



# ENGL\*2920 Elements of Creative Writing

Fall 2020

Section(s): 01

School of English and Theatre Studies

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - September 08, 2020

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## 1 Course Details

### 1.1 Calendar Description

This lecture course focuses on teaching character, dialogue, setting and plot. Students will learn how to create a compelling narrative, as well as recognize the key successful elements in the narratives that surround us, for example advertisements, blogs, or film, television, etc. Student skills are developed through a combination of lectures, in-class workshops, peer editing, and short written assignments.

**Pre-Requisites:** 4.00 credits

### 1.2 Course Description

This course invites you to explore fundamental elements of creative writing, understood as an ongoing, layered (and not linear) process: e.g., story construction, character development, voice and perspective, figural language, imagery, theme, structure, drafting, and revision. Working across the primary genres of poetry, prose narrative (fiction and creative nonfiction), and rudimentary screenwriting, you will examine varied, effective examples of literature, film and television, thereby improving your skills in attentive, critically astute reading and reception that are essential to the creation of compelling and original work for an external audience. Course work will also consist of informal learning activities, the drafting and revising of short pieces, constructive peer feedback and discussion, and the preparation and submission of a final portfolio.

### 1.3 Timetable

Timetable is subject to change. Please see our CourseLink site and WebAdvisor for the latest information.

### 1.4 Final Exam

There is no final exam in this course.

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## 2 Instructional Support

### 2.1 Instructional Support Team

<b>Instructor:</b>	Elaine Chang
<b>Email:</b>	echang@uoguelph.ca
<b>Telephone:</b>	+1-519-824-4120 x53258
<b>Office:</b>	MCKN 440
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Please see CourseLink for my and our TAs' office hours and availability. Please note that I will not be on campus F20.

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## 3 Learning Resources

### 3.1 Required Resources

Elaine Chang (Textbook)

**Course Texts:**

**Required:**

- Nancy Pagh, *Write Moves: A Creative Writing Guide and Anthology*.

An e-version of this textbook will not be available until 2021 at the earliest. Thus far, the press has issued print editions only, principally to ensure that anthologized authors receive adequate royalties for their work. The Library has copies on Reserve, but they cannot be borrowed in the current environment. If you require an e-version owing to accommodations, please contact SAS and/or the Library for assistance. Otherwise, please purchase or arrange to have ready sharing access to a print edition of this textbook. Your TAs and I may work with PDF copies live on screenshare during class time; but we are required by copyright to blank out or remove these pages before we make recordings available to you.

See Course Schedule and Modules, arranged by weeks, for assigned chapters and anthologized works in Pagh's *Write Moves*.

**Other Required Texts:**

- Ares Course e-Reserve: Assigned Texts not included in the Anthology.
- CourseLink: for Assigned and Recommended Texts, Images, and/or Clips.
- CourseLink: to view Assignment Guidelines and to post to Discussion Forums for Learning Activities, where applicable.
- Suggested: Two (or more) slim notebooks for required Learning Activities (e.g., one for “**LAB**” and “**PEN**,” and one for “**GYM**,” and “**SA**”; reading notes, and jolts of inspiration – or in other combinations): Nancy Pagh recommends notebooks with paper that feels good to the touch, and a writing implement that feels comfortable as it glides across the page. (I like the softcover, lined Moleskine “Cahiers.” There’s a definite “snob factor” associated with these items, but they’re often on sale from Indigo.)
- For Learning Activities work (LAB, GYM, PEN, SA), you can scan page(s) or photograph them with your cellphone and submit files (e.g., JPG, PDF) to Dropbox—by indicated dates or on the same day.
- If you have mobility, dexterity, or other concerns with handwriting, you can do the Learning Activities, etc. on your computer—and submit the relevant PDF or DOC/DOCX files to Dropbox.
- Another alternative would be to enter your “GYM” work into a personal Blog, such as you can create on [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com). Please submit both a copy and the link to a specific entry to Dropbox.
- If your teammates have the necessary bandwidth, etc., you can offer your feedback to them on video or audio files. Please video + audio record your team meetings, during or out of class time; and submit video files or screening platform links to Dropbox. You do not need to have your camera on if you prefer not to. (See Course Notes.)

**3.2 Recommended Resources****Elaine Chang (Textbook)*****Strongly Recommended:***

- Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*.

Goldberg may be the most widely known and most frequently cited writing teacher in the English-speaking world. Her methodology of mindfulness, grounded in the practice of Zen meditation, is the foundation of Pagh’s approach; and is central to the teaching and learning philosophy of this course as well.

**Recommended:**

- Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*; **and** Michael Cunningham, *The Hours*.
- Ben Lerner, *Leaving the Atocha Station*.

These fictional novels depicting the writer’s process have been staples of this course’s Library Reserve items. Only the last title is currently available, via Ares, in electronic form. Yet you may, if interested, find and read the other two as well.

## 4 Learning Outcomes

### 4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Learning Outcomes:

Over the course of the semester, you will:

1. Develop and apply mindful and critical reading and viewing strategies so as to engage insightfully with—and learn “how-you-can-do-it-too” from—exemplary works of poetry, short fiction, creative nonfiction, and film/screenwriting.
2. Identify, experiment with, and gain invaluable practice in the key stylistic and structural elements and techniques of different genres and media.
3. Heighten your powers of perception and bring your original creative ideas to life: developing them, incrementally and recursively, from informal learning activities, such as prompted free-writing and focalized exercises, to the invention and completion of short writing assignments geared toward specific genres and

practices.

4. Demonstrate your own nuanced and detailed comprehension of the fundamentals of storytelling, in particular and in different forms, including character, voice, setting, and perspective—and the vital importance of tension and conflict in story structure, advancement, and “arcing.”
5. Practice and participate actively in the necessarily social and “worldly” process of rewriting and revision, becoming an increasingly perceptive and objective reader of your own writing and that of others through peer feedback and discussion.
6. Strengthen and refine your powers of empathy, a tangible quality, through respectful interaction with points of view and human experiences that may differ widely from your own—acquiring proficiency in the evaluation of artistic works without leveling judgment, in the assessment of their effectiveness or ineffectiveness on their own terms, rather than on the narrow basis of mere “liking” and “disliking.”
7. Further sharpen your creative and critical appraisal skills, applying them to your own writing as you select, revise, write anew, and organize the finest examples of your work all semester in a final portfolio collection.
8. Situate and account for your own creative growth and your own foremost thematic, social-cultural, or other concerns in self-assessments, which will culminate in an Artist’s Statement that you include in your final portfolio.

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## 5 Teaching and Learning Activities

Please note: The Learning Activities, and Peer Feedback Workshops and Self-Assessments in which you’ll participate (35% of the total grade) are **lower-risk, lower-stakes categories of your work for this course**. Simply by completing these exercises and activities, and submitting evidence of completion, you will receive up to 100% for each component, or up to the entire 35% in total. The underlying teaching philosophy is quite simple: “We learn by **doing** .” Some of these activities and exercises may seem trivial or arbitrary to different people at different times, but they’ve all been designed with thought to how they might evolve into your longer graded assignments, and the pieces you include in your Final Portfolio.

(I also hope you have fun “in” our LAB and GYM, that maybe you get hooked on mindful writing; many previous students continue this practice to this day!)

Your LAB and GYM notebooks or files are your own creative resources. Neither I nor our TAs will evaluate the contents; we will simply document completion and submission. These are your personal inspiration dossiers, from which you can build assignments or other work. You can draw further inspiration, if you like, from required and non-required portions of the *Write Moves* anthology.

***In-class Learning Activities (aka LAB; see "CourseLink: Content"):***

Like "controlled experiments," these timed and prompted free-writing exercises **undertaken during synchronous class time** will enable you to acquire greater competence and confidence through the "doing in the moment": by producing 5-minute bursts of writing (10 in total) that might feature vivid description, "speaking" in character, and/or another creative writing faculty or element. Percentages of the grade will be calculated at defined points during the semester and also after classes end. **If you are unable to participate in the occasional synchronous session, please see "Assessments: LAB" for asynchronous alternatives.** It would be up to you to make up this work as quickly as possible; but complete marks can be tabulated before Final Grades are submitted.

***Asynchronous Learning Activities (aka GYM; see "CourseLink: Content"):***

Like workouts targeting specific "creative muscles," these activities (15 in total) **undertaken on your own time, ideally before the specified dates unless otherwise indicated**, will provide guidelines, emphases, and parameters for exercises intended to hone particular skills: e.g., close reading, modes of seeing and hearing with the mind, preparing for group discussion. Percentages of the grade will be calculated at points in the semester and also after classes end.

**Peer Feedback Workshops (aka PEN; see “CourseLink Content”):**

By Week 2, you will be randomly grouped into a team of 5 students (maximum). It will be up to you as a team to decide if you will meet for **Peer Feedback** (5 workshops in total) during scheduled class time or by other arrangement, and by what means: Zoom, Teams, and/or in words (e.g., on your team’s CL Discussion Board). Each team member will quickly assess the other members’ participation in and contribution to Peer Feedback (See *Write Moves*, “Feedback and Workshop,” 54-7, for general criteria) and submit their confidential scores—either 1 or 0—to Dropbox. A “1” will mean “satisfactory.” A “0,” “unsatisfactory”; if you file a “0” for a fellow student, you must provide a rationale for your evaluation.

If a majority of members file 0’s for another, credit for Peer Feedback will not be earned. Rationales will be confidential; but disputes, if any, should be handled as a team. If a team member is not pulling their own weight; or impeding the work of the team as a whole, please notify your TAs and me as early in the semester as possible. Ideally, your “PEN” team should be both judiciously critical and fully supportive of your work-in-progress, with all members interacting with mutual respect and invested in each other’s success. (See “University Statements: **Netiquette**” and the appropriate CourseLink “**Checklists**” for PEN-related work.)

**Self-Assessments (aka SA; see “CourseLink Content”):**

**Self-Assessments** will be called for periodically (5 times; see “Schedule”). These are opportunities for you to reflect on and process where you feel you are with your writing and where you’d like to go next; and will include your taking stock of the peer feedback that you receive at least once during the semester. You may write them up in one of your notebooks, or separately, before submitting them one at a time to Dropbox. The Self-Assessments will be counted and credited after classes end.

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## 6 Assessments

### 6.1 Marking Schemes & Distributions

Learning Activities—Synchronous (aka **LAB**, or “**L**earning **A**ctivity to **B**egin”):

10% (pass/fail)

Learning Activities—Asynchronous (aka **GYM**, or “**G**etting **Y**ourself **M**otivated”):

15% (pass/fail)

Peer Feedback Workshops (aka **PEN**, or “**P**eer **E**xchange **N**etwork”):

5% (pass/fail)

Self-Assessments (aka **SA**, probably self-explanatory):

5% (pass/fail)

3 **Short Writing Assignments** (aka **SWA** 1, 2, and 3):

30% (10% each, graded)



Final Portfolio, including approximately 5-page centrepiece:

35% (graded)

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## 7 Course Statements

### 7.1 Course Procedures and Policies

#### COURSELINK ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Please **subscribe** to receive emailed copies of Announcements—which appear on your screen first thing, as you log onto our CourseLink course site. Prepared by me or your TAs, Announcements are the primary conduit of new or updated information—as well as they serve as introductions to the week/module ahead.

#### TECHNICAL AND LOGISTICAL ISSUES:

If you have questions or problems with our CourseLink site itself, please contact **CourseLink Technical Support**: [courselink@uoguelph.ca](mailto:courselink@uoguelph.ca); 519.824.4120 x56939 or 1.866.275.1478 (USA/CAN). <https://support.opened.uoguelph.ca/contact>

Please report any other problems—such as may interfere with assignment submission, video or audio reception, etc.—to the CourseLink Discussion Board: **Course Logistics: Problems, Q & A**. Your TAs and I will check this Discussion Board frequently. If you're a student who knows the solution to another student's concern, please feel free to post replies. (It's quite likely that you'll have more answers, and better answers, than we do!)

INSTRUCTOR AND TA OFFICE HOURS; INTERNET AVAILABILITY:

These will be a combination of “live drop-in sessions” during synchronous course time, and additional online office hours. Please see “Schedule” and/or “Announcements” for Zoom or Teams links. Drop-In Office Hours during class time will generally utilize the same link needed to log onto synchronous class instruction. You may be placed in a Waiting Room and sequenced to speak with me or a TA on a first-come, first-served basis; or you may be polled for common concerns and placed in a Breakout Room to chat with your classmates as well as a TA or me. You can, of course, leave a Breakout Room if you get the answers you need from your peers, before meeting with one or more of us.

Your TAs and I will do our utmost to be respond to email within 72 hours; please email all of us if you wish to receive the most expedient reply. And please bring your questions, drafts, etc. to drop-in office hours whenever possible for you to do so, and understand the importance of our “off-the-grid parameters”:

- **Prof. Elaine Chang**

Drop-In Office Meetings: M after synchronous class work to 1:30PM; and by appointment. Off-the-Grid: W, Th, most weekends.

- **Please see CourseLink: “About Your TAs”** for their Office House and Off-the-Grid parameters.

We will be posting links/URLs to Zoom and Teams to enable you to join synchronous class sessions, peer team workshops, etc. where applicable in **CourseLink: Schedule**. You can enter these invitations/links into your personal Outlook or other Calendar. You can also consult **Module Maps** for links. But please be alert to **Announcements** and your UG email in the event that the TAs or I must switch platforms for technical or other reasons that may unavoidably arise.

When synchronous learning segments are over, you can indicate to me and/or a TA your readiness to meet in virtual/drop-in office hours. We will be alerted by sounds that tell us that someone or some folks are waiting for us.

CONTENT AND SPOILER WARNINGS:

**\*\*\* This course contains material that deals with difficult subjects, traumatic experiences,**

**and potentially offensive expression: such as violence, abuse, war, sexuality, coarse language, bigotry, and controversial social and political issues \*\*\***

We may also screen clips of films and television shows that time constraints do not permit us to view in their entirety, and which you may not have already seen. Please seriously consider whether any of these factors, which **cannot be avoided**, could negatively affect your participation in this course. I will do my best to post individual trigger warnings to our **Module Maps** on CourseLink; titles of anthologized literary works or films, etc. may offer you additional information.

#### FEEDBACK: BEST PRACTICES:

Sharing our writing with others, especially rough or tentative work, is always an intimidating prospect. Yet all writers worth the name release their work into “the world” to some significant degree; and feedback is essential to the process of revision and rewriting (which is furthermore inseparable from any notion of “creative writing”). Please see “Netiquette” below and Pugh’s chapter on “Revision” (48-63), especially her guidelines for Workshops (54-7), on how to give and receive constructive criticism. (“I like it” or “I don’t like it” alone won’t “cut it” in this class!) You will also be provided with Checklists to assist with the process.

#### STUDENTS REGISTERED WITH SAS:

If you have medical accommodations that require adjustments to assignments or scheduling, or which could inadvertently affect the concentration or participation of other students, please consult with me, or have your counsellor contact me, at the earliest opportunity. We will respect your privacy and make every effort possible to enable you to participate fully and succeed in this course.

#### USE OF REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:

Much of the “Writing Guide” portion of Nancy Pagh’s book may be useful to you as a reference resource, including helpful definitions and expositions, advice, and examples; you are responsible for the assigned portions but may wish to extend your reading beyond what’s required. It is up to you whether or not you read the chapter opening segments ***italicized in blue type***: these are Pagh’s engagingly personal-anecdotal introductions to her chapters. You are not required to undertake all the suggestions included in the “Your Moves” final section of each chapter: some provide blueprints for our LAB and GYM Learning Activities; the rest you can review when you need inspiration or a new direction. She has many excellent ideas, but you’re certainly not expected to try them all out.

Anthology selections are listed in the Schedule by author’s surname (and with “Pagh” as the source text), and title. All texts (poems, short stories, personal essays, etc.) are organized alphabetically by authors’ names in the second half of the book. **There are alternative Tables of Contents that may be useful if you’re thinking about particular genres or themes/issues: see Pagh, 191-206.**

#### LATE OR MISSED COURSE WORK:

If you are unable to attend a synchronous course session or segment, lose connectivity or other access, or require an extension, please do not worry, and please contact your two TAs as much in advance or as soon afterwards as possible. Given the unprecedented nature of “pandemic education,” we will provide alternative modes of satisfying requirements whenever possible. **Please see University Statements, however, for warnings about false reporting of technical or other difficulties** (which I genuinely hope will prove unnecessary).

Also, missed LAB activities (in live, synchronous class time) can’t be completed after the fact, as the important aspect of spontaneity and surprise would be lost. If you miss a LAB, please substitute another free-write using the alternative prompted writing site(s) provided and submit proof of completion (photo or etc.) to Dropbox as soon as you possibly can. Please also note if a particular LAB activity “funnels” into an assignment; and watch the recorded video of the relevant, missed session or read its text equivalent. It may take time, however, for us to either make text equivalents like transcripts or notes available; you may need to explore options of your own, although we’ll do all we can to facilitate your learning and to provide the most assistance possible.

“GYM” learning activities can be submitted in daily/weekly or in 3 installments (see Schedule), which may give anyone who needs it the extra time to catch up.

Extensions on assignments and the final portfolio can be approved and arranged on a case-by-case basis only. If you are granted an extension, we may find that there isn’t sufficient time for us to offer substantial commentary.

## 7.2 University Statements, Pt 2

### **MEDICAL NOTES:**

**The University will not normally require verification of illness (doctors' notes) for fall 2020 or winter 2021 semester courses. However, requests for Academic Consideration may still require medical documentation as appropriate.**

**NETIQUETTE STATEMENT:**

**Inappropriate online behaviour will not be tolerated. Examples of inappropriate online behaviour include:**

- Posting inflammatory messages about your instructor, TAs, or fellow students
  
- Using obscene or offensive language online
  
- Copying or presenting someone else's work as your own





- Using the course website to promote profit-driven products or services
  
- Attempting to compromise the security or functionality of the learning management system
  
- Sharing your username and password
  
- Recording lectures without the permission of the instructor

**PRIVACY GUIDE:**

**Recording of Lecture Materials**

The University of Guelph's primary mode of course delivery has shifted from face-to-face instruction to remote and online learning due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, some learning activities (e.g., synchronous lectures or student presentations and peer workshops) may be recorded by faculty, instructors, and TAs and posted to CourseLink for grading and dissemination; students may be recorded or record themselves during these sessions.

By enrolling in a course, it is assumed that students agree to the possibility of being recorded during lecture, seminar, or other "live" course activities, whether delivery is in-class or online/remote.

If a student prefers not to be distinguishable during a recording, they may:

1. turn off their camera
2. mute their microphone
3. edit their name (e.g., initials only) upon entry to each session
4. use the chat function to pose questions.

Students who express to their instructor that they, or a reference to their name or person, do not wish to be recorded may discuss possible alternatives or accommodations with their instructor.

## **8 University Statements**

### **8.1 Email Communication**

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

### **8.2 When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement**

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a

teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. The grounds for Academic Consideration are detailed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/index.shtml>

### 8.3 Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all students (undergraduate, graduate and diploma) except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

### 8.4 Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

### 8.5 Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance and not later than the 40th Class Day.

For Guelph students, information can be found on the SAS website  
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas>

For Ridgetown students, information can be found on the Ridgetown SAS website  
<https://www.ridgetownc.com/services/accessibilityservices.cfm>

## 8.6 Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community-faculty, staff, and students-to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff, and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that encourages academic integrity. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct  
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct  
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

## 8.7 Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work - including lectures - cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

## 8.8 Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs.

Academic Calendars  
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/academics/calendars>

## **8.9 Disclaimer**

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (<https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>) and circulated by email.

## **8.10 Illness**

The University will not normally require verification of illness (doctor's notes) for fall 2020 or winter 2021 semester courses. However, requests for Academic Consideration may still require medical documentation as appropriate.

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