

Novel Writing: Chick Lit

This is a sample syllabus. Actual course topics and assignments may vary by instructor and class.

Week 1

What is chick lit: Good chick lit vs. bad chick lit. Why write in this genre? Coming up with a title.

Assignment: Write a list of ten potential titles and a one-page plot summary.

Week 2

Who's my book about: How to create a great main character. Character sketches. What makes a great chick lit main character? Creating secondary characters.

Assignment: Write a full character sketch of your main character.

Week 3

What's my book about: Why outline? The one-page summary. Chapter-by-chapter outlines. Why conflict is so vital to your story.

Assignment: Write a full outline of your novel.

Week 4

Let's start writing: How do you actually sit down and begin your book? Some first sentences and why they work. How to make your first sentence shine. Great first chapters. What's in a chapter? How to write funny.

Assignment: Write your first chapter.

Week 5

Look Who's Talking: Dialogue. Why it's such an important element of chick lit. Show, don't tell. How to write great dialogue. How to embellish characters through dialogue. Starting and ending a chapter with a bang.

Assignment: Write your next chapter, incorporating dialogue and a strong chapter opening and ending.

Week 6

Fight, fight, fight (and happy endings: How to create conflict. Fleshing out the conflict in your outline. Solving your characters' problems.

Assignment: Write your next chapter, making sure to set up conflicts that create suspense and drama.

Week 7

Your own best critic: How to begin editing your novel. Pare your writing down and keep your prose tight. Add to your story where it needs to be clarified. Make your novel funnier.

Assignment: Edit your first and second chapters.

Week 8

Show me the money: The reality of publishing. Do I need an agent? Finding an agent. What do I need to send to potential agents? Cover/query letters. Synopsis. Marketing ideas. Chapter-by-chapter outline. Sample chapters.

Assignment: Write a cover letter for your novel.