

ENGE3430 Reading Alice Munro and Writing Life-Stories

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Course description

In this course, we will read Alice Munro's short stories and analyze them as the author's retrospection, reconfiguration and reimagining of places, people and events in her own life. From the recasting of her mother, father and other family members in her works to the reconstruction of tales of tragedy, love and faith, Munro writes in order to open up the past, take a good look at it, feel the life, and discover the story. This idea of life as story and the power of storying lives in the construction self and identity is drawn from narrative psychology and will be used as a springboard for students to experiment with life-writing in the course. Students will be given opportunities to re-tell the stories of their own lives and/or the lives of their family and friends in ways that allow a re-interpretation of the past as well as a re-orientation of the future.

Learning outcomes:

After completing this course, students should:

- Become familiar with the works of Alice Munro and appreciate her artistry
- Understand the storied nature of human lives and the power of life-writing
- Have assembled a portfolio of life-writing works
- Have produced a complete life-story for workshopping

Course components: onsite face-to-face lectures, interactive tutorials and workshops

Assessment:

Lecture attendance & participation	10%
Tutorial attendance & participation	10%
Writing booklet (tasks + questions)	40%
Life story (8-12 pages)	40%
First draft	20%
Final draft	20%

* It is recommended that students take ENGE3290 Reading and Writing Short Stories prior to this course.

Details of assessments:

Attendance/participation (20%): Complete the assigned readings before class, and come to class (both lecture and tutorial) ready to contribute to the discussion. Attendance and participation in **workshops** (Weeks 11-13) is particularly important.

** To apply for sick leave or special leave, you should

- 1) email your instructor **before class, and**
- 2) fill out the Google form for **leave application** (on Blackboard). **

Writing booklet (40%): Write down your **answers** to the pre-reading or pre-lecture questions about the stories, and complete **all** the life-writing exercises. (For the list of questions to be answered, refer to the Booklet Task List on Blackboard.) The suggested word count for each life-writing exercise is 750 – 1,000. Give your work a title.

Life Story (40%): The life story should center on a key event, explore a character and illuminate a life. The story must be submitted for workshoping. You are expected to do revisions on the story before submitting the final draft. The suggested length of the life-story is 8 - 10 pages. Any submission over 4,000 words will incur a penalty.

The final draft of your life story must be submitted to VeriGuide.

Format your work professionally. Number your pages. Do NOT use single line-spacing for any work that you hand in.

Please note that you will be asked to hand in hard copies of the assignments.

Sick leave, attendance and late submissions:

The Department has issued a set of guidelines on sick leave, attendance and late submissions, including acceptable reasons for application of leave and extensions, the documents required, and the maximum period of extension to be granted. Please refer to this document (available on Blackboard) for details.

Late submission of assignments will be penalized half a grade for each day late.

Course schedule (Weekly on-site f2f lectures and interactive tutorials)

Week	Topic & readings	Writing exercises assigned/due
Week 1	Introduction to the course; <i>Storying Our Lives</i>	1. Life chapters 2. Childhood memory
Week 2	<i>Alice Munro – Writing Her Lives</i> “Boys and Girls”	3. Photo Story
Week 3	I. The Mother “The Peace of Utrecht” “The Ottawa Valley”	4. Peak/nadir experience
Week 4	I. The Mother (continued) “The Progress of Love” “Friend of My Youth” “Dear Life”	
Week 5	II. Sisters and Aunts “Chaddeleys and Flemings I & II”	5. Flaw that got you in trouble Hand in hard copies of Tasks 1-4
Week 6	III. The Father “The Moons of Jupiter” “Night”	6. Symbolic message
Week 7	<i>Alice Munro – The Story-teller</i> “Nettles” “Dimensions”	7. Puzzle/enigma/mystery
Week 8	IV. Sex, love, and marriage “How I Met My Husband” “Voices”	8. A turning point in life Hand in hard copies of Tasks 5-7
Week 9	V. Faith and fate “Age of Faith” VI. Self and self-writing “The Eye”	Life-story due (40%) 9. A script for the future
Week 10	Workshop	Hand in hard copies of Tasks 8 & 9
Week 15	Workshop	
Week 12	Workshop	Hand in 3 self-selected pieces
Week 13	Workshop	Final Draft of Life Story due

References:

Narrative psychology:

Bruner, Jerome. "Life as narrative." *Social research: An international quarterly* 71.3 (2004): 691-710.

McAdams, Dan P. *The stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self*. Guilford Press, 1993.

McAdams, Dan P. "The psychology of life stories." *Review of general psychology* 5.2 (2001): 100-122.

Pillemer, David B. *Momentous events, vivid memories*. Harvard University Press, 1998.

Alice Munro:

Fiamengo, Janice, and Gerald Lynch, eds. *Alice Munro's miraculous art: Critical essays*. University of Ottawa Press, 2017.

Staines, David, ed. *The Cambridge companion to Alice Munro*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Thacker, Robert. *Alice Munro: Writing her lives: A biography*. Emblem Editions, 2011.

Thacker, Robert. *Reading Alice Munro, 1973-2013*. University of Calgary Press, 2016.

Feedback for evaluation:

Students will be asked to complete Course Evaluations for both the lectures and tutorials of ENGE3430 at the end of the semester. Comments and suggestions about the course content, teaching method and learning tasks are most welcome at any time during the semester.

Academic honesty:

All the works submitted for assessment should be your own work written for this course. **Do not recycle old pieces of writing.**

The University has implemented a zero tolerance policy against plagiarism and has required all written work to be submitted via VeriGuide at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/veriguide> .

To comply with University regulations, you are therefore asked to:

- 1) submit your written work via VeriGuide before due date and print the receipt issued by VeriGuide
- 2) submit a hard copy of the work, along with the receipt from VeriGuide and the declaration of honesty (which comes with the VeriGuide receipt but is also attached here for your use).

Assignments without the receipt from VeriGuide and the signed declaration of honesty will not be graded.

Prohibition of all AI tools in assignments and assessment tasks

For assignments and assessment tasks that count towards the final course grades, students are not allowed to submit work which is produced with the collaboration of or supported by the use of any generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT).

Any breach of the regulations will be considered an act of academic dishonesty and will be handled according to the University's Procedures for Handling Cases of Academic Dishonesty.

Department of English

Grade A / Excellent: Outstanding performance on ALL learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would surpass the normal expectations at this level and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study. The 'A' grade should be reserved for truly excellent work that exceeds the level expected for the majority of students and are expected to be achieved only by a small minority

Grade A- / Very Good: Generally outstanding performance on ALMOST ALL learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would fully fulfill the normal expectations at this level and occasionally reaches standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade B+ / Good (Plus): HIGH performance on all learning outcomes, OR HIGH performance on some learning outcomes which compensates WELL for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.

Demonstrates the ability to apply WELL the principles or skills learned in the course in a comprehensive manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level WELL.

Grade B / Good: SUBSTANTIAL performance on all learning outcomes, OR SUBSTANTIAL performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.

Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a MORE COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

Grade B- / Good (Minus): GOOD performance on all learning outcomes, OR GOOD performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.

Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal

expectations at this level.

Grade C+ / Fair (Plus): VERY SATISFACTORY performance on the majority of learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a SOMEWHAT SUSTAINED manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade C / Fair: SATISFACTORY performance on the majority of learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to partially apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade C- / Fair (Minus): SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY performance on A NUMBER OF learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to SOMEWHAT apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the BARE basic requirement at this level.

Grade D+ / Pass (Plus): BARELY SATISFACTORY performance on A FEW learning outcomes.

Addresses the course inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in some areas while responding minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade D / Pass: ALMOST BARELY satisfactory performance on VERY FEW learning outcomes.

Addresses the course inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in very few areas while responding very minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade F / Failure: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

Fails to address the course and likely does not understand what the course requires. In other words, the work completely misses the point.