

The Mayapple & Sarah Lawrence Summer Intensive Sarah Lawrence College

Course: Adult Creative Writing Workshop, Fiction

Instructor: Mohammed Naseehu Ali
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Time: Monday, June 12 – Saturday, June 17
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Location: TBD

Office Hours (Individual Sessions): Monday, June 12 – Friday, June 16, 3 – 6 p.m.

Course Description

Though this class is primarily a writing workshop; its overarching theme is that of Human Trafficking. From advanced nations in the West to the so-called under-developed countries in other parts of the world, slavery persists without any sign of a complete eradication. According to The United Nations, the human trafficking trade generates \$31 Billion annually and enslaves 27 million people around the globe, half of whom are children under the age of 18. And this flies in the face of the fact that slavery is illegal in every nation on earth. Through in/out-of-class writing exercises, assigned readings, your workshop stories, and class discussions, we will examine the reasons why such a glaring atrocity continues to thrive in the modern world.

In 1946, George Orwell wrote in a short essay titled *Why I Write*, that “There are four great motives for writing,” which he listed as *sheer egoism*, *aesthetic enthusiasm*, *historical impulse*, and *political purpose*. Using the above ideas as springboard for a class symposium, we will be asking ourselves three questions: (1) Why do we write?, (2) Why write fiction in particular? and (3) What we, as writers, could do to make a difference. During our six-day session students will be encouraged to carry out a personal analysis of what motivates, inspires, or informs their writing. Students will also be expected to submit at least one workshop piece that deals with the issue of human trafficking.

The other equally important focus of the workshop will be on your writing. Most of the class time will be dedicated to discussing and critiquing your work and providing ideas on how to improve a draft and sharpen your overall writing skills. Craft-wise we will examine the structure of the short story and the novel, as well as the basic elements of fiction such as characterization, dialogue, plot, tone, setting, theme, and viewpoint. And finally to be in tune with the summer session’s theme, we will be taking an in-depth look at the role of **activism** in fiction, and how that affects *form* and *style*.

Reading List

Fiction

The Washwoman, Isaac Bashevis Singer (short story)

Alyosha The Pot, Leo Tolstoy (short story)

The Long Ride Home, Mohammed Naseehu Ali

Beyond the Horizon, Ama Darko (short novel)

Purge, Sofi Oksanen (novel)

Non Fiction

Why I Write – George Orwell

Africa's World of Forced Labor, in a 6-Year-Old's Eyes, Sharon LaFraniere, NY Times

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/29/world/africa/29ghana.html>)

NOTE: All assigned short stories and essays will be emailed to you. Novels must be purchased by the students

About the Workshop

You should be prepared to do a decent amount of reading—at least one assigned short story, in addition to the day's workshop stories. You will read a wide range of short stories, from the good old classics to contemporary stories, all in the effort to highlight the critical areas in your writing that need improvement.

You will be expected to write and present two original short stories or two novel chapters to be workshopped.

Workshop Etiquette

In this workshop your criticism must be constructive, and all comments must be about the story and not its writer, even if the material is autobiographical. The golden rule is to treat your colleagues and their work as you would like you and your work to be treated. With respect, and also, with the sole aim of helping them improve their writing skills.

Attendance

Since the session has such short duration, each student is expected to not miss a single meeting. Besides, it is only fair and respectful to other students to be present on days their stories are being workshopped.

Plagiarism

The repercussions to your personal and artistic reputation is simply not worth the risk. So, Just Don't Do It.

Student Participation

Each student will be expected to lead class discussion for one workshop story. ***