

CRW 6130 (DEPT) Graduate Fiction Workshop Fall 2013
T 6-8 CBD 224

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Tom thinks that the best method of teaching anything is to rely on discussion in class, which means letting twenty young blockheads and two cocky neurotics discuss for fifty minutes something that neither their teacher nor they know.

--from Pnin, Vladimir Nabokov

Objective of this course clearly stated at outset: that you leave it writing better than when you entered it. Your job in here is to write with force and surprise. My job in here is to induce criticism that will gently inoculate the writer against the present mistakes in the writing.

I fear, after thirty years' trying, that it is virtually impossible to say what is wrong with a piece of fiction in a way that is corrective, instructive, and palatable to its author. But it may be possible, in speaking ostensibly about a piece of writing, to speak prescriptively and salubriously toward the bettering of later writing, both that done by the present author and by critical witnesses to his or her ordeal. A general sense of what constitutes good writing is supposed to obtain in the course of our specific daily assaults.

My standard grade is a B+. I despise grading you in here, but I like even less the pandemic impression that these courses are easy. The very nature of this endeavor--the invidious impact of criticism upon that which you cannot properly write, surrounded as you are by the distractions of school--nearly ensures that no one's behavior in it is excellent. When we encounter excellence, either in writing or in criticism, I will reward it./Please attend class. While my hard grading is not deliberately punitive, this policy is. If I have to come, you do too. You may be absent once without preamble or postmortem; a good workshop needs to be skipped once in a while by the sane petitioner.

Manuscripts will be delivered in class the week before they are discussed. There is no late delivery. There is no switching. If you do not deliver, the class suffers, and you come up at your next slot on the calendar. Avoid last-minute writing. Get the work done. We will not do email distribution. Hard copy to class, period.

If your writing is lively and interesting, we can address ourselves to its faults in form. This is the zone of the question Can writing

be taught? that may be answered Yes. Then it will be up to you to say something new: to put to paper things not said before that surprise us. This is the zone of the question that must be answered No. We cannot legislate interest, surprise, new utterance. We can but pray.

For our reading, Trevor's Collected Stories will serve us as a base. He offers a surprising variety of form and approach. We will not use the collected LBA O'Connor heavily in class, but I advise you to get the book. We will use the Barthelme 40 Stories unless a 100 Stories has been issued.

No food in class unless it is dry baked goods in quantity to share. **If your cell phone goes off**, remove to the hall to answer, to the street to talk, and **return the following week** (French system).

NOTES:

Powell, CRW 6130, F11, schedule

holidays:

Labor Day 9/2 HC 11/7-8 VD 11/11 TG 11/27-29

Aug 27 Introduction

Sep 03 no class_____

Sep 10 _____

Sep 17 _____

Sep 24 _____
Oct 01 _____
Oct 08 _____
Oct 15 _____
Oct 22 _____
Oct 29 _____
Nov 05 _____
Nov 12 _no class_ _____
Nov 19 _____
Nov 26 _____
Nov 29 _____
Dec 03 _____

Consider

- 1) My best stories come out of nowhere, with no concern for form at all. --Barry Hannah
- 2) I can take a sentence apart and tell you why I did it; obviously that's the key to the whole thing, being able to write a sentence, and I've got a sense of what my sentences ought to do. --Pete Dexter
- 3) Learn to play your instruments, then get sexy.
--Debbie Harry
- 4) Some people run to conceits or wisdom but I hold to the hard, brown, nut-like word. --Donald Barthelme (character)
- 5) Art is not difficult because it wishes to be difficult but because

it wishes to be art. --Donald Barthelme

6) There is at the back of every artist's mind something like a pattern or a type of architecture. The original quality in any man of imagination is imagery. It is a thing like the landscape of his dreams; the sort of world he would like to make or in which he would wish to wander; the strange flora and fauna of his own secret planet; the sort of thing he likes to think about. This general atmosphere, and pattern or structure of growth, governs all his creations, however varied.

--G. K. Chesterton

7) Did it happen? Could it happen? Should it happen? You do not want the first answer to be yes. The second should be a strained maybe. The third answer should be a resounding Yes! Fiction is implausibility rendered plausible by an accuracy of sentiment conveyed by precision of utterance. Fiction must be a doozie, and it must be a gratifying doozie. You must at all cost forestall "So what?"

8) A good story is the author's private idea of what makes a very good day. It chronicles a heightened moment of his or her dreams.

9) What we do in a fiction class is often not what we should do. We should not perorate incoherently on the precious nuances of intent. We should state plainly and simply where the disbelief becomes unsuspected, or where the taut wire of precision goes loose and the bubble of fantasy breaks. There is something that makes a formative work difficult to read, unlike authoritative work that you gladly keep reading. In a workshop we should spot that which keeps us from wanting to keep reading. One need go no further than that.

Workshop Appendix
Powell

[These are quotations from various sources about writing that I find useful on an ad hoc basis. Keep this appendix with you in class. It is also useful as a whole document that can be pondered and that can lead you into the authors represented and others.]

1. Harold Ross, the founding editor of this weekly, was wary of, among other things, "writer-consciousness," and would mark phrases and sentences wherein, to his sensibility, the writer, like some ugly giant squid concealed beneath the glassy impersonality of the prose, was threatening to surface. Writing, that is, like our grosser animal functions, could not be entirely suppressed but shouldn't be performed in the open. Yet fashions in aesthetic decorum change. Modernism, by the spectacular nature of its experiments, invited admiring or irritated awareness of the experimenting author. Intentionally or not, the written works of James Joyce and T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein and Ernest Hemingway were exercises in personality, each provoking curiosity about the person behind the so distinctive voice. Postmodernism, if such a thing exists, without embarrassment weaves the writer into the words and twists of the tale. Italo Calvino's "If on a Winter's Night a Traveler," the mirrors and false bottoms of Vladimir Nabokov's "Pale Fire" and "The Gift," John Barth's self-proposed and exhaustively fulfilled regimens of tale-telling--all place the writer up front.

--John Updike, "Writer-consciousness," The New Yorker, Dec.25, 1989, 103.

2. Interviewer: Don't you write more about the mind than about the external world?

Barthelme: In a commonsense way, you write about the impingement of one upon the other--my subjectivity bumping into other subjectivities, or into the Prime Rate. You exist for me in my perception of you (and in some rough, Raggedy Andy way, for yourself, of course). That's what curious when people say, of writers, this one's a realist, this one's a surrealist, this one's a super-realist, and so forth. In fact, everybody's offering true accounts of the activity of the mind. There are only realists.

--interview, Paris Review, Vol 23, #80, Summer 1981, 200-201.

3. I was trying to write then and I found the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced.
. . . but the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion and which would be as valid in a year or in ten years or, with luck and if you stated it purely enough, always, was beyond me and I was working very hard to get it.

--Hemingway, Death in the Afternoon, 2

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately released.

--T. S. Eliot, 1920

It is agreed by most of the people I know that Conrad is a bad writer, just as it is agreed that T.S. Eliot is a good writer. If I knew that by grinding Mr. Eliot into a fine dry powder and sprinkling that powder over Mr. Conrad's grave Mr. Conrad would shortly appear, looking very annoyed at the forced return, and commence writing I would leave for London early tomorrow morning with a sausage grinder.

--By-Line: Ernest Hemingway, 132-133

4. Int.: What's your greatest weakness as a writer?
Barthelme: That I don't offer enough emotion. That's one

of the things people come to fiction for, and they're not wrong. I mean emotion of the better class, hard to come by.

5. What must wacky modes do? Break their hearts.

--Barthelme, workshop

6. Then there is the other secret. There isn't any symbolism (mis-spelled). The sea is the sea. The old man is an old man. The boy is a boy and the fish is a fish. The shark is all sharks no better and no worse. All the symbolism that people say is shit. What goes beyond is what you see beyond when you know.

--Hemingway to Bernard Berenson, 1952, SL 780

Keep them people, people, people, and don't let them get to be symbols.

--to Dos Passos, 1932, SL, 354

. . . a writer should create living people; people not characters. A character is a caricature.

--DA, 191

7. There doesn't have to be any connection between Enoch and a criticism of humanism. As a fiction writer, I am interested first in Enoch as Enoch and Haze as Haze. Haze is repulsed by the shriveled man he sees merely because it is hideous. He has a picture of his new Jesus--shriveled as it is. Therefore it certainly does have meaning for Haze. Why would he throw it away if it didn't? Its meaning is in its rejection. Haze, even though a primitive, is full of the poison of the modern world. That is in part responsible for some of the comic effect. Of course that isn't all there is in it and when I wrote it my mind was not primarily on these abstract things but only on what would Haze and Enoch do next, they being themselves. . .

--Flannery O'Connor to "A," 1960, The Habit of Being, 403

8. Mice: Do you know what is going to happen when you write a story?

Y.C.: Almost never. I start to make it up and have happen what would have to happen as it goes along.

--By-Line: Ernest Hemingway, 217

I am becoming convinced that anybody who gives anybody else advice ought to spend forty days in the desert both before and after. Anyway, when I told you to write what was easy for you, what I should have said was what was possible for you. Now none of it is easy, none of it really comes easy except in a few rare cases on a few rare

occasions. In my whole time of writing the only parts that have come easy for me are Enoch Emery and Hulga

--O'Connor to "A," 1957, HB, 241

It is strange that in both these novels, what makes them possible as novels, I mean what makes them work, is the same thing that detracts or lowers the interest. I couldn't have written WB without Enoch. It would have been impossible mechanically. . . . you turn and twist and try it every possible way and only one thing works. What you are really twisting about in is your limitations, of course.

--O'Connor to John Hawkes, 1959, HB, 353

I am very much taken with your books and their wonderful imaginative energy. The more fantastic the action the more precise the writing and this is the way it ought to be.

--to Hawkes, 1950, HB, 292

9. I try always to do the thing by three cushion shots rather than by words or direct statement. But maybe we must have direct statement too.

--Hemingway to Owen Wister, 1929, SL, 301

Eschew the monumental. Shun the epic. All the guys who can paint great big pictures can paint great small ones.

--Hemingway to Maxwell Perkins, 1932, SL, 352

Some people . . . run to conceits or wisdom but I hold to the hard, brown, nutlike word. I might point out that there is enough aesthetic excitement here to satisfy anyone but a damned fool.

--from "The Indian Uprising," Barthelme

Prose is architecture, not interior decoration, and the Baroque is over.

--DA, 191

10. Nobody really knows or understands and nobody has ever said the secret. The secret is that it is poetry written into prose and it is the hardest of all things to do.

--Hemingway in How It Was, Mary Hemingway, 352

Int.: Why dialogues?

Barthelme: The opportunities are those of poetry without the stern responsibilities. Dialogues are rather easy to write but there are some fine points. The sentence rhythms are rather starkly exposed, have to be weirdly musical or you send the reader off to Slumberland posthaste.

Int.: They're Beckett-y. Are they Beckett-y?

Barthelme: Certainly they couldn't exist without the example of Beckett's plays. But I have other fish to fry . . . There's an urge toward abstraction that's very seductive--

Int.: Art about art?

Barthelme: No, I mean the sort of thing you find in Gertrude Stein and hardly anywhere else. . . I'm talking about a pointillist technique, where what you get is not adjacent dots of yellow and blue which optically merge to give you green but merged meanings, whether from words placed side by side in a seemingly arbitrary way or phrases similarly arrayed, bushels of them . . .

. . . [Stein] had published three stories that were intelligible to anyone. One of these stories, "Melanctha," was very good. . . She had also discovered many truths about rhythms and the uses of words in repetition that were valid and valuable and she talked well about them.

But she disliked the drudgery of revision and the obligation to make her writing intelligible.

--Hemingway, A Moveable Feast, 17

11. Turgenieff to me is the greatest writer there ever was. Didn't write the greatest books, but was the greatest writer. That's only for me of course. . . . Chekhov wrote about 6 good stories. But he was an amateur writer. Tolstoi was a prophet. Maupassant was a professional writer, Balzac was a professional writer, Turgenieff was an artist.

--Hemingway to Archibald MacLiesh, 1925, SL, 179

Int.: If you had to recommend one influential writer, perhaps one who might be most helpful to students--

Peter Taylor: Turgenev.

Int.: Why?

Taylor: . . . these envelopes, that kept going . . .

12. Flaubert is a great writer but he only wrote one great book--Bovary--one 1/2 great book L'Education, one damned lousy book Bouvard and Pecuchet.

--Hemingway to Paul Romaine, 1932, SL, 360

Barthelme: I suspect that the starting point for the essential Beckett was Bouvard and Pecuchet and that Bellow's Henderson the Rain King is a fantasia on the theme of Hemingway in Africa.

--Interview, 186

13. Int.: Your own influences--whom would you like to cite as

your spiritual ancestors?

Barthelme: They come in assorted pairs. Perelman and Hemingway. Kierkegaard and Sabatini. Kafka and Kleist. Kleist was clearly one of Kafka's fathers. Rabelais and Zane Grey. . .

--Interview, 187

14. He had turned at bay as soon as he had reached this cover and he was sick with the wound through his full belly, and weakening with the wound through his lungs that brought a thin foamy red to his mouth each time he breathed. His flanks were wet and hot and flies were on the little openings the solid bullets had made in his tawny hide, and his big yellow eyes, narrowed with hate, looked straight ahead, only blinking when the pain came as he breathed, and his claws dug in the soft baked earth.

--from "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Hemingway

A girl came in the cafe and sat by herself at a table near the window. She was very pretty with a face fresh as a newly minted coin if they minted coins in smooth flesh with rain-freshened skin, and her hair was black as a crow's wing and cut sharply and diagonally across her cheek.

--MF, 5

As I ate the oysters with their strong taste of the sea and their faint metallic taste that the cold white wine washed away, having only the sea taste and the succulent texture, and as I drank their cold liquid from each shell and washed it down with the crisp taste of the wine, I lost the empty feeling and began to be happy and to make plans.

--MF, 6

15. "I can make a landscape like Mr. Paul Cezanne. I learned how to make a landscape from Mr. Paul Cezanne." Hemingway spent several minutes looking at Cezanne's "Rocks--Forest of Fontainebleau." "This is what we try to do in writing, this and this, and the woods, and the rocks we have to climb over."

--from "Portrait of Hemingway," Lillian Ross, 1950

16. The second clerk took a tape measure from his pocket, saying he thought Hemingway was a size 44 or 46.

"Wanta bet?" Hemingway asked. He took the clerk's hand and punched himself in the stomach with it.

"Gee, he's got a hard tummy," the belt clerk said. He measured Hemingway's waistline. "38!" he reported. "Small waist for your size. What do you do--a lot of exercise?"

Hemingway hunched his shoulders, feinted, laughed, and

looked happy for the first time since we'd left the hotel. He punched himself in the stomach with his own fist.

"Where are you going--to Spain again?" the belt clerk asked.

"To Italy," Hemingway said, and punched himself in the stomach again.

--Ross, 52

17. Lillian Ross wrote a profile of me which I read, in proof, with some horror. But since she was a friend of mine and I knew that she was not writing in malice she had a right to make me seem that way if she wished. I did not believe that I talked like a half-breed choctaw nor that it gave a very sound impression of some one who gets up at first light and works hard at writing most of the days of his life. But I had just finished a book and when you have done that you do not really give a damn for a few weeks. So I did not mind it although I knew it was harmful to me just as the Life piece was. There was no harm intended and much received. But I am still fond of Lillian.

--Hemingway to Thomas Bledsoe, 1951, SL, 744

Ernest's suite was well attended when I got there. In the center of the sitting room was a round table on which rested two silver ice buckets, each containing a bottle of Perrier-Jouet, a huge blue tin of beluga caviar, a salver of toast, a bowl of finely chopped onions, a bowl of lemon slices, a salver of smoked salmon and a thin vase containing two yellow tea roses. Around the table were Marlene Dietrich, Mary Hemingway, Jigee Viertel, Charles Scribner, Sr., and George Brown. Off to one side, with a stenographer's pad on her lap, sat Lillian Ross of The New Yorker. . . . Lillian Ross, in her corner, was taking rapid shorthand notes for a profile of Ernest she was doing for The New Yorker. ("It was a shorter hand than any of us knew," Ernest was to say a few months later.)

--from Papa Hemingway, A.E. Hotchner, 35-36

18. All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened

--B-L:EH, 184

[Stein] thinks the parts that fail are where I remember visually rather than make up

--Hemingway to Fitzgerald, 1929, SL, 310

. . .everybody's . . . offering true accounts of the activity of the mind.

--Barthelme, interview, 201

Which is true? Truth is greatly overated, volition where it exists must be protected, wanting itself can be obliterated, some people have forgotten how to want.

--from "The Sea of Hesitation," Barthelme

Syllabus Requirements

Department of English, University of Florida

All syllabi for 1000- and 2000- level courses must include the information listed below.

All syllabi for 3000- and 4000- level courses must include all of the information below except for the boilerplate in #4 and except for #11 and #12 in their entirety.*

* Exception: syllabi for ENC 3310 and ENC 3312 must include #12.

Basic Requirements

1. Course number, course title, section number, and place/time.
2. Instructor's name, office number, office or departmental phone, and office hours.

Course-Specific and Department-Specific Requirements

3. Course description.

This should be descriptive, certainly, but also reader-friendly and relatively brief.

4. Statement of goals/objectives.

In addition to your own briefly stated goals, this section should include the following sentence, or something like it: "The student learning outcomes for this course are as detailed in the Undergraduate Catalog at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggened.html#requirements>."

5. List of required or recommended books, as well as the local bookstore(s) in which they

may be bought.

Note to instructors: According to state law, book titles must be posted online at least 30 days before the start of classes. That is, they must be available on the UF text adoption website: <http://www.bsd.ufl.edu/textadoption/>

6. Assignments.

A detailed list of each writing assignment, including kind, length, and all due dates related to it. You might also include a description of each assignment's purpose.

7. Grading criteria.

Explain how grades for each assignment will be determined, as well as the weight of each toward students' final grades.

8. Absence and tardiness policies.

Along with your own policies, please make clear that prolonged absences, even for medical reasons, will not be excused, as discussion of reading & writing assignments is a key part of the course content.

Note to instructors: According to the UF Catalog, student athletes must be excused for athletic events, but they must make up the work. In addition, the English department extends this same courtesy to students in the band or theater who need to travel for a university-sponsored event. Should any of these students not consult you about an absence and/or how to make up the work, you may report this to their respective departments (Athletic, Music, or Theater).

9. Final grade appeals.

Indicate one of these options for appeals of final grades:

In 1000- and 2000- level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant.

In 3000- and 4000- level courses, students should consult Prof. Robert Thomson, Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Indicate that grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

10. Schedule.

A tentative run-down of daily reading assignments, writing activities, and significant due dates (i.e., for in-class writing; early drafts and final drafts for out-of class writing; required conferences; library trips; etc.). It should

explain general topics to be covered and their order, as well as what work students are expected to do and when.

University Requirements

11. Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit.

Include this, verbatim, on all 1000- and 2000- level syllabi:

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggened.html>

Note to instructors: CRW 1101, 1301, 2100 and 2300 do not give H credit, so please omit that part of this requirement when teaching one of those courses.

12. Statement of Writing requirement (WR)—formerly Gordon Rule.

Include this, verbatim, on all 1000- and 2000- level syllabi, and on syllabi for ENC 3310 and ENC 3312:

This course can satisfy the UF requirement for Writing. For more information, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggordon.html>

Note to instructors: The word count must be met with individually produced student writing that has received feedback from you, so you should make any such assignments due two weeks or so before the end of the semester. Accordingly, because collaborative writing and in-class essays don't satisfy the Writing requirement under any circumstances, you might consider assigning them (or at least making them due) toward the end of the course.

13. Statement of student disability services.

Include this, verbatim:

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/>

14. Statement on harassment.

Include this, verbatim:

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/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041>

15. Statement on academic honesty.

Include this, verbatim:

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>

16. Statement on grade point equivalencies.

Include this, or something like it, with the link:

UF has recently instituted minus grades. As a result, letter grades now have different grade point equivalencies. For more information, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Rev. 6/28/10