Distinguishing Characteristics
Syllabus

Instructor
Dipika Mukherjee

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Modality
Remote learning

Quarter: Spring
Start – end date: March 28 – April 18
Session day/time: Monday, 6:00 - 8:30 PM CT
Course Code and Section: WRIT32403 22S1

Course Overview

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.

Course readings

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Love and War: Gay, Oates, Atwood.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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| 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. |

**Accessibility information**

Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class session at 773.702.6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.

**Accessing remote courses**

Remote courses are taught through our Canvas platform. Approximately two weeks before your class begins, we will add you to your canvas site using the email address you provided at the time of registration. An invitation will then be sent to that email. Click the “Get Started” button in the email to begin the Canvas login process. For step-by-step instructions, please visit https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts. Once you’ve created your Canvas account, you can access any Graham School canvas course for which you are registered at: https://canvas.uchicago.edu.

Questions? Contact Zoë Eisenman at zm1@uchicago.edu.