

"A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us" – Franz Kafka

"I was thrown out of college for cheating on the metaphysics exam. I looked into the soul of the boy sitting next to me." – Woody Allen

## **CRW 1101: Fiction Writing: Section 218; Fall 2013**

CBD 210; Tuesday, Period 10-E1 (5:10pm-8:10pm)

Instructor: Sebastian Boensch

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Office hours: Monday Period 3, 4 in Tigert Hall Room 302 (Please make an appointment)

### **Required Texts:**

Janet Burroway, *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft* (8<sup>th</sup> Edition)

Course Pack. Available at Bookit, next to Holiday Inn and Beef O'Brady's ("Gator Beefs") on 13th Street and University (green awning above Bookit storefront reads "Buyback").

### **Course Objectives:**

That you leave it writing better than when you entered it. This course provides introductory instruction in fiction writing and, since careful and reflective reading is the best way to learn how to write, an introductory approach to the study of literature. We will write and read with attention to how stories work – structurally, stylistically, and thematically.

The first half of the semester will be devoted to a discussion of the elements of fiction. The second half will be a traditional fiction workshop, the requirements of which will be discussed in detail later on, but which can be described in general as a format in which we apply the same critical skills to our own work that we've learned to apply to the assigned readings.

This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog. For more information, see:

<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx#learning>

### **Course Format:**

**Reading:** Short stories from the course pack, chapters from the textbook, and (possibly) essays addressing various aspects of craft.

**Writing:** In-class exercises, 10 600-word reading responses, a 100-250 word story, a 500-750 word story, a 1,000-1,500 word story, and a portfolio of revised work.

**Critiquing:** Of both the published stories and the work of your peers.

### **Graded Assignments and Other Course Components:**

#### **Class Participation: 35% (350 points)**

Each week we will discuss both the textbook (Janet Burroway's *Writing Fiction*) and published fiction/poetry. Doing the reading is only half the assignment. In-class discussion of the material is the other half. Not having your books in class will result in a participation grade of zero for the day. I will also periodically give reading quizzes, and a failing grade will earn a participation grade of zero for that day.

On workshop days it is expected that you will come to class having read each piece carefully *at least once*, and that you have spent time formulating a **typed** response to it. I urge

you to read the piece once, without marking it, before writing your marginal notes during the second read. In addition to your marginal comments in ink or pencil, attach your typed response to the author's piece with a staple. In addition, provide me with a copy of your typed responses at the end of the semester. These typed responses will form part of your participation grade.

(In-class discussion, preparedness (including timely response to all class emails), and (especially) engagement/attitude are all parts of participation. A writing workshop should be a safe place where everyone should feel encouraged and welcome to share their thoughts/feelings – the participation of those who fail to respect their peers' thoughts/feelings will be graded accordingly.)

This course requires you to have a journal. This journal – it can be a composition book, notebook, sketchbook, whatever you prefer – will be collected at the end of the semester and graded out of 150 points (hence it is 15% of your final grade). You will record your writing exercises (both in-class and for homework) in your journal. These exercises will be evaluated based on effort, imaginativeness, and correct style and usage. I encourage you to take in-class notes in your journal as well as any reflections/ideas you might have for stories; keeping a notebook at hand is helpful for many writers.

### **Reading Responses: 25% (250 points)**

Ten (10) 600 word responses to the reading: The structure and content of the reading responses (worth 25 points each) will be taught in class, both explicitly and organically as a result of our classroom discussions about the stories we read. The responses will be evaluated based on the following criteria: demonstrated reading of the stories/chapters; critical thinking; depth of analysis; engagement with the discussion of craft. Your analytical and critical skills are expected to improve over the course of the semester, both through practice and in response to my written feedback.

My goal is that your reading responses achieve the following:

1. Make a claim about the stories based on Burroway's ideas or those we discussed in class. If ideas are taken from Burroway, those ideas, whether quoted, paraphrased, or summarized, should be cited using MLA style.
2. Provide textual support for your claim from the story being discussed. Point to the specific words in the text of the stories that made you think what you thought and that support and prove your point.
3. Provide analysis of your claim and the text. Answer the question "so what?" What does this mean within the context of the work as a whole? How does this section contribute to the author's overall intent?
4. Cite all quotations in-text in MLA style.

(Please avoid "rating" the stories with remarks of taste, such as "I hated this" or "I liked this." We will work during the semester to develop your ability to talk about fiction, but please keep in mind that these are published, professional writers, meaning whether you enjoyed their writing or not, they have something to teach you about the practice and art of the written word. Which is not to say they are gods! Or infallible! Or that you must worship at the altar of their prose or their ideas!)

### *Rubric of Evaluation for Reading Responses*

**A:** Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops original, sophisticated ideas. Has exceptionally well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

**B:** Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops original, sophisticated ideas. Has well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

**C:** Contains some analysis of the texts and develops some original ideas about them. Has adequately well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), adequately-supported claims, and some appropriate stylistic elements.

**D:** Contains minimal analysis of the texts. May lack well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, and/or a persuasive organizational structure. Fails to adequately support its claims and/or use appropriate stylistic elements.

**E:** Lacks analysis of the text, and therefore fails to demonstrate reading and/or comprehension.

### **Short Stories: 20% (200 points)**

Three short stories. Your stories (a 100-250 word story (worth 50 points), a 500-750 word story (worth 50 points), and a 1,000-1,500 word story (worth 100 points)) will be evaluated based on the same criteria as your writing exercises. Do not write these stories the night before they are due. I will be able to tell if this is the case, and your grade will be lowered accordingly.

Manuscripts must be delivered to the class *the week before* they are to be workshopped. There is no late delivery. There is no switching. No last-minute writing. If you are unable to turn in the story on time, an entire letter grade will be deducted from your final grade. Please bring enough copies for everyone.

### **Revised Stories: 20% (200 points)**

You will rewrite/revise your stories, based on my comments and those of your peers. Your revisions will be turned in as your final project. This portfolio should be polished and thoroughly proofread. In addition, it should be accompanied by a brief paragraph explaining what changes you have made – how your writing has developed.

### **Formatting:**

Each assignment will be submitted at the beginning of class in double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman (Or Calibri or Courier New) font. Pages must be numbered. One staple goes in the upper-left-hand corner. There must be a title, something beyond "First Reading Response" (for reading responses the title must be interesting and informative; for stories, well, do your best). You are responsible for photocopying your workshopped stories. Each formatting failure will result in a 5% deduction on the grade of that assignment.

### **Attendance:**

You are allowed one absence without explanation, but do not miss the day you are going to be workshopped. Reserve the day you don't attend class for a day you really need it. Doctor's notes will not be accepted. Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, are exempted from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade for that story. Each absence after the first will lower your final grade a full letter grade. Arriving late twice to class will be counted as an absence.

### **Class Policies:**

**Classroom Behavior:**

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal – and accordingly absence—from the class.

**Cell Phones:**

Cell phones are not allowed in class. You may not text in class. You may not have your phone out on your desk during class. Please put your phone away. If your phone is out on your desk or in your hand during class, you will be marked absent that day (see absence policy above).

**Laptops, Etc.:**

Laptops, ipads etc. should not be used in class. If you have a special reason you must use a laptop or an ipad, please see me. If I see you using a laptop or an ipad, and you have not spoken to me about it, I will count you as absent that class.

**Notes:**

+You are responsible for checking your university emails. I will often give or change assignments via email, as well as make any necessary changes to the schedule. You are responsible for checking your email and approaching me with any questions. If I have sent an email to you, I will assume you have read it.

+I may change anything on this syllabus at any time.

**Additional Information:****Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

**Plagiarism.**

A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

(University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 8 July 2011)

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came.

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

**UF Requirement for Writing:**

This course can satisfy the UF requirement for Writing. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/gordon.aspx>

**UF Reading and Writing Center:**

The Reading and Writing Center at the University of Florida is an excellent resource for improving reading comprehension and writing skills. For more information, see: <http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/>

**Student Disability Services:**

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

**Harassment:**

UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

**Grading:**

A: 94-100; A-: 90-93

B+: 87-89; B: 84-86; B-: 80-83

C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 60-62

E: 0-59

## **Schedule of Assignments:**

(Note: All assigned stories are in the Course Pack (marked "CP") or *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft* (marked "WF"). Any additional readings will be emailed to you or provided as handouts.)

### **8/27: First day**

#### **9/3: Showing and Telling**

Reading:

WF: Ch.1 (pp. 2-18); Ch. 2 (pp. 21-42)

CP: Heinrich von Kleist: "The Earthquake in Chile"; "The Foundling"

Reading Response #1 Due

#### **9/10: Characterization, Part I**

Reading:

WF: Ch. 3 (pp.74-90)

CP: Franz Kafka: "Before the Law"; "The Judgement"; "In the Penal Colony"; "A Country Doctor"

100-250 Word Story Due

#### **9/17: Characterization, Part II**

WF: Ch. 4 (pp. 116-137)

CP: Franz Kafka: "The Hunger Artist"; "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk"; "The Cares of a Family Man"; "The Wish to be a Red Indian"

Reading Response #2 Due

#### **9/24: Fictional Place**

Reading:

WF: Ch. 5 (pp. 164-177)

CP: Isaac Babel: "Sashka Christ"; "The Life Story of Pavlichenko, Matvey Rodionych"; "The King"; "How It Was Done in Odessa"

Reading Response #3 Due

#### **10/1: Fictional Time**

Reading:

WF: Ch. 6 (pp. 208-220)

CP: Isaac Bashevis Singer: "Gimpel the Fool"; "The Spinoza of Market Street"; "A Friend of Kafka"

500-750 Word Story Due

#### **10/8: Story Form, Plot and Structure**

Reading:

WF: Ch. 7 (pp. 247-264)

CP: Bernard Malamud: "The Magic Barrel"; "The Jewbird"; "The Silver Crown"

Reading Response #4 Due

**10/15: Point of View**

Reading:

WF: Ch. 8 (pp. 300-316)

CP: Grace Paley: "Goodbye and Good Luck"; "Zagrowsky Tells." Rivka Galchen: "The Region of Unlikeliness"

(Week off from Reading Responses to allow students more time to craft their stories)

Workshop: 1, 2

**10/22: Revision**

Reading:

WF: Ch. 9 (pp. 340-351)

CP: Flannery O'Connor: "A Good Man is Hard to Find"; "Greenleaf"; "Parker's Back"

Workshop: 3, 4

Reading Response #5 Due

**10/29:**

Reading:

CP: Barry Hannah: "Coming Close to Donna"; "Dragged Fighting from His Tomb." Padgett Powell: *The Interrogative Mood* (Selection)

Workshop: 5, 6, 7

Reading Response #6 Due

**11/5:**

Reading:

CP: Jorge Luis Borges: "The Other Death"; "The Circular Ruins"; "The Two Kings and Their Two Labyrinths"; "The Secret Miracle"

Workshop: 8, 9, 10

Reading Response #7 Due

**11/12:**

Reading:

CP: Julio Cortázar: "We Love Glenda So Much"; "Axolotl"; "A Yellow Flower"; "The Secret Weapons"

Workshop: 11, 12, 13

Reading Response #8 Due

**11/19:**

Reading:

CP: Roberto Bolaño: "Last Evenings on Earth"; "The Prefiguration of Lalo Cura." Javier Montes: "The Hotel Life"

Workshop: 14, 15, 16

Reading Response # 9 Due

**11/26:**

CP: Lydia Davis: "A Position at the University"; "Examples of Confusion"; "The Race of the

Patient Motorcyclists"; "Affinity." Hertha Müller: "Rotten Pears"; "The Man with the Matchbox"; "Black Park"; "Workday"

Workshop: 17, 18, 19

Reading Response #10 Due

**12/3: Final Day of Class**

CP: Aimee Bender: "End of the Line"

WP: Sherman Alexie: "What You Will Pawn I Will Redeem" (p. 265)