



Boston University Study Abroad London

The Writer in the World: Meet the Writer
CAS EN 387 (*Elective A*)
[Semester] [Year]

Key Information

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Course Overview

This course marries two complementary areas of study: the opportunity to conduct in-depth interviews with a group of contemporary novelists, poets, dramatists, and non-fiction writers, alongside the critical analysis of post-2000 literature, comprising mainly but not exclusively British literature. The texts we'll be studying cover a broad range of contemporary subjects: we'll be reading a travelogue which surveys transhumanism, techno-capitalism, and the threat of AI; we'll study poetry about migration, the iPhone 6s, and species loss; we'll read a play which features speed dating and slavery. In class, we'll adopt two principle critical strategies when we respond to our texts: firstly, we'll analyse the linguistic, structural and thematic features intrinsic to each text, and secondly, we'll locate each work within its wider sociological, cultural and literary context; we'll survey each text's critical reception too. We'll forge links between our very contemporary syllabus, and other noteworthy genre-linked and / or historic examples.

Meanwhile, we'll also be readying ourselves for our author meetings through a consideration of the style, content and ethos of the literary interview genre. We'll assess Malcolm Cowley's essay 'How Writers Write'; we'll compare a contemporary *Paris Review* interview with an example from the *Writers & Company* series; we'll respond to CBC journalist Eleanor Wachtel's recommendations for productive (and unproductive!) interview strategies. Taken alongside our critical evaluation of the writers' works, these investigations of the author interview genre will help students define their own interview priorities, styles and approaches. Students will be encouraged to prepare carefully for their interviews (which will generally be conducted in pairs). They will refer to preparatory notes during brief introductory remarks (outlining the writers' backgrounds, wider oeuvre, and the book up for discussion) but once conversation is established, students will be encouraged to consider the interview format as an exciting and dynamic space in which they should think and perform creatively. Students may want to consider how, for example, they might distinguish their interview from the previous published or broadcast versions? Students will write up their author meetings in the style of a *Paris Review* 'Art of Fiction' interview. It might be worth noting that *The Paris Review* is a literary quarterly established by young Americans living in Europe in the 1950s!

We'll analyse our writer interviews through ongoing discussions. As the course progresses, and the answers to our questions proliferate, students will attempt to define what Malcolm Cowley describes as 'the mind and method' of the writer. Students will, for example, establish connections between our writers' creative practices; they will reflect on the authors' speculations on the imagination's association with the subconscious; they will compare the writers' differing (or, indeed, likeminded) approaches to conceiving new works, executing preliminary drafts, and to the crucial revisionary stages of a new novel, memoir, poem or play. Discussions will also explore the degree to which external interventions (by editors, agents, actors, fellow writers etc.) shape the form and content of the completed published works.

Course Objectives

This course fulfills two areas of the Hub, BU's general education programme: (1) Aesthetic Exploration, and (2) Creativity and Innovation.

(1) Aesthetic Exploration

Students will demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of notable works in literature and / or the arts, including the cultural contexts in which those works were created, and be able to identify their ongoing significance and relevance.

Students will describe and analyse a broad range of contemporary writing, comprised of post-2000 fiction, drama, poetry and non-fiction written in the English language (AE LO1a).

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the cultural climates in which the texts were produced (alongside the specific working conditions of each writer) contextualising the novels, poetry, plays and non-fiction texts within a framework of other noteworthy contemporary and / or historic genre-based examples (AE LO1b).

Students will synthesise their critical responses to the texts with the commentaries and insights they have gleaned from their personal interviews with the authors (AE LO1c).

Students will demonstrate the reasoning skills and vocabulary necessary to interpret a work of art.

Students will communicate coherent analytical responses to eight contemporary texts employing critical and theoretical terminology where necessary (AE LO2a).

Students will critique these texts from the standpoints of genre, language-use, modes of characterisation, theme, and formal arrangement (AE LO2b).

Students will identify how the writers' creative practices, working conditions, and biographies shape structure and meaning within the individual texts (AE LO2c).

Students will produce evaluative, analytical, or creative works that demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics – such as genres, modes, styles, and cultural history – of at least one literary or artistic medium.

Students will complete a 2,500-word write-up of their writer interviews following the style and genre requirements of a *Paris Review* author interview; they will complete an examined response combining critical analysis of the texts' linguistic, thematic and structural features with an evaluation of the writers' own reflections therein (AE LO3a).

(2) Creativity and Innovation

Students will demonstrate understanding of creativity as a learnable, iterative process of imagining new possibilities that involves risk-taking, use of multiple strategies, and reconceiving in response to feedback, and will be able to identify individual and institutional factors that promote and inhibit creativity.

Students will understand that conducting a successful interview is a masterable process requiring diverse preparation. Students will undertake research within the author-interview genre, critiquing best practice examples, thereby facilitating the on-going development of the students' own interrogative strategies. Students will appraise their own and each other's performances in dry-run interviews, reflecting upon the types of enquiries which were productive as well as those which could have been redacted, altered or refined. As the course progresses, students will draw on their growing experience of conversing with authors during 'question generations' in which they will write, draft and redraft highly relevant and insightful enquiries (C/I LO1a).

Students will define the writers' variant creative strategies, placing these strategies within the context of each writer's unique working conditions. Specifically, the students will distinguish between the writers' differing approaches to conceiving a new project, the creative practices enacted during the actualisation of a new project, and the numerous strategies the writers employ during the editorial (re-drafting and revisionary) stages of a new project. Students will identify specific subjective factors (behavioural, psychological, sociological) which foment creative thinking and work (C/I LO1b).

Students will compare and contrast the degree to which the writers receive feedback from external agencies during composition, and they will appreciate the degree to which the process of composition is dynamic and collaborative (C/I LO1c).

Students will identify the sources (editor, literary agent, director, actor, mentor, academic, journalist, fellow writer) and content of editorial feedback, and they should be able to describe the impacts (both beneficial but also constraining) of external voices and/or institutions on the completed works (C/I LO1d).

Students will be able to exercise their own potential for engaging in creative activity by conceiving and executing original work either alone or as part of a team.

Pairs of students will conceive, plan and conduct one author interview, coordinating their respective interview strategies, and collaborating subsequently to arrange and cohere material (C/I LO2a).

Students will appreciate that the author-interview is simultaneously a learnable art form *and* a dynamic, dialogical space in which the interviewer should be ready to adapt and innovate. Students will be able to enact both well-honed *and* inventive, impromptu interrogative approaches (C/I LO2b).

Students will complete a 2,500-word write-up of their author meetings following the style of a *Paris Review* interview whose format (specifically the introductory phase) encourages a subjective and imaginative response to the experience of interviewing writers (C/I LO2c).

(3) Content and Discipline-specific Objectives

Students will collaborate to research and plan interview content; they will reconvene in the aftermath to organise and cohere material.

Students will describe individual behaviours and routines which effectively harness creative thought.

Students will describe key distinctions between different phases of individual works with specific reference to characterisation, language, and structure.

A Note on Developing a ‘Meet the Writer’ Mindset

In line with General Education programme learning outcomes, EN387 invites the evaluation of literary works alongside deep engagement with the writers’ creative practices. During the course of ‘Writer in the World,’ we’ll develop an approach which conjoins insightful, complex and nuanced responses to our texts with an assessment of the works very much informed and mediated by the content of our conversations with the authors. The course will focus not merely on the text’s content (the ‘what’ so to speak – the linguistic, formal and thematic features) but also on the ‘how’: *how* the text was conceived; *how* our biographical knowledge of a writer’s life reinvigorates our understanding of a specific passage; *how* our awareness of the content of an early draft shapes our response to the completed work. In his introduction to *The Paris Review Interviews – Writers at Work First Series*, Malcolm Cowley cites Henry James who defines the germ of a novelistic idea as the ‘precious particle...the stray suggestion, the wandering word, the vague echo, at a touch of which a novelist’s imagination winces as at the prick of some sharp point.’ An exemplary approach to this course will see students synthesising their critical appreciation of literary works with their newly acquired understanding of these ‘precious’ creative ‘particle(s)’. As Salman Rushdie suggests, ‘the “how” of literature (is) in many ways more interesting than the “why.”’

Please note that not all writers’ visits can be guaranteed. When the writer does not visit, the class will work from supporting materials such as published interviews and personal communications.

Grade Breakdown and Assignments

Malcolm Cowley and Eleanor Wachtel write-up	3%	Due end of Session 1
Peer-to-peer interview	5%	Conducted Session 1
Author interview case study comparison	7%	Due end of Session 2
Opening remarks	5%	Students will conduct opening remarks in same session as their writer interview
Writer interview	20%	Interviews conducted from Sessions 2-8 incl.
The Writer in The World paper	10%	Due end of Session 4
Paris Review style interview write-up	20%	Staggered submission*
Final exam	30%	Session 11

*Students will submit their write-ups a calendar week after completing their interviews (e.g. those interviewing during Session 2 (a Monday) will submit at the end of Session 4 (the following Monday).

Malcolm Cowley and Eleanor Wachtel write-up – students will complete a fifteen-minute write in class evaluating Cowley and Wachtel’s recommendations for effective interview strategies.

Author interview case study comparison – students will compare and contrast the style and content of Stephen J. Burn’s 2010 *Paris Review* interview with Jonathan Franzen and Eleanor Wachtel’s 2010 *Writers & Company* interview with the same author.

Peer-to-peer interview – pairs of students will participate in a ten-minute interview. These conversations will provide the basis for a think-pair-share exercise in which students pinpoint and analyse the most successful interrogative strategies within their exchanges.

Opening remarks – students will make brief remarks introducing their interviewee to the class. During these remarks students will offer an overview of the writer's background and oeuvre, alongside a survey of the text up for discussion.

Writer interview – students will (mostly) work in pairs to conduct a one-hour interview with an author, poet or playwright.

The Writer in the World paper – students will complete a 750-word paper, choosing from two prompts which link back to in-class discussions. This assignment requires students to consider i) to what degree the contemporary writer’s work should demonstrate moral and civic responsibility or ii) to what degree the contemporary writer should respond to the pressures of the marketplace.

Paris Review style interview write-up – students will write up their interviews in the style of *The Paris Review*’s ‘Art of Fiction’ series, up to 2000 words. An ‘Art of Fiction’ introduction may describe the overall atmosphere of the encounter, alongside more specific commentaries on the writer’s appearance, mood, manner, and speech; emulating this style of author interview journalism will afford students the opportunity to creatively interpret their interview experience.

Final 2-hour exam – students will choose one prompt from a selection. The prompts will encourage students to integrate their critical responses to the texts with the new perspectives and knowledge they have garnered from their author interviews. This will be an open book examination (students will bring set texts in addition to their *Paris Review* style write-ups).

Grading

The following Boston University table explains the grading system that is used by most faculty members on Boston University’s Study Abroad London Programmes.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Honour</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Usual %</u>
A	4.0	93-100	
A-	3.7	89-92	
B+	3.3	85-88	
B	3.0	81-84	
B-	2.7	77-80	
C+	2.3	73-76	
C	2.0	69-72	
C-	1.7	65-68	

D	1.0	60-64
F	0.0	Unmarked

Grading Criteria

'Incomplete' or **I** grades are not permitted because of the obvious difficulty in making up missed work once the student has left the country. All work must be completed on time. We also do not allow **'Audits'** (AU), **'Withdrawals'** (W), or **'Pass/Fail'** (P) grades.

The grades reflect the quality of the work. Lecturers and students should use the following criteria for an understanding of what each grade means.

A This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.

A- Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systematically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or inapt expressions.

B+, B, B- This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar.

C+, C, C- Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of the class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range.

Quality of presentation can lift such work into the upper levels of this grade range. Work of this quality which is poorly presented, and riddled with errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, will fall into the lower end of the range. To earn a C grade, the work must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the primary course material, be written well enough to be readily understood, be relevant to the assignment, and, of course, be the student's own work except where properly cited.

D A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.

F The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:

- Obvious lack of familiarity with the material
- So poorly written as to defy understanding
- So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject
- Material presented is not relevant to the assignment
- Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism (see following section in Academic Conduct Code)

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for further grading criteria and policies on plagiarism.

* *Final Grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absences.*

Attendance

Classes

All Boston University Study Abroad London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, and field trip in order to fulfil the required course contact hours and receive course credit. Any student that has been absent from two class sessions (whether authorised or unauthorised) will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their continued participation on the programme.

Authorised Absence

Students who expect to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorised Absence Approval Form 10 working days in advance of the class date (except in the case of absence due to illness, for which students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor's note as soon as possible). The Authorised Absence Approval Request Form is available from: <http://www.bu.edu/london/report-absence/>

Please note: Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Form does not guarantee an authorised absence

Students may apply for an authorised absence only under the following circumstances:

- **Illness (first day of sickness):** If a student is too ill to attend class, the student must phone the BU London Student Affairs Office (who will in turn contact the student's lecturer).
- **Illness (multiple days):** If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must call in to the Student Affairs Office each day the student is ill. Students must also provide the Student Affairs Office with a completed Authorised Absence Approval Form and a sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class.
- **Important placement event that clashes with a class (verified by internship supervisor)**
- **Special circumstances which have been approved by the Directors (see note below).**

The Directors will only in the most extreme cases allow students to leave the programme early or for a significant break.

Unauthorised Absence

Any student to miss a class due to an unauthorised absence will receive a **4% grade penalty** to their final grade for the course whose class was missed. This grade penalty will be applied by the Academic Affairs Office to the final grade at the end of the course. As stated above, any student that has missed two classes will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their participation on the programme as excessive absences may result in a 'Fail' in the class and therefore expulsion from the programme.

Religious Holidays

Boston University's Office of the University Registrar states:

'The University, in scheduling classes on religious holidays and observances, intends that students observing those traditions be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe religious holidays will

arrange for another faculty member to meet their classes or for cancelled classes to be rescheduled.’

Special Accommodations

Each student will need to contact Disability and Access Services to request accommodations for the semester they are abroad. Students are advised by BU-DAS not to expect the same accommodations as they receive on campus. BU London can only uphold special accommodations if we have received the appropriate documentation from BU-DAS. We cannot accept letters from other universities/centres. All disabilities need to be known to DAS in Boston if they are to be used as a reason for requiring a change in conditions, i.e. reduced internship hours or special accommodations for the internship schedule.

Lateness

Students arriving more than 15 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Any student with irregular class attendance (more than two late arrivals to class) will be required to meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have his/her final grade penalised.

<p><u>Course outline</u></p> <p><u>Session 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing a ‘Meet the Writer’ mindset with reference to Malcolm Cowley’s excellent introduction to the first series of <i>The Paris Review Interviews – Writers at Work</i> ▪ Designation of interviews and presentations ▪ Definition and analysis of the author interview genre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - i) students will watch novelist Michael Ondaatje interview CBC Radio's Eleanor Wachtel about her career as host of <i>Writers & Company</i> - ii) students will complete a fifteen-minute write a) evaluating Wachtel’s recommendations for effective / ineffective interview strategy, and b) describing Malcolm Cowley’s reflections on the culture, content and protocols of a <i>Paris Review</i> interview ▪ Students will conduct peer-to-peer interviews; they will enact interview protocols (as per Wachtel and Cowley’s directions) and they will go on to review their conversations – pinpointing the most effective lines of questioning; e.g. were they improvised/newly imagined rather than pre-planned? – and sharing their findings with the group <p><u>Session 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuing our focus on the author interview genre, 	<p><u>Preparatory reading; reminders re. interviews and presentations; assignments and in-class assessments due in</u></p> <p>No prior reading is expected for this class, but students should begin reading Eve Harris’ <i>The Marrying of Chani Kaufman</i> ahead of Session 2</p> <p>Eleanor Wachtel and Malcolm Cowley write-ups due in after completion in class</p> <p>Peer-to-peer interviews will be assessed in class</p> <p>Students should have read Eve</p>
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students will compare and contrast two contemporary case studies [Stephen. J Burn's 2010 *Paris Review* 'The Art of Fiction' interview with Jonathan Franzen and Eleanor Wachtel's CBC *Writers & Company* interview with the same author]. Students will also consider the style and content of each journalist's 'opening remarks' (ahead of composing 'opening remarks' for their own interviews)

- Group discussion of Eve Harris' *The Marrying of Chani Kaufman*
 - context [contemporary Jewish Literature; class-consciousness in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*]
 - intrinsic features
- Students will watch footage of Lionel Shriver being interviewed about freedom of speech; students will read excerpts from Shriver's article, 'Fiction and Identity Politics.'
- In a role-playing exercise, students will debate the writer's responsibility to uphold freedom of speech (in the context of social and institutional factors which may impact upon the development of creative works). Students should be ready to expound upon Shriver's position and/or the counter-arguments expressed by authors such as Ravinder Randhawa (quotation cards will be used as a debating resource). Students will be encouraged to consider whether and how these arguments inform our response to Harris' *The Marriage of Chani Kaufman*
- Question generation
 - before we note potential lines of questioning, we'll discuss the creative possibilities of the author interview. We'll focus on establishing an interview culture which balances rigorous preparation with the potential for improvised, unplanned and spontaneous questioning. If we have time, we'll read excerpts from 'The Dialectical Approach' taken from Lajos Egri's *The Art of Dramatic Writing*. Can we identify the risks of adhering too closely to a set of pre-planned questions? How should interviewees approach the use of their preparatory notes?
- Interview with Eve Harris conducted by two students followed by a general Q and A format

Session 3

- Review of Eve Harris interview. How does Harris describe the process of creating/conceiving new scenes? How does she describe the process of uncovering character? Students

Harris' Booker Prize nominated novel *The Marrying of Chani Kaufman* charting the cultural and socio-economic pressures experienced by a group of Orthodox Jewish characters living in north London in 2008

Interviewers should be fully prepared to conduct the first stage of the interview, including brief 'opening remarks' which will be presented to class ahead of the writer's arrival

Case study write-ups due in after completion in class

Students should have read Robert McCrum's BBC Radio 4 'Book of the Week' *Every Third Thought*

should be ready to quote writers directly when we analyse interview content

- Group discussion of Robert McCrum's *Every Third Thought*
 - context [misery memoir; YouTube footage of John Gielgud performing Prospero's 'our revels now are ended' speech; McCrum's role as chief editor at *Faber & Faber*; his editorial oversight of Kazuo Ishiguro, Paul Auster, Peter Carey and Milan Kundera]
 - intrinsic features
- In *My Year Off*, McCrum explains that he 'no longer felt at home in a new literary environment dominated by the bottom line and the restrictive scrutiny of accountants and financial directors.' Students will consider McCrum's comments on the influence of external institutions on literary works in relation to the topic of the marketplace; we'll brainstorm, then record ideas onto the board, citing and analysing specific examples of literary works which submit to/subvert market forces; we'll also consider how genre plays a key role in this debate
- Question generation
 - students will respond to 'Everyday Examples of a Dual Personality' taken from Dorothea Brande's *Becoming a Writer*; according to Brande, which types of individual behaviours promote a creative mindset? Can we use Brande's speculations on the relationship between creativity and the unconscious as an interview resource?
- Interview with Robert McCrum conducted by two students followed by a general Q and A format

Session 4

- Review of Robert McCrum interview. Can we describe the editorial notes McCrum received? How did these notes influence the re-composition of later drafts of his memoir? Remember to cite interview quotations during our analysis!
- Group discussion of Mark O'Connell's *To Be A Machine*
 - context [investigative non-fiction; Montaigne's essay 'The Apology of Raimond Sebonde'; Stephen Hawking's article 'Are we taking AI seriously enough?'; YouTube footage of Boston Dynamics' Atlas Robot; examples of AI generated poetry]
 - intrinsic features
- Question generation
 - students will watch Kirsty Wark's BBC *Newsnight* interview with Mark O'Connell; students will

which examines our changing responses to ageing and mortality

Interviewers should be fully prepared to conduct the first stage of the interview, including brief 'opening remarks' which will be presented to class ahead of the writer's arrival

Students should have read *To Be A Machine*, Mark O'Connell's 2018 Wellcome Prize-winning exploration of the transhumanist movement

Interviewers should be fully prepared to conduct the first stage of the interview, including brief 'opening remarks' which will be presented to class ahead of the writer's arrival

'Writer in the World' paper due

critique the journalist's lines of questioning – can we think of potentially productive/inventive interrogative avenues the journalist *didn't* pursue?

- Interview with Mark O'Connell conducted by two students followed by a general Q and A format

Session 5

- Review of Mark O'Connell interview. Now we're mid-way through the course, we'll be comparing O'Connell's responses with those of Harris and McCrum. Can we identify key distinctions and/or correspondences in terms of the writers' creative approaches? Can we argue that writers invoke multiple and varied strategies to promote creative thinking and practice?
- 'Language is not a neutral instrument': working from a number of author interviews, we'll consider writers' remarks on the subject of exogenic writing. Students will form smaller groups, and will identify the creative possibilities (and limitations) of exogenic composition; students will explore how a writer's (individual) relationship with his/her language of composition opens up new creative avenues
- Group discussion of Agnieszka Dale's *Fox Season*
 - context [post-Brexit Literature; Ali Smith's *Autumn*; Nigel Farage's 'Breaking Point' poster; dystopian fiction and metafiction]
 - intrinsic features
- Students will perform a five-minute self-assessment quiz responding to questions about this session's threshold concepts
- Question generation
 - can students use their analysis of the writers' remarks on exogenic composition as a springboard for interview questioning?
- Interview with Agnieszka Dale conducted by two students followed by a general Q and A format

Session 6

- Review of Agnieszka Dale interview. How does the author describe her relationship with language? Are there common metaphors writers use to illustrate the workings of the imagination? How do Dale's working conditions and practices compare to those of the other writers?
- Think-pair-share exercise in which students respond to the linguistic, formal and thematic features of individual poems in *Stranger, Baby*. As students share their findings

in

Students should have read Agnieszka Dale's short story collection *Fox Season*
Dale is a Polish-British writer whose stories have been adapted for BBC Radio 4

Interviewers should be fully prepared to conduct the first stage of the interview, including brief 'opening remarks' which will be presented to class ahead of the writer's arrival

Students should have read Emily Berry's collection of poems *Stranger, Baby*
Berry's first collection, *Dear Boy*, won the Forward Prize for Best First Collection and the Hawthornden Prize

(backing up statements with illustrative textual examples)
we'll identify the poems' common features

- Group discussion of *Stranger, Baby*
 - context [the elegy; Coleridge's definition; Hardy's 'The Voice'; ekphrastic poetry; Freud's correspondence; Berry's 'collage' style]
- Question generation
 - we'll read Ralf Webb's interview with Berry in the *LA Review of Books*. Can we pursue further the poet's comments on the dialogical nature of *Stranger, Baby* during our own interview? And/or the poet's reference to Donald Winnicott's description of the artist's central creative tension?
- Interview with Emily Berry conducted by two students followed by a general Q and A format

Interviewers should be fully prepared to conduct the first stage of the interview, including brief 'opening remarks' which will be presented to class ahead of the writer's arrival

Session 7

- Review of Emily Berry interview. How did the poet approach the final arrangement of poems within her collection? Can we compare Berry's approach to formal arrangement with the strategies other writers employed towards the chronology of their novels/non-fiction texts? What was the impact of external feedback on Berry's collection, and similarly on the other texts we have studied?
- Group discussion of *Hundreds and Thousands*
 - context ['The Maxine Question' by Blake Morrison; Gothic Literature; Edmund Burke on the 'sublime'; excerpts from *Hansel and Gretel* by The Brothers Grimm]
 - intrinsic features
- Question generation
 - we'll read Lyn Gardner's *Guardian* interview with playwright Philip Ridley alongside a *Guardian* review of *Hundreds and Thousands*. Can we identify parallels between the moral and social questions posed by Ridley's *Mercury Fur* and Ramsden's *Hundreds and Thousands*? Can we exploit the content of Ridley's interview in order to refine our questions about influence?
- Interview with Lou Ramsden conducted by two students followed by a general Q and A format

Students should have read Lou Ramsden's play *Hundreds and Thousands* which was produced in the Soho Theatre in 2011. Ramsden has written extensively for BBC Radio 4

Interviewers should be fully prepared to conduct the first stage of the interview, including brief 'opening remarks' which will be presented to class ahead of the writer's arrival

Session 8

- Review of Lou Ramsden interview. We'll analyse Ramsden's reflections on genesis – the period of gestation;

Students should have read *Seasonal Disturbances*, Karen McCarthy

the percolation of multiple strands. We'll also be thinking about the revisionary stages of a project – how do the parameters of genre bear influence on writers' editorial practices? How does Ramsden's mode of re-drafting differ from that of the novelists and poets we've encountered?

- Students will spend ten-minutes re-reading and annotating (thoroughly!) individual poems taken from this week's collection. Students will pair up, and will describe to one another the key features of their chosen poem. We'll then brainstorm, mapping out commonalities onto the board
- Group discussion of *Seasonal Disturbances*
 - context [the Anthropocene; ecopoetry; Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*; The Tatler List; Blake's 'London'; John Burnside's poetic agenda]
- Question generation
 - we'll listen to an excerpt from Eleanor Wachtel's CBC interview with Seamus Heaney – from where do poems emerge? We'll compare Heaney's insights with John Burnside's reflections on the ethical possibilities of poetry. Can we incorporate Heaney and Burnside's remarks into our interview with McCarthy Woolf?
- Interview with Karen McCarthy Woolf conducted by two students followed by a general Q and A format

Session 9

- Review of Karen McCarthy Woolf interview. How do McCarthy Woolf's reflections on dislodging creative energy compare to the other writers' remarks? Do writers share common behaviours and/or daily routines which lay the foundations for creative work? Can we describe individual traits/behaviours which promote creativity?
- Group discussion of *Grief Is The Thing with Feathers*
 - context [Ted Hughes; 'Two Legends'; 'Crow Tyrannosaurus'; theatrical adaptation featuring Cillian Murphy; *New York Times* review]
 - intrinsic features
- Question generation
 - we'll read Max Porter's interview with *The Bookseller* in which he cites Samuel Beckett as an early influence. We'll then consider Beckett's description of 'impressionism'. Can we reference Beckett's descriptor in our questions about Porter's prose style? We'll also consider Porter's role as an editor (e.g. his editorial oversight of O'Connell's *To Be A Machine*, Sarah Moss' *Ghost Wall*). How

Woolf's second collection of poems

Interviewers should be fully prepared to conduct the first stage of the interview, including brief 'opening remarks' which will be presented to class ahead of the writer's arrival

Students should have read *Grief Is The Thing With Feathers*, Max Porter's International Dylan Thomas prizewinning novel. Porter is also the winner of *The Sunday Times* Young Writer of the Year

Interviewers should be fully prepared to conduct the first stage of the interview, including brief 'opening remarks' which will be presented to class ahead of the writer's arrival

do book editors integrate editorial methods into their own writing projects?

- Interview with Max Porter conducted by two students followed by a general Q and A format

Session 10

- Peer review
 - students will review each other's *Paris Review* style write-ups. Students will read aloud from their work (introductions, and selected excerpts from the interviews themselves). Peers will feedback. They will be encouraged to analyse (constructively, sensitively and empathically) the creative features - language; style; tone; nature of description of writer's physical appearance, mood, manner and speech - of each other's *Paris Review* write-ups. Whose approach to the exercise was exemplary? Can we determine how and why?
- Student-generated exam questions
 - following a group discussion of potential exam subject areas (alongside exam assessment guidelines) students will compose their own questions, and will spend 15 minutes planning a response. Students will then work in small groups to critique each other's plans. Do their outlines meet the learning outcomes the exam will be assessing? Do their plans establish a 'Writer in the World' mindset – i.e. do they answer the question whilst demonstrating a synthesis between the texts' intrinsic features and the relevant material gleaned from our interviews?

Session 11

- Students will sit a 2-hour open book examination. They will respond to a single prompt from a selection of several. Students will be encouraged to refer to interview content included in the group's collated *Paris Review style* write-ups within their examination answers

NB – students will receive a collated copy of the author interview write-ups, comprising each class member's submission. These write-ups are key reference material for the exam and should be brought to Session 11. This notice will be re-iterated during class.

Final 2-hour examination

Course Materials – these titles will be available in the library ahead of our first meeting

Berry, Emily. *Stranger, Baby*. London: Faber & Faber, 2017

Dale, Agnieszka. *Fox Season*. London: Jantar, 2017

Harris, Eve. *The Marrying of Chani Kaufman*. Dingwall: Sandstone Press, 2013

McCarthy Woolf, Karen. *Seasonal Disturbances*. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2017

McCrum, Robert. *Every Third Thought*. London: Picador, 2017

O'Connell, Mark. *To Be a Machine*. 2nd ed. London: Granta, 2018

Porter, Max. *Grief Is The Thing With Feathers*. London: Faber & Faber, 2015

Ramsden, Lou. *Hundreds and Thousands*. 2nd ed. London: Nick Hern Books, 2012

Further Reading

You are expected to do further reading and show evidence of it in your interview, your assignments, and your exam. What follows is a list of titles which will be useful for this course.

[NB – the titles broadly fall into four categories: 1) those that respond to the intrinsic features, and social and cultural contexts of British and Irish contemporary literature, drama and poetry; 2) those that provide further examples of the author interview genre; 3) those that foreground differing approaches to the craft of writing fiction and drama; 4) and finally, those that reflect on how writers cultivate a working approach which fosters creative and imaginative thought.]

Acheson, James, ed. *The Contemporary British Novel Since 2000*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017

Bentley, Nick. *Contemporary British Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008

Block, Lawrence. *Telling Lies for Fun and Profit*. New York: William Morrow, 1981; reissued 1994 with an introduction by Sue Grafton

Bradbury, Ray. *Zen in The Art of Writing: Essays on Creativity*. London: Harper Voyager, 2015

Bradford, Richard. *The Novel Now: Contemporary British Fiction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007

Brande, Dorothea. *Becoming a Writer*. 1934; repr. New York: Penguin, 1981

Carver, Raymond. *Call Me If You Need Me*. London: Harville, 2000

Cowley, Malcom, ed. *The Paris Review Interviews – Writers at Work*. 1958; repr: Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983

- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Creativity: The Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2013
- Curry, Mason. *Daily Rituals: How Great Minds Make Time, Find Inspiration, and Get to Work*. Picador: London, 2014
- Forster, EM. *Aspects of the Novel*. 1927; 6th ed. London: Penguin, 2005
- Freeman, John. *How To Read A Novelist: Conversations with Writers*. London: Constable, 2013
- Gourevitch, Philip, ed. *The Paris Review Interviews, Volume 1*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2007
- Gourevitch, Philip, ed. *The Paris Review Interviews, Volume 2*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2007
- Gourevitch, Philip, ed. *The Paris Review Interviews, Volume 3*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2008
- King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000
- Gourevitch, Philip, ed. *The Paris Review Interviews, Volume 4*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2009
- Hawthorn, Jeremy. *Studying the Novel*. 1985; 4th ed. London: Arnold, 2001
- Head, Dominic. *The State of the Novel: Britain and Beyond*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008
- Kennedy, David. *The Ekphrastic Encounter in Contemporary British Poetry*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016
- Lajos, Egri. *The Art of Dramatic Writing: Its Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives*. 1946; 6th ed. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.
- Lane, David. *Contemporary British Drama*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.
- Lane, Richard, ed. *Contemporary British Fiction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
- Lodge, David. *The Art of Fiction*. London: Penguin, 1992
- Mullan, John. *How Novels Work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008
- O'Connor, Flannery. *Mystery and Manners*. 1957; 28th ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001
- Robinson, Peter. *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*. Oxford: OUP, 2016
- Roorbach, Bill. *Contemporary Creative Nonfiction: The Art of Truth*. Oxford: OUP, 2001
- Sierz, Aleks. *Rewriting The Nation: British Theatre Today*. London: Methuen, 2011
- Sussler, Besty, ed. *Bomb: The Author Interviews*. New York: Soho Press, 2014

Wachtel, Eleanor. *The Best of Writers & Company*. Windsor: Biblioasis, 2016

Wheatley, David. *Contemporary British Poetry*. London: Palgrave, 2015

Wilson, Colin. *The Craft of the Novel*. 1975; repr. Bath: Ashgrove Press, 1990

Wu, Duncan. *Making Plays: Interviews with contemporary British dramatists and their directors*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000

London Learning

The following bookshops, libraries and cultural centres host regular events in which authors and poets discuss their most recent works –

Southbank Centre (London Literature Festival 17th – 27th October 2019)

British Library

Libreria bookshop

Poetry Library Southbank

London Review of Books

Waterstones Piccadilly (among others),

Daunt Books (Marlebone, Hampstead, Chelsea and Holland Park)

Poetry Café

Poetry Society

Contemporary playwriting is regularly featured at the following theatres –

Royal Court; Soho Theatre; King’s Head; Bush Theatre; Arcola; Theatre 503; The Yard; The Vaults; Finborough; National Theatre

Podcasts

The Paris Review podcast (the online Paris Review is an invaluable resource for the ‘Art of Fiction’ and ‘Art of Poetry’ series)

CBC *Writers & Company* podcast

BBC *World Book Club* podcast

BBC *Meet the Author* podcast

BBC *Only Artists* podcast (features novelists, poets and dramatists in conversation with other artists)

LRB Readings podcast

The Poetry Review podcast

The New York Times Book Review podcast

Faber Poetry podcast

Granta podcast

The Irish Times Books podcast

LA Review of Books podcast