Course Title: Novel Writing: How to Start Your Novel and Keep It Going
Course Code: NVL 06
Instructor: Angela Pneuman

Course Summary:

Our course, “Novel Writing: How to Start Your Novel and Keep It Going,” is designed to help you get off to a great start on a long, satisfying journey. We’ll focus on writing the opening section of a novel, pages that have enough energy to help you go the distance. Does this mean that when you’ve finished your draft the opening you’ve produced in this course will still work? Possibly. Possibly not. In fact, the end of your first draft may offer a whole new perspective on what the beginning needs. That’s where your revision process will kick in. But in this class, we’re focusing on the opening section of this very first effort, that exciting place for discovering your characters, their dramatic potential and the world they inhabit. These pages at this stage do the essential job of engaging you, the writer. These pages help you figure out the kind of material that will keep you vitally attentive for the long-haul, and this class will give you the opportunity to respond to all kinds of creative provocation. In lieu of an outline for the rest of the book, at the end of the course I'll ask you to write a précis—a one-page narrative summary of what you imagine will happen in the rest of the book based on the dynamics you’ve put into play with your first pages. A précis is often what a potential agent or publisher requests to accompany a sample chapter or two.

Each week, short one- to two-page writing assignments will help you work with your own subject matter as you practice handling the elements of fiction. These assignments, as well as class discussion and instructor feedback, are designed to help you develop an opening section of your book for our class workshop.

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

Course Materials:

Writing the Breakout Novel by Donald Mass (available in print and electronically)
http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=writing+the+breakout+novel

http://www.amazon.com/Writing-Breakout-Novel-Donald-Maass-ebook/dp/B00506WXJA/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1428959808&sr=1-1&keywords=writing+the+breakout+novel

The opening chapters of several novels available online.

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
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continuingstudies@stanford.edu
650-725-2650
Grade Options and Requirements:

- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - All assignments will be graded on a completed / not completed basis
    - 65% Satisfactory completion of portfolio, to include four of six weekly writing assignments and one 10- to 15-page opening section of your novel
    - 35% Participation, to include in-class discussion and thoughtful feedback on classmates’ workshop submission
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - A passing grade (for “Credit”) = at least 70% of expectations accomplished
- 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.

*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:

We’ll focus on outside readings, discussion of the elements of fiction, and writing assignments that explore these elements and spark the creative process. The last four weeks we’ll also focus on workshop, reducing the number of outside readings and assignments in favor of focusing on classmates’ writing. Workshops not only provide direct feedback on individual work, they also bring up helpful topics for all of us to think about while writing our own stories.

This syllabus is still very much in progress and subject to change.

Week 1: The Creative Habit

Week 2: Character

Week 3: Point of View

Week 4: Conflict

Week 5: Place, Time, Culture, the Material World

Week 6: Dialogue and Narrative Pace

Week 7: Conflict, Tension, Plot, Stakes
Week 8: Time, Structure

Week 9: Picking up Threads, Opening up Your Pages

Week 10: Moving Forward