WRITING COUPLE TO GUIDE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

DURHAM, N.C. -- When a novelist and her psychologist husband come together later this month to teach a weekend short course in creative writing at Duke University, they will prescribe lots of good advice to stimulate the creative impulses of the participants -- all health-care professionals.

There will be writing exercises to get the words flowing onto the page. And to help people search the unconscious for ideas and possibilities for developing stories, there will be a group hypnotic induction aimed at enhancing one’s motivation to write.

Peggy Payne, a novelist and travel writer who lives near Jordan Lake in Chatham County, says her own creative energies were stirred years ago when she sat in on a hypnotic induction led by her husband, clinical psychologist Bob Dick. “It was during my reverie with his guided meditation murmuring in the background,” she says, “that I came up with the idea -- and it arrived with some urgency -- to go on with a short story I thought I’d finished and make it into a novel.” That novel turned out to be her first published book, Revelation, published by Simon & Schuster, with screen rights sold to Synergy Films.

The couple was enlisted by Duke office of Continuing Education and Summer Session to teach the short course, to be offered Sept. 24 and 25. Duke University Medical Center’s Office of Cultural Services and the North Carolina Medical Journal are co-sponsors. So many doctors and other health-care professionals had signed up for the writing courses that it seemed right to design a course for their particular interests, Payne says. The couple was first scheduled to teach this class at a Duke writers conference on the North Carolina coast two years ago and Hurricane Fran caused it to be canceled.

“It’s refreshing to unload the complicated demands of health care and it’s unstressing in both personal and professional ways, as well as satisfying, to do something a little different that is challenging and engaging,” Dick says.

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Payne believes a psychologist and a novelist can make for a good teaching combo. “Both fields involve studying people and stirring people,” she says. “And, too, the fact that we’re married may well stir useful associations for people as they delve into their own stories that almost inevitably involve family and relationship.”

The course is being held in a conference room of Duke Clinic. The cost of the two-day workshop is $135.

The Duke Office of Continuing Education and Summer Session is offering a number of other creative writing short courses this fall. In addition to workshops in fiction, poetry and creative non-fiction, they include “Breakthrough Writing: An Intensive Workshop,” Nov. 6-7; “The Artist’s Way: Creativity Workshop,” Nov. 8-Feb. 14; “Workshop in Spiritual Autobiography,” Oct. 9; and “Writing Book Reviews and Getting Them Published,” Oct. 20-Nov. 17.

For more information, contact the Duke Office of Continuing Education and Summer Session at (919) 684-6259.

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