Course Outline:

In this 6-week course you will learn about:

- Six different types of stories or genre,
- The 5-Steps in the Writing Process,
- The main parts of a story, and
- Specific editing techniques that will help you be a better writer.

Genre:

If asked what type of stories you like to read, you might respond by saying "mysteries," "science fiction," "comedy," or some other type of writing. A type of writing is called a **GENRE** (pronounced: jon ruh). Each genre has a certain form, mood, style, or subject matter. There are many different genres. Here are some of them:

- Detective or mystery,
- Science fiction,
- Drama,
- Comedy,
- Romance,
- Historical fiction,
- Action,
- Adventure,
- Western,
- Fantasy, etc.

Sometimes stories fit more than one genre. Examples of these include:

- Romantic comedy
- Action Adventure
- Science Fiction Adventure

The Adventure Genre

An **ADVENTURE** is an exciting or extraordinary event or series of events. Pure adventure stories are usually set in a realistic setting, with realistic characters. Adventure plots often involve difficult journeys in which characters are searching for something really important. These plots might include struggles to survive in difficult circumstances. Some good adventure stories that are example of these plots include:

- *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen
- *The Series of Unfortunate Events* by Lemony Snicket
- *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George
- *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell
- *The Sign of the Beaver* by Elizabeth George Speare
- *Johnny Termain* by Esther Forbes
- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain
- *Holes* by Louis Sachar
Every genre includes different elements (the words and actions) that make the genre special. They set the tone or make you feel a certain way as you read, just like the music in a movie helps set the tone. Scary music probably won’t be something you hear in a comedy. In writing, an adventure story will have elements that you may or may not find in a romance and vice versa. Elements that are often found in adventure stories include:

- unusual events or circumstances
- realistic settings
- travel / voyaging
- exploration / searching
- a quest / mission
- danger / risk / conflict
- competition

- excitement
- uncertainty
- need to survive
- lack of resources / hardship
- loss
- pursuit
- treasure / goal

Note that not all of these elements will be found in every story and that this is not a complete list.

Five Steps in the Writing Process

1. Prewriting:

*Prewriting* is the planning that takes place before any writing is begun.

- Decide on a topic to write about. Sometimes, deciding what to write about is the hardest task of all. Many writers keep journals or notebooks in which they write down story ideas, descriptions of the places they visit, the people they see, and the conversations they hear. Then, when it's time to write, there are plenty of ideas to choose from.

- Once you've decided on a topic, plan the story you will tell. Some writers make outlines or charts that briefly tell the sequence of events. Some write notes in their journals.

- If necessary, gather information that will help you tell the story. Use reference materials to aid you in gathering information. This is especially important when writing historical fiction and some science fiction. After you have gathered information, decide which ideas and details you want to use in your writing.

- Determine who your audience will be. Writing for a child is much different from writing for a college professor. Simpler words and ideas are used in a story for a young child.
2. Writing a first draft:

A DRAFT is a version of a story. A first draft is the very first copy or version of the whole story. The first draft of the story must have a:

**Beginning** - This introduces the audience to the basic details of the story, including who it is about, what it is about, and where and when it is taking place. In most stories, this introduction takes place over a series of paragraphs. If the story is very short, only one paragraph, the introduction takes place in a *topic sentence*, so the first thing that you will write is a topic sentence.

**Middle** - Next, write the *details* of the story. Include descriptions of the characters, setting, and events that occur. Make sure the story is told in a logical order and that there are no gaps in the story.

**End** - Finally, tie up all the loose ends in the story and bring it to a close. If the story is paragraph length, write a *closing sentence*. A closing sentence leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that there is no more to say, and the story is done.

Since it is important to get all of the story details written down, many writers do not pay attention to grammar or spelling while writing first drafts. The technical parts of writing are looked at in the revising and editing steps of the writing process.

3. Revising:

The *revising* step is very important. Read over the first draft to see how you can make your story better. Have other people read over your story to see if they have any suggestions on improving your writing. Start by making sure you have:

- A beginning that tells the reader what the story is all about.
- A middle that tells the details of the story in a logical order. If the details are confusing or out of order, rewrite them.
- An ending that fills in any missing bits of story detail and leaves the reader feeling like there is no more to know about the story.
- Sufficient, descriptive details. There should be no holes in the story and the story is told in a most interesting way. Be sure that you have used nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that really describe what is happening in the story.

4. Editing:

*Editing* is a step that will be discussed, in detail, throughout the six weeks of this course. Editing is the process of looking for and correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.
5. **Publishing:**

Once the story has been revised and edited, and it sounds perfect, the final step is to publish the story. *Publishing* is just a fancy way of saying to make the typed story look perfect. For this class, this means making sure the paragraph is typed in MLA format. Pictures may be included, but this isn't necessary.

**Capitalization**

There are many rules about capitalization. Four rules that apply most frequently in this course include:

1. The first word of each new sentence is capitalized.
2. Proper pronouns (the names of persons, places, and things) are capitalized.
3. The first and last word in a book title are ALWAYS capitalized along with all ‘big’ or ‘important’ words in between. (Prepositions, articles, and coordinating conjunctions are NOT capitalized.)
4. Titles are capitalized when used with or as a person's name: Mr., Mrs., Dr., Professor, President, etc.

**Homework Assignments:**

All homework assignments must be formatted following MLA formatting rules and saved as an MS Word document.

1A - Editing Practice

Read the handout, *BCW-1-Capitalization Rules*. Correct the capitalization errors in the paragraph in the **BCW-1A-Editing** document:

Open the MS Word document **BCW-1A-Editing**. Save it as **BCW-1A-your name**, retype the words that must be capitalized, and send the corrected paragraph to your instructor as an attachment to an email.

1B - Revising Practice

Open the MS Word document **BCW-1B-Revising**. Save it as **BCW-1B-your name**, retype the sentences adding details and using more descriptive nouns, verbs, adverbs, or adjectives. Send the revised sentences to your instructor as an attachment to an email.

1C - Story Writing - Adventure:

Using the prompt for the proper session on the next page, write a short adventure story. Use MLA formatting. Save the story as an MS Word (.doc) file, named **BCW-1C-your name**, and send it to your instructor as an attachment to an email. **Remember, you MUST use the correct prompt for the current session.**
Prompts (choose correct prompt for the session in which you are taking this class)

Session 1 (August – September)

You are out hiking with a group of friends, but you and your best friend become separated from the group. It’s getting dark and you seek shelter for the night. You stumble across something dangerous, secret, or extra special. Describe where you were hiking and with whom. Describe getting lost, looking for a safe place to sleep, and making the discovery. Tell what it is that you discovered, what happened when the discovery is made, and whether or not you find your way home again.

Session 2 (October – December)

You are a famous archaeologist and have learned about a new dig, which is rumored to contain many wonderful treasures. However, getting to the treasure is dangerous, and the treasure itself may be booby-trapped. Tell about the site of the dig (its location, the weather, the environment, etc.), finding the treasure, and the difficulties encountered in the process. Describe the treasure.

Session 3 (January – February)

You’re walking home from school one day, and you’re taking a shortcut through a maze of dark city alleyways. You’re not supposed to be walking through this part of town, and you’re feeling a little nervous. Suddenly, someone steps out of the shadows in front of you, comes close and speaks to you. Tell about the meeting with the person in the alleyway, what it is that he says or asks of you, and what happens next.

Session 4 (March – May)

The character is watching TV when a weather alert interrupts the program. His neighborhood is being evacuated due to an extremely dangerous storm heading his way. Describe what happens next. What steps does the character take to flee or face the storm? Describe what happens when the storm hits and what happens to the character afterwards.

Summer (June-July)

You are stranded on a deserted island with only the clothes you are wearing, a copy of your favorite book, and two other items. Write a story about your time on the island. Describe the island, how you came to be on the island, the title and author of your book, the other two items that you have with you, and what happens to you on the island.