

2025-26

Full Name: Writing Prose Fiction: A Toolkit

Short Name: **Prose Fiction: A Toolkit**

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Una Mannion umannion@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught: Hilary

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this course a student should be able to:

1. generate original ideas for fiction
2. demonstrate skills in narrative craft, including characterization, story structure, voice, point of view, dialogue, aesthetic use of language and description
3. read texts closely with a view to understanding the method of their composition and what craft and techniques can be applied to own writing
4. critically evaluate and discuss the value of literary experimentation across forms and genres
5. develop analytical and editing skills in order to evaluate own work in progress and that of peers
6. give considered and constructive feedback to others on literary works in progress
7. demonstrate ability to revise texts in response to feedback from peers and instructors
8. produce a work of fiction that has been reimagined, developed, and edited through workshop process

Learning Aims:

- To understand the elements of prose fiction and to apply these to works in progress
- To practice writing modes and take work through revision and editing processes
- To engage in collaborative environment with other students, giving and receiving feedback and refining an authorial voice

Content:

In Writing Prose Fiction: A Toolkit, students are introduced to a range of technical and imaginative concerns in creative writing. Through close reading of literary texts, exercises, and experimentation, we will develop our narrative craft, including plot, characterisation, voice, point of view, and language. Close attention will be given to the scene and how to build the narrative tension that keeps a reader turning the pages. We will focus on how writers do what they do, the technical strategies they deploy and consider how these might be used in our own work. Our writing will also develop by attention to the work of our peers and through close analysis and revision of our own work through writing workshops.

Students must be willing to participate in workshops, giving and receiving considered and constructive feedback.

This course is intended for students who have already been writing fiction in their own time, and who wish to develop their work in a more formal structure. Teaching will take place in small group workshops to facilitate the attention to detail such a course requires. Class numbers will be capped at 10 students. The course contains a reading element, including both works of fiction and other books relevant to the art of writing fiction..

Assessment Details:

Number of Components: Two

First component: Fiction: 90% of overall mark.

Students will be required to submit a work fiction that has been workshopped in the class.

Word Count of Fiction: 4,000/5,000

Second Component: Observational Journal: 10% of overall mark. No word count given.

Preliminary Reading List:

Andrew Cowan, *The Art of Writing Fiction*, 2nd edition (2024)

Lucy Caldwell, ed., *Being Various* (2019)

Anne Enright, *The Gathering* (2007)

Mariana Enriquez, *Things We Lost in the Fire* (2016)

Annie Ernaux, *Extérieurs* (1993/2021)

Sarah Hall, *Madame Zero* (2017)

Paul Murray, *The Bee Sting* (2023)

Single Stories/ Novellas

Colin Barrett, 'Whoever is There, Come on Through,' *The New Yorker*, December 2017

Raymond Carver, 'The Bath' *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981) and 'A Small Good Thing' *Cathedral* (1983)

Teju Cole, 'Incoming', *The New Yorker* (November 2023)

Claire Keegan, *Foster* (2010)

How to apply for this course:

Students must submit a short sample of their fiction, 2 A4 pages at most, together with a short covering letter about what writing they have done so far. This should be delivered by email to Elaine Maddock: maddocke@tcd.ie

Students may apply for both this module and Eoin McNamee's module but can only be allocated a place on one module if successful.

Students who will be doing the CW Capstone are eligible to apply for and take this course.

Please note:

- **Curricular information is subject to change.**
- **Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.**

The School of English strongly supports Trinity's strategic commitment to the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion. Staff in the School are required to adhere to all the college's policies around issues of equality, diversity and inclusion, including engaging with appropriate training. The School also encourages its students to engage with the training made available to them in relation to these areas by Trinity's Equality Office. This training and further information about the college's policies can be found on their website: <https://www.tcd.ie/equality/>. The School acknowledges, however, that texts studied in its modules may contain forms of representation or language that engage in and portray prejudice and discrimination of various kinds. Fostering the ability to engage critically with such texts, and the complex and challenging debates and deliberations to which they give rise, is an essential part of the School's educational mission. So too is instilling knowledge of the historical and sociolinguistic dimensions of what has and has not been considered offensive. As a community committed to open, respectful and responsible discussion, the School recognises that the direct quotation of discriminatory, derogatory terms from texts in lectures, seminars and tutorials should generally be avoided. It supports the right of its members to respond critically, openly and vigorously to ideas or opinions that they oppose, while affirming its commitment to fostering a robust intellectual environment in which all members can freely participate. The School also recognises the complexities of debates about teaching and questions of equality, diversity and inclusion, and undertakes to continue to work towards a better understanding of the issues involved.