,000-word novel draft with us in November.*

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.

Grade Options and Requirements:

• No Grade Requested (NGR)
  o Come to class, and bash out your 50,000-word novel.
• Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  o Come to class, participate in discussions, and bash out your 50,000-word novel.
• Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  o Come to class, participate in discussions, bash out your 50,000-word novel, and complete a 300- to 600-word supplemental writing assignment.

*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.

Tentative Weekly Outline:

Week One

WHAT HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?
• Introduction and course goals
• Two non-fictions and a fiction: Getting to know our noveling teammates
• NaNoWriMo: A brief history
• The curious benefits of cramming a novel into a month
• Why are you writing a novel this fall?
• The Two Questions
• Magna Carta I and the kinds of stories we might write in November

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
365 Lasuen St., Stanford, CA 94305
continuingstudies@stanford.edu
650-725-2650
Week Two
READYING YOUR LIFE FOR A MONTH OF LITERARY ABANDON
• Registering on NaNoWriMo.org and adding writing buddies
• What it takes to write 1,667 words a day
• Friends, family, and other noveling distractions
• A month without our inner editors
• Planning your writing schedule and incentives
• Setting up your writing space
• Writing tools
• Outlining: How much is necessary?
• The book we think we’re writing, and the book we’ll actually write

Week Three
NERDING OUT ON STORY STRUCTURE
• Why understanding story architecture is so helpful
• A primer on three-act structure
• The hero’s journey
• Won’t this result in miserably clichéd, predictable stories?

Week Four
MEETING OUR CHARACTERS
• Who are these people in your book, and what do they want from you?
• Exploring appearance, age, family, passions, pet peeves, guilty pleasures, weaknesses, secrets, etc.
• Character changes: Who are they now? Who might they become?
• Backstory: Plumbing your character’s past
• Great antagonists (external and internal)

Week Five
EXPLORING OUR STORIES
• Deciding on point of view
• Setting and world-building
• Possible turning points, subplots, and conflicts in our books
• Honing our elevator pitches and writing our blurbs
• The power of tone
• Historical and geographical research

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Week Six

FINAL PREP

• Tips on making writing sessions fun and productive
• Momentum vs. speed
• NaNoWriMo write-ins happening in Palo Alto and beyond
• Virtual class write-ins?
• Things to know for the upcoming first week of NaNoWriMo

Week Seven

AND WE’RE OFF!

• Public word-count check-in and treats
• Plot doctoring
• In-class writing sprints
• Confronting the urge to start over
• What to do if you’re falling behind
• Things to know for the upcoming second week of NaNoWriMo

Week Eight

GETTING OVER THE WEEK-TWO WALL

• Public word-count check-in and treats
• Plot doctoring
• In-class writing sprints
• What to do when you want to quit
• Some thoughts on the 20,000s
• Jumpstarting stalled stories
• Handling character mutinies
• Things to know for the upcoming third week of NaNoWriMo

Week Nine

THE HOME STRETCH

• Public word-count check-in and treats
• Plot doctoring
• In-class writing sprints
• The magic of 35,000
• The home stretch
• Surviving Thanksgiving with your word-count intact
• Things to know for the upcoming fourth and final week of NaNoWriMo

Week Ten

I WROTE A NOVEL! NOW WHAT?

• Revision intensive focusing on editing tips and timelines, fixing story vs. polishing prose, and how to get great feedback from beta readers.
• Novelist crowning ceremony, reading, and raucous party
• Sleep

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