

# Stanford | Continuing Studies

**Course Title:** The Writing Life: Form and Theory

**Course Code:** OWC 101 E

**Instructor Name:** Deborah Johnson

## Class Sessions and Recording

Meeting days and times: Mondays, Noon-1:00pm PT

Meeting location: Online (Zoom link will be provided to enrolled students closer to start date)

Class sessions will be recorded.

*Course recordings will be available for three weeks after the quarter ends.*

## How This Course Works

This course requires asynchronous participation in Canvas (more details below). There will also be weekly Zoom sessions for lecture, discussion, and interaction with the instructor.

## Assignments & Coursework

This course includes:

- Weekly writing assignments and discussion questions,
- Submission of one 3,500 word piece for workshop,
- One required private conference over Zoom

## Grade Options and Requirements

- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - 70% of your grade will consist of completing required assignments: each week's writing assignment, the longer 3,500-word workshop, plus answering at least 2 Discussion questions each week.
  - Courteous and constructive feedback to postings from others in your cohort will comprise the remainder of your grade. If you do this, you will receive an A. Of course, exceptions can always be made for family or other emergencies that might arise. This is a guideline, not a hard and fast rule.

## Learning Objectives

Students will begin the process of formulating and writing their novels not only by beginning the work this process requires but by studying how other writers (both in our cohort and outside) have approached the process. One very important aim of this course is to help us learn to read like writers.

## Textbooks/Required Materials

### Required:

-*A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines ISBN: 978-0375702709

-*Trust* by Hernan Diaz ISBN: 978-0593420324

-*Write Away: One Novelist's Approach to Fiction and the Writing Life* by Elizabeth George ISBN: 978-0060560447

## Tentative Weekly Outline

### Week One

The Concept of Discovery. Some discovery/preliminary work.

### Week Two

Creating believable characters who are capable of carrying a novel.

### Week Three

Choosing Point of view and narrative voice.

### Week Four

Creating Conflict.

### Week Five

Private Zoom sessions.

### Week Six

The importance of setting to the novel. Building toward the novel's climax.

### Week Seven

Creating scenes and linking them to them to form the novel. The importance of the "hook."

### **Week Eight**

How to create believable/ compelling dialogue.

### **Week Nine**

Delving more deeply into the theme and story from Homer around his campfire to Robert McKee.

### **Week Ten**

What it takes to write and complete a novel.

Extra Zoom session Dec. 2 with author Simi Monheit

### **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 drafting papers, assignment submissions, or discussion board posts. Use of AI tools for prohibited activities may be considered academic dishonesty, and thus a violation of the student Code of Conduct.