

Stanford | Continuing Studies

Course Title: Novel III: Subtext, Theme, and Language

Course Code: OWC 305 A

Instructor Name: Angela Pneuman

Class Sessions and Recording

Meeting days and times: Fridays, 12:00pm - 1:15pm PT

Meeting location: On Zoom

ZOOM sessions are an informal drop-in time for discussion, student Q&A, and an extension of the workshop conversation from the boards. Attendance is highly recommended, but if you can't make it, each ZOOM session will be recorded. Twenty-minute individual conferences are available by request, and can be arranged directly with me for before or after your workshop submission.

Assignments & Coursework

In each week's module, you'll find a lecture and lesson on the week's focus, a reading assignment or suggestion, a writing assignment, and topics for online discussion. In Novel III, we'll read weekly f and selected essays I'll provide, and you'll also select a text of your own—a novel you'll investigate deeply over the course, “reading like a writer,” for similarities and contrasts that help you understand your own project. Feel free to answer discussion questions with examples from the texts that best help you think things through. If you'd like to select a novel I'm familiar with, I'll provide a list of 100 books—but please feel free to select a book I don't know. We'll spend the first two weeks of class talking about what to consider when selecting your book for deep study.

You'll have an email from me every Sunday night that details the week's focus and reminds you of our weekly Zoom.

Because this course is designed to facilitate completing, or getting close to completing, your novel draft, workshop and workshop feedback will be our priority. Keep in mind that in a workshop model, providing feedback can be as valuable to the feedback-giver as to the feedback-receiver. It is often easier to identify what works

well or what needs work in the writing of your peers. Our goal is a supportive atmosphere in which the writers of the class are all learning together and motivated towards improvement and progress.

Weeks 3 to 10 will be workshop, and you'll each have the chance to submit 30 to 40 pages (7500 to 10,000 words) for a whole-group workshop. This is a significant commitment to reading the work of others. My feedback and the responses from each of your classmates will also be posted under your workshop thread.

To inspire you to think in new ways and to foster community, the other mandatory element is to complete one weekly DISCUSSION question **OR** one weekly ASSIGNMENT (also under "discussions" thread) per week-whichever is most helpful to you. This participation in one or the other can include brief commentary on a classmate's posting rather than an original posting of your own.

Of course you are always welcome participate more, as inspired and as time permits, but since the time spent reading the work of others in this course is significant, you should manage your weekly discussion and assignment participation in the way that allows you the most time to push your own manuscript forward.

Grade Options and Requirements

Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)

- To receive an A:
 - 50% Satisfactory completion and submission of 30 to 40 pages of your novel for workshop
 - 50% Satisfactory completion of comments on classmates' novel excerpts during workshop; participation in online discussion questions and weekly assignments (one of either, per week).
 - Missing workshop critiques and failure to participate at least once weekly in a discussion OR assignment thread will reduce your final grade.

Learning Objectives

In Novel III, we will continue to work with the elements of storytelling we have explored in Novel I and II, with a special eye to subtext, theme and language. At this point in your discovery draft, you've put enough characters and events into play that they are starting to take on relationships of their own in ways that may surprise you. We'll look closely at what's happening as a result of what you've set up. We'll ask how the book's preoccupations, often unconscious ones for the writer, are revealing

themselves, and we'll figure out how best to work with them as they begin to contribute to or suggest your theme.

The biggest goal for this course is for each of you to complete a full draft—or come close to completing one—however rough it may be.

Textbooks/Required Materials

Apart from the Seger text, below, the main required reading for this course is the rereading of the novel you choose for close study. Optional are the books I will reference in discussion and as example; it's helpful, but not necessary, for you to have read them before Novel III.

Required:

Writing Subtext: What Lies Beneath, Linda Seger, 978-1615932580

Optional:

Old School, by Tobias Wolff, 978-0375701498

The Vanishing Half, by Brit Bennett, 978-0375701498

The Buddha in the Attic, Julia Otsuka, 978-0375701498

The Namesake, by Jhumpa Lahiri, 978-0358062684

Tentative Weekly Outline

Week 1

Setting a Goal to the End (Catching Us Up, Choosing a Text)

Week 2

Language Habits (Metaphor & Moments)

Week 3

Intention vs. Preoccupation (When to Let Go, When to Pay Attention)

Week 4

Subtext vs. Text

Week 5

Plot & Subplot I (Laying it out)

Week 6

Plot & Subplot II (Identifying Opportunities)

Week 7

Language Habits (Expectation, Variation, Sentence Length)

Week 8

Dialogue Revisited (Subtext, Distinction)

Week 9

More Subtext (Gestures, Images, Actions)

Week 10

Language Habits and Skills (Meaning/Sense/Clarity)

Additional Information

The use of generative AI tools is permitted in this course for brainstorming, researching topics, and checking grammar/spelling. However, it is prohibited for responding to prompts or producing feedback or pages for workshop. Use of AI tools for prohibited activities may be considered academic dishonesty, and thus a violation of the student Code of Conduct.