

## **ENGE3360 Special Topics in Creative Writing – *Reading Alice Munro and Writing Life-Stories***

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### **Course description**

In this course, we will read Alice Munro's short stories 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 friendship, 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

### **Assessment:**

Attendance & participation	10%
Workshop attendance & participation	10%
Discussion facilitation (tutorial)	10%
Writing Portfolio (5-6 pieces)	30%
Life-Story	40%

**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.

(If on Zoom, make sure you can turn on your mic and camera during class.)

**Discussion facilitation (10%):** Make use of tutorial meetings to exchange and deepen ideas on the stories. You will be responsible for the discussion of ONE story and will be given prompts to help you structure the discussion. You will open and **lead** the discussion, offering your own ideas, referring us to the text, and inviting follow-up comments from your classmates.

Your opening remarks should not be longer than FIVE minutes. You will be assessed based on content, clarity, fluency and engagement.

(If on Zoom, make sure you can turn on your mic and camera during class.)

**Writing Portfolio (30%):** Five to six life-writing exercises will be assigned. Be prepared to allocate time for these exercises as some might involve research and interviews with family members.

**Life-Story (40%):** You can expand one of the life-writing exercises into a complete original story or start a new piece. The life-story should center on a key event, explore a character and illuminate a life. The story must be submitted for workshopping.

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

**Course schedule (tentative)**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Week 1 Sept 6	<b>Introduction to the course;</b> <i>Storying Our Lives</i>
Week 2 Sept 13	<i>Alice Munro – Writing Her Lives</i>
Week 3 Sept 20	<b>I. The Mother</b>
Week 4 Sept 27	<b>II. Sisters and Aunts</b>
Week 5 Oct 4	<b>III. The Father</b>
Week 6 Oct 11	<i>Alice Munro – The Story-teller</i>
Week 7 Oct 18	<b>IV. Friendship</b>
Week 8 Oct 25	<b>V. Sex, love, and marriage</b>
Week 9 Nov 1	<b>VI. Faith and fate</b>
Week 10 Nov 8	<b>VII. Self and self-writing</b>
Week 11 Nov 15	<b>Workshop</b>
Week 12 Nov 22	<b>Workshop</b>
Week 13 Nov 29	<b>Workshop</b>

**Stories:****W<sub>1</sub>**

“Boys and Girls” (in *Dance of the Happy Shades*)

**W<sub>2</sub>**

“Material” (in *Something I’ve Been Meaning to Tell You*)

“Meneseteung” (in *Friend of My Youth*)

**W<sub>3</sub>**

“The Peace of Utrecht” (in *Dance of the Happy Shades*)

“Forgiveness in Families” (in *Something I’ve Been Meaning to Tell You*)

“The Ottawa Valley” (in *Something I’ve Been Meaning to Tell You*)

“The Progress of Love” (in *The Progress of Love*)

“Friend of My Youth” (in *Friend of My Youth*)

“My Mother’s Dream” (in *The Love of a Good Woman*)

“Dear Life” (in *Dear Life*)

**W4**

“Chaddeleys and Flemings” (in *The Moons of Jupiter*)

“Family Furnishing” (in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*)

**W5**

“The Moons of Jupiter” (in *The Moons of Jupiter*)

“Night” (in *Dear Life*)

**W6**

“Nettles” (in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*)

“Dimensions” (in *Too Much Happiness*)

**W7**

“Day of the Butterfly” (in *Dance of the Happy Shades*)

“Jesse and Meribeth” (in *The Progress of Love*)

**W8**

“How I Met My Husband” (in *Something I’ve Been Meaning to Tell You*)

“Voices” (in *Dear Life*)

**W9**

“Age of Faith” (in *Lives of Girls and Women*)

“Tricks” (in *Runaway*)

**W10**

“The Eye” (in *Dear Life*)

**References:**

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 ENGE3360 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:**

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.

**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.