

Prose Writing Workshop – Between Tel Aviv and the World
Ayelet Tsabari
Spring Semester 2023

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Office Hours: TBA by appointment

Course Credits: 3 TAU Semester Credits

For course times/days and location, please visit the TAU International web site (Study Abroad Course Offerings and Schedules). Please note that all information below is subject to change and/or adjustment as necessary.

Course Description (Summary)

The city of Tel Aviv, which acts as the settings for this workshop, will inform and inspire this course. Students will learn to engage with place—where we live, where we come from—in their work, create mood and evoke emotion through settings, and will think of place as a geographical heart for their story and a potential character in their work. Through weekly guided exercises, participants will learn to use their experiences as the basis for creating dramatic and engaging stories.

An emphasis on workshopping will allow students to acquire literary techniques to enhance their prose, and experiment with new and creative ways to write while retaining a sense of joy in their craft. Supportive and constructive feedback will help polish and deepen the work.

In addition, we will be reading and responding to poetry and prose with a focus on place and identity by diverse writers from the region such as Dorit Rabinyan, David Grossman, Sheikha Helawy, Linda Grant, Almog Behar, Tehila Hakimi, Etgar Keret, Yonit Naaman, Shlomi Hatuka, Adi Keissar, Mahmoud Darwish, Yehuda Amichai, Sayed Kashua and others. The readings will further students' understanding of their chosen genre and enhance their critical abilities while maintaining a supportive and dynamic environment that encourages authenticity, boldness, and originality.

Course Requirements and Expectations

Prior experience with creative writing is not necessary; however, to benefit from the course in a meaningful way, students must be willing to explore written expression in different forms, as well as to study writing as a craft.

No cell phone and laptops are permitted in class unless approved by instructor.



Students are asked to come to class with texts/materials read and annotated.

During the course of the semester, each student will have the opportunity to have at least one piece of writing (fiction/creative nonfiction) workshopped (up to 8 pages each, double spaced, 12-point font, with your name and the title clearly marked, also clearly paginated).

All students will be providing verbal feedback during the workshop and participating in an engaged discussion on their peers' work. Students will also be responsible for sending feedback to the authors of the pieces to be workshopped that week (either in a paragraph form or as a marked document; we will be discussing these methods in class).

Workshop etiquette:

The workshop will follow a structured method that acknowledges strengths before offering constructive feedback and provides a safe and supportive environment for participants while positioning the writer at its centre. Guidelines to workshopping will be given and discussed on the first class. The workshop is the center of our work together so engaged responses to the work are essential: bringing in notes for yourself as well as annotated copies of essays or comments for the reader may be a helpful way of making sure our workshops are focused and helpful.

We will create a master schedule for workshops. If you are absent on a workshop day without a reason, you will not be given an alternative workshop date. If you need to change one of your scheduled sessions, please arrange to switch with another student, but be sure to inform me of the change so I can change the master schedule.

Please send your piece for the workshop no later than Friday (three days before the class.)

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, participants would:

- Learn the fundamentals of craft in fiction and creative nonfiction
- Acquire craft techniques for writing fiction and creative non-fiction
- Engage in a supportive arts community
- Participate in supportive, focused workshopping sessions
- Discuss the texts in the context of craft and reflect on personal impact
- Demonstrate use of craft concepts in short, experimental writing exercises
- Reflect on the successes and challenges of craft in their own work
- Acknowledge that writing is an inherently imperfect, ongoing process
- Revise their workshop drafts (that first, experimental attempt) into a more fully realized first draft for their final mark



Evaluation Criteria

In order to motivate students to take risks and submit unpolished material, grades are based on participation and effort. Final grade would be graded on their ability to revise, implementing the editorial skills acquired in class, as demonstrated in their final portfolio. Overall.

- 30%: Final portfolio, consisting of a one-page artist statement (describing the writing journey the student has gone on writing and revising the essay), a revised essay/story (up to 8 pages, double spaced, 12-point font, with your name and the title clearly marked, also clearly paginated). The revision could be of their mid-term assignment, the workshopped piece, or any of the exercises completed in class. Students will be evaluated on their ability to revise and re-envision their work. **Due May 18**
- 25% Mid-Semester guided writing assignment. **Due week 6.**
- 45%: class participation, which includes
 - Workshopping, providing feedback, (15%)
 - Discussions on assigned reading (10%)
 - Attendance (10%)
 - Ongoing writing exercises. Students will be marked on their efforts. (10%).

Absence Policy

Please note the TAU International Absence Policy as outlined on the next page.

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.

Students who miss class are expected to follow the syllabus, stay informed about updates, and come prepared for the next lesson. Your source for information, announcements, and “catching up” is the Moodle site, where course announcements are posted.

Unless an extension is agreed upon in advance, late assignments will not be accepted, nor are extensions granted, after a deadline has passed. If a student does not contact me requesting an extension due to extenuating circumstances, the grade for that assignment will be marked down. Please note that extensions are given on an individual basis only, unless otherwise indicated to the class as a whole.



Course Schedule

March 6-May 15

(Readings, assignments, and workshop dates are subject to be amended)

Week One – March 6: Introduction. Genres. Guidelines to Workshopping, Reading like a Writer, Writing Process

- Introduction and overview of course
- Review syllabus
- Discussion of genres
- Writing Exercise (Why I write)
- Writing Exercise ("Here, after a meager diet of horizon, is some scenery," Elizabeth Bishop)
- Guidelines to workshopping
- Readings: "Why I Write" by Terri Tempest Williams, Excerpt from *Reading Like a Writer* by Francine Prose

Week 2, March 13: Memory and Experience, Place: overview

- Writing Exercise (finding stories in our lives)
- Writing Exercise (Memory Map)
- Readings: Excerpt from *All The Rivers* by Dorit Rabinyan, "The Manuscript," by Ruby Namdar

Week 3, March 20th: Structure and form, Workshop begins

- Readings: "Clock Square," by Adi Keissar
- Writing Exercise (three objects)
- WORKSHOP: 4:00-5:30PM

Week 4, March 27: Voice and Tense, POV

- Readings: "The Last Summer Of Our Patriarch," Idra Novey, "Biography of a Dress," by Jamaica Kincaid
- Writing Exercise (letter to a place)
- WORKSHOP: 4:00-5:30PM

Week 5, April 3: Show and Tell, Details and imagery

- Readings: An excerpt from *The People in the Street* by Linda Grant, "Tel Aviv 1935" by Leah Goldberg
- Writing Exercise (showing and telling, the people in the street)
- WORKSHOP: 4:00-5:30PM
- **Midterm ASSIGNMENT (DUE APRIL 17): a place in the city. Assignments must be submitted on Moodle**



Week 6, April 17: Dialogue and character, ASSIGNMENTS DUE

- Readings: “Ana min al-yahud,” by Almog Behar
- Writing Exercise (reveal character through dialogue)
- WORKSHOP: 4:00-5:30PM

Week 7, April 24: Writing Emotion

- Readings: “The Braid,” by Sheikha Hussein Helawy
- Writing Exercise (objective correlative)
- WORKSHOP: 4:00-5:30PM

Week 8, May 1: Revision Techniques

- Readings: “Addiction,” by Tehila Hakimi
- Writing Exercise
- WORKSHOP: 4:00-5:30PM

Week 9, May 8: Conflict and tension

- Readings: Excerpt from *Someone to Run With* by David Grossman
- Writing Exercise
- WORKSHOP: 4:00-5:30PM

Week 10, May 15: Farewell, Readings

- Readings: TBA
- Student readings
- **FINAL PORTFOLIO due by Thursday, May 18 (end of the day) Portfolios must be submitted on Moodle**

Course Readings and/or Required Materials

Readings will be posted on the course Moodle site throughout the semester. **Note:** Announcements, instructions, and due dates will be posted regularly on Moodle, so please refer to the site for questions about these matters. Assignment must be submitted on Moodle

Instructor Biography

Ayelet Tsabari is the author of the memoir in essays *The Art of Leaving*, winner of the Canadian Jewish Literary Award for memoir, finalist for the Writer’s Trust Hilary Weston Prize and The Vine Awards, and an Apple Books and *Kirkus Review* Best Book of 2019. Her first book, *The Best Place on Earth*, won the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature and the Edward Lewis Wallant Award, and was long listed to the Frank O’Connor International Short Story Award. The book was a *New York Times* Book Review Editors’ Choice, a *Kirkus Review* Best Book of 2016, and has been published internationally. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Globe and Mail*,



Foreign Policy, *The Forward*, and *The National Post*, has won a National Magazine Award and was shortlisted to CBC Short Story Prize. She holds an MFA from The University of Guelph and has taught creative writing at the University of King's College MFA in Creative Nonfiction, The University of Guelph's MFA in Creative Writing, and at Shaindy Rudoff's Graduate Program in Creative Writing at Bar Ilan University.

TAU International Academic Guidelines

Students may only attend classes which they are officially registered for. No auditing of courses is permitted. Students are responsible for reading and adhering to all policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook [posted here](#) at all times. Below is a summary of some of these relevant policies and procedures.

Learning Accommodations

In accordance to University guidelines, TAU International may be able to accommodate students with learning disabilities or accommodation requests if these requests are also honored at the student's home university or home school. To be considered, students must submit official documentation from their home school or university (if not in English, a notarized official copy translated into English is required) to TAU International in advance of arrival describing in detail any specific needs and how these are accommodated at the home school or university. 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 or accommodations they may have. **Without official documentation from the home school submitted on or before the first day of courses, TAU will not be able to honor accommodation support.**

With supporting documentation and by following the correct procedure as outlined above, TAU International and its faculty will do the best it can to make any suitable accommodations possible. However, we cannot guarantee that all accommodations received at the home school can be similarly met at TAU. For example, TAU is usually not able to offer note-taking services in English, private testing rooms, or advance viewing of classroom presentations, exams, or assignments.

It may be an option to provide a student with additional tutoring or support outside the classroom as needed. Students should be aware that this additional support cannot be guaranteed and is based on teacher availability in the subject as well as the specific student level. If available, the cost of additional tutoring or support will be the sole responsibility of the student.

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 if there is an in-class midterm or final exam as this date/exam cannot be changed. It is also the student's responsibility to clarify exam dates with the professors at the beginning of a course, with the understanding that not all exam dates can



be decided up front as it can sometimes depend on the pace of the course and class learning. It is the student responsibility to plan to be present for all courses including the final day of class for this reason. 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 including Hebrew Ulpan. Faculty can and will take attendance regularly. Missing classes will be reflected in the final grade of the course. Up to three justified and properly documented absences from classes may be accepted (for example: emergency matter or illness, both of which will require a doctor's note). Such cases of absence should be reported to the faculty immediately and again, a doctor's note is required. Teachers are entitled to treat any lateness or absence without documentation as unexcused. Some of our courses such as Service Learning or the Internship Seminar require more practical in-class work; thus, attendance policies may be stricter in some courses and students then must adhere to the stricter attendance policy as outlined by the faculty/syllabus.

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 official TAU Academic Policy, if a student's behavior or attendance during is disagreeable his/her course participation may be cancelled at the discretion of TAU with no due refund.

Grade Appeals

Students are responsible for checking grades once posted or distributed by faculty. The limited grade appeals window and the detailed procedure for appealing a grade – whether a graded assignment, exam or final grade – is outlined clearly in the policies and procedures in the TAU International Academic Handbook [posted here](#).

