

# THE WRITERS STUDIO

*Fiction and Poetry Writing Classes since 1987*

## **GETTING STARTED: TECHNICAL NOTES FOR THE ONLINE FICTION AND POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP**

To take The Writers Studio online class you will need:

Computer capable of connecting to the internet

An internet connection (Via cable modem or DSL is preferable. With a landline connection, you are more likely to be “dropped” from chats when your ISP—internet service provider—detects that you are “idle”.)

Email

AOL Instant-Message chat software (It’s free, and you don’t have to be an AOL member.)

Word Processing program (If you don’t have Microsoft Word, make sure your word processing program allows you to create rich text format (.rtf) files, so that others can open and read your files.)

Patience. (There may be moments when you get booted off the chat, can’t log on or can’t upload a piece. When this happens, feel free to email me at the address listed below.)

You will be invited to join your online class via email. The assignments, chats and your writing will be uploaded to the online classroom. The chats, however, will take place on AOL Instant Messenger. AOL IM is free, and you don’t have to belong to AOL to use it.

If you still have questions after reviewing the following notes, please contact me:

Lucinda Holt

Email: [lucinda@writerstudio.com](mailto:lucinda@writerstudio.com)

AOL IM: LucindaAH

### **OPERATING SYSTEMS**

Supported operating systems are as follows:

Microsoft Windows (95, 98, NT, 2000, XP)

Macintosh (OS 8.5 or higher)

### **BROWSER:**

Supported browsers are:

Microsoft Internet Explorer, versions 4 and higher

Netscape, versions 4 and 5 but not any version past 6

Other browsers, such as Opera, Lynx, etc., should work as long as your browser accepts cookies and can successfully browse MSN Groups.

**EMAIL:**

Any valid account that allows you to receive attachments along with your email should be fine.

**CHAT:**

As I mentioned earlier, AOL Instant Messenger will be used for the chats. It's free and relatively easy to use and set up.

**ACCESSING YOUR ONLINE CLASSROOM**

If you have been sent this document and have not yet accessed The Writers Studio online classroom, please follow these instructions. Several days before the first class, I will send a link to the classroom: [www.writerstudio.com/classroom/](http://www.writerstudio.com/classroom/).

- 1) Click on the link ([www.writerstudio.com/classroom/](http://www.writerstudio.com/classroom/)), which will take you to the login page for the classroom.
- 2) As you do not yet have a password, click on "Click here if you cannot remember your password."
- 3) You will be prompted to enter your email address. Enter your email address and hit "Submit".
- 4) You will receive an email from "Writers Studio" with a URL address. Click on the link. You will be taken to a page, which displays your email address and prompts you to enter a new password. Click on "Submit," once you have entered a new password and confirmed the password by re-typing it.
- 5) Once you have set-up a password, go back to the email you were initially sent and click on the URL in step 1 ([www.writerstudio.com/classroom/](http://www.writerstudio.com/classroom/)). You will notice you have been assigned a temporary user name.
- 6) To change your user name, click on "Update Info" near the top of the page. You will be able to select a Login Id, change your email id if necessary, and add your first, middle and last name and a nickname.

You can now use the [www.writerstudio.com/classroom/](http://www.writerstudio.com/classroom/) link to access the classroom using the user name and password you have set-up. Only you, the teacher and your colleagues will have access to the classroom.

**DOWNLOADING INTRODUCTORY DOCUMENTS**

Click on "Introductory Documents" from the menu on the left of your screen. You will be taken to the Introductory Document page. Each of the Introductory Documents is listed on this page: "Getting Started," "How the Class Works," "Guidelines for Workshops," and "Elements of Craft." To download any of these documents from a pc,

right click on the document name and select “Save Target As.” On a Mac, simply double click on the document name.

Information on downloading AOL Instant Messenger and participating in the weekly chats can be found by clicking on “Chat Instructions” from the menu on the left of your screen.

Please make sure that you have read the Introductory Documents and the Chat Instructions before attending the first chat.

## **DOWNLOADING ASSIGNMENTS AND CHATS**

Click on “Assignments” from the menu on the left of your screen. You will be taken to a page that says “Assignment List.” Each weekly assignment is listed with the date of the corresponding chat. For example, under January 11, 2005, which is listed using the European format 2005-01-11, you will find the first assignment—Bausch Assignment. To download the assignment text and instructions, if you are on a pc, right click on “Bausch Assignment” or double click if you’re on a Mac. After the chat has taken place, you can also find the corresponding chat document (.html) listed with the assignment. Follow the same instructions for downloading the chats as for downloading any other document.

## **UPLOADING YOUR OWN WORK**

Once you have completed your two-page writing assignment for the week, upload it under “Assignments.” Click on “Assignments” to the left of your screen. On the “Assignments” page, under the assignment that corresponds to the exercise you want to upload, select “Upload Assignment Document.” Select “Browse.” You will then be able to browse your documents and select the exercise you want to upload. Once you have found your exercise, click on it and select “open.” The document name should now appear next to “Upload File.” In the text box below “Upload File,” you should see “Name.” Enter the name that you’d like to list your exercise as. For example, “Charlie’s Exercise” works well, as it clearly indicates the student submitting the exercise. There is no need to specify the assignment by specifying “Charlie’s Bausch Assignment,” as the exercise for a particular assignment will all appear together. Student exercises will appear in a list with the assignment and chat.

For this course, the two best options are Word Document (\*.doc) or Rich Text Format (\*.rtf). If you use a \*.doc format, make sure that you virus check your document before you upload it. If you don’t have a virus check, or you want the safety of knowing that your document is impervious to viruses, then choose Rich Text Format: it gives the same formatting possibilities as Microsoft Word, but without a lot of unnecessary features, like document macros where viruses can live and breed.

On occasion when you have problems uploading, you may need to clear your cache. If you have a pc with Explorer 5.0 or higher, you can do the following:

1. From the Tools menu, click on Internet Options.
2. On the General tab, click Clear History.
3. Then click yes and Ok.

If you have a MAC with OS X or higher, you can:

1. From the Explorer Menu (just before File), choose Preferences.
2. Under Web Browser select Advanced.
3. Then click Empty Now under Cache to the right of the same dialogue box.
4. Click ok.

Once your cache is cleared, you should be able to upload. If you continue to have problems uploading, please contact your teacher.

## **DOWNLOADING YOUR CLASSMATES' DOCUMENTS**

Select "Assignments" from the menu on the left of your screen. Under the assignment for the week, click on "view submissions." You will be taken to a page that says "Assignment Submission List." This page will note which students have submitted exercises for the week. If a student has not submitted an exercise for the week, you will see "This student has not submitted this assignment yet," listed under the student's name. If a student has submitted work that is ready to be critiqued you will see the following options under their name: "view submission," "view critiques" and "submit critiques." To download your colleagues' work, click on "view submission" under his or her name.

## **POSTING CRITIQUES**

Go to the "Assignment Submission List." (Click on "Assignments" to the left of your screen. Find the week's assignment and click on "view submissions" to access critiques for that week. You will be taken to a page that says "Assignment Submission List." This page will note which students have submitted exercises for the week. If a student has not submitted an exercise for the week, you will see "This student has not submitted this assignment yet," listed under the student's name. If a student has submitted work that is ready to be critiqued you will see the following options under their name: "view submission," "view critiques" and "submit critiques.") Select "view critiques" under a given colleagues' name to view critiques posted by other students. To post your own critique, select "submit critique" under a student's name from the "Assignment Submission List." Type your comments in the text box and hit "submit" just below the text box.

The guidelines for critiques are as follows:

Please don't respond when someone else critiques your exercise. Just listen. You want to get people's response to your writing. If you feel you need to explain your work or your intentions, just listen and consider what was not clearly conveyed in the writing.

When you're critiquing someone else's exercise, please be specific and respectful. While we could all wax poetic about our particular tastes, your comments should

focus on what is or is not working. If you like something or find something is not effective, specifically note what is or isn't working. If you can specify what element of craft (tone, mood, narrative distance) is or isn't working, do so. The more specific you are in your comments, the more helpful they will be to your colleagues.

I may, on occasion, ask you to restate a critique.

## **WEEKLY CHATS**

The weekly chats will take place at 8:00 PM Eastern Time and will last an hour. If you are unable to attend a chat, please make sure you read the chats saved with the Assignment under "Assignments" to the left of your screen. As mentioned earlier, detailed instructions for downloading AOL Instant Messenger and attending the chats can be accessed under "Chat Instructions" from the menu to the left of your screen in the online classroom.

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