

**USCDornsife**  
**Department of**  
**English**

**English 593 (32793): Practicum in Teaching English and Narrative Studies**

**2 units/Spring 2024/Tuesdays 5-6:20/Taper Hall 107 & online**

**Professor Chris Freeman/cefreema@usc.edu**  
**Office: Taper Hall 410, 8:15-9:15 T/Th & by appt.**

**Course Description**

Participants are expected to have prior training in pedagogy and teaching methods through the USC Writing Program or Thematic Option. This course builds on that training and on actual teaching experience to work at a more advanced level. The course will work in coordination with

- English 297 “Introduction to the Genre of Nonfiction”
- English 298 “Introduction to the Genre of Fiction”
- English 299 “Introduction to the Genre of Poetry”
- English 105 “Creative Writing for Non-Majors”

and with some other lecture courses which use graduate teaching assistants. Participants will attend and observe one of the above classes two to three during the semester. You should also observe other departmental courses. These observations will be an important part of our discussions in seminar and will supplement our conversation and analysis of the written material with which we will be working. By the end of the semester, participants will

- 1) be comfortable with techniques for relating successfully to undergraduate students;
- 2) have learned principles of lesson plan design and execution;
- 3) be familiar with principles of assignment design and grading techniques;
- 4) develop a repertoire of techniques for leading and advancing classroom discussion; and
- 5) formulate and adopt a strategy for further development as a teacher/scholar and have begun to assemble a portfolio of teaching and related professional materials.

In their course work and research, graduate students are prepared intellectually for the profession, but the transition from the PhD into the professoriate is a critical time in the professional development process. Students enter graduate school in a cohort, but the work often sends the cohort in different directions. This course not only reunites some of the cohort near the end of the PhD, but also fosters collaboration integrating the roles of scholar and teacher, addressing many of the challenges of shifting responsibilities in the move from graduate student to professor. This course addresses these issues directly and in consultation with peers and other professional mentors.

Successful, effective teaching goes well beyond our own disciplinary knowledge. It is also about connecting with our students, about connecting our students to the material, and about connecting the material to our world. The same thing holds true for our individual relationship to “the profession”: we know that good teaching and active scholarly work will be expected of us as we move forward in our careers, but what else does a successful academic career entail? Different types of positions and opportunities require different approaches. These are some of the topics this seminar’s participants will explore. This course will add significant dimensions to graduate student training at the critical time near degree completion.

### **Learning Goals**

- \* Developing various course plans, syllabi, and assignments
- \* Honing teaching styles and approaches for different types of material, different forms and genres, different levels of courses, and different size groups
- \* Collaborating to troubleshoot issues in the classroom and beyond it; to create assignments and activities; to evaluate and grade work effectively and fairly
- \* Sharing success stories and challenges, and keeping a written record of our reading, teaching, observation, and discussion work throughout the semester
- \* Understanding your role in a larger department; in a college/university; within the larger profession
- \* Creating resources and sharing options and awareness of opportunities beyond the classroom, in administration or outside of the academy
- \* Supporting collegial development and personal and professional growth

### **Readings and Texts**

*My Trade is Mystery* by Carl Phillips (Yale UP, 2022; Kindle edition recommended; also available as audio book)

Articles from *The New Yorker*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, etc. on Blackboard

### **Grading (Credit/No Credit)**

50% Reflective portfolio (midterm and end of term evaluation)

40% Classroom observations and reports/updates

10% Participation and engagement in seminar discussion (note: missing more than two seminar meetings will likely result in NO CREDIT)

### **Engagement**

Participants will attend sessions and actively engage with readings and discussions; will sit in on their peers’ and colleagues’ courses and share brief responses; facilitate discussions of readings; draft a statement of teaching philosophy; and create a course syllabus and attendant assignments. Written work will be evaluated in each participant’s portfolio at midterm and at the end of the semester (10-15 pages by the end of the term). The portfolio should be an ongoing document starting in week one, and include reading notes, discussion notes, teaching reflection, and comments on classroom observations.

## **Weekly Schedule (*subject to change as schedules necessitate*)**

**Meeting One (2/6): discuss syllabus, course/semester goals; current teaching assignments; plan the schedule together; guest: Michelle Gordon, Emory University**

**Meeting Two (2/20): update on teaching so far; guest: Trisha Tucker, USC**

**Meeting Three (3/5): discuss plans for classroom observations; begin to approach colleagues for visits; guest: Monica Miller, Middle Georgia College**

**Meeting Four: March: One-on-one meetings and classroom observations**

**Meeting Five (4/2): guest: Allan Pero, University of Western Ontario**

**Meeting Six (4/23): final meeting**

### **Definition of Excellence in Teaching USC Department of English**

All writing is creative, and all civic engagement requires a sophisticated understanding of discourse and interpretation. The USC Department of English is committed to the power of the story, the word, and the image. We analyze and organize complex ideas, evaluate qualitative information, anticipate how real audiences respond to language, and study behaviors of complex characters leading uncertain lives with competing values. We develop critical abilities for a successful life, but our stories tell us why life is worth living.

Excellence in teaching is an active engagement with these commitments, perspectives, and values. A student with a major in **English** should graduate with an appreciation for (1) the relations between representation and the human soul, and (2) the relations between words and ideas. Teachers will encourage this appreciation through their knowledge and conveyance of the subject, the appropriateness of instructional materials, and the quality of their students' responses. We expect our students to:

- understand the major representations in English discourse from earliest beginnings to the current moment; all literatures exist in conversation with earlier literatures;
- organize and interpret evidence;
- feel the experiences of others, both by engaging in literatures and by their own efforts to create new literatures;
- understand how periods, cultural intentions, and literary genres differ;
- grasp the skills and theories of interpretation, and the history of our own discipline;
- see how interpretive interests shift with time and place;
- attend to linguistic details of semantics, phrasing, and structure;
- assume there are reasonable alternative understandings of a text;
- adjudicate differences through reasoned arguments that honestly engage counter-arguments.

Our students will have lives in very different arenas, but all calling for skills in discourse, empathy, civil argument, and civic engagement. We cannot and should not say what those careers will be; we train students for jobs that have not yet been invented.

English Department students with an interdisciplinary major in **Narrative Studies** should expect instruction that inculcates an appreciation for all of the above, and coordinates with definitions of teaching excellence in USC's corresponding departments.

The Department of English adheres to the modalities of instruction published in the "USC Definition of Excellence in Teaching."

Approved September 18, 2018  
Undergraduate Studies  
Committee  
Department of English

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### Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

#### Academic Conduct:

- *Plagiarism* – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b).
- *Other forms of academic dishonesty* are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

#### Support Systems:

- *Student Counseling Services (SCS)* – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call  
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)
- *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* – 1 (800) 273-8255  
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- *Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)* – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call  
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)
- *Sexual Assault Resource Center*  
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu)
- *Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance* – (213) 740-5086  
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu)
- *Bias Assessment Response and Support*  
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)
- *The Office of Disability Services and Programs*  
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

- *Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*  
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)
- *Diversity at USC*  
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)
- *USC Emergency Information*  
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)
- *USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000*  
24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu).