

Fall 2014-15

The Art and Craft of Fiction Writing.

Course Description

This course focuses on the creative process of fiction writing from multiple epistemic perspectives and diverse pedagogic methodologies. The aim is to evolve a reading and writing environment which can stimulate students to explore not only their own creative potentials as fiction writers but also provide them with an opportunity to understand the critical, esthetic and cultural aspects of fiction as a form of art. After the initial development of a foundational background regarding fiction, a proactive and interactive discourse and practice will be initiated for the students to engage in analytical readings of selections from the master pieces of fiction, predominantly from Urdu literature along with doing their own writings informed by the insights gained through these critical reading. Theoretical issues related to fiction and matters of techniques will be demonstrated in direct relation to these mandatory creative writings by the students, thus blending the art and craft aspect of writing fiction.

Objectives

- To build a general understanding of Fiction as a form of verbal art and its creative and esthetic uniqueness.
- Understanding the nature of creative process in the light of interdisciplinary insights on the subject.
- Critically examining the possibilities of teaching/learning creative writing in terms of expectations and limitations.
- Evolving a rigorous mechanism of instruction and evaluation in the light of the cognitive profile of the group, to actively engage with the conventions of craft in fiction and employ the techniques thus learned to create their own pieces of fiction.
- Sensitizing the participants to explore the hidden dimensions of language through a play with language as a medium for the creation of fiction.
- Learning through writing, the nature of the conceptual structure of fiction, in terms of Plot, Character, Themes, Ideas, Narrative Voice, Showing and telling, Description and the problems of fictional space and time.
- Learning through writing and critiquing the peculiarities of the sub-genres of fiction i.e. Short story, Long short story, Flash fiction, Novella, Novel.
- Learning through intensive reading about the movements, styles and genres in contemporary Urdu fiction.
- Understanding the nature of global literary influences on Urdu fiction.
- Developing skills to constructively critique the creative writings of the fellow members of the group and learning for self-improvement from being critiqued.
- Preparation of a final portfolio of original texts produced comprising of a minimum of 6000 words in Urdu language.
- Selection of the best pieces of fiction, submitted for competition and later to be published in the literary magazine of the University.

Methodology

‘Learning the art and craft of fiction through writing fiction’ will be the working principle and goal of this course, realized through a three pronged teaching strategy:

1. Analytical reading of published texts. (30% of the final grade)

Close reading on critical and deconstructive lines, of the carefully selected masterpieces of fiction from Urdu literature (60%) and World literature (40%) will be mandatory for all the participants of the course. The study shall be supported by the conceptual explanation and elaboration by the instructor of the emerging issues related to the nature of fiction as a form of art. The evaluation of the performance of the learner shall be through critical assignments, class room participation and innovative personal interpretations of the well-known texts.

2. Writing your own fiction (60% of the final grade)

In an academic workshop environment the participants of the course will be encouraged to make their own creative decisions, follow their personal inspiration and produce their own works of fiction. The texts thus produced shall have to be presented all along in the group, or smaller groups for mutual critiquing and discussion. These creative assignments, a minimum of 7000 words till the end of the session as the final portfolio, will be evaluated in terms of Language competence, creativity and originality, innovative application of the insights on the craft and techniques of fiction writing gained through concomitant analytical readings of the master pieces. Credit shall also be given for constructive critiquing, and self-improvement.

3. Study of fiction in society (10% of the final grade)

Throughout the session the participants of the course will have to engage with an active study of the discourse of fiction in our society. This end will be realized through interviews with known fiction writers and editors of literary magazines, participation in the notable literary meetings in the city for the analysis of their workings, visits to known publishing houses and survey of reading trends in fiction. Performance will be assessed through the evaluation of the reports students shall submit at the end of the session. Some basic issues related to the sociology of literature will also be highlighted by the instructor for guidance.

Calendar of activities

(This schedule is subject to modification in accordance with the creative and critical requirements of the students and the cognitive and pedagogic insights evolving throughout the progression of the course.)

Week 1

A general introduction of the course leading to more detailed sharing of the reading, writing and critiquing activities to be carried out during the course. Discussion on the nature of creative process. Can creative writing be taught? Introduction of Stanley Parable
Discussion on Fiction as a form of art, types of fiction, fiction in civilization. Fiction in Urdu

language.

Assignment: Reading from textual sources. Writings based on students' personal views about fiction, writing fiction, expectations and suggestions.

Week 2

Discussion on Language and its role in the creation of fiction.

First interaction with fiction, based on the 'favorite stories' of students shared in the group.

Assignment. Group discussion and written assignments on 'why do we like a story?'

Readings on the related issues from textual sources.

Week 3

Analysis of students assignments leading to a preliminary discussion on the essential elements of fiction: Plot, Character, Narrative voice, setting, atmosphere, dialogue etc.

Creative Assignment: Start writing your story. Discussion on how to begin a story. The role of imagination. Brain storming and playing with the fictional possibilities in a workshop setting.

Readings suggested from textual sources.

Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction.

Week 4

Presentation of creative work and mutual critique in workshop.

Discussion on conceptual issues related to Plot and plot structure. Conflict, climax resolution, subplot, flashback, foreshadowing.

Readings related to conceptual issues and their exemplification/demonstration in selected works of fiction.

Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction

Week 5

Presentation of creative work and mutual critique in workshop.

Discussion on Plot to be concluded. Discussion on the conceptual issues related to Character and Characterization. Character development, types of characters, functions of characters.

Readings from textual sources explaining conceptual issues and selected works of fiction for their manifestation.

Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction.

Week 6

Presentation of creative work and mutual critique in workshop.

Discussion on Characterization to be concluded. Discussion on conceptual issues related to Narrator, Narration and Narrative Voice. Narrative point of view.

Introduction of the idea of studying the discourse of fiction in society and allocation of assignments.

Readings related to conceptual issues and their exemplification in selected pieces of fiction from textual sources.

Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction

Week 7

Presentation of creative work and mutual critique in workshop.
 Discussion on the conceptual issues related to the narrative voice as Third person.
 Explanatory readings and corroborating works of fiction from textual sources.
 Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction

Week 8

Presentation of creative work and mutual critique.
 Discussion on conceptual issues related to Narrative voice as First person. Mixed types.
 Readings related to theory and their exemplification in selected pieces of fiction from textual sources.
 Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction

Week 9

Presentation of creative work and mutual critique.
 Discussion on Narrative voice to be concluded. Discussion on conceptual issues related to Setting: Physical/ spatial, temporal, cultural, historical.
 Readings related to conceptual issues and their exemplification in selected pieces of fiction from textual sources.
 Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction

Week 10

Presentation of creative work and mutual critique in workshop.
 Discussion on Setting to be concluded. Discussion on the conceptual issues related to Theme. Author's purpose or intent.
 Readings related to theory and their exemplification in selected pieces of fiction from textual sources.
 Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction.

Week 11

Presentation of creative work and mutual critique in workshop.
 Follow up of progress on writing a report on a topic related to 'Fiction in Society'.
 Discussion on Theme to be concluded. Discussion on Atmosphere, and tone.
 Readings related to conceptual issues and their exemplification in selected pieces of fiction from textual sources.
 Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction.

Week 12

Presentation of creative work and mutual critiquing in workshop.
 Discussion on conceptual issues related to Style.
 Follow up of progress on report related to 'Fiction in society'.
 Readings related to conceptual issues and their exemplification in selected pieces of fiction from textual sources.
 Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction.

Week 13

Presentation of creative work and mutual critique in workshop.

Discussion on the conceptual issues related to role of Dialogue in fiction.

Readings related to conceptual issues and their exemplification in selected pieces of fiction from textual sources.

Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction.

Week 14

Final presentation of creative work and discussions at individual and group level before the submission of the final portfolio.

An introductory discussion related to movements in fiction writing: Realism, Symbolism, Surrealism, modernism, postmodernism.

Readings related to conceptual issues and their exemplification in selected pieces of fiction from textual sources.

Assignment: Analysis and critique of a selected work of fiction.

Textual Sources (Urdu)

- Umrao Jan Ada (MirzaHaadiRuswa)
- ChauthikaJora (IsmatChughtai)
- KaaluBhangi by KrishanChander
- MahaLuxmika pull by KrishanChander
- Aanundi by Ghulam Abbas
- Katba by Ghulam Abbas
- NayaQanoon by Manto
- Toba Tek Singh by Manto
- Gadarya by Ishfaq Ahmed
- Sitaro se Aagay by QuratulAinHyder
- JilaVatan by QuratulAinHyder
- Moam ki Maryem by JilaniBano
- TaoosChamankiMaina by Nayyar Masood
- Cinderella by AnwerSajjad
- Pehchan by Khalida Hussain

Textual Sources (World)

- The Huntsman, by Anton Chekhov
- The Necklace, by Guy de Maupassant, The Gift of the Magi, by O Henry, and Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel's Coat, by Roald Dahl
- The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, by James Thurber
- Possessions, by George Ewart Evans
- The Yellow Wallpaper, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
- The Man in a Case, by Anton Chekhov
- Rain, by Somerset Maugham
- The Cask of amontillado, by Edgar Allan Poe
- The First Seven Years, by Bernard Malamud

- The Library of Babel, The Garden of Forking Paths, and The Circular Ruins, by Jorge Luis Borges
- A Hunger Artist, by Franz Kafka
- Bartleby, the scrivener, by Herman Melville
- The Boy who Broke the Bank, by Ruskin Bond, Engine Trouble, by R. K. Narayan, Provide, Provide, by DaniyalMueenuddin.
- The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- The heart of darkness by Joseph Conrad

Textual Sources (Theory)

- Narrative fiction : Contemporary Poetics, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan
- The Rhetoric of Fiction by Wayne C. Booth
- Telling Stories: A theoretical analysis of narrative fiction by Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires.
- The Forest for the Trees (Revised and Updated): An Editor's Advice to Writers by Betsy Lerner
- The mind of your story: discover what drives your fiction by Lisa Lenard-cook.
- Literature: An introduction to Fiction, Poetry and Drama by X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia
- The Philosophy of literature by Peter Lamarque
- The Paris review books....since 1953.

Video Source

- Stanley parable