

Course Guide for Fall 2020

All LSWA students are expected to enroll in an LSWA class each semester. LSWA 125 fulfills LSA's first year writing requirement. Students who are enrolled in the College of Engineering, the Honors College, and students who have fulfilled the first-year writing requirement over the summer can enroll in LSWA 151.001.

If you have any questions, please contact the LSWA office at (734)-764-7521 or via email at LSWA@umich.edu.

LSWA 125.001: *Writing in the Surreal World*

Instructor: Scott Beal

Credits: 4

Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30am-11:00am

Location: TBD

Through all that has happened in 2020, the idea of things “making sense” may seem like a quaint notion of yore. Certainly recent events have shaken many of us out of our customary ways of sensemaking in our daily lives, in our understanding of relationships, of country and society and economy. And the word “surreal” has been used repeatedly to capture how strange the world began to feel this year—in response to the [coronavirus pandemic](#), [of course](#), but also the sight of [Sarah Palin popping out of a psychedelic bear costume](#). But what does it mean to be surreal? Did things ever make sense, or had we just been deluding ourselves all along?

As scholars for writing and the arts, we are positioned to pursue two complementary objectives: (1) to appreciate more fully the *precise ways* our experience fails to make sense, and (2) to strive to make *more* sense of those things that we can. In this writing course, we will use writing to explore art and literature that evokes the nonsensical and surreal, and to unravel the seemingly nonsensical elements of our own observation and experience that might help us navigate a surreal world. Along the way, we will engage with all aspects of the writing process, from brainstorming and research to collaboration and revision—to strengthen our writing voices and build skills and strategies for communicating persuasively with academic audiences and beyond.

LSWA 125.002: *Creative Obsessions and Writing*

Instructor: Carol Tell

Credits: 4

Class Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30am-1:00pm

Location: TBD

What are your obsessions? Are they quirky and unique (and maybe embarrassing) (a schlocky song, a character from a book, your family recipe for meatloaf), or more mainstream but no less haunting (a love interest, a social identity, a sports team, the number of likes you get on Instagram)? From childhood crushes to white whales, our obsessions can be self-defining and often drive us to write/create beautiful things. But as much as they define us, they can occasionally delude or even destroy us.

This introductory writing class will allow you to explore—and write about—intellectual, aesthetic, and personal obsessions—both your own and those of writers, artists, filmmakers, and musicians. We'll read texts (from such writers as Toni Morrison, Claudia Rankine, David Foster Wallace, Jeanette Winterson, Sylvia Plath, and Maurice Sendak), watch a film or two (*Brokeback Mountain*, *An Education*), and listen to and create podcasts, all of which will explore obsessive love, work, and creativity. We'll also think about how our current global health crisis may have inspired or shifted our own obsessions, particularly with health, isolation, and anxiety. But most of all, you'll be figuring out how to write effectively for college—and hopefully become obsessed with how to parse a writing prompt, what words like "argument" and "revision" really mean, and how to move (quickly) beyond the five-paragraph essay to create complex and challenging essays.

LSWA 125.003: *Genre Wonderland*

Instructor: Raymond McDaniel

Credits: 4

Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00pm-5:30pm

Location: TBD

Noir, fantasy, romantic comedy, thriller, horror: we take categories like these for granted when we talk about film or literature, but what (if anything) do they have to do with how we imagine and narrate our own lives? In this section of LSWA 125, we will examine: what it means, why it has to exist, whether anything exists outside of it, how we use it to construct

experience and knowledge as consumers, scholars and people just trying to makes sense of it all. Texts will include both literature and multimedia references both high and low, common and obscure, and skills will be developed in analysis, argument, narrative, and writing into and across academic curricula. Tolerance for stylistic excess encouraged but not required.

LSWA 125.004: *Monsters and Beasts*

Instructor: Angela Berkley

Credits: 4

Class Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00am-11:30am

Location: TBD

Zombies, vampires, werewolves, cyborgs, yetis, witches, ghosts, demons, and countless others—they stalk us relentlessly from the pages of our favorite novels and stories. Their creepy images haunt us from movie and TV screens—and we love every minute of it, however frightened we might be. Plenty of these monsters are beastly, but many of the beasts we love just as much as we love monsters aren't scary at all. What, if anything, do the monsters who scare us and the beasts who charm us, have in common? Why do we fear these beastly monsters, and why do we love them? What's behind our enduring urge to create and consume narratives of these inhuman imaginary beings? Are they as inhuman as they seem—or is what captivates us about monsters the unsettling suggestions and foreboding images they offer us about who and what we really are?

All good writing starts with good questions, and in our course, we will explore a range of texts (novels, stories, comics, photos, paintings, TV shows, and movies) that raise questions and make arguments about the cultural and political meaning of the monsters we create. You will read and write in response to these questions and arguments, through essays, images, sounds, and stories. You will engage with each other as you explore these questions as readers and writers, using the experiences of your peers to develop your insights and conclusions about what it means to be a monster-and-beast love in 2020. You will practice readerly and writerly skills together—skills that you can readily apply to the writing that awaits you beyond this course.

LSWA 125.005: *The Hidden Lives of Ordinary Things*

Instructor: Cat Cassel

Credits: 4

Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00am-12:30pm

Location: TBD

In this writing-intensive course, we will explore the personal, cultural, historical, and philosophical significance of the material objects that surround us in our everyday lives, and develop original insights and arguments in a series of writing assignments designed to introduce you to personal narrative, analytic writing, argumentative writing, and multimodal composition. Good arguments stem from good questions, and academic essays allow writers to write their way toward answers, toward figuring out what they think. Using things as an anchor for our inquiry, we will focus on the creation of complex, analytic, well-supported arguments addressing questions that matter in academic contexts. The course also hones your critical thinking and reading skills with readings from a variety of genres, which will serve as models or prompts for your writing assignments. Working closely with your peers and the instructor, you will develop your essays through peer review workshops and extensive revision and editing. The specific questions that you pursue in your essays will be guided by your own interests.

LSWA 125.006: *Our TV, Our Selves: The Rhetoric of Television*

Instructor: Shelley Manis

Credits: 4

Class Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30pm-4:00pm

Location: TBD

How many times have you heard someone say (or have *you* said), "It's just TV!" In this class, those, as they say, are "fightin' words." Television—from high drama like *Breaking Bad* to goofy animation like *Bob's Burgers*—makes *meaning*, makes *arguments*. Television both reflects and creates current attitudes about public issues; and it can and should inspire important, sometimes difficult, conversations. I've designed this course around one major question that should be important to those of us who love TV (or who hate it!), who *live* for the next episode of *Riverdale* or the next season of *Queer Eye*, or who would rather eat glass than watch *Game of Thrones*. How does TV make meaning? How does it contribute

to our senses of self—as individuals, as citizens or residents of the U.S. and/or other home nations, as [you-fill-in-the-blank]?

The content that we study will be television; the end result of our study will be an intimate relationship with rigorous thinking, writing, and revising processes.

We will practice strategies of close reading, thick description, research, analysis, reflection, revision, and responding in writing to a variety of texts: television episodes and series (some chosen by me, some by you), academic articles, podcasts, and mainstream publications. We will engage in the kinds of tasks you will be asked to do often as a college student: blogging, social media writing, informal writing, planning and conducting research, review writing, analytical essay writing, etc. We will argue about the virtues and shortcomings of the shows we watch. We will disagree (respectfully but enthusiastically) about all manner of things. We will “live every week like it’s shark week.”

This will all help you look anew at something you likely know well (tv) as you practice making dynamic, savvy, even artistic academic arguments. And we’ll hopefully have a lot of fun doing it.

“Clear eyes, full hearts, can’t lose.”

LSWA 151.001: *What Matters Most?: Big Questions, Fabulous Failures, and Creative Genres in Writing and the Arts*

Instructor: Carol Tell

Credits: 1

Class Time: Fridays 2:00pm-3:00pm

Location: TBD

College is a time not just to pursue a major or profession, but to ask big questions of ourselves and our world: Who are we? What do we want? How shall we live in the world? As our world transforms due to the impact of our global health crisis, all of these questions resonate.

One essential way of understanding such questions is through writing and the arts. In this discussion-based seminar, we will explore how different writers and artists interpret such

topics as identity, purpose, community, and aesthetics. We'll think about labels like "success" and "failure," and what it means to take an aesthetic risk. Yes, these are hefty subjects for a mini-course—but we'll discuss and respond to them in concrete ways through specific pieces of writing and artwork. Each week we'll examine a different genre—tv and film (*Black Mirror* to *Black Swan*), poetry and fiction (Langston Hughes, Sylvia Plath, Kazuo Ishiguro, Toni Morrison), and music (Bob Dylan to Beyonce) and the visual arts. We'll visit an art museum, attend a University performance, and explore the role of social media in writing and the arts. Along with short assignments and weekly blogging, students will produce their own creative, semester-long project in the genre of their choice.

LSWA 230.001: *Creative Communities*

Instructor: Mark Tucker

Credits: 3

Class Time: Fridays, 11:00am-2:00pm

Location: TBD

Students in this class will co-design a creative community within Lloyd Scholars for Writing and the Arts while collaborating and building community connections in the Ann Arbor region/online realm. Through inventive planning, organization, logistics, and implementation, students will have the opportunity to work together, and with other communities, to experience first-hand what it takes to create their own relevant public arts related exhibitions/performances/installations. Additionally, students will attend artist talks and performances and will examine and critique these varied creative experiences via dynamic group discussions and written reflections.

Note: LSWA 230.001 is limited to sophomore student leaders in Lloyd Scholars for Writing and the Arts.