




Master of Arts Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) 616

Writing the Self: The Experience and Potential of Writing for Personal Development (Revision 4)

Status: Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Delivery mode: [Grouped study](#) 

Credits: 3

Area of study: Arts

Prerequisites: **MAIS 601** or professor approval is required.

Precluded: None

Faculty: [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Notes: Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

Overview

Welcome to Master of Arts-Interdisciplinary Studies 616: Writing the Self: The Experience and Potential of Writing for the Purpose of Personal Development. Writing is an important form of human expression and a valuable tool in academia for reporting findings, expressing points of view, or furthering an area of study. Some university students view writing merely as a technical skill-or, at worst, a necessary evil in the process of obtaining certification. However, writing offers diverse potentials, such as giving the writer the opportunity to explore, define, and refine his or her internal experiences.

Compelling evidence exists that the writing process may enhance and expand personal development in a variety of contexts and that writing has therapeutic benefits. This course focuses on exploring these potentials, by engaging students in the writing process and by inviting them to review, study, discuss, and evaluate existing contexts where writing is being used for therapy, creativity, and self-expression, and for research on the writing process.

As a student in Writing the Self, you will be required to commit to a daily writing practice, and you will be invited to express yourself in the form of poetry and fiction. You will also be prompted to write about various themes and explore facets of your lived experience. During the course you will be asked to share selected written work with your course professor and other students. You will work online, participate in student discussion, give and receive feedback, and complete assignments during and at the end of the course.

The three final assignments reflect key topics and approaches covered in this course-the first of these final assignments invites you to write a portrait of self as a means to express and reflect in a personal way. The second assignment encourages you to think about and create a writing application for self or others as a practical exercise. The third assignment requires you to write an essay about a question that will arise out of student discussion, readings, or your professor's commentary both in this manual as well as online. In other words, the personal, the practical, as well as the theoretical aspects of writing as a means of personal development will be covered.

Regard your participation in this course as an investment in yourself as well as an opportunity to write with more creativity, insight, and enjoyment. You may even find that writing can play a role in your life or in the life of those you work with, beyond where you have used it until now.

Important notice: The process of writing about self can bring up challenging emotional issues. Students are reminded that this course is not therapy and


that they must participate within their own capabilities and limits. If a student feels that further support is needed, he or she may discuss with the course professor contacts for competent counsellors and/or psychologists. Neither the professor nor Athabasca University is responsible for any personal problems that should arise during the participation in this course.

Objectives

The objectives for Writing the Self are fourfold. The course provides you the opportunity to

1. write with the intention of exploring facets of self and to commit to a daily writing practice.
2. explore approaches to self-expressive and self-reflective writing and write with more fluidity, creativity, and honesty (that is, lack of inhibition) and coherently express parts of your lived experience.
3. study views, research, and contexts where writing is being used and demonstrate an open-minded yet critical view of these views/findings/reports.
4. share during the discovery process and participate in discussions with your course professor and fellow students.

Evaluation

To receive credit for this course, students must participate in the online activities, successfully complete the assignments, and achieve a final mark of at least 60 per cent. Students should be familiar with the Master of Arts—Interdisciplinary Studies [grading system](#) . Please note that it is students' responsibility to maintain their program status. Any student who receives a grade of "F" in one course, or a grade of "C" in more than one course, may be required to withdraw from the program.

The following table summarizes the evaluation activities and the credit weights associated with them:

Activity	Weight
Weekly Writing Assignments	25%

Activity	Weight
Online Participation	10%
Book Review	5%
Joint Assignment	10%
Private Journal	10%
Assignment 1 A Portrait of Self	5%
Assignment 2 Writing: A Practical Application	15%
Assignment 3 Position Paper	20%
Total	100%

Materials

Physical course materials

The following course materials are included in a course package that will be shipped to your home prior to your course's start date:

Hunt, Celia, and Fiona Sampson, eds. *The Self on the Page: Theory and Practice of Creative Writing in Personal Development*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1998.

Lengelle, Reinekke, and Shirley A. Serviss. *Read Two Poems and Call Me in the Morning*. Edmonton: The Friends of University Hospital, 2001.

Metcalf, Linda Trichter, and Tobin Simon. *Writing the Mind Alive: The Proprioceptive Method of Finding Your Authentic Voice*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2002.

Zimmermann, Susan. *Writing to Heal the Soul: Transforming Grief and Loss through Writing*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002.

Compact Disc





Ma, Yo-Yo. *J. S. Bach: The 6 Unaccompanied Cello Suites*. 2 CD set. New York: CBS Masterworks, 1983.

Athabasca University Online Materials

Course Home Page: You will find Course Information (including the Assignment File and other pertinent information) at the top of the course home page. You will also find your Study Guide presented unit by unit online. You will find your assignments and links to submit your work to your professor on the course home page.

Athabasca University Library: Students are encouraged to browse the Library's Web site to review the Library collection of journal databases, electronic journals, and digital reference tools: <http://library.athabascau.ca> .

Important links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) 
- › [Focus Areas](#) 
- › [Courses](#) 
- › [Fees and Funding](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Opened in Revision 4, January 6, 2014

Updated March 10, 2025

View [previous revision](#) 