

CRW 1101: Fiction Writing: Section 1879, Fall 2015

Matherly Room 51; Thursday, Periods 9-11 (4:05pm–7:05pm)

Instructor: Arthur Thuot

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Office: Turlington 4341

Office Hours: Tuesday, 4:05pm–6:05pm and by appointment

Required Texts:

Textbooks:

Jerome Stern, *Making Shapely Fiction*: ISBN-13: 978-0393321241

Texts:

Coursepack.

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>

Please note:

Some of the work we will read may contain content that some students may find offensive or upsetting. No one will ever be forced to read something aloud in class that they find offensive or upsetting. If, however, you do not wish to encounter such content at all, please do not take this class.

Course Format:

Reading: Short stories, chapters from the textbook, and essays addressing aspects of craft.

Writing: In-class exercises/quizzes, ten 600-word (approximately 2.5 pages) critical responses, and two stories (six pages each, plus revisions).

Critiquing: Of the texts, essays, stories, and the work of your peers.

Graded Assignments and Other Course Components:

Class Participation: 20% (200 points)

Each week we will discuss the textbook (Jerome Stern's *Making Shapely Fiction*) and published fiction. Doing the reading is only half the assignment. In-class discussion of the material is the other half. Students who do not bring their books or hard copies of their work to class will be

marked absent. I will also regularly give reading quizzes. If you fail the reading quiz, you will be marked absent. Punctuality counts, and is binary—you are either on time, or you are late.

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 story with a staple. In addition, provide me with a copy of your typed response. 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—the participation of those who fail to respect their peers' thoughts/feelings will be graded accordingly.

Critical Responses: 60% (600 points)

Ten 600-word (approximately 2.5 pages) critical analyses: The structure and content of the critical analyses (worth 60 points each) will be taught in class, both explicitly and organically as a result of our classroom discussions about the stories we read. The analyses 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 feedback. **You will read part or all of your critical response, every class, and must come to class with enough hard copies for everyone.**

My goal is that your critical responses achieve the following:

1. Make a claim about our reading based on Stern's ideas or those we discussed in class. This claim should attempt to get at the source of the author's achievement through a discussion of craft (choices the author has made in the telling of the story).
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?

(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 probably have something to teach you about the practice and art of the written word.)

Rubric of Evaluation for Critical 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)

Two short stories, the first worth 50 points, the second 150 points. Your stories will be evaluated based on the same criteria as your writing exercises. I am looking for clarity, attention to language, and a developing understanding of the building blocks of fiction writing as discussed in Stern's text and during class. 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.

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 Critical Analysis." (For critical analyses 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. Assignments that are not stapled will not be accepted.

Attendance:

You are allowed one absence without explanation, but do not miss the day you are going to be workshopped. 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 you are asked to put your phone away during class, you will be marked absent that day (see absence policy above).

Laptops, Etc.:

Laptops, iPads etc. are not allowed in class (see cell phone policy above). If you have a special reason you must use a laptop or an iPad, please let me know before the course begins.

Notes:

+If you have missed class, it is your responsibility to catch up by getting notes from a classmate. Please do not email me to ask if you missed anything important.

+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>

Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit:

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

Statement of Writing requirement (WR):

This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of 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 information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Harassment:

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. 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

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>

Schedule of Assignments:

Week 1: Emailed reading: Walter Benjamin – “The Storyteller”; **Critical Response 1 Due**

Week 2: Making Shapely Fiction (MSF): Introduction and Part III, selections*; Write 1st Shape (20 minute freewrite); Alistair MacLeod - “The Boat”; **Story 1 Due**

Week 3: MSF: Part III, remaining entries and Part II; Write 2nd Shape; Isaac Babel – “My First Fee”; **Critical Response 2 Due**

Week 4: MSF: Speed; Write 3rd Shape; Leonard Michaels - “In the Fifties” and “City Boy”; **Critical Response 3 Due**

Week 5: MSF and Italo Calvino’s Six Memos for the Next Millennium; Write 4th Shape;

Maxim Gorky – “Twenty-Six Men and a Girl”; Workshop 1, 2 Due **Critical Response 4 Due**

Week 6: MSF and Six Memos (cont’d); Write 5th Shape; Ann Beattie - Home To Marie; Workshop 3, 4 Due **Critical Response 5 Due**

Week 7: MSF and intertexts; Write 6th Shape; Isaac Babel – “Guy De Maupassant” and Guy De Maupassant – “The False Gems”; Workshop 5, 6 Due **Critical Response 6 Due**

Week 8: MSF: Time; Write 7th Shape; Tobias Wolff – “Bullet in the Brain” and Leo Tolstoy – “Alyosha the Pot”; Workshop 7, 8 Due; **Critical Response 7 Due**

Week 9: Thanksgiving

Week 10: MSF: Humor; Write 8th Shape; Mavis Gallant – “When We Were Nearly Young” and Tobias Wolff – “The Rich Brother”; Workshop 9, 10 Due; **Critical Response 8 Due**

Week 11: MSF: Believability; Kafka – “A Hunger Artist”; Workshop 11, 12 Due; **Critical Response 9 Due**

Week 12: MSF: What Stories Do; Robert Walser – “Friedrichstrasse” and Mavis Gallant – “The Wedding Ring” and Andre Dubus – “The Doctor”; Write 10th Shape; Workshop 13, 14 Due;

Critical Response 10 Due

Week 13: MSF: Relatability; Write 11th Shape; Richard Yates – “A Natural Girl” and Mona Simpson – “Lawns”; Workshop 15, 16 Due

Week 14: MSF: Death; Write 12th Shape; James Salter – “Last Night” and Denis Johnson – “Out on Bail”; Workshop 17, 18, 19 Due

Week 15: Last Class Write 13th Shape; David Foster Wallace – “Good Old Neon”

*Accuracy

Ambiguity

Anti-Hero

Atmosphere

Beginnings

Character

Cliche

Convention

Crisis

Description
Dialogue
Diction
Endings
Epiphany
Exposition
Flashback
Frame Story
Freytag's Pyramid
Hero
Imagery
Imagination
Immediacy
Interior Monologue
Intrigant
Irony
Metaphor and Simile
Mise-En-Scene
Motif
Names
Narrative
Narrator
Negative Positive Knowledge
Objective Correlative
Plot
Point of View
Position
Premise
Psychic Distance
Realism
Resolution
Revision
Scene
Sentimentality
Short Story
Showing and Telling
Stereotype
Style
Subtlety
Suspense
Suspension of Disbelief
Symbolism
Tension
Texture
Transitions
Trust Your Material

Voice
Zigzag