

“Imagining English: Creative Writing for Bilingual Students”
21G.240 • Spring 2022

TR 1-2:30

16-645

Office hours: T 11-12, R 2:30-3:30

or by appointment.

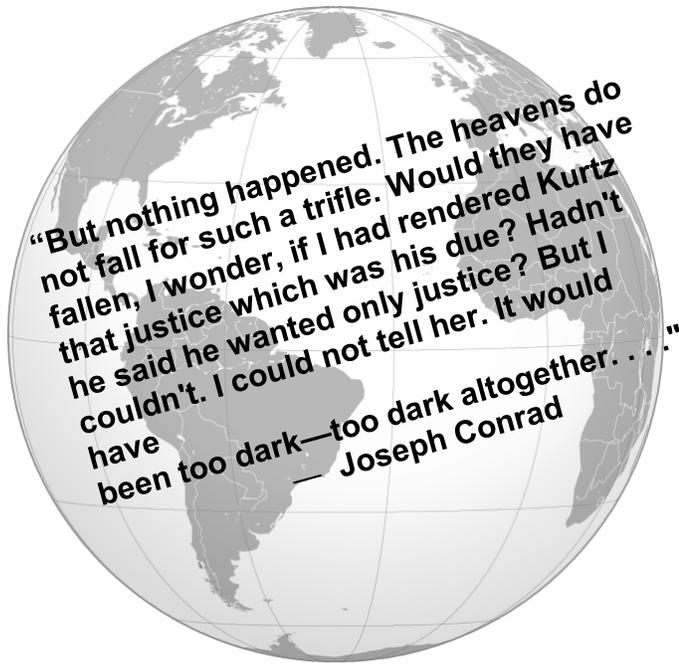
(office hours held at <http://mit.zoom.us/my/egrunwal>)

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“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

We will explore the joys and struggles of writing creatively and expressing yourself in new ways, with the added challenge—and freedom—of writing in a second (or third or fourth) language. By studying the elements of fiction and poetry and reading and discussing 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 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.

Joseph Conrad, author of *The Heart of Darkness*, was Polish, and English was his third language. And because of that, he brought a freshness to English. So in addition to any review of any necessary fundamentals that come up in your writing (advanced verb tenses, article usage, complex sentence structure), we also explore the limits of English grammar—i.e., *what you write that is fresh, unusual, but grammatically correct* versus what is not grammatical (and how it

could be made so). 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 that 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 work on the following skills:

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

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| <u>Fiction</u> | <u>Poetry</u> |
| ○ plot | ◇ imagery and figures of speech |
| ○ character | ◇ sounds, rhythm, and meter |
| ○ setting | ◇ metered versus free verse |
| ○ theme | ◇ the line and line break |
| ○ imagery and figurative language | ◇ argument and resolution |
| ○ point of view | |
- Reading literature critically and closely and offering textually based interpretations;
- 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 texts and materials

1. Class Canvas site (CVS): <https://canvas.mit.edu/courses/13372>.
2. Grunwald, E., Spring 2022 *21W.240 Course Workbook* (CopyTech, Building 11)
3. Oliver, Mary, *A Poetry Handbook* (pre-order at COOP)
4. A hardback sketchbook, 8½” x 11, lined or 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/blink-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 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 in the Course Workbook (CW) or on the class Canvas site. Assignments should be submitted in paper 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.
- **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.

Grade breakdown:

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| 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% | 15% |

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| final draft; 5% for other 2) | |
| 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:

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| 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:

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| $\Delta+$ | 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. |
| $\Delta-$ | 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.

21W.240 (21G.240) Class and Homework Schedule

| | C l # | D a y | D a t e | Class Topic | Homework & Assignments due on these dates |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|---|--|
| W e e k 1 | 1 | T | Feb 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course objectives, overview • Introductions • How to read short stories (in a second language) • Diagnostic | • NA |
| | 2 | R | Feb 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why write? • Reading faster • Discussion, “Mother”: inference, vocabulary • Register: fiction vs. academic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resources for finding the right word - Vocabulary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “How to Read Fiction in a Second Language” • Read Vivante, “Can-Can”; Kardos, “Conflict” (4 pp.) • Reading response #1 (see Canvas) • Class Notes (CN) #2 |
| W e e k 2 | 3 | T | Feb 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz: Elements of Fiction and Wolff’s “Powder” • Discussion: Wolff • Character (and plot) • How fiction works (the “fictional dream”) • 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 |
| | 4 | R | Feb 10 | <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 |
| W e e k | 5 | T | Feb 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting • Tone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does the reader need to know (and when?) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #1 Workshop Draft due • Vocabulary bank #2: 4 words/phrases • CN#5: Setting and describing places • Cisneros, “Woman Hollering Creek” |

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| 3 | 6 | R | Feb 17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop #1 • Revision I | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and critique classmates' stories | |
| W e e k | | T | Feb 22 | MONDAY SCHEDULE | | |
| | 4 | 7 | R | Feb 24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar & Vocab Quiz #1 • Discussion: "Conversion" I • Theme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #1 "Best Draft" to Instructor • CN#6: Theme • Roth, "The Conversion of the Jews" part I, pp. 809-814 (top), online responses • Review for quiz |
| W e e k | 5 | 8 | T | Mar 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit by Chinese-American writer Xuyun Eberlein | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eberlein story, "Pivot Point" • Post on Cvs three questions you would like to ask her (e.g., about her career, writing in English, revision, etc.) |
| | | 9 | R | Mar 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief: Xujun • Point of view • Discussion: Roth • Verb Tenses II – present tenses • Revision II | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roth, pp. __ - end, discussion • Discussion post (Cvs): Response to Eberlein visit |
| | | F | Mar 4 | ADD DATE | | |
| W e e k | 6 | 10 | T | Mar 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #2 Workshop draft • Vocabulary bank #4: 4 words/phrases |
| | | 11 | R | Mar 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop II | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and critique classmates' stories |
| W e e k | | 12 | T | Mar 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar Workshop #2 • O'Connor discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #1 "final" draft • O'Connor: "A Good Man is Hard to Find," pp. 709, 735-39, RR#__ |
| | | 13 | R | Mar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiction wrap-up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story #2 Best draft to instructor |

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| 7 | | | 17 | | | |
| W e e k 8 | | T | Mar 22 | SPRING BREAK | | |
| | | R | Mar 24 | SPRING BREAK | | |
| W e e k 9 | 14 | T | Mar 29 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is poetry, and what's it for? • Practice • Terminology • What we'll do | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetry Sheaf 1 + audio on Cvs; reading response | |
| | | | 15 | R | Mar 31 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz: Terminology • What is a poem? • Prepositions • Anaphora/repetition • Poem #1 assignment, practice |
| W e e k 10 | 16 | T | Apr 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliteration & Assonance • Enjambement • Grammar and Poetry • Imagery I • Diction in poetry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #1 workshop draft • Oliver, "Sound" & "More Devices of Sound" (pp. 19-34) | |
| | | | 17 | R | Apr 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz: Grammar and vocabulary • Recitation I • Patterns of rhythm I; scanning a line • Practice |
| W e e k | 18 | T | Apr 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop • Patterns of Rhythm II • Rhyme scheme practice: • Recitation II • Writing/moodling time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #1 best draft • Poetry sheaf 4, response • Oliver, pp. 92 – 108 ("Imagery"); pp. 35-57 ("The Line"); • expect a quiz on terminology | |

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| 11 | 19 | R | Apr 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit by Bosnian poet Selma Asotic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asotic poems, reading response (Cvs); + post questions you'd like to ask • Vocab: 4 more words |
| W e e k | 20 | T | Apr 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recitation III • Meter and rhyme exercises • Time to write • Poem #2 assignment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #2 workshop draft • Oliver, pp. 58-66 ("Some given forms"); • Poetry sheaf 5, response • Vocab: 4 more words |
| | 12 | 21 | R | Apr 21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recitation IV • Writing poetry in a second language • The Sonnet |
| W e e k | 22 | T | Apr 26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem recitation V • Final portfolio assignment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #1 final draft |
| | 13 | 23 | R | Apr 28 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation |
| W e e k | 24 | T | May 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation workshop • Final quiz (cumulative): Vocab & grammar | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poem #2 final draft due in Portfolio • Optional translation assignment |
| | 14 | 25 | R | May 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA |
| W e e k | 26 | T | May 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap up: Reflections and self-reflections • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio due: |
| 15 | | | | | |