In this creative writing class students will produce work informed by their experiences of exploring, learning about, and being in Sydney. Students are encouraged to contemplate how a sense of place can be conveyed through writing and to consider the palimpsestic environments (natural, urban, cultural, historical etc.) they interact with and within.

Students will engage with a diverse range of readings, identifying their technical elements and discussing their affective poetics to learn how to ‘read as a writer’. Texts are not restricted to particular genre, but rather, move dynamically across short fiction, poetry, the essay, the blog, and the novel. Readings predominantly showcase other writers’ depictions of the mercurial character of Sydney, whilst others exemplify particular authorial techniques that the class will be studying, organised around weekly themes. Students are encouraged to add any relevant material they might encounter in their own reading to an online discussion board.

The class emphasizes the importance of students’ embodied interaction with the city through two planned field trips. The first shall use ‘The Disappearing’ – a downloadable app featuring over 100 site-specific poems spanning a ‘poetic map’ of Sydney, created by The Red Room Company, a noted poetry organisation. Students will think about the possibilities of marrying new technologies with writing as they navigate using poems as landmarks. For the second excursion the class will devise their own route using the City of Sydney council’s walking tour guide ‘Barani/Barrabugu (Yesterday/Tomorrow)’ to hear the stories of Aboriginal people’s histories and cultures of this land at sites of importance throughout the city.

Students shall workshop their works-in-progress during the course, learning how to effectively communicate critical feedback and how to be receptive to constructive critique during the drafting process. At the end of the course students will have the opportunity to collectively self-publish their work as a physical zine and/or an online blog.
Desired Outcomes

- To sharpen students’ analytical skills and abilities to identify the formal elements of texts in order to enhance their own writing and experience of literature.
- To develop students’ ability to produce, draft, edit and polish their own creative work, and equip them with the skills to critique each other’s writing within a supportive workshop environment.
- To deepen students’ knowledge of Sydney’s cultures and histories and synthesise their own experience of place through their writing.

Assessment Components

Attendance, discussion, weekly writing exercises, workshop participation: 25%

‘Reading as a Writer’ response (1500 words). This response, due in week 7, will take the form of an informal essay or reflection upon the formal elements and affective experience of a text of the student’s choosing from the readings: 25%

Final Work (either 1 short story of 4000–6000 words, or a collection of shorter pieces amounting to a similar word count, or a suite of poems approx. 20 pages): 50%

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; all work includes clear, logical explanations, insight, and original thought and reasoning. Creative work is of a highly sophisticated standard.

Grade B: Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; all work includes general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research. Creative work is of a superior standard.

Grade C: Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level. Creative work is of an acceptable standard.

Grade D: Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations. Creative work is of a basic standard.

Grade F: Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria. Creative work is weak, unfinished or unsubmitted.

Grade conversion

NYU Sydney uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

A=94-100
A-=90-93
B+=87-89
B=84-86
B-=80-83
C+=77-79
C=74-76
C-=70-73
D+=67-69
D=65-66
F=below 65

Where no specific numerical equivalent is assigned to a letter grade by the class teacher, the midpoint of the range will be used in calculating the final class grade (except in the A range, where 95.5 will be used).

NYU Sydney aims to have grading standards and results similar to those that prevail at Washington Square. At the College of Arts and Sciences, roughly 39% of all final grades are in the B+ to B-range, and 50% in the A/A- range.

We have therefore adopted the following grading guideline: in any non-Stern course, class teachers should try to insure that no more than 50% of the class receives an A or A-. (Stern has a different grading policy that we follow in all Stern courses).

A guideline is not a curve. A guideline is just that: it gives an ideal benchmark for the distribution of grades towards which we work.

NYU Sydney has a strict policy about course attendance for students. Faculty will not give students permission to be absent for any reason. Students should contact their instructors to catch up on missed work but should not approach them for excused absences.

All non-medical absence requests must be presented by the student to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs. Non-medical requests should be made in advance of the intended absence. All medical-based absence requests MUST be presented to the Student Life Coordinator. In the case of illness, the student should contact the Student Life Coordinator within three days of the absence or as soon as practicable and provide medical documentation. Faculty will be informed of excused absences by the Student Life staff and Assistant Director, Academic Programs. Any absences of which faculty have not been informed by the NYU Sydney staff will be presumed to be unexcused.

Students are expected to arrive to class promptly both at the start of class and after breaks. Arriving more than 10 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early will be considered an unexcused absence.

This attendance policy also applies for classes involving a field trip or other off-campus visit. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at the agreed meeting point on time.

The faculty will report all unexcused absences to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs, and students’ final grades will be negatively impacted by each such absence. Each unexcused absence will result in the deduction of 3 percentage points from the final grade. More than two unexcused absences will result in failure of the course.

There will be no adjustment of attendance records after the end of the semester. If you wish to contest an unexcused absence, you must do so before you leave Sydney. Contact the Assistant Director, Academic Programs to discuss the attendance record as soon as you think there may be a discrepancy about your attendance in class on a given day.

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel.
that may come before and/or after the holiday

Students must notify their professor and the Assistant Director, Academic Programs in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

Written work due in class must be submitted during class time to your instructor.

Late work should be submitted in person to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs during regular office hours (9:30-5:00, Monday-Friday). You must also submit an electronic copy of late written work to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs – megan.carrigy@nyu.edu – for submission to Turn-it-in.

The Assistant Director, Academic Programs will mark down the date and time of submission in the presence of the student. In the absence of the Assistant Director, Academic Programs, another member of the administrative staff can accept the work in person, following the same protocol.

Work submitted after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale for each day the work is late.

Written work submitted beyond five (5) weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU Sydney. NYU Sydney policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

Any course work must to be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form. All students must submit an electronic copy of each piece of written work to www.turnitin.com. Instructions will be provided to you in class.

Penalties for confirmed cases of plagiarism are severe and are dealt with by the Director, NYU Sydney, not your instructor. Your home school will be notified and you will be dealt with according to the standards of that school. The codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges are outlined in the respective school’s academic resources.

Required Text(s)

Lilian’s Story by Kate Grenville (1985), Sydney: Allen & Unwin (280pp., paperback, ISBN 1 86448 284 2)

We will be referring during the course to John Mullan’s How Novels Work, (2006), Oxford: Oxford University Press (ISBN 9780 19 928178 7)

Supplemental material will be posted in the online discussion group or distributed in class.

This will include excerpts from Delia Falconer’s Sydney, Kathy Lette and Gabrielle Carey’s Puberty Blues, Luke Davies’ Candy, Fiona McGregor’s Indelible Ink, Marieke Hardy’s You’ll be sorry when I’m dead, Brendan Cowell’s How It Feels, Mary Fallon’s Working Hot, Larry Writer’s Razor, Charlotte Wood’s Animal People, Luke Davies’ Praise, 'Cold Snap' by Cate Kennedy, ‘The Lap Pool’ by Robert Drewe, ‘Love
and Honour and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice’ by Nam Le, and selected poems by
Kenneth Slessor, Dorothy Porter, Paul Dawson, Mary Fallon, Bonny Cassidy, Bronwyn Lea, and Martin
Harrison.

### Internet Research Guidelines
None

### Additional Required Equipment
None

## Session 1
**Introduction: discussion of course outline and assessments**

**August 28**
- In-class writing exercises and workshop practice round
- Create student workshopping schedule (workshops begin Session 3)
- Discussion of narrative openings: How do I begin?

### Read for next class:
- Excerpt from Delia Falconer’s *Sydney* – ‘Ghosting’ pp.13-58
- ‘Narrating’ (Chapter 2) of John Mullan’s *How Novels Work*

### Write for next class: place, anecdote, narrative

## Session 2

**[September 4]**
- Discuss Falconer, Slessor and Mullan
- Workshop homework
- In-class writing exercises
- Discussion of narrative techniques: Who is narrating?

### Read for next class:
- Excerpt from Larry Writer’s *Razor*, ‘People’ excerpt pp.3-45
- (Chapter 3) of *How Novels Work*

### Write for next class: unfamiliar landscapes

## Session 3

**[September 11]**
- Discuss Writer and Mullan
- First student major workshop
- In-class writing exercises
- Discussion of biography and fiction

### Read for next class:
- Excerpt from Fiona McGregor’s *Indelible Ink*, pp.1-28
• Excerpt from Charlotte Wood’s *Animal People*, 1-32
• (Chapter 7) of *How Novels Work*

**Write for next class:** a city’s character

**Session 4**

- Discuss McGregor, Wood and Mullan
- Second student major work workshop
- In-class writing exercises
- Discussion of character: human / non-human – depiction, motivation, essence

**Read for next class:**
- Excerpts from Luke Davies’ *Candy*, Prologue
- Andrew McGahan’s *Praise*, pp.1-32
- Brendan Cowell’s *How It Feels*, Chapters 1 & 2
- ‘Style’ (Chapter 8) of *How Novels Work*

**Write for next class:** ‘real people’ character studies

**Session 5**

- Discuss Davies, Cowell, McGahan and Mullan
- Third student major work workshop
- In-class writing exercises
- Discussion of voice: how do characters speak?

**Read for next class:**
- Excerpt from Kathy Lette / Gabrielle Carey’s *Puberty Blues*, pp.1-14
- Marieke Hardy’s *You’ll be sorry when I’m dead*, ‘Maroon and Blue’ pp.77-94
- ‘Voices’ (Chapter 5) of *How Novels Work*

**Write for next class:** flavour, sensuality, synaesthesia

**FALL SEMESTER BREAK OCTOBER 1-5**

**Session 6**

- Discuss Hardy, Lette and Carey, and Mullan
- Fourth student major work workshop
- In-class writing exercises
- Discussion of form: the short story

**Read for next class:**
(these are all found in *The Best Australian Stories – A Ten Year Collection* (2011)
- Drewe, Robert ‘The Lap Pool’ pp.55-71
• Kennedy, Cate ‘Cold Snap’ pp.162-169
• Le, Nam ‘Love and Honour and Pity...’ pp.35-54

**Write for next class:** flash fiction

**Session 7**

[October 16]

• ASSIGNMENT ‘READING AS A WRITER’ DUE
• Discussion of Kennedy, Drewe and Nam Le
• Fifth student major work workshop
• Discussion of form: the poetic image
• In-class writing exercises

**Read for next class:**
(These are found in *Harbour City Poems* (2009))
• Dawson, Paul ‘Thanks for the Poems, Pauline Hanson’ pp.205-206
• Harrison, Martin ‘The Red Gum’ pp.152-153
• Porter, Dorothy ‘Paradise Beach’ pp.175-181
• Ryan, Gig ‘The Cross/The Bay’ p.190

**Write for next class:** the poetic instance

**Session 8**

Excursion using The Red Room Company’s *The Disappearing* app: a poetic safari of Sydney

[October 23]

**Session 9**

[October 30]

• Discussion of the excursion and of the readings from the prior week
• Sixth student major work workshop
• In-class writing exercises
• Discussion of form: the long poem / the verse novel

**Reading for next class:**
• Excerpts from Dorothy Porter’s *The Monkey’s Mask* and Mary Fallon’s *Working Hot*

**Write for next class:** a poetic scene

**Session 10**

[November 6]

• Discussion of Porter and Fallon
• Seventh student major work workshop
• Planning the route of next week’s fieldtrip
• Discussion of symbolism and metaphor

Read for next class:
• City of Sydney council’s ‘Barani/Barrabugu (Yesterday/Tomorrow)’ booklet of indigenous Australian stories.

Write for next class: continue working on your major assignments and reading Lilian’s Story

Session 11
Excursion based around City of Sydney council’s ‘Barani/Barrabugu (Yesterday/Tomorrow)’ self-guided tour of Sydney locations.

[November 13]
Read for next class: ‘Ending’ (Chapter 11) of How Novels Work

Session 12
• Discussion of the excursion and Mullan reading
• Eighth student major work workshop
• Discussion of endings: letting go.

Read for next class: Finish Lilian’s Story

Write for next class: continue working on your major assignments

Session 13
• Discussion of Lilian’s Story and general reflection on the course
• Troubleshooting problems in the major assignments
• Discussion of how the class might like to self-publish finished work

[November 27]

Session 14
• Watch Lilian’s Story dir. Jerzy Domaradzki
• Readings of students’ work

[December 4]

Session 15
FINAL WORK DUE

[December 11]

Classroom Etiquette
This is a seminar subject and requires active participation. It also requires respectful and engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view. Eating is not permitted in any classrooms. Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided.
Required Co-curricular Activities

Excursion using The Red Room Company’s *The Disappearing* app: a poetic safari of Sydney

Excursion based around City of Sydney council’s ‘Barani/Barrabugu (Yesterday/Tomorrow)’ self-guided tour of Sydney locations.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities

None

Your Instructor

Anna Westbrook is a PhD candidate at the University of New South Wales where she tutors and lectures in Creative Writing. She has presented at many conferences and writer’s festivals around Australia. She was the recipient of the Sydney University prize for Best Honours thesis in Gender & Cultural Studies, a Marrickville Council Arts Development Grant, the Australian Society of Authors Mentorship award, and has been shortlisted for the Australian Vogel. Anna has been anthologized in *Herding Kites*, and published in magazines *Harlequin Creature, Voiceworks, Slit* and *WQ*. 