



Dalia Rosenfeld
Tel Aviv University International
Fiction Writing: Observing Israel from Within
Spring 2020
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Course Description

With Tel Aviv as our fictional laboratory, this course will be devoted to reading, writing, and discussing short stories as a means to explore literature and how it shapes our lives. As we engage with each other's experiences and personal narratives, we will address the mechanics of fiction while developing tools to enhance the emotional response of the reader.

Learning objectives:

--To master key elements of storytelling, such as plot, structure, character development, turning point, etc.

--To learn to read as writers by analyzing short works of literature and their strategic motifs.

--To critically observe our environment as a means to locate our literary voice.

During the course of the semester, each student will write and submit original pieces of fiction, varying in length from 100-1,000 words. In addition, we will read short stories representing a diversity of voices, both from Israel and abroad, including Lydia Davis, Natalia Ginzburg, Osama Alomar, Etgar Keret, Sayed Kashua, Iddo Gefen, Aner Shalev, and Zakaria Tamer.

Course Policies

Attendance:

Attendance and arriving to class on time are mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect your final class grade. Regularly arriving late will also result in a lower grade. Reading assignments are expected to be completed before class.

Grading:

Class attendance and participation, 10%.

Creative work, 70%, comprised of three writing assignments (Assignment #1, 100 words; Assignment #2, 500-750; Assignment #3, 750-1,000). Your grade for this component of the class will be based on your proficiency in various crafting concepts we will study during the course of the semester. It will not be determined by the degree to which I “like” your story.

Reading responses, 10%. Short written responses to assigned readings.

Letters to Your Peers, 10%. Thoughtful responses to each other’s stories, to help generate class discussion. We will discuss the workshop format in greater detail in class. Stories must be submitted one week before your workshop slot.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Introduction to class

Crafting concepts: Writing with concision; Hemingway’s Iceberg Theory

Readings: “The Rock,” “Flashing Fiction,” “The Marriage of Abdel Sattar and Laila,” “A Graveyard of Ladybugs,” “We Called Her Edgy”

Week 2

Crafting concepts: Evoking emotion through objects; irony & absurdity

Readings: “Write it Down,” “Shoes,” “The School,” “Should Literature Aim for the Heart or the Head?”

Week 3

Crafting concepts: dialogue; defying expectations

Readings: “Popular Mechanics,” “The Tits of an Eighteen-Year-Old,” “Why Don’t You Dance?”

Week 4

Crafting concepts: setting as character; showing versus telling

Readings: “Letter to a Peas Manufacturer,” “The Problem with the Vacuum Cleaner,” “Jerusalem Beach”

Week 5

Crafting concept: plot progressions

Readings: “Freedom of Expression,” “Expired Eyes,” “The First Thing the Baby Did Wrong”

Guest lecturer: Q & A with Israeli author Iddo Geffen

Week 6

Crafting concept: Character development; turning point

Readings: “The Story of the Stolen Salami,” excerpt from “Dancing Arabs”

Week 7

Crafting concepts: Point of view; voice; satire/humor

Readings: Selections from “The Onion”

Week 8

Crafting concepts: implicit vs. explicit endings

Readings: “Marbles,” “Ahmad’s Sheep,” “Salma’s Hair Ties”

Week 9

Guest lecturer: Q & A with Israeli author Matan Hermoni

Crafting concepts: experimenting with experimental fiction; finding the magical in the mundane

Readings: excerpt from Katschen and The Book of Joseph (Yoel Hoffmann)

Week 10

Crafting concepts: elevating our writing through research and revision

Readings: excerpts from historical novels

TAU International Course Guidelines

Rules and Respectful Behavior

- No cell phones or laptops permitted in class unless approved by instructor for use
- Tardiness to class is not permitted
- As our courses bring together students from many different styles of learning and from a wide variety of home institutions, we ask that students remain respectful to and patient with fellow classmates at all time as some students may be more familiar with certain course material or procedures than others.

Learning Accommodations

In accordance to University guidelines, students with learning disabilities or accommodation requests must submit official documentation from their home country / university (translated into English by notary if not already in English) to TAU International (tauiacademic@tauex.tau.ac.il) in advance of arrival describing in detail any specific needs

they have. Students must also bring a copy of this documentation with them on-site and give it to their faculty on the first day of class while introducing themselves so that the faculty know who they are and what sorts of needs they may have. TAU International and its faculty cannot guarantee that all accommodations received at the home school can be similarly met at TAU but certainly does the best it can to make any suitable accommodations possible that are needed.

In-class Exams

TAU does not permit, under any circumstances, taking any in-class (including mid or final) exams early or later than the scheduled exam day. When selecting courses, it is thus very important to note below if there is an in-class midterm or final exam as this date/exam cannot be changed. Early departures from the program are not approved, nor are early or exception in-class exams.

TAU International Absence Policy

Attendance is **mandatory** in all of the courses. Missing classes will be reflected in the final grade of the course. In most courses, up to three justified absences from classes will be accepted (for example: emergency matter or illness, both of which will require an official doctor's note sent to the faculty **on the day of the absence**). In some courses which are more participatory dependent, a faculty may set different absence policies (for example, two justified absences) and in these cases students must adhere to the policy set by the faculty member. All cases of absence should be reported to your lecturer immediately and again, a doctor's note is required. Students are required to arrive on time for classes. Teachers are entitled to treat any single case of lateness and/or repeated lateness as an unjustified absence. Please note that according to TAU Academic Policy, if a student's behavior or attendance during the semester is disagreeable his/her course participation may be cancelled at the discretion of TAU.

Students are responsible for reading and adhering to the policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook [posted here](#) at all times.