

Writing the Global City: Sydney

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: SDNY 3017W

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Course Description

This course is a creative writing workshop keyed to exploring the experience of travelling and living abroad in Sydney in either verse or prose texts. Along with the writing workshops, we will also read and discuss texts that focus on Australia in general and Sydney specifically from both native and foreign perspectives, noting particularly the literary techniques and strategies that various writers have used to express their experiences and observations.

Our class sessions will be divided almost equally between the reading and critical evaluation of selected texts and a written response to the stimuli. Half of our weekly time will be devoted to the examination of a text dealing with various authors' experiences of Australia. These texts will provide us with a forum for discussing each author's relationship to and the literary expression of place. The other half of our class time will function as a writer's workshop in response to the set texts: each student will present his/her own work orally (accompanied by photocopies) to the group for reactions, critique, and suggestions for revision.

Course Objectives

Through reading the works of diverse and experienced authors, discussing the elements of literary technique and style, and critiquing each other's texts, the aim is to improve writing skills and to produce aesthetically sophisticated texts in a variety of genres.

Students should demonstrate: independence & creativity, goal orientation, the ability to give and receive criticism, flexibility, and a greater appreciation of cultural differences.

Methodology

This course is a lecture course in which class participation and discussion is encouraged. The course has compulsory readings and students will be given copies of these readings at the commencement of the course. In addition to these readings students participate in class discussions, field trips, lectures, and other structured activities.

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Participation (includes weekly readings and discussion of student generated responses)	25%
Final Class Presentation (students to choose 1 response for formal presentation to class - see formats below)	25%
Writing Folder (a compilation of weekly exercises)	25%
Final Exam	25%
Overall grade	100%

Assessment Details

Class Participation - The participation mark is based on a student's preparation for class and their input into group discussion in all classes. Participation includes discussion of student-generated responses to the weekly reading. The student will need to demonstrate that they have read and thought about the set material for each week. Participation in class discussion will be marked on the constructiveness of their input to the class discussion and debate. During week 7, each student will be asked to make a 5-10 presentation on two MyEd activities. This will constitute 5% of your class participation mark.

Final Class Presentation - During the last week of classes, students will be asked to present a formal response (15-20 mins) based on one of the topics discussed during the course. Some suggested formats include the following:

- Essay / Critical Analysis of texts
- Interview
- Script

- Poetry
- Short story
- Short Video
- Book/Film/Play Review
- Short account/report
- Mini photo reportage with comments relating to pictures.
- Journal entry

Depending on the class numbers students may give individual presentations or a team presentation, at the discretion of the lecturer. To prepare for your presentation you will be expected to read and critically analyze and report on the set readings, and further readings around the topic. The student is encouraged to raise further questions that may have arisen out of their research for the class to consider.

Writing Folder - Students will be required to submit a writing folder: a compilation of their 5 best weekly responses to the texts and field trips. This may include work that has already been presented in a verbal format for discussion during the weekly sessions. Students should aim for 500 words for each response.

Exam - The final examination will take place in class in week 12. The exam consists of a formal written response. Preparation and discussion regarding the exam will take place during class in week 11. The questions in the exam will be based on topics and themes covered throughout the course.

Course Content

Unit 1

First Impressions - An American Abroad

- “The trick, as he said, was all in the telling.” (Don Watson, Introduction to “The Wayward Tourist: Mark Twain’s Adventures in Australia by Mark Twain”)
- **Focus Texts:**
 - Excerpts from – “The Wayward Tourist: Mark Twain’s Adventures in Australia” by Mark Twain (Melb Uni Press) & In a Sunburnt Country / Downunder , Bill Bryson
- **Writing Task:** First Impressions of Australia / Sydney (any form)
 - The Wayward Tourist publishes edited extracts from Mark Twain’s Following the Equator (1897). Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens) travelled to Australia in 1895 as part of a world tour of 150 lectures. Within the genre of travel writing it is, in many ways the predecessor to Bill Bryson’s In a Sunburnt Country / Downunder (2001).
- This class will explore the genre of travel writing.

Unit 2

The Poetic Imagination - History and Identity

- “Farewell to old England forever...” (“Botany Bay” traditional convict folk song)
- **Focus Texts:**
 - Folk Song: Botany Bay (anon)
 - Poem: Kenneth Slessor, Five Visions of Captain Cook III (1931)
 - Novel: Marcus Clarke, For the Term of his Natural Life (1870-74)
 - Film: Australia (2008)
- **Writing Task:** Descriptive writing: “A Sense of Place”
 - For the Term of His Natural Life follows the fortunes of Rufus Dawes, a young man transported for a theft which he did not commit. The inhumane treatment meted out to the convicts, some of whom were transported for relatively minor crimes, as well as the harsh conditions experienced by them is clearly conveyed through Clarke’s powerfully descriptive prose.

Unit 3

Terra Nullius – Cultural identity

- "He had been a policeman for half an hour yet now wanted to commit murder. He was more officially a black now than Tabidgi or Mort: a registered, accredited, uniformed black man; more deeply, more damagingly black than ever." (Thomas Keneally, *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*, Chapter 5)
- **Focus Texts:**
 - Novel: *The Secret River* (2001), Kate Grenville and *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1972), Thomas Keneally
 - Poetry: Oodgeroo Noonuccal, selected poetry and Judith Wright, selected poetry
 - Film: *Bran Nue Dae* (2009)
- **Writing Task:** Critical analysis of texts.

Unit 4

Nationalism and Landscape

- "I love a sunburnt country..." (Dorothea MacKellar, *My Country*)
- **Focus Texts:**
 - Poetry: *My Country* (1908), Dorothea MacKellar *Australia* (c.1939) A.D. Hope
 - Song: *Great Southern Land* (1982), Ivor Davies *Downunder* (1982) *Men at Work*
- **Writing Task:** Poetic response to the landscape
- **Field Trip:** Watson's Bay / South Head walk

Unit 5 & 6

Cultural Identity II - City vs. Country

- "Uncle first said that he was glad to see I had the spirit of an Australian and then threatened to put my nose above my chin if I failed to behave properly. Grannie remarked that I may have the spirit of an Australian, but I had by no means the manners of a lady." (Miles Franklin, *My Brilliant Career*)
- **Focus Texts:**
 - Poetry: AB Paterson, *The Man from Ironbark* (1892) Kenneth Slessor, *William Street* (1939)

- Short story: Henry Lawson, The Drover's Wife (Russell Drysdale, The Drover's Wife)
- Novel: My Brilliant Career (1901), Miles Franklin Looking for Alibrandi (1992), Melina Marchetta
- Autobiography: Unreliable Memoirs (1981) Clive James
- Film: The Castle (movie)
- Art: The Heidelberg School
- These classes will explore the “mockumentary” and the short story.
- **Writing Task:** Scriptwriting / short story

Unit 7

Theatre in Australia

- “All the world's a stage...” (William Shakespeare, As you Like It)
- **Writing Task:** Theatre reviews/script writing
- **Class Presentations:** My Ed

Unit 8

Speculative Fiction - Sustainability & Survival

- “We'd thought that we were among the first humans to invade this basin, but humans had invaded everything, everywhere. They didn't have to walk into a place to invade it.” (John Marsden, Tomorrow When the War Began)
- **Focus Texts:**
 - Tomorrow When the War Began (1993), John Marsden
 - Taronga (1986), Victor Kelleher
- **Writing Task:** Journal entry – “the dystopic future”
- **Field Trip:** Taronga or Q station, North Head

Unit 9

The National Pastime - Sport

- “C'mon Aussie, c'mon, c'mon!” (Jingle – Aussie Cricket anthem. Mojo 1978)

- **Focus Texts:**
 - Play: The Club (1980), David Williamson
 - Films: Crackerjack (2002), Pharlap (1983)
 - Poetry: Life Cycle (1968), Bruce Dawe
- **Writing Task:** Film review

Unit 10

Visual Visions

- **Focus Texts:**
 - Five Bells: John Olsen & Kenneth Slessor
 - The Explosive Landscape: Tragedy and Comedy - Arthur Streeton's Fire's On & Henry Lawson, The Loaded Dog.
 - True History of the Kelly Gang (2008) Peter Carey +Ned Kelly series, Sidney Nolan
- **Writing Task:** Critical Art Review
- **Field Trip:** AGNSW

Unit 11

Final formal presentations in class

Unit 12

Final exam

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).