



WRIT32403-20S1:Distinguishing Characteristics
Writer's Studio Winter 2021

COURSE INFORMATION	
Online Workshop: Distinguishing Characteristics	Feb 23–Mar 16
Live Webinars Dates: Online (Canvas)	
<p>Four 2.5 hour sessions, Feb 23–Mar 16 Tuesdays : 1.30pm-4pm</p>	
GRAHAM SCHOOL INFORMATION	
PHONE: 773.702.1722	WEBSITE: https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this four-week class led by author Dipika Mukherjee (*Ode to Broken Things; Shambala Junction*), you will read short fiction from around the world. Distinguishing Characters will focus on writing characters, including unreliable narrators. Over four weeks, we will look at characters through literary examples from Carmen Maria Machado, Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, Ernest Hemingway, Saras Manickam, Margaret Atwood, Shiv Ramdas, Shirley Jackson, Joyce Carol Oates, Steven Millhauser, Ken Liu, Roxanne Gay and Lauren Groff. Readings will be posted in advance and students will be encouraged to bring their own questions about problems with characterization for discussion. Students will have time in class to craft different characters and workshop their writing. Writers with short stories or novels-in-progress would find this class useful, and writers of all levels are welcome.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

As we may be addressing controversial topics in our class discussions, students are expected to be respectful and considerate of others.

DISABILITY INFORMATION

The Graham School of Continuing Liberal & Professional Studies abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act (see <http://www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm>), with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (see <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/sec504.htm>), and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (see <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>) and will provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities covered by law. If you have a disability for which you may require accommodations, please contact Charnessa Warren, Director of Student Disability Services, at 773.702.6000 or charnessa@uchicago.edu in advance of the first class meeting.

SYLLABUS

This syllabus is a skeletal summary of course objectives and content, not a contract. All information in this syllabus is subject to change, with sufficient advance notice provided.

Week 1: Love and War: Gay, Oates, Atwood.

The first three stories look at how fully developed characters are written when there is clear deception involved. Three beautifully crafted stories with unexpected twists.

In the first week, we will focus on developing memorable characters, and developing a strong, assured voice.

Week 2: Politics and Rage: Adiche, Millhauser, Ramdas

These three writers demonstrate a mastery over craft and voice, while dealing with sensitive topics.

We will experiment with character development in the first, second and third person.

Week 3: Men and Women: Liu, Machado, Manickam

Is it possible to write honestly about families and communities, and still write with empathy? These three stories dig into creating unlikeable characters.

We explore writing authentic characters from cultures and communities around the world, and how these characters evolve through effective dialogues.

Week 4: Writing the Unspeakable: Hemingway, Jackson, Groff

Our final stories take risks with tragic narratives. We look at new ways of storytelling in creative nonfiction.

Students can expect to write prompt-based short pieces in every class and receive feedback during class should they choose to share their writing. In the final two meetings, time will be set aside to workshop a short story in-progress from each student, and students can opt to send their stories online for critique in either the third or the fourth meeting. Guided by literary examples, students will be encouraged to work on at least one piece of their own writing and submit it for publication.

INSTRUCTOR BIO:

Dr. Dipika Mukherjee is the author of the novels *Shambala Junction*, which won the UK Virginia Prize for Fiction, and *Ode to Broken Things*, which was longlisted for the Man Asia Literary Prize. Her short story collection is *Rules of Desire* (Fixi, 2015). Her work is included in *The Best Small Fictions 2019* and she frequently writes for *World Literature Today*, *Asia Literary Review* and *Chicago Quarterly Review* as well as a literary column for *The Edge* in Malaysia. She is core faculty at StoryStudio Chicago and teaches at the Graham School at University of Chicago. She holds a doctorate in English (Sociolinguistics).