Novel Bootcamp: Working Toward Publication (NVL 07)
Sara Houghteling

Course Meetings: Mondays, April 3-June 12 (no class May 29), 6:30-9:20
Location: TBA
Email: for enrolled students only

Guiding Principles, Goals, and Expectations: My goal for you for these next ten weeks is to help you advance significantly on your novel. To this end, our short weekly writing exercises are designed to give you a range of writerly tools with which to experiment; each is tied to that week's assigned reading. These exercises will help keep you writing even during the fallow periods—and, hopefully, they're fun and interesting too. I encourage you to employ the characters and settings from your novel in these smaller assignments. I’ll respond to these weekly pieces very briefly, and at length to your workshop submission.

I encourage you to write every day, if you can. What's most important for the class is that you complete your story for workshop and your weekly reader responses to your peers' stories. This is required of everyone, even if you're not taking the class for credit.

I hope what we read will stay with you for a long time. My goal for you is to write as much as possible.

Your Piece for Workshop:

*Its format and supplementary materials:*

- Your manuscript should be roughly between 3,000 and 6,500 words (with 7,000 as the absolute upper limit. Shorter than 3,000 words is fine).
- If you're not giving us the novel from its outset, you must include a summary (as brief as possible) to bring the reader up to speed.
- Please also include a process letter to me about your perception of the piece’s strengths and challenges (more on this later).

Overview of Workshop Logistics:
We'll discuss this at greater length during class. The general outline is:

1) We'll sign up for workshop slots on the first day of class. Workshop will begin on our third meeting.
2) Bring copies of your manuscript to class the week prior to your workshop date.
3) Everyone marks their peer's manuscript with questions and comments and writes a feedback letter for each workshop piece.
4) We will discuss each manuscript for approximately 20 minutes depending on how many students are in the class.

Course Grading: The default option for this class is “No grade requested.” If you choose Credit/No Credit, your class attendance will determine that you receive a passing grade. If you take the class for a letter grade, workshop participation and completion of the assignments will determine your grade. You can change your grade status up until the last meeting of our class.

Required Text: *Smiley's People* (Penguin), John Le Carré. If you would like to purchase the edition I have recommended, then you will easily be able to follow along with the page numbers during our class’s discussion—however, it's not essential and I'm happy for you to purchase a used version or to take it out of the library, etc.

Optional Texts: I will periodically assign excerpts from James Woods’ *How Fiction Works*, Charles Baxter’s *The Art of Subtext* and Tom Chiarella’s *Writing Dialogue*, all which are excellent. I highly recommend these books for those wanting further in-depth craft study.
All other required readings are available online via the Continuing Studies website; these readings will not be available until the course begins.

**Additional Expenses:** A) There will be a nominal fee for some of the copyrighted material posted online. B) On the day of your workshop, you will need to bring a copy of your manuscript for everyone in the class, so please budget for this additional expense.

**Course Schedule (Subject to change)**

**WEEK ONE: April 3**

**Introductions.**
Discussion of model authors. Character studies. First pieces for workshop distributed in class and via email.

Homework: a) Please read entire syllabus thoroughly, and especially if you missed our first session. I hope this will answer most of your questions!  b) Read Madame Bovary (Flaubert) excerpt. c) Writing Exercise One. Optional: The Things They Carried, (Tim O’Brien). The Scene Beast (Hribal). Excerpt from Transit of Venus (Shirley Hazzard). Profile of Nora Roberts; Jonathan Franzen on Edith Wharton; Michael Chabon on Finnegan’s Wake.

**WEEK TWO: April 10**

**Scene, Ellipses, Point-of-View (Part I): Learning from Flaubert.**
Discuss Madame Bovary excerpt.

Homework: Read up to page 105 (the end of Chapter 8) of Smiley’s People (Le Carré). Writing Exercise Two. Optional: Craft Reading TBA

**WEEK THREE: April 17**

**Swift and Stately Introductions: People, Plot, Place.**
Discuss Smiley’s People (Le Carré). Workshop.

Homework: Writing Exercise Three. Read excerpts from Lolita.

**WEEK FOUR: April 24**

**Narrators, Narrative Frames**
Workshop. Discuss Lolita.

Homework: Writing exercises and readings based on Epitaph of a Small Winner (Machado de Assis).

**WEEK FIVE: May 1**

**The Intrusive Authorial Voice, and When No Writing is Sometimes Better than Writing**
Workshop. Discuss Epitaph of a Small Winner (Machado de Assis).

WEEK SIX: May 8

Third Person, and Where No Character is a Minor Character: Pacing Your Scenes & Determining their Components

Homework: Read *Paris Review* interview and excerpts of author’s novel. *Paris Review* Writing Exercise—please read this early in the week, as it has a “class participation” component 😎.

WEEK SEVEN: May 15

Scavengers
Workshop. Discuss *Paris Review* findings. We discuss MFAs, writers’ conferences, and the vicissitudes of publishing (writing query letters to agents, writing in concentric circles around your chosen topic, and submitting short stories for publication).

Homework: Agent query letters due next week.

WEEK EIGHT: May 22

Publishing and Publisher’s Round-up
2) Agent query letters due in class.
3) Workshop.

Homework: Read excerpts from *White Teeth* (Zadie Smith). Smith Writing Exercise.

May 29th—no class

WEEK NINE: June 5

Doubles and foils: Plot and Characterization
Workshop. Discuss *White Teeth* (Zadie Smith).
Homework: TBA

WEEK TEN: June 12

Workshop. Goodbye party!