Creating Memorable Characters: A Weekend Workshop
Daniel M. Jaffe, Instructor

PUBLIC SYLLABUS

DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:

Vivid, complex characters are the heart of good fiction. Whether you choose to render your characters through spare details or extensive description, you need to know them thoroughly. In this weekend workshop, you read short examples of memorable characterizations in literature, and engage in various writing exercises exploring diverse aspects of character: physical traits, voice and ways of thinking, habits and tastes, past relationships, and current relationships. You leave the workshop knowing one or two of your characters deeply enough to begin developing a work of fiction.

GRADES:

Grades, for those requesting them, will be based upon attendance, participation, and effort displayed.

MINIMUM STUDENT AGE REQUIREMENT:

As UCLA's principal provider of continuing education, the majority of UCLA Extension courses are designed for the post-baccalaureate professional-level student. Enrollment is therefore normally reserved for adult students 18 years of age and older. The Writers’ Program may consent to enroll younger students based on special academic competence and approval of the instructor. Students who enroll in a Writers’ Program course without first receiving permission of the instructor are subject to withdrawal. To request instructor approval, please contact the Writers’ Program at 310/825-9415.

COURSE EVALUATIONS:

To help the UCLA Extension Writers’ Program better serve our students, at the end of the course you will be asked to complete an evaluation. These evaluations are 100% anonymous and help shape the program curriculum. Please take the time to fill out this quick form, and don’t be afraid to be candid in your responses.

READINGS:

The class will read and discuss published examples of character traits and writing techniques before engaging in writing exercises that practice those traits and techniques. Handouts of published literature will be presented in class.
SCHEDULE:

Day 1

9:30-11:00 Introduction

--Writing Exercise #1: Defining character traits.

11:00-11:10 Break

11:10-1:00 Character Basics

--Writing Exercise #2: Third-person description.

1:00-1:30 Lunch Break

1:30-2:00 --Writing Exercise #2a: Third-person description.

2:00-3:20 Character Basics (continued)

--Writing Exercise #3: First-person description.

3:20-3:30 Break

3:30-5:00 Character Values, Beliefs, Ways of Thinking, Voice

--Writing Exercise #4: Goals, values, voice.

Day 2

9:30-10:00 Review

--Discussion: review of yesterday’s work; discussion of any questions.

10:00-11:00 Past Relationships

--Discussion/reading examples: past relationships.

11:00-11:10 Break

11:10-1:00 Past relationships (continued):

--Writing Exercise #5: Past relationships.
1:00-1:30 Lunch Break

1:30-2:00 --Writing Exercise #5a: Past relationships.

2:00-3:20 Current Relationships

--Writing Exercise # 6: Current relationships.

3:20-3:40 Break, Evaluations

3:40-4:30 Habits, Tastes, Routines

--Writing Exercise #7: Habits, tastes, routines

4:30-5:00 Questions; Review

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Academic dishonesty covers behavior in cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication of information. These behaviors are not tolerated. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with the UCLA Extension Student Conduct Code and the official statements regarding cheating and plagiarism at: https://www.uclaextension.edu/Pages/str/StudentConduct.aspx

Also in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, UCLA Extension provides appropriate accommodations and support services to qualified applicants and students with disabilities. These include, but are not limited to, auxiliary aids/services, such as note takers, audiotaping of courses, sign language interpreters, and assistive-listening devices for hearing-impaired individuals, extended time for and proctoring of exams, and registration assistance. Accommodations and types of support services vary and are specifically designed to meet the disability-related needs of each student based on current, verifiable medical documentation. Arrangements for auxiliary aids/services are available only through UCLA Extension Disabled Student Services at (310) 825-4581 (voice/TTY) or by email at access@uclaextension.edu. Please request such arrangements with at least five working days’ advance notice. All assistance is handled in confidence. Accommodations must be pre-approved. Requests for retroactive accommodation will not be accepted.
Note to students: While this syllabus is posted to give you an overview of the course, it is subject to change. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Writers’ Program at (310) 825-9415 or via email at writers@uclaextension.edu. We are happy to answer any questions and to help you find the best class to achieve your writing goals.