

Honours in Creative Writing 2024



Compulsory Courses

Working Concepts in Creative Writing or The Core Course SLLS4018

A practice-led course offering a comprehensive exploration of theoretical concepts and practical methodologies crucial for creating and analysing creative works. This course delves into the intricacies of writing and evaluating short fiction, non-fiction, and poetry, examining the impact of stylistic, representational and narrative practices on the reader. Drawing on global literature, students will explore new possibilities in subject, form, style, and voice, as well as the potential inherent in fragments, suspense and transformation. Active participation in critical discussions, literary debates, and the creation of original works is integral. Assessment is based on a writing portfolio comprising pieces developed during the course.

Convenor: Stacy Hardy Stacy.Hardy@wits.ac.za

Creative Writing Long Essay ENGL4037A

The Long Essay is a compulsory module for the Honours degree in Creative Writing. You will write a 10 000-word non-fiction essay with the support of a supervisor. If you are registered full-time for the degree, then you must register for this course in the first semester. If you are doing the degree part-time, then you may do the Long Essay in the first or the second year of the degree. The essay runs for a full year. There is one seminar per semester, to be scheduled after term begins.

Convenor: Phillippa Yaa de Villiers Phillippa.deVilliers@wits.ac.za

Elective courses

All Honours students are required to do **one** literature course and **two** writing courses.

In consultation with the department, you can choose from the following options:

Literature Courses

First semester options

ENGL 4030A Theory of Literature: (Mondays) Dr Adam Levin and Dr Sofia Kostelac

Exploring Memory and Representation: Studies in Genocide and Colonialism This course examines the complex modalities in which certain genocides and the stresses of colonial encounter may be remembered and represented. Drawing on the legacy of philosopher Hannah Arendt, the conceptual approaches range from Michael Rothberg's notion of multidirectional memory, through theories of racism or antisemitism, to postcolonial perspectives and the complexities of narrating time and history. While the Holocaust (or Shoah) is often regarded as uniquely emblematic of genocidal atrocity, close attention will also be paid to its precursor, the Namibian genocide on our own continent. This enquiry will be set against the traumas of apartheid in South Africa, and their impact on our society in the present. Questions about representation will be addressed by interweaving theoretical appraisal with appropriate literary texts, thus nuancing the guiding concerns of the enquiry. The theoretical readings for the course will be posted on Ulwazi. The course will also include discussions of the following literary texts, which you should acquire and read in advance of your seminars: Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* Uwe Timm, *Morenga* Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull* Cynthia Ozick, *Antiquities* As an exciting supplementary opportunity, students taking this course will participate in parallel in an OSUN (Open Society University Network) module entitled 'Cultures of Hate and Oppression: Connecting the Conversations about Antisemitism, the Holocaust, Colonialism and Gender'. These sessions will be presented by staff from the Central European University in Vienna, the University of London and Wits, as well as several distinguished guest lecturers. Wits students will interact with their peers from international institutions in stimulating interdisciplinary discussions. They will also participate in creating a podcast to address one of the central topics examined in this module. The OSUN programme promises lively engagement with patterns of thinking about, remembering and representing the past that have fundamentally shaped our times.

MDLL 4059A Social Change in the Nineteenth-Century Novel: (Tuesdays) Prof Annette Horn.

Taking account of Georg Lukács's theory that good novels reflect the structure of historical and social reality, and the Marxist view of history as a dialectical class struggle, the course examines European novels written during this epoch of considerable social and cultural upheaval. Different approaches to realism, political discourse, propaganda, satire and censorship are discussed, while illustrating the role

of the novel as a yardstick of social change and a medium that influences social and political transformation. A novel by a realist English writer is studied, as well as a text by an Italian author and a work by realist German writer, Fontane. In addition, fiction by the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky and the film by Peter Watkins on Edvard Munch are considered, contextualizing the artist in the social movements of 19th century Europe.

ENGL 4001A American Literature: (Wednesdays) Prof Gerald Gaylard

The English Honours American Literature course focuses on some of the core contemporary themes and aesthetics of this fiction. From the minimalist explorations of individualism in Salinger and Carver, to the epics of marginality in *Beloved* and *Dune*, from the psychological drama in Bechdel's graphic novel, to the paranoia of fascism in *Kunzru*, this course is a compendium of American realities and imaginaries that echo globally. We hope that you will find this course stimulating, challenging, and a window into the possibilities of the present for fiction and culture

ENGL 4023A Renaissance Literature: (Thursdays) Dr Colette Gordon

This course serves as an introduction to the varied and dynamic interdisciplinary field of Renaissance and Early Modern Studies. In gaining a more global understanding of early modern studies, you will learn how understandings of the period have been shaped by intellectual history, social history, material history and (new) historicist theory. The course will also introduce you to the rich archival resources available to scholars in the field, (with a focus on digital holdings) and research skills specific to the discipline (paleography and historical bibliography). Taking early modern drama as our core case study, we will explore how revised understandings of material practices (theatre architecture, play scripts, collaborative authorship), physical playhouse reconstruction, and even linguistic reconstruction, radically reshape the study of early modern drama and open up old plays to new readings... Examining a core of plays* we will look at how rapid social change and expanding horizons (political, religious, scientific, geographical, aesthetic) registered on London's stages. Key themes will be legitimacy, nationalism, empire-building, encounters with otherness, and the exploration of outer and inner worlds.

Critical Approaches to African Literature AFRT4009A / AFRT7009A Course coordinator: Grace A Musila grace.musila@wits.ac.za

The appreciation of African Literature has been a site of intense debate since the international prominence of African Studies and Literature in the '50s and '60s. This course will introduce students to a range of debates that have characterised the modern development of African literary criticism. Equally central to our enquiry will be the need to register the confluence of African literary criticism and concurrent developments in the discourse of African history, politics, economics, sociology and culture. Although the emphasis in the course will be on exploring theoretical positions, seminar presentations must integrate the arguments explored with empirical investigations of texts related to the thematic and aesthetic problematics under discussion.

Canonical Writers and the Postcolonial Experience AFRT4006/7007:– 2023 Course coordinator: Grace A Musila – Grace.Musila@wits.ac.za

The focus of this course is on the work – both creative and scholarly— of African writers considered to be part of the 'canon' of African letters. The course is interested in the dialogues these writers convene about postcolonial African societies and the questions that preoccupy them at different socio-historical junctures. We use the term postcolony to refer to those societies which have recently emerged from the experience of colonisation. In this sense, postcolonial is a temporal marker. But it can also be used

to indicate the analytical concept of greater range and ambition, as in 'postcolonial theory' or the 'postcolonial condition'.

The writers studied in the course are preoccupied with diagnosing the challenges their societies grapple with; recuperating epistemologies and archives suppressed by colonial violence; and articulating alternative discursive, aesthetic and political practices that may offer sustainable modes of being in Africa and the world. By setting these writers' critical thought in conversation with their creative works, this course encodes a double reference, stressing the interdependence of artistic and critical orders of knowledge in shaping the directions of African letters.

Please also check the English Honours booklet for more courses

Second Semester Options

African Popular Media and the Novel 2023 AFRT4005/ AFRT 7006

As many previous studies have demonstrated, the African novel has often emerged from a background of popular media such as newspapers, periodicals, magazines, pamphlets, popular novelettes, films, television, popular drama, letters, popular religious media and so on. These media often provide the opportunity for stylistic innovation and generic experimentation which subsequently informs the more 'canonical' novels that emerge. More recently, this field of popular cultural production which straddles the oral and the written has been the subject of growing academic investigation, partly because it is in this zone that the bulk of African cultural activity occurs.

These experiments with genre in popular fiction are also a way of imagining and speaking to new audiences and publics. The generic innovation of popular fiction in Africa is often also a way of providing narrative expression to new forms of experience. By paying close attention to the forms of popular fiction and poetry, as well as the popular cultural forms that circulate in overlapping spaces, this course aims to raise preliminary questions about the formation of reading publics in Africa. These publics are in turn often tied up with powerful ethnic, racial, gendered, religious and regional identities and the course will ask how these identities interact with the ideas and notions of official culture.

Course coordinator: Dr Danai Mupotsa – Danai.Mupotsa@wits.ac.za

Memory, Violence and Representation in Africa

AFRT 4012 / AFRT7012

The complex colonial and post-independence experiences of African countries have thrown into sharp relief the saliency and vicissitudes of memory, particularly in societies that have been marked by violent, racialised, ethnic conflicts. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, together with the call for or implementation of similar commissions in other African countries, has refocused attention on the question of memory, a topic which has been debated for some time in a range of academic disciplines. The course is a multifarious exploration of memory work and its importance for, in particular, the making of political subjectivities such as identity and nation-hood. It scrutinises the modes of memory-work: the acts, practices, repertoires and politics of remembrance (how memory is realised, textualised or ruptured) and amnesia (how it becomes buried, repressed or avoided) across a

range of representational forms and discourses. While the course takes a fundamentally literary approach to the processes of remembrance and forgetfulness, it draws on a wide range of approaches where issues of memory are examined, including psychology, oral history, sociolinguistics, colonial studies and literary studies.

Course Coordinator: Grace A Musila – Grace.Musila@wits.ac.za

ENGL 4022A Postmodernism in Literature: (Mondays)

ENGL4021A (Tuesdays) Medieval Literature:

ENGL 4028A (Wednesdays) Fantasy, Science Fiction and the Fiction of the Unreal: South African Literature:

MDLL 4016A (Thursdays)

Writing Courses

Participants choose **two** of the following. With the approval of the Honours coordinator, participants may also substitute one of these courses for a writing course in another programme in the Faculty. All places in the courses must be booked in advance with the convenors as space is limited. Also, courses have certain entrance requirements and therefore permission to take the course must be sought from the course convenor.

First semester

Writing IVA: Writing for Performance DRAA4078

This course is experientially based, giving students selected tools and techniques to

enhance their storytelling abilities by writing multiple drafts of an original play. By having to solve specific issues around plot, character, dialogue, sub-text, theme, etc, students will learn a range of dramaturgical techniques and structures that aid in improving storytelling in performance. Classes include group sessions as well as one- on-one feedback sessions with the convenor. The primary task of this course is to write at least two drafts of a play with a running time of approximately sixty minutes.

Fundamental to this course is the development of the student's ability to respond to notes through the process of rewrites.

Seminars: Tuesday 2.15–5pm

Convenor: Kgafela oa Magogodi kgafela.magogodi@wits.ac.za or **Myer Taub** myer.taub@wits.ac.za

Second Semester

Writing: Theory and Praxis SLLS4060

In this course we will explore particular texts to discover what we may call ‘theories’ of writing, and formulate our own set of standards or personal rules about writing. Informed by Kroll and Harper’s definition of poetics, which they describe as “the means by which writers formulate and discuss an attitude to their work that recognises influences, the traditions within they write and develop, the literary, social, and political context in which they write, and the processes of composition and revision they undertake.” (Kroll J and Harper G. (eds). *Research Methods in Creative Writing*. (2013). Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. “Poetics and Creative Writing” by Lasky, K. We will read a range of texts from various times in history and places in the world, reading the critical voice towards envisioning theories about writing, and we will do creative and critical writing as exercises in class. Please remember to bring pen, paper and your reader to all classes. You will enhance and develop your own sense of poetics, and be able to discuss the technical and formal elements of writing, as well as the historical and geographical positions of writers. You will engage with writers and writing events.

Seminars: Wednesday 2-4pm, Wits Writing Centre

Convenor: Phillippa Yaa de Villiers Phillippa.deVilliers@wits.ac.za

Writing IVA: Writing for Performance DRAA4108

In order to be a successful writer, students need to develop dexterity and patience – always putting many irons in as many fires as possible. This course is designed to help students forge some of these irons. The course examines storytelling techniques through exercises, readings, viewings of plays and writing assignments. The aim of the course is to develop critical and dramaturgical techniques as well as to develop a portfolio of work that may help the transition into the ‘professional’ world of writing. Tasks include writing a short story, pieces of flash fiction, a script reader’s dramaturgical report, and a theatre review for a newspaper, magazine or website.

Seminars: Tuesday 2.15–5pm

Convenor: Kgafela oa Magogodi kgafela.magogodi@wits.ac.za or Myer Taub myer.taub@wits.ac.za

Writing Immersion: Special Topic in Creative Writing SLLS4054

The topic for this course will change from year to year. Students should check with the course convenor what the topic is in the semester they wish to take the course.

In this course, students will spend a semester focused on one topic (which will change from year to year). The purpose of this will be to allow students to engage in a sustained, deep and considered way with a problem, theme or philosophical question in relation to the topic being considered. The course will include workshops around the topic, discussions with experts in fields related to the topic, site visits where appropriate, and consideration of literature and film on the subject and its related themes. Throughout the semester, students will be required to write a variety of written responses to the topic (fiction and/or non-fiction) and to present these in workshops.

Students will learn the value of research (in its myriad forms, from interviews, to reading, to consultation) in relation to a creative project, see the importance of sustained engagement with their

subject, and will be encouraged to experiment in various genres and ways of writing. They will be required to submit a portfolio of texts at the end of the semester (which may take different forms: short stories, a series of essays, a novella, a long essay etc).

Seminars: TBC

Convenor: Masande Ntshanga Masande.Ntshange@gmail.com

Writing Poetry SLLS4053

This is a practice-based course that will develop the students' existing interests by exposing them to a variety of poetry, including spoken word and oral poetry. The students will be expected to continuously produce their own new work, including a response to a political or social issue, which will be read outside of class to a section of the Wits community. The course will also include at least one workshop with a contemporary poet. In addition to reading poetry by a variety of authors, they will be expected to develop an understanding of various poetic forms and the ability to write these forms too, as well as to critically analyse poetry and to distinguish and analyse figures of speech and other poetic devices. They will be required to produce an extensive poetry portfolio that includes at least one essay in response to the work of a published poet and a reflective essay. Occasional students wishing to do this course, or full-time students who did not submit poetry in their initial portfolio, must submit, by 30 May, a portfolio consisting of six to ten poems and a 1500-word motivation to the course convenor.

Seminars: Wednesday 10am–1pm

Convenor: Phillipa Yaa de Villiers Phillippa.deVilliers@wits.ac.za

Image and Text SLLS4052A

This course focuses on the many possible relationships between image and text. It explores the relationship between text and image, thinking about how words and pictures function, how they differ, what happens when they are combined. Students develop a single, experimental project incorporating visual and textual elements, or a series of shorter projects that present texts and images in creative tension. These may include a graphic novella, a zine, a series of texts and images, a photo essay, an artist's book or a work of hypermedia.

Seminars: TBC

Convenors: Stacy Hardy stacy.hardy@wits.ac.za & Fouad Asfour

Further Information

For information regarding fees or other Faculty PG administrative concerns, contact Ms Hale Modau hale.modau@wits.ac.za in the Graduate Studies Office, Faculty of Humanities, located in the South-West Engineering Building on East Campus.

The Creative Writing administrator is Marilyn Jousten: marilyn.jousten@wits.ac.za