Fiction: Crafting Dialogue

Course Description and Objectives

Good dialogue breathes life into your characters, which not only animates your story, but drives it. Used to full effect, it can advance your plot, reveal information, describe setting, describe other characters, and explore emotion. This course provides tips and guidelines to help you get your characters talking. Weekly exercises and writing samples will explore ways that published authors have used dialogue, and ensuing discussions focus particularly on how these approaches can apply to your own writing.

During the course, you have the opportunity to read aloud from 6-10 pages of your work that focus on dialogue, and receive feedback from fellow students in a supportive workshop environment. You also receive instructor comments on these same pages in the form of margin notes and a typed response sheet.

Readings

There will be paper handouts for each of the four sessions. On occasion you might be directed to links on the Internet following class discussions on a particular subject. A common source of book industry news is Quill & Quire www.quillandquire.com. For a list of local literary readings as well as international events in the book world, see the Vancouver Writers Fest weekly newsletter Book News https://www.writersfest.bc.ca/get-involved/booknews.

Participation

Regular attendance ensures that you get the most you can out of the class lectures and discussions. If you are scheduled to give a reading and find you cannot attend, please advise the instructor by email so that another student can take your place. In order to give fellow students your undivided attention during readings, kindly turn off all electronic devices and avoid leaving the room.

Offering Feedback

Please keep in mind that all writing brought to the workshop setting will be, by its nature, a work in progress and, therefore, rough draft material. Our goal is improvement, not perfection. Handouts will offer students tips on both giving and receiving feedback.

Assessment

Certificate Students

If you are a student in our professional communication certificate or our creative writing award of achievement, your assessment may differ from that of your classmates. Please note that part of that assessment will be a final portfolio that will require you to submit a piece of writing or other project from this class.
Assessment for the Course
Records detailing attendance and completion of assignments are submitted for each student. See “letters of completion”.

Letters of Completion
In order to be eligible for a letter of completion, you will need to attend at least 80% of the classes (or the online equivalent) and complete the assignments. You can request a letter of completion by emailing us at writing.exl@ubc.ca after the course has finished.

Feedback
Over the four weeks students will have the opportunity to read aloud from their writing at least once and submit these pages to the instructor for margin notes as well as a typed response sheet.

Additional Information
This course is student-centred. Your questions and concerns help dictate the direction of each class. Effort is made to help you find solutions to your writing concerns, and to help you make your writing, and in particular your dialogue, the best it can be. You should finish the course feeling inspired.
**Course Schedule**

**Week One:**
- Introductions
- What dialogue can do
- Exercise: childhood memory!

**Week Two:**
- Power struggle
- Characteristics of successful dialogue
- Exercise: character description
- Exercise: persuasive dialogue
- Student readings
- Discussion: What to notice when listening in on conversations

**Week Three:**
- Eavesdropping
- Exercise: tune in to conversations around you, and report on findings
- Exercise: interviews
- Handout: Dialogue sheet on proper format
- Student readings

**Week Four:**
- Body language
- What is unsaid
- How setting and symbol/motif also contribute to our understanding
- Exercise: paring down dialogue
- Discussion: the role of voice and narrative
- Final readings