

## **CRW 1101- BEGINNING FICTION WRITING (sec. 0218), Fall 2020**

### **Blurred Lines: The Personal Essay, Memoir, and Autofiction**

**Instructor Name:** Victor Imko

**Course Meeting Time and Location:** Thursday 4:05 PM - 7:05 PM, Online

**Office Location and Hours:** Monday 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM, Online

**Course Website:** Canvas

**Class #:** 12435

**Instructor Email:** victorimko@ufl.edu

#### **COVID Statement:**

In the light of the ongoing public health crisis, this course will be managed entirely online. We will meet for synchronous sessions over Zoom on Thursdays during periods 9-11. Outside of class time, you are responsible for completing readings, responses, and your own creative work. Please be sure to download Zoom on your personal computer before the start of the class and familiarize yourself with how it works. I will send instructions to the class through Canvas about how to join our Zoom meetings.

If you as an individual have any COVID-related hardships which may obstruct your performance in this class, please communicate with me as well as making use of all UF resources available to you. We can then assemble a plan to help you complete the class and fulfill all requirements in the way most beneficial for you.

#### **Course Description:**

This class examines three closely related modes of autobiographical writing: the personal essay, memoir, and autofiction. What features distinguish one form from the others? How might we combine aspects of each in new and exciting ways? Through the close reading and discussion of exceptional texts, we will seek to reach a better understanding of autobiographical writing's innovative formal elements. Additionally, by trying our hand at some life writing of our own, as well as workshopping that of our classmates, we will try to better understand how to make such stories come alive.

#### **General Education Objectives:**

- This course confers General Education credit for Composition (C), and also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- Composition courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce

effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.

- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.

- The University Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

### **General Education Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

Content: Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.

Communication: Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.

Critical Thinking: Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

### **Assignments:**

#### Class participation: 25%

In-class discussion of all readings is required. You will read Canvas readings at least once before class, and you will read the workshop stories of your peers at least twice before respective workshops. You will provide a typewritten letter of comments and thoughts on the work's strengths, weaknesses, and possible improvements.

#### Discussion preparation notes: 25%

Discussion preparation notes are 600 words each. You will submit 10. By the end of the semester, your accrued notes will account for 6,000 words of critical analyses, as required by UF. Structure and content of these responses will be outlined in class. These responses will serve as a basis for your in-class discussion (for example, you

may plan what you'd like to say aloud), will show you've read the material, and will demonstrate engagement and analytical practice or ability.

The word count of each critical response should be listed at the bottom of each at the time of turning in.

#### Presentation: 25%

Each student will lead class discussion of one text. This is your opportunity to shape the critical conversation and tailor it to your own interests. You may choose to introduce the text with background information about the author or, if we're reading an excerpt from a longer work, information about the larger project as a whole. I recommend structuring the discussion with four open-ended questions that focus on setting, character/point of view, theme, and form/style.

#### Workshop stories: 25%

For this course you will also write one 4-6 page personal essay/short story and one 6-8 page revision to be turned in at the end of the semester. When your essay/story is due, it is due, and you must be present for its workshopping. You will know your workshop date far ahead of schedule. Your workshop submission is due one week from the date of your workshop, and not on the date of your workshop itself.

For the revision, you will use the feedback from your peers and your instructor, and you will revise your work taking these comments and thoughts seriously in mind (although incorporation of any one specific comment is not mandatory). A revision in this instance is not just correcting typos or moving paragraphs around, but involves changing the essay/story in some significant way.

#### **Course Policies:**

1. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
2. Attendance: Attendance policy is consistent with UF's attendance policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies>. Triple-period, once weekly classes (such as ours) count as two absences. Like all discussion courses, this one needs you! Use your allotted absences wisely (for emergencies, major illness) as you would for any job. You will fail the course if you accrue more than two absences.
3. Latecomers receive partial absences, and must see me after class so I know you attended. Three instances of tardiness will count as one absence. Please let me know if you have reasonable trouble coming to class resulting in chronic lateness, and we can reach an accommodation.

4. UF's policy on Sexual Harassment: The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/policy-statement/>

5. Paper Format & Submission: Canvas.

7. Late Papers/Assignments: Critical responses can be submitted up to one week late, resulting in a drop of two letter grades. Workshop stories and revisions should be on time if at all humanly possible—late assignments will only be accepted under extenuating circumstances.

8. Paper Maintenance Responsibilities. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.

9. Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'" The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.

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

- a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
- b. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
- c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
- d. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

10. Students with disabilities who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)), which will provide appropriate documentation to give your instructor early in the semester.

11. Students who are in distress or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you. UF's Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

12. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

13. Grade Appeals. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, cblount@ufl.edu. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

14. Course Evaluations. Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages requesting that you do this online: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>

### **Required Texts:**

Ben Lerner, *Leaving the Atocha Station*

North Morgan, *Into?*

All other course materials can be accessed on Canvas. You will be responsible for having read the material before the class.

### **Course Schedule**

#### **The Personal Essay: Inquiring**

##### **Week 1, September 3:**

\*\*\*Assign workshop and presentation dates\*\*\*

Joan Didion, “On Keeping a Notebook”

##### **Week 2, September 10:**

Philip Lopate, “The State of Nonfiction Today” and “On the Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character”

##### **Week 3, September 17:**

Virginia Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”

##### **Week 4, September 24:**

James Baldwin, “Notes of a Native Son”

**Week 5, October 1:**

Jia Tolentino, “Always Be Optimizing”

**Memoir: Dramatizing**

**Week 6, October 8:**

\*\*\*Begin Workshop\*\*\*

E.M. Forster, “Story” and “Plot” from *Aspects of the Novel*

**Week 7, October 15:**

Truman Capote, “A Beautiful Child”

**Week 8, October 22:**

David Wojnarowicz, “Being Queer in America: A Journal of Disintegration”

**Week 9, October 29:**

Yiyun Li, “Dear Friend, from My Life I Write to You in Your Life”

**Autofiction: Fabricating**

**Week 10, November 5:**

Sigmund Freud, “The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming”

**Week 11, November 12:**

Ben Lerner, *Leaving the Atocha Station*

**Week 12, November 19:**

Ben Lerner, *Leaving the Atocha Station*

**Week 13, November 26:**

No class

**Week 14, December 3:**

North Morgan, *Into?*

**Revision due, December 14 11:59 p.m.**

**Grading Rubric:**

A: 94-100; A-: 90-9

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

**Rubric of Evaluation for Discussion Preparation Notes:**

A: Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops original, sophisticated ideas. Has exceptionally well-crafted paragraphs, a persuasive organizational structure, 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 persuasive organizational structure, 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 persuasive organizational structure, adequately-supported claims, and some appropriate stylistic elements.

D: Contains minimal analysis of the texts. May lack well-crafted paragraphs, 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.