

“Imagining English: Creative Writing for Bilingual Students”
21G.240 • Spring 2021

TR 9-10:30: Zoom ID: 944 2360 2938 (link on Canvas)
Office hours: M 9:30-10:30, R 8:00-9:00
or by appointment.
(office hours held at <http://mit.zoom.us/my/egrunwal>)

Instructor: Eric Grunwald
Office phone: 617-253-2647
egrunwal@mit.edu



“No matter what your first language, you should treasure it all your life. If it happens not to be standard English, and if it shows itself when you write standard English, the result is usually delightful, like a very pretty girl with one eye that is green and one that is blue.”
—*Kurt Vonnegut*

“Everyone is creative and has something to say.” —*Brenda Ueland*

“I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say.”
—*Flannery O'Connor*

“A blank sheet of paper.”
— *Nobel Prize-winning writer Ernest Hemingway on the scariest thing he ever encountered*

Course Description

In this course, we will explore the joys and struggles of writing creatively and expressing yourself in new ways, with the added challenge—and freedom, perhaps—of writing in a second (or third or fourth) language. Through the study of the elements of fiction and poetry and the reading and discussion of short stories and poems, you will prepare yourselves to write and revise your own. Also, as immigrants or the children of immigrants, you straddle multiple worlds and can offer readers in English emotional, cultural, and linguistic experiences that we might not otherwise get. Not only will we work on improving your own writing, but we will also explore how you might push and reinvigorate the language and where you are trying to stretch it too far. And through the close reading of American, British, and non-native writers writing in English, we will try to puzzle out what makes a story or poem good and how immigrant writers have shaped their forms and themes.

In addition to any necessary review of any necessary fundamentals that come up in your writing (advanced verb tenses, article usage, complex sentence structure), we also explore the bounds of English grammar—i.e., *what is fresh, unusual, and grammatically correct* versus what is not grammatical (and how it could be made so). Studying together on the “blackboard” sentences from your work and from published authors, we will note places where your diction and syntax may differ from what is “usually” said, and we will discuss whether they add freshness to a piece and to the language. We will also review any necessary advanced grammar rules, allowing you to expand your writing toolbox with confidence and accuracy. Given the variety of personal and cultural writing styles, this should be an exciting and dynamic process. We will also be exploring vocabulary and the differences between academic and “literary” diction.

Finally, we will explore writing strategies and processes as well as different ways to tap into creativity that you may not know you possess and which will be useful in any field or task. Does a language shape our ideas or our writerly identities, and if it does, can you wrestle control of the differences to jump to a higher vantage point above the two languages and cultures? Through the analysis and partial translation of a story and a poem from your native language, we will investigate these cultural and literary differences.

We will be working on the following skills:

- Writing and revising short stories and poems, deploying skillfully the craft of both:

Fiction

- plot
- character
- setting
- theme
- imagery and figurative language
- point of view

Poetry

- ◇ imagery and figures of speech
- ◇ sounds, rhythm, and meter
- ◇ metered versus free verse
- ◇ the line and line break
- ◇ argument and resolution

- Reading literature critically and closely and offering textually based interpretations;
- Writing critically about literature;
- Mastering advanced English grammar;
- Mastering academic and colloquial English vocabulary;
- Revising work deeply.

Prerequisites for enrollment

The class is for students whose native language or language of instruction K-12 was not English and who have completed 21G.222 or another CI-HW class. This class counts as a HASS-A class.

Prioritizing for enrollments

First priority are undergraduate students who are concentrating in ELS. Next are students who have preregistered for the class. If there are too many students required to take the class, a lottery will be held.

Required materials

- Oliver, Mary, *A Poetry Handbook* (pre-order at COOP)
- A hardback sketchbook, 8½" x 11, unlined. Here are two inexpensive local options:
 - Strongly recommended: Michael's (Porter Square): <https://www.michaels.com/sketchbooks/hardbound-sketchbooks/845166107?prefn1=brand&prefv1=Artists%20Loft> (only \$7, and many colors available; go for fun! You're going to be using this a lot; curbside pick-up available, and it's only three subway stops away; they also deliver.)
 - Blick (Central Square, 619 Mass. Ave.): <https://www.dickblick.com/items/blick-hardbound-sketchbook-11-x-8-12/> (more expensive and black only)
- Printer and plenty of paper
- Folder or 3-ring binder for handouts and printouts
- Organized computer folders where you keep all of your work (and all separate drafts!)
- Imagination, enthusiasm, and courage.
- Recommended: Journal at least 6" x 8", lined or unlined.
 - Again, the Artists Loft™ journals at Michael's are fun and a great value. Use the link above to see choices.

Additional resources and readings, course announcements, and assignments will be available on the class Canvas site.

Homework Policies

Major writing assignments will not be accepted late unless you have obtained *prior* approval from the instructor at least 24 hours in advance with the exception of verified emergencies. Making work for another class or extracurricular activity a priority over this class is not an acceptable reason for an extension. Other reasons will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Assignments are listed on the syllabus and are due before the class under which they are listed. **Always check the schedule for the homework due the next class.** All reading materials and instructions are on the class Canvas site: <https://canvas.mit.edu/courses/6983>. Assignments should be submitted there unless otherwise specified. If instructions are missing, do not correspond to the syllabus, or are otherwise unclear, please email me immediately.

Occasionally I will make an alteration to the syllabus or an assignment. Check your email a few times a day, especially before beginning the homework, to see whether I have posted an announcement (which will be emailed to you as well, assuming you have the correct Canvas notifications turned on).

Missing class is not an excuse for missing an assignment. Students who miss class are expected to check the syllabus. If you miss class, you must send your assignment before the class in which it is due.

Follow Instructions

Read the instructions for each assignment carefully and **ask for clarification** if you are not sure what you are supposed to do. To get full credit for an assignment, you must follow the

instructions, including page length, margins, font size, and other features. Turning in work that does not match the assignment will result in a lower grade.

Attendance, Preparation & Participation

Plan to attend every class. Missing more than three classes without permission will negatively affect your grade, as will chronic lateness. If you think that you may be required to attend meetings or do work for other classes during our class time, or will have to be perpetually late, please change to another class or take this a different year.

Students are expected **to participate** to the best of their abilities. This includes contributing comments in full class discussions, asking questions, being active in small group discussions and thoughtfully evaluating other students' papers in peer review. Students may be required to come to the instructor's office hours or visit the Writing Center for additional tutoring, and failure to comply with such requirements will also be factored into the participation grade.

Courtesy

No cell phone/electronic device use in class unless specified by instructor. Also, while the instructor always appreciates "friend" requests, they cannot be accepted while you are his student.

Types of assignments

Work for this class will include:

- **Major assignments:** You should expect to write at least 3,000 words over the semester, as well as revisions. If you receive a grade of C or lower on any papers, you may be asked to revise them again. All preliminary work assigned, such as outlines and drafts, must be submitted for the final draft to be accepted.
 - **Two short stories** of 3-6 pages (~750-1,500 words) and 4-7 pages (~1,000-1,750 words), respectively, with multiple revisions;
 - **Two poems**, 1-2 pages double-spaced, with multiple revisions;
- **On-line discussions about our readings:** Research has shown that such "low-risk" writing assignments as journaling, freewriting, and reading responses that do not require grammatical perfection or elegance (i.e., that do not emphasize *accuracy*) can increase students' *fluency*—that is, the ability to write a decent amount of text in a reasonable amount of time. Close reading is also necessary for a writer, and discussing texts with others is a way to facilitate that. It is also fun to reflect on the stories and poems you read and discuss them with others.
- **Short writing exercises** preparing you for the next story or poem that you will write.
- **Grammar exercises;**
- **Vocabulary bank:** Together, you and your classmates will create an ongoing bank of words, phrases, and idioms weekly as well as synonyms suitable for academic writing (or vice versa) and contribute to group lists for quizzes;
- **Quizzes** on grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, **and readings.**

- **Attending local readings** by fiction writers and poets will help you experience the excitement of the vibrant literary scene that the Boston area has to offer and to hear new work. Probably I will have you write reading responses to these experiences as well.
- **Final portfolio:** Collection of your best work and other artifacts from the semester.

Class preparation and participation, including in-class warm-up assignments, discussions on Canvas, peer workshopping, and poem recitation	20%
2 short stories (2,000 – 2,500 words total) + drafts	15%
2 poems (1,000 words total), two of which will be revised (5% first draft, 10% final draft; 5% for other 2)	15%
Vocabulary banks	15%
Homework not including the major writing assignments: e.g., craft exercises, grammar assignments, day books	15%
Reading, grammar, and vocabulary quizzes	10%
Final portfolio	10%
Total	100.00%

Grading

Points on assignments translate to the following grades, and vice versa:

97 & above=A+	93 – 96 =A	90-92=A-	87-89=B+	83-86=B	80-82=B-
77-79=C+	73-76=C	70-72=C-	60-69=D	Below 60 = F	

Major writing assignments will receive a letter grade. However, creative assignments will not be graded only on quality (in terms of linguistic ability, depth and profundity, etc.), but also on 1) your use of the elements of craft that we are studying, 2) the degree to which you truly revise your work and incorporate your peers’ and my suggestions. Expect to get lower grades on your “best” drafts of your creative work, which are worth less than the final drafts, which should be much higher.

Homework assignments will be assigned grades as follows:

Δ+	100%	Assignment followed instructions and was successful in meeting all or most of the requirements.
Δ	85%	Assignment followed instructions and met many of the requirements.
Δ-	70%	Assignment missed some instructions, was incomplete and/or met only some of the requirements.
X	0	Work did not match assignment, was late without permission or was not turned in.

Format

All out-of-class writing assignments except the reading responses must be typed and double spaced in Times Roman 12-point type, one-sided, with standard margins (top/bottom 1", L/R 1.25") to allow for comments and corrections. A **template** for this will be posted on Canvas.

Plagiarism

At MIT, you are expected to do your own work. While borrowing ideas and words from others is acceptable in some cultures, it is not in the United States, where it is known as **plagiarism**. **Plagiarized papers, stories, or poems will not receive credit, and the participation grade will also be negatively affected.** Students who plagiarize a second time are likely to fail the class. We will discuss how to avoid plagiarism in week two. In the meantime, do not copy from other sources, and do not have someone edit your paper before you submit it.

The Writing Center

The **WCC at MIT** (Writing and Communication Center) offers *free* one-on-one **professional** advice from communication experts (MIT lecturers who all have advanced degrees and who are all published writers). The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic, creative, job-related, and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing your presentations & designing slides). The WCC also helps with all **English as Second Language** issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice, from understanding genre conventions to analyzing what particular journals require. The WCC is located in **E18-233** (50 Ames Street; entrance through Bldg. 19, 400 Main St.). To register with their online scheduler and to make appointments, go to <https://mit.mywconline.com/>. To access the WCC's many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations, go to <http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/>. The Center's core hours are Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; evening hours vary by semester—check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours.

21G.240 Course Calendar, Weeks 1-7

1. Readings and assignments are to be discussed on the days listed, so have them read and done before class on those days. Sometimes I will change the assignments in class, so if you miss class, check the LM or your email for any additional assignments.
2. This schedule is tentative; major revisions will be distributed in class and posted on the LM. It is your responsibility to keep up to date on readings and any announced changes to the calendar.

CR = Course Reader

LM = Learning Module (Stellar)

BC = Bring computer/tablet

W	#	D	Date	In class	Homework Due
1	1	T	Feb 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course objectives, overview • Introductions • Why write? • How to read stories (in a second language) 	
	2	R	Feb 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading faster • Discussion, “Mother”: inference, vocabulary • Register: fiction vs. academic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resources for finding the right word - Vocabulary • Vocabulary bank 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Class Notes (CN) #2
2	3	T	Feb 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz: Elements of Fiction and Wolff’s “Powder” • Discussion: Wolff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plot review - stages of plot • How fiction works (the “fictional dream”) • Character (and plot) • Past verb tense review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary bank #1: 4 words/phrases • Read CN#3 • Read T. Wolff, “Powder,” answer plot questions in Discussion (see Canvas) • “Character and Conflict” exercise

Spring 2021 (Grunwald)

W	#	D	Date	In class	Homework Due
	4	R	Feb 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogue & punctuation Grammar workshop #1 Story #1 assignment, prompts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where to get ideas - The writing process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CN#4: “Dialogue,” Punctuating dialogue Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants,” brief online discussion Dialogue exercise
3	5	T	Mar 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting Tone What does the reader need to know (and when?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary bank #2: 4 words/phrases CN#5: Setting and describing places Cisneros, “Woman Hollering Creek” Setting exercise
	6	R	Mar 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammar & Vocab Quiz #1 Theme The Writing process Discussion: “Conversion” I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CN#6: Theme Roth, “The Conversion of the Jews” part I, pp. 809-814 (top), online responses Review for quiz
4		T	Mar 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NO CLASS – MONDAY SCHEDULE 	
	7	R	Mar 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point of view Discussion: Roth Verb Tenses II – present tenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Story #1 workshop draft Roth, pp. __ - end, discussion
5	8	T	Mar 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary bank #2: 4 words/phrases Read and critique classmates’ stories (see Canvas for instructions) Jin, “Love in the Air,” pp. 79-84, top half; reading response
	9	R	Mar 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revision strategies I 1st-person narration Writing as an immi-/emigrant Story #2 assignment Moodling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CN#9: Writing as an immi-/emigrant, idleness Finish Jin story; also, Glieberman, “Inside the Bilingual Writer”; Jin, “The Jin, “The Spokesman and the Tribe,” Canvas discussion
		F	Mar 19	<p>ADD DATE – Last day to add full-term subjects to registration</p>	
		T	Mar 23	<p>STUDENT HOLIDAY – NO CLASS</p>	

Spring 2021 (Grunwald)

W	#	D	Date	In class	Homework Due
6	10	R	Mar 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microscopic truthfulness • 1st-person narrators • Writing exercise: pastiche 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #1 Revision to Instructor • Vocabulary bank #3: 4 words/phrases • Kincaid story, O'Brien excerpt, brief discussion
7	11	T	Mar 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision II • Grammar Workshop #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #2 Workshop draft • CN#11: Deep revision • Vocabulary bank #4: 4 words/phrases
	12	R	Apr 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop II 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and critique classmates' stories • Lahiri, "The Third and Final Continent," pp. 1-5
8	13	T	Apr 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lahiri discussion • Fiction recap • Literary tour of downtown Boston 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #1 "final" draft • Finish Lahiri, reading response

21G.240 Course Calendar, Weeks 8-14

1. Readings and assignments are to be discussed on the days listed, so have them read and done before class on those days. Sometimes I will change the assignments in class, so if you miss class, check the LM or your email for any additional assignments.
2. This schedule is tentative; major revisions will be distributed in class and posted on the LM. It is your responsibility to keep up to date on readings and any announced changes to the calendar.

CR = Course Reader

LM = Learning Module (Stellar)

BC = Bring computer/tablet

W	#	D	Date	In class	HW DUE
8	13	T	Apr 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lahiri discussion • Fiction wrap-up • Literary tour of downtown Boston 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #1 “final” draft • Lahiri, finish “The Third and Final Continent,” response
	14	R	Apr 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar/vocab Quiz #2 • What is poetry, and what is it for? • Writing poetry I: read, memorize, recite (sign-up sheet) • Sounds in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #2 best revised draft to instructor • Study for quiz #2 • An introductory sheaf of poems + audio on LM; “Suggestions for Approaching Poetry”; journal; Oliver, “Intro,” “Getting Started” • Alliteration and assonance
9	15	T	Apr 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anaphora/repetition • The line • Open form • Poem #1 assignment • Vocabulary workshop #3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oliver, “The Line”; “Open form” • Poetry Sheaf 2 + audio; “Anaphora” (poets.org); Addonizio, Koch.
	16	R	Apr 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetry sheaf 3 (Open Form”; poems by Cummings, Halaby, Ha Jin, Vazirani; Pastan, Bishop, Snyder, Tragore; journal
		T	Apr 20	HOLIDAY – NO CLASS	

Spring 2021 (Grunwald)

10	17	R	Apr 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • imagery • Recitation I • Discussion: patterns of rhythm I: Frost & Dickinson • Vocabulary Workshop: imagery • Poem presentation #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #1 workshop draft
11	18	T	Apr 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recitation II • Poem presentation #2 • Rhyme & meter 2 • Writing about Poetry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #2 “final” draft • “Meyer, “Patterns of Rhythm”; poems by Frost (+MP3), Auden (+MP3), Dickinson, Brodsky (+MP3), Barbosa; journal es (inc. Hulme),” • Vocabulary List #4 • iambic pentameter
	19	R	Apr 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recitation III • rhyme scheme practice: ababcc • exercise: write 2 rhyming couplets in native language, then one in English • Poem presentation #3 • Poem #2 assignment • Translating poems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #1 revision to instructor • bring rhyming poem in your language • Write two lines of iambic pentameter that rhyme and form a grammatical sentence.
12	20	T	May 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recitation IV • Poem #2 assignment • Vocabulary Workshop • Poem presentation #4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #2 peer review draft • Vocabulary List #5
	21	R	May 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar workshop #3 • Moodling time • Poem presentation #5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DROP DATE – last day to drop class • (3 copies) • Meyer, “The Sonnet”; journal; sonnets by Wordsworth, Hopkins, Frost, Shelley, Shakespeare • Bring pen/pencil and paper
13	22	T	May 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm-up • The Sonnet • Translating poems: sacrifice • Poem presentation #6 • Assignment for final portfolio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #2 revision to instructor • “51 Immigrant Poets”: Ladan Osman (Somalia), et. al.; journal, RR • “On the Poetics of Translation” • pre-peer review three partners’ poems

Spring 2021 (Grunwald)

	23	R	May 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read some poems, translations; discuss • Figures of Speech • Poem presentation #7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary List #6
14	24	T	May 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of translation • Recitation VII • Quiz #3 • Poem presentation #8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #1 final revision • Translation of poem into English; • Meyer, “Figures of Speech” and poems; journal.
	25	R	May 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap up: Reflections and self-reflections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #2 final revision • Translation into English of a poem from your language; journal