



Master of Arts Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) 621

Narrative Possibilities: The Transformative Power of Writing, Story, and Poetry in Personal and Professional Development (Revision 3)

Status:

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

Delivery mode:

Individualized study online . Delivered via Brightspace.

Credits:

3

Area of study:

Arts

Prerequisites:

The prerequisite for this course is MAIS 616 or demonstrated, equivalent experience confirmed by the course professor.

Precluded: None

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

Notes:

The process of writing can bring up challenging emotional issues. Students are reminded that *MAIS 621* is not therapy, and that they must participate within their 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 participation in this course.

Overview

MAIS 621: Narrative Possibilities: The Transformative Power of Writing, Story, and Poetry in Personal and Professional Development looks at what writing might have to offer if one's primary aim is not publication. What other reason is there to write? *MAIS 621* will provide some answers to that question.

A range of literature is now available on writing and its potential for contributing to our wellness and personal development, and even immunological research has been done to explore whether writing has physiological health benefits. A variety of writing-based wellness projects have also been

established in Britain, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada which draw on the idea that literary art offers something for our personal and professional development.

Students who have taken *MAIS 616: Writing the Self: The Experience and Potential of Writing for the Purpose of Personal Development*, the prerequisite for this course, spent a week on each writing genre and familiarized themselves with writing in a variety of contexts (for example, hospitals, prisons). They also explored the concept of self, disclosure, and looked at the possible drawbacks of writing for personal development.

In *MAIS 621* students will be able to spend more time on their personal writing and gain a more in-depth understanding of what narrative (including poetry) has to offer the individual in both personal and professional settings. This includes looking at brain research on trauma and healing as well as evaluating the implications of teaching this type of writing in classrooms. How cultural narratives can inform allopathic medicine is another topic of exploration for this course, and while *MAIS 616* students touched on a variety of problem-solving exercises, *MAIS 621* will allow students, through critical thinking, to explore their attachments to entrenched narratives.

The project at the end of *MAIS 621* is substantial: five weeks are dedicated to its completion. A variety of ideas for projects/papers will be provided in this course guide to serve as an example of what might be possible; however, students will propose their own interdisciplinary projects which may include, but are not limited to, fiction, personal essay, autobiographical writing, and/or poetry.

About Journal Writing Practice

During *MAIS 621*, students will be required to write a minimum of a thousand words in a journal each week. This is intended to make writing part of their weekly routine. Their writing fluidity may improve and they may also find journal writing an amiable and stalwart companion on their learning journey.

Inspiration to engage with journal writing is provided in the form of Kim Stafford's text, *The Muses Among Us*, but students may also make use of other inspirational books to stimulate their practice.

They will be required to post a summary of their practice online, but are not obligated in any way to share details of written work unless they choose to do so.

Outline

MAIS 621 covers the following five topics:

- 1.** Writing narratives (fiction/non-fiction) as a vehicle of reflection, learning, and transformation: examples and discourse.
- 2.** Cultural perspectives and the use of narrative in health care settings as an adjunct to allopathic medicine.
- 3.** Professional development through writing: reflexive practice and writing in classroom settings.
- 4.** Alternative narratives and the "no story" space
- 5.** Poetry and transformation: therapeutic potential, etc.

Weekly schedule:

- Week 1: Getting Started
- Week 2: Narratives-Foundations and Traditions
- Week 3: Writing and Healing in the Classroom: Practical and Ethical Considerations
- Week 4: Cultural Narratives and Healing
- Weeks 5 and 6: Narratives in Health Care and the Biology of Healing
- Week 7: Writing in Professional Contexts

- Week 8: The No-story space
- Weeks 9 & 10: Poetry as Alchemy
- Week 11: Complete the proposal for your final project
- Weeks 12-15: Complete your final project.

Objectives

In *MAIS 621*, students will be able to spend more time on their personal writing and gain a more in-depth understanding of what narratives (including poetry) have to offer the individual in both personal and professional settings. This includes looking at brain research on trauma and healing, as well as evaluating the implications of teaching this type of writing in classrooms. How cultural narratives can inform allopathic medicine is another topic of exploration for this course and while *MAIS 616* students touched on a variety of problem-solving exercises, *MAIS 621* will allow students, through critical thinking, to explore their attachments to entrenched narratives.

Students will read texts and articles and write short concise pieces in response to them. Students will also keep a self-directed journal and enter into active online discussion. In addition, each student is expected to initiate and complete a final project or piece based on a proposal they write and which has been approved by their professor.

To participate fully in *MAIS 621*, a student must be able to initiate and generate writing without specific prompts and be able to structure, revise, and polish written work before submitting it. In other words, a student must be able to write a poem, start a piece of fiction, and/or put together a coherent paper of quality without further instruction from your professor. Students must also have knowledge of the use of the arts in a variety of educational and therapeutic settings

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
Written work/assignments in blog entries	35%
Self-evaluation of journal practice	10%
Proposal for individual project	5%
Final written project or product	50%
Total	100%

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Materials

Digital course materials

Links to the following course materials will be made available in the course:

Bolton, Gillie and Russell Delderfield. 2018. *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*. London; Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Anderson Charles M., and Marian M. MacCurdy, eds. 2000. *Writing & Healing: Toward An Informed Practice*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Lengelle, Reinekke. 2008. *Blossom & Balsam: Poems that reveal and heal*. Edmonton: Black Tulip Press.

Lengelle, Reinekke. 2017. *Happy: Poems and Reflections for Writing and Healing the Self*.

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:

Bolton, Gillie, Victoria Field, and Kate Thompson, eds. 2006. *Writing Works: A Resource Handbook for Therapeutic Writing Workshops and Activities*. London; Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley

Publishers.

Charon, Rita. 2008. *Narrative Medicine*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Katie, Byron. 2002. *Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life*. New York: Harmony Books.

Kooser, Ted. 2007. *The Poetry Home Repair Manual*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Stafford, Kim. 2003. *The Muses Among Us*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Wilentz, Gay. 2000. *Healing Narratives: Women Writers Curing Cultural Dis-ease*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. (Several chapters for weeks 1 & 4).

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 modes may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Opened in Revision 3, June 21, 2024

Updated October 16, 2026

View [previous revision](#) 
