

Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Barcelona

Course Code / Title: BC/ENGL 310 Narrating Barcelona: Local Stories, Global Perspectives

Contact Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: English / Literature, Urban Studies, Global Studies

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description

This course provides intensive experience in creative writing, focusing on the intersections of literature, cultural identity and global perspectives, with the city of Barcelona as a privileged scenario. Through creative practice, literary analysis and field-based learning students will hone consistent writing skills and critically examine the role of storytelling as a tool for social change. Specifically, by examining literary representations of the city's historical, symbolic and social fabric, and interacting with local writers and organizations, students will explore the transformative potential of creative writing in shaping personal and collective identities within a global context.

Objectives

Through their participation in this course, students will:

- Examine literary texts by local and international authors and compare perspectives on the interplay between identity, power, and culture.
- Identify key literary techniques to hone specific vocabulary for both critical analysis and creative application.
- Develop original creative writing pieces (fiction, non-fiction, poetry) to master writing skills while engaging with the city's urban, social and cultural fabric.
- Analyze the ethical dimensions of creative writing to explore how narrative structures respond to contemporary challenges.
- Conceptualize a consistent approach to creative expression within a global cultural and societal framework.

Requirements

Active participation is essential in this course. Students are expected to attend each class and field study course component, as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy, participate in class debates and engage in conversations with guest speakers. Students are expected to read all assigned materials before the relevant class session (reading assignments are generally 20-30 pages per class session). All assignments must be submitted via Canvas unless otherwise noted within the established due date.

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Each content unit will explore a specific literary technique, which students will then develop through their own creative writing pieces.

Graded assignments include:

- **Participation:** students are expected to participate in class discussions and debates, to demonstrate engagement with course content by asking and answering questions, to join group and class activities with respectful behavior, and to demonstrate listening skills by incorporating their peers' contributions into class discussions.
- **Writing Portfolio:** 3 creative writing pieces, 4 pages each (poetry, fiction, nonfiction) and 2 reflective essays (3 pages each) connected to the course topics. Detailed guidelines will be provided by the instructor.
- **Critical Reviews:** 3 literary analyses (2 pages each) of texts written by local authors or set in Barcelona.
- **Presentation:** a 10-minute presentation on the ethical dimensions of storytelling in contemporary global societies.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

- Participation (see rubric below) 15%
- Writing Portfolio (5 at 10%) 50%
- Critical Reviews (3 at 5%) 15%
- Presentation 20%

Class Participation Grading Rubric

	A – 90-100% Exemplary	B – 80-89% Proficient	C – 70-79% Developing	D – 60-69% Unacceptable	F – 0-59% Missing
Frequency of class participation	Actively contributes 2+ times per meeting	Actively contributes at least 1 time per meeting	Actively contributes at least half of the time during term	Actively contributes less than half of the time during term	Does not contribute
Quality of class participation*	Contribution is always thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, frequently interacting with peers	Contribution is mostly thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, usually interacting with peers	Contribution is somewhat thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, sometimes interacting with peers	Contribution is rarely thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, rarely interacting with peers	Does not contribute or interact with peers

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Level of class preparation	Always fully prepared and on task	Mostly prepared and on task	Somewhat prepared and on task	Rarely prepared and on task	Consistently unprepared and not on task
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Readings

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Americanah*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *The Thing Around Your Neck*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

Atwood, Margaret. *Negotiating with the Dead. A Writer on Writing*. Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 2002.

Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Fordham University Press, 2005.

Constantine, Helen (Ed.). *Barcelona Tales*. Translated by Peter Bush. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

El Hachmi, Najad. *The Last Patriarch*. Translated by Peter Bush. London: Profile Books, 2011.

Epps, Brad, and Fernández Cifuentes, Luis (Ed.). *Spain Beyond Spain: Modernity, Literary History, and National Identity*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005.

Ffion, Lindsay. *The Seven Pillars of Storytelling*. Bristol, UK: Sparkol Books, 2015.

Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Gornick, Vivian. *The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.

Hooks, Bell. *Belonging. A Culture of Place*. London-New York: Routledge, 2008.

Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988.

Laforet, Carmen. *Nada*. Translated by Edith Grossman. New York: Vintage Books, 2008.

Lahiri, Jhumpa. *In Other Words*. Translated by Ann Goldstein. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016.

Lodge, David. *The Art of Fiction*. London: Harvill Secker, 1992.

Marçal, Maria-Mercè. *The Passion According to Renée Vivien*. Translated by Kathleen McNerney and Helena Buffery. London: Francis Boutle Publisher, 2020.

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Matute, Ana María. *The Lost Children*. Translated by Robert Nugent. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

McCann, Colum. *Letters to a Young Writer: Some Practical and Philosophical Advice*. New York: Random House, 2017.

Mendoza, Eduardo. *City of Marvels*. Translated by Bernard Molloy. London: Harper Collins, 1988.

Mittelmark, Howard, and Newman, Sandra. *How Not to Write a Novel*. London: Penguin Books, 2009.

Orwell, George. *Homage to Catalonia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Rodoreda, Mercè, *In Diamond Square*. Translated by Peter Bush. London: Virago Books, 2014.

Rodoreda, Mercè. *The Time of the Doves*. Translated by David Rosenthal. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 1986.

Ruiz Zafón, Carlos. *The Shadow of the Wind*. Translated by Lucia Graves. London: Penguin Books, 2004.

Solà, Irene. *When I Sing, the Mountains Dance*. Translated by Mara Faye Lethem. Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2022.

Solnit, Rebecca. *The Faraway Nearby*. New York: Viking Books, 2013.

Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. New York: Penguin Books, 2000.

Vogler, Christopher. *The Writer's Journey. Mythic Structures for Writers*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2007.

Wood, James. *How Fiction Works*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.

Audiovisual Sources

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story". YouTube Video. 19:16. October 7, 2009. [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The danger of a single story | TED](#)

Allen, Woody. *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*. Mediapro and The Weinstein Company, 2008. Film.

Coixet, Isabel. *The Secret Life of Words*. Filmax International, 2005. Film.

Iñárritu González, Alejandro. *Biutiful*. Cha Cha Films, 2010. Film.

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Guerin, José Luis. *En construcción*. Ovideo, 2001. Documentary.

Content

Topic 1 – The City as Text

- Barcelona through literature: visible and hidden stories. A framework.
- Reading as a tool for writing: setting the basis for literary exploration.
- Types of narrators: from theory to analysis and practice.

Topic 2 – Local Context and Global Perspectives

- Writing about power and identity: Mercè Rodoreda and the Spanish Civil War.
- Multilingual narratives: Spanish, Catalan, and English in Barcelona.
- Description and scene: sensory details in shaping landscapes.

Topic 3 – The Point of View

- Writing from the margins: narrating Barcelona's symbolic borders.
- Empowering voices through social narratives: Carmen Laforet and the postwar era.
- Who is telling and from where: displacement in writing.

Topic 4 – The City as Character

- Barcelona and cinematic representation: contradiction and authenticity.
- Diverse narratives in urban settings: an exploration.
- Building characters to bring stories to life.

Topic 5 – Writing the Other

- The danger of a single story: city of marvels or city of tourists?
- Fiction as a tool for social change: Najat El Hachmi and the defence of freedom.
- Cross-cultural dialogue through diverse voices in literature.

Topic 6 – Myths as Stories

- Myths and legends: *The Shadow of the Wind* and the Gothic quarter.
- Reshaping universal themes for local and global contexts.
- Showing and telling: the narrative iceberg.

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Topic 7 – Memory and Imagination

- Writing to remember: George Orwell and Catalonia.
- Cultural and symbolic memory: the case of Catalan literary organizations.
- Stream of consciousness between past, present and future.

Topic 8 – Poetry of Place

- The rhythms of the city: inspiration and creativity.
- Catalan contemporary voices on the international stage: Irene Solà and rural writing.
- Narrative pacing in fiction and poetry.

Topic 9 – Writing through the Arts

- Visual and performance arts: literary events in Barcelona.
- Narrative structures: breaking the boundaries to foster inclusion.
- Outlining a plot in fiction.

Topic 10 – Writing across cultures.

- The power of words: cultural awareness in writing.
- The politics and the ethical dilemmas of literary translation.
- Study abroad and creative expression.

Field study and experiential learning components may include:

- Visit the Barcelona Center for Contemporary Culture (CCCB) - [Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona | CCCB](#)
- Tour of Barcelona’s Bookstores.
- Visit the Barcelona Creative Writing School, located in the historical Ateneu Barcelonés - [Escuela de escritura Ateneu Barcelonés](#)
- Conversations with local writers and artists.
- Visit the Spanish division of the international publishing company Penguin Random House - [Editoriales | Penguin Libros ES](#)
- Visit the García Márquez Library, recognized as “The Best Public Library in the World 2023” - [Biblioteca Gabriel García Márquez | Biblioteques de Barcelona | Ajuntament de Barcelona](#)

** Syllabus is subject to minor changes in term-specific syllabus at instructor discretion.*