

**CREATIVE WRITING IN MINISTRY MW 5301 LS
SYLLABUS
FALL 2020**

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of the principles and techniques of effective writing designed to prepare students for communicating biblical truth through the written word. Students will write and read their own material during class time as well as edit and critique the writing of their fellow students. (MW301LS does not have a physical classroom; it is entirely by live remote video.) Enrollment limited to 12 students. 3 hours.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Cognitive objectives

- The student shall learn the fundamental principles of good writing.
- The student shall learn theology of culture-building that is Christ-centered.

Affective objectives

- The student shall recognize the need for dependence on God in the creative process.
- The student shall value excellence of skill in the writing process.
- The student shall value feedback from a diverse group of readers.

Behavioral objectives

- The student shall communicate biblical truth in a winsome, creative way.
- The student shall reflect a theology of incarnational living by expressing truth in a way that engages the five senses.
- The student shall model love when providing feedback to other students.
- The student shall recognize the need for humility and honesty in the writing process.

III. READING

A. Required Books

(If you have already read any of the required books, talk to the professor about a substitution.)

Fujimura, Makoto. *Culture Care: Reconnecting with Beauty for our Common Life*.

International Arts Movement and the Fujimura Institute: New York, 2015. 124 pages.

Karr, Mary. "Page Turner: [Sacred Carnality](#)," *The New Yorker*. October 11, 2015. 3 pages.

L'Engle, Madeleine. *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*. New York: Water Brook Press, 2001. 224 pages. (Any edition.)

Rico, Gabriele. *Writing the Natural Way*. New York: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 2000. 262 pages. (Edition year matters.)

B. Required excerpts

Dillard, Annie. "[Seeing](#)," from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. New York: Harper/Row, Publishers, 1974. 10 pages.

Karr, Mary. "Page Turner: [Sacred Carnality](#)," *The New Yorker*. October 11, 2015. 3 pages.

Wright, N. T. "All the Trees of the Forest Sing for Joy" in *The Case for the Psalms: Why They Are Essential*. New York: Harper Collins, 2013. 45 pages. Excerpt.

C. Required DVD

Goldsworthy, Andy (actor) and Thomas Riedelsheimer (director). Andy Goldsworthy's [Rivers & Tides DVD](#). 2004. 90 minutes.

D. Suggested books

Keyes, Ralph. *The Courage to Write*. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2003. 224 pages.
Peterson, Andrew. *Adorning the Dark. Thoughts on Community, Calling, and the Mystery of Making*. Nashville: B&H Books, 2019. 224 pages.
Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Non-fiction*. New York: HarperResource, 2001. 336 pages.

E. Supplementary Information

DTS does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the operation of any of its programs and activities. To avoid discrimination, the student is responsible for informing the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities and the course instructor of any disabling condition that will require modifications.

Students are prohibited from using cell phones or other forms of technology during class that are separate from that required to participate in class.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Reading Assignments:

Reading (thoroughly) every assignment of Rico's *Writing the Natural Way*.
Read Annie Dillard's excerpt from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, "[Seeing](#)."
Read Madeleine L'Engle's *Walking on Water*.
Read Mako Fujimura's *Culture Care*.
Read Mary Karr's chapter, [Sacred Carnality](#).
Read Ernest Hemingway's short story, "Hills Like White Elephants." (course files)
Read Hamlin Garland's short story, "Under the Lion's Paw." (course files)
Read "All the Trees of the Forest Sing for Joy" in N. T. Wright's *The Case for the Psalms*.
Read Flannery O'Connor's "The River." (course files)

B. Written Assignments:

1. **Type and double-space** all assignments from Rico's *Writing the Natural Way*.
2. Turn in all assignments (limit: one page, double spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point font) on time (30 minutes before the beginning of class) unless prior arrangements are made with the professor.
3. Know that instructions from the professor supersede those given in the book.
4. Leave one-inch margins left and right except when experimenting with form.
5. Upload all written assignments as well as all hand-written clusters. Written assignments must be in Word documents: .doc or .docx
6. Please do not read your classmates' work until you have turned in your own.
7. Include the following on all papers:

Name
Title of assignment: (DYH: Title in syllabus)

Your title for the piece; date

V. COURSE POLICIES

A. Weight Given to Course Requirements for Grading

Class Interaction: 15%
Writing: 65%
Reading 20%

Papers will be graded on honesty, creativity, clarity and relevancy. A rubric is provided on the course web site. The professor reserves the right to raise a student’s grade by adding points for professionalism, which include progress, teachability, punctuality, and perfect attendance. The professor also reserves the right to deduct points from the class interaction grade for unauthorized use of electronic devices during class.

B. Class Participation

Students must participate in editing and verbally evaluating the work of their fellow classmates in a constructive way.

C. Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted unless arrangements are made ahead of time with the professor. (“Late” means any time after the class hour in which they are due.)

D. Absences

The absences policy for this class will follow the absences policy as outlined in the Student Handbook. Students are responsible for knowing this information.

E. Letter/Numerical Grade Scale

A+ 99–100	B+ 91–93	C+ 83–85	D+ 75–77	F 0–69
A 96–98	B 88–90	C 80–82	D 72–74	
A- 94–95	B- 86–87	C- 78–79	D- 70–71	

*Note about quality of work: Students must use strong verbs in their writing. On each assignment the student may use only one form of the verb “to be” per double-spaced page. ****Forms of “be” include be, am, are, is, was, were, been, being, become, becoming. Grader will deduct one half-grade for each “be” verb.***

F. Gender-Inclusive Language

All written submissions should strive to use gender-inclusive language. As a gospel-shaped, gospel-centered community of learning, we have compelling reasons to think, write, and speak in such a way as to insure that none are either intentionally or inadvertently excluded by our use of language. Consider using “humans,” “persons,” “humanity,” or “humankind” rather than “man” or “men” when referring to human beings in general. Consider alternating between the use of “he” and “she” as generic

pronouns or substituting the use of the plural (“they,” “them,” “their”) when appropriate.

VI. COURSE LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Date	Assignment Due	Class time
Week 1 Aug 26	Watch Creative Writing in Ministry (1:36) lecture. Watch Andy Goldsworthy’s “Rivers and Tides” documentary. Notice recurring patterns in his art and also how he handles failure.	Introduction Class short (to compensate for time spent watching); meet prof and TA, and ask questions. Note: <i>This class is entirely by live remote video; there is no physical classroom.</i>
Week 2 Sept 2	Read syllabus in entirety. Read L’Engle, ch. 1; Rico, ch 1 DYH* (p. 9–10). Fit all four onto one page . Part 1 Write something about yourself Part 2 Describe a feeling Part 3 Write about someone you care for Part 4 Write on “Write.” <i>* DYH refers to the “Directing Your Hand” writing exercises in Rico. Be sure to do all four parts to this first DYH: maximum one-fourth page at most for each of the four. Follow book instructions till you finish them. Then go back and edit. Prof’s instructions supersede book’s.</i>	Chapter 1: Letting the Writer in Us Out Read/critique work; make sure you post your work according to instructions you will receive so it is accessible to all <i>during class time</i> . We will read it and critique during class on this day and every week.
Week 3 Sept 9	Watch clustering videos with Dr. Reg Grant (total = 1:05) Rico, 2 L’Engle, 2 DYH (p. 34) “Meinke poem”	Clustering: Doorway to Your Design Mind Read/critique work Class shortened to compensate for time spent watching lectures.
Week 4 Sept 16	Read excerpt from Mary Karr on Sacred Carnality Rico, 3–4 L’Engle, 3 DYH (p. 57) “Toy” Read Isaiah 60 From now on, include cluster with every submission	Chapter 3: The Receptive “I” Chapter 4: The Self-Reflective Mind Read/critique work John Donne: Batter My Heart
Week 5 Sept 23	Rico, 5–6 L’Engle, 4 DYH (p.84) “Web” Luke 8:1–14	Chapter 5: Design, Trial Web Shift Chapter 6: Improvising Discuss prioritizing the “writing rules” Read/critique work Discuss blinding w/ the truth vs “Tell It Slant”
Week 6 Sept 30	Rico, 7 L’Engle, 5 Read first half of Fujimura DYH (p. 100) “War Memorial” Read Psalm 136	Chapter 7: Recurrences: The Unifying Thread Read/critique work George Herbert: “Easter Wings” Langston Hughes: “Goodbye Christ”

Week 7 Oct 7	Rico, 8 L'Engle, 6 Read second half of Fujimura DYH (p. 127) "Portrait of" Email the prof with the name of the museum you plan to visit in week to come.	Chapter 8: Language Rhythms: Music in Words Review of line, mass, texture, color Read/critique work
Week 8 Oct 14	View four chapel messages by Esther Meeks on epistemology (links at end of bibliography) Turn in museum piece with cluster.	NO CLASS: ARTS CONFERENCE AT DTS In lieu of class time, visit an art museum (by 8:30 PM Central on 10/14). Find a piece and cluster about it. Then write up to one page. When you post your writing, including a photo of the museum piece you chose.
Week 9 Oct 21	Rico, 9 L'Engle, 7 Watch "Tips" lecture (1:15) DYH (p. 138) "Color" Watch " Allow Me to Reintroduce the Christ " Alternate assignment: Make your own version paralleling or answering Hughes or "Reintroducing Christ"	Chapter 9: Images: Inner Eye Class shortened to compensate for lecture-watching time
Week 10 Oct 28	Rico, 10 L'Engle, 8 Read "Hills Like White Elephants" Read handout "Dialogue Tags and Beats" DYH (p. 141) "This Is"	Chapter 10: Wedding Word to Image: Metaphor Discuss dialogue, short story Read, critique work
Week 11 Nov 4	Rico, 11 L'Engle, 9 DYH (p. 185) "Dialogue" Read "Under the Lion's Paw"	Chapter 11: Nuances: The Many Voices in the One Read/critique museum piece Discuss "Under the Lion's Paw" Discuss "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" Watch https://www.facebook.com/dts.eikon/videos/889450954563496/
Week 12 Nov 11	Rico, 12-13 DYH (p. 201) "Contraries" L'Engle, 10 Read O'Connor's "The River" Read Ezekiel 37:1-14	Chapter 12: Polarity & Creative Tension Chapter 13: Brevity and Re-Vision Read/critique work Discuss "The River"
	NO CLASSES READING WEEK 11/16-20	
	NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK 11/23-27	

<p>Week 13 Dec 2</p>	<p>Read chapter 5 (“All the Trees of the Forest Sing for Joy”) in N. T. Wright’s <i>The Case for the Psalms</i> Read Dillard excerpt, “Seeing.” Take nature walk by yourself. Cluster and write short (maximum ¾ page) prose or poetry account of observations in a style that mimics Annie Dillard. Read Psalm 19.</p>	<p>Drawing Inspiration from Others’ Work Read/critique work</p> <p>Fall 2020 grads: All assignments are due early per date provided by Academic Dean.</p>
<p>Week 14 Dec 9</p>	<p>DYH (p. 9–10) Create <i>four new paragraphs from scratch with new clusters</i>: something about yourself; a feeling; someone you care for; “write.” Course evaluation due</p>	<p>The Before and After Read and critique work</p>

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY MW301LS

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. TED Talk: [The Danger of a Single Story](#).

Bell, James Scott. *Plot and Structure: Techniques and Exercises for Crafting a Plot That Grips Readers from Start to Finish*. Cincinnati: Writer’s Digest Books, 2004. Bell, a Christian, has published numerous books and is the past fiction columnist for *Writer’s Digest* magazine.

Boo, Catherine. *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers*. New York, NY: Random House, 2012. Won the National Book Award for Nonfiction. Great example of creative nonfiction.

Brady, John. *The Craft of Interviewing*. New York: Random House, 1977. Former editor of *Writer’s Digest* gives advice drawing from years of experience doing interviews.

Brandt, Dorothea. *Becoming a Writer*. Los Angeles, California: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1981. 186 pages. Classic text on writing; revised from its 1930s edition.

Browne, Renni and King, Dave. *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers: How to Edit Yourself into Print*. New York, New York: HarperCollins, 1993. 240 pages. Sections on dialogue tags and beats are especially good.

Buckley, William F., Jr., Vaughan, Samuel, editor. *Buckley: The Right Word*. New York: Random House. 1996. 544 pages. Buckley’s editor’s compilation of late conservative columnist’s musings about writing.

Charters, Ann. *The Story and its Writer: An Introduction to Short Fiction*. 9th edition. Boston: Bedford/St.

- Martins, 2015. 1,775 pages. This short story anthology includes many of the stories and book excerpts that the aspiring short-story writer needs to know.
- Clark, Roy Peter. *Murder Your Darlings: And Other Gentle Writing Advice from Aristotle to Zinsser*. New York, NY: Little, Brown, Spark, 2020. 352 pages. The author is senior scholar at the Poynter Institute, one of the most prestigious schools for journalists in the world.
- Cohen, Richard. *Writer's Mind: Crafting Fiction*. NTC Publishing Group, 1994. Well-written guide for crafting a story.
- Conroy, Frank, ed. *The Eleventh Draft: Craft and the Writing Life from the Iowa Writers' Workshop*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1999. 240 pages. Twenty-three writers use story as a vehicle for providing writing advice. The "Ralston" chapter is an especially good example of humor writing.
- Cordoza, Monica McCabe. *You Can Write a Column*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 2000. 120 pages. Advice for those wanting to write a regular column in a periodical.
- DeMarinis, Rick. *The Art & Craft of the Short Story*. Cincinnati: Storypress. 2000. 244 pages. DeMarinis explains the craft of short-story writing by using many stories or parts of stories.
- Dillard, Annie. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. New York: Harper/Row, Publishers, 1974. 304 pages. Excerpt from this is required text. Won Dillard the Pulitzer Prize for outstanding prose. Excerpt required for this class: "[Seeing](#)."
- Files, Meg. *Write from Life*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 2002. How-to book on transforming personal experiences into fiction, nonfiction, or poetry – emotionally honest writing worthy of publication.
- **Franklin, John. *Writing for Story: Craft Secrets of Dramatic Nonfiction by a Two-Time Pulitzer Prize Winner*. New York: Penguin, 1986. 215 pages. Examples of the author's two Pulitzer-winning articles are filled with annotated explanations for the writer's choices. Though designed for non-fiction, also helpful for fiction writers.
- Fujimura, Makoto. *Culture Care: Reconnecting with Beauty for our Common Life*. International Arts Movement and the Fujimura Institute: New York, 2015. 124 pages. Exploration of the Christ-following writer as cultural tend-er.
- Ginna, Peter. *What Editors Do: The Art, Craft, and Business of Book Editing* (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. 320 pages. A seasoned editor curates 27 essays from his peers in the book business on everything from the importance of the author-editor relationship to the challenges of editing genre fiction to the ways editors must function as evangelists, creating buzz for their books.
- Guthrie, Steven R. *Creator Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 240 pages. Guthrie hosts a cross-disciplinary conversation that both advances Christian theology and offers insights and resources for those involved in the arts.
- Hills, Rust. *Writing in General and the Short Story in Particular*. Revised Ed. Boston: Mariner. 2000. 208 pages.
- Hudson, Robert. *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004. 432 pages. Do we

capitalize *biblical* and *Advent*? What is a devotional? This reference book has the answers for writers publishing in the CBA.

Ingermanson, Randy. *Writing Fiction for Dummies*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley Publishing, 2009. 384 pages. "The Snowflake Guy" provides the elementals for writing fiction. I recommend anything you can find by Randy Ingermanson.

Jerome, Judson. *The Poet's Handbook*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 1980. 244 pages. This excellent how-to guide to poetry teaches basics of diction, imagery, metrics, verse forms, and symbolism. Oldie but goodie.

Karr, Mary. *The Art of Memoir*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2016. Author of the bestselling *The Liar's Club* provides an entertaining, informative, faith-inclusive work on how to tell your story.

Keyes, Ralph. *The Courage to Write: How Writers Transcend Fear*. New York City: Owl Books, 1995. 228 pages. Addresses how to overcome the fear that paralyzes most writers and how to write with transparency. This book contains profanity. In the past I required this text.

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. New York, NY: Pocket Books, 2000. 320 pages. King tells the story of his life, how his experiences have influenced his writing, and gives tips to writers on how to write well. This book contains profanity.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Random House, 1994. 239 pages. A best selling writer talks about the writing life and how to write well. This book contains profanity.

Lauber, Lynn. *Listen to Me: Writing Life into Meaning*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004. This book is for the person writing to transform and use one's own story to do so.

**L'Engle, Madeleine. *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 1998. Required text. Award-winning Christian writer Madeleine L'Engle talks about how faith and art work together.

LePeau, Andrew T. *Write Better: A Lifelong Editor on Craft, Art, and Spirituality*. Downer's Grove: IVP, 2019. 272 pages.

Lott, Bret. *Letters & Life: On Being a Writer, on Being a Christian*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2013. In this series of intimate reflections on life and writing, critically acclaimed and best-selling novelist Bret Lott calls authors to pursue excellence in their craft through writing essays and using extended memoir.

Olasky, Marvin. *Telling the Truth: How to Revitalize Christian Journalism*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1996. 303 pages. *World* magazine's editor discusses the need to reflect a Christian worldview in one's writing.

McKee, Robert. *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting*. New York: It Books, 1997. Essential text for anyone wishing to master the art of storytelling.

McManus, Patrick. *The Deer on a Bicycle: Excursions into the Writing of Humor*. Cheney, Washington: EWU Press, 2000. This book offers tips on analyzing the format of humor in short stories. Chapters include examples of how McManus applies the tips in his writing. Also includes sections on getting an agent, writing a book contract, and pitching ideas to magazines.

- Paris Review. Women at Work: Interviews from the Paris Review.* New York: Paris Review Editions, 2017.
Interviews about writing with some of the US's best writers of literary fiction and non-fiction.
- Peterson, Andrew. *Adorning the Dark: Thoughts on Community, Calling, and the Mystery of Making.* Nashville: B&H, 2019. 224 pages.
- **Rico, Gabriele. *Writing the Natural Way.* New York: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 2000. Required text. Includes ways to tap into the creative side of the brain, and offers corresponding writing prompts. Required.
- Sayers, Dorothy. *The Mind of the Maker.* San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1987 (reprint edition; original released in 1941). In this philosophical textbook on writing, Sayers—a contemporary of Lewis and Tolkien—considers parallels between the creations of God and the human creative process.
- Stern, Jerome. *Making Shapely Fiction.* New York: W. W. Norton Company, 2000. 262 pages. This book contains lots of great writing advice and ideas for fiction writers.
- Stokes, Penelope. *Writing & Selling the Christian Novel.* Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1998. 256 pages. Stokes's section on point of view is outstanding.
- **Strunk Wm. Jr and White, E.B. *The Elements of Style, 4th ed.* New York: MacMillan, 2000. 105 pages. Classic among writing classics.
- Swain, Dwight. *Techniques of the Selling Writer.* Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982. For intermediate writers ready for the next level.
- Truss, Lynne. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero-Tolerance Approach to Punctuation.* New York: Gotham Books, 2004. This book about punctuation wound up on the *New York Times* bestseller list by combining spirit and wit with helpful advice. Unabashedly strict and sometimes snobbish, the author gives the reader "permission to love punctuation."
- University of Chicago Press staff. *Chicago Manual of Style, 17th ed.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. Standard style book for the general periodicals market.
- Wiman, Christian. *My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer.* New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2013. A well-known poet and the editor of *Poetry* magazine wrote a now-famous essay about having faith in the face of death. His book is a meditation on contemporary faith for readers interested in the intersection of faith, life, and art. (The accompanying "On Being" NPR podcast interview is excellent.)
- **Wright, N. T. *The Case for the Psalms: Why They Are Essential.* New York: Harper Collins, 2013. Chapter titled "All the Trees of the Field" required reading for this class.
- Yancey, Philip and Schapp, James, Eds. *More than Words: Contemporary Writers on the Works That Shaped Them.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002. 288 pages. Top Christian writers talk about the classical writers who have most influenced their thinking and writing.
- Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well.* New York: Harper and Row, 2001. Another classic of classic writing texts (along with Strunk and White), especially for non-fiction writers.

Esther Meek's Arts Conference Lectures on Epistemology

Why We All Need Epistemological Therapy

<https://voice.dts.edu/chapel/why-we-all-need-epistemological-therapy-meek-esther/>

How Knowing (and the Creative Act) Works

<https://voice.dts.edu/chapel/how-knowing-and-the-creative-act-works-meek-esther/>

Loving to Know: Covenant Epistemology for Artists and other Knowers

<https://voice.dts.edu/chapel/epistemological-paradigm-shift-meek-esther/>

Inviting the Real and the Real We Invite

<https://voice.dts.edu/chapel/inviting-the-real-and-the-real-we-invite-meek-esther/>

Updated August 20, 2020