

Course: LS 810, fall 2021

Instructor: Sasha Colby

Contact: scolby@sfu.ca

Office hours: Zoom by appointment

**Course Schedule: Zoom meeting Weds. 6 pm
and weekly written participation**

This course will be offered entirely remotely through weekly Zoom meetings at ***6 pm on Wednesdays and an online community writing forum on Canvas.***

Please note that course books will *not* be available from the SFU Bookstore. Rather, the 8 books should be purchased from a local or online seller.

LS 810: The Art of Writing

In the practice of most arts, technique is widely discussed. Outside of writing programs, however, there is often surprisingly little discussion of writing itself, with a primary focus on *what* is being said (content) rather than *how* this is achieved (form). In this course, we will reverse this emphasis, traversing academic writing, literary non-fiction, and fiction to explore the common formal characteristics of notable writing (voice, detail, atmosphere, etc.) as well as qualities specific to each genre. To do this, we will be *slow-reading* each text - including some foundational GLS works - exploring writing techniques and strategies to better understand the elements of form. We will also embark on a hands-on application as students write one sustained piece of academic writing, literary non-fiction or fiction according to preference. This work will then be workshopped by class participants and the instructor in a rigorous and respectful application of the principles we have studied. At the end of the course, students will re-write their work for submission, with final projects appearing on *The GLS Journal* portal of *The Ormsby Review*. The overriding goals of the course are to emerge with an advanced understanding of literary form, a polished piece of published writing, and an effective writing tool-kit for future academic and creative writing endeavours.

Fiction (the novella and beyond):

James, Henry. *Daisy Miller and Other Tales*. Penguin, 2017.

Mann, Thomas. *Death in Venice*. Vintage, 2010.

Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Penguin, 2011.

Literary Non-Fiction:

Didion, Joan. *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008.

Baldwin, James. *Notes of a Native Son*. Penguin, 2018.

Writing and story:

King, Thomas. *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well*. Harper, 2016.

Hodgins, Jack. *A Passion for Narrative*. McClelland and Stewart, 2001.

A note on writing guides: These are helpful volumes about writing. They are not sacred texts. They are there to offer suggestions and remind you of important elements. But they should in no way inhibit you and you are welcome to disagree with the advice, which is to say they are also there to generate debate.

Academic Writing - Texts to be made available through Canvas and the Library System

Cultural Criticism - broad and applied

Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History."

Sturken, Marita. "The Wall, the screen, the image."

For(m) and against:

Updike, John. "On Literary Biography."

O'Brien, Sharon. "Feminist Theory and Literary Biography"

Formal criticism/close reading:

Mumford, Peter. Introduction. *Memory and Desire: Representations of Passion in the Novella*

Assignments:

Letters: 20%

Workshop Participation: 20%

Draft submission: 20%

Final Assignment: 40%

*Note: All assignments must be completed to achieve a passing grade.