

CRW 1101: Beginning Fiction Writing | Sec. 1648 | Fall 2016

CBD 0212 | Wednesdays, periods 10-12 (5:10 P.M.–8:10 PM)

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Turlington 4405. Wednesday, Periods 8-9, or by appointment

The Skinny:

This is an introductory course to fiction writing. You will learn and practice the basics of fiction writing: the creation of interesting characters, the construction of a plot, the development of a conflict, the development of themes and symbols, the construction of strong dialogue, etc. Discussions of our stories and those of published writers will aid us when we write and revise our work.

The first half of the course consists of reading, discussion, and critical responses. The second half of the course will incorporate student stories into writing workshops while continuing the practices of the first half of the course.

Required Texts and Supplies:

Texts

1. *The Anchor Book of New American Short Stories* edited by Ben Marcus
2. *Making Shapely Fiction* by Jerome Stern
3. Various assigned readings provided

Supplies

Cash—for the Xerox machine. You are required to make copies of your stories for each of your classmates and your professor. If you cannot afford to make copies, do not take this course. Please, never tell me that you are broke, that your printer's out of ink, etc.

Workshop Etiquette

Personal attacks have no place here. Attacks on a person's race, religion, sexuality, intelligence, general appearance, etc. will not be tolerated. If you make such attacks, you will be dismissed from class, and you will have to ask permission both from me and your classmates to return.

In this class, a special civility is necessary. When we write essays, we usually write with the brain. We may be honest or we may B.S. Writing fiction, however, requires an effort not only of the brain but also of the heart. Fiction is personal. Therefore, *all* submissions must be treated with respect, even when we believe a particular piece would best serve as kindling. A regularly negative person will be dismissed from class.

Honest criticism requires neither cruelty nor mockery. It points out flaws and strengths where they can be seen in stories. In this class, criticism is always intended to help the writer.

At the same time, you must be willing to accept legitimate criticism of your work. You are taking a chance here: someone in this room may tell you a thing or two about your writing that you would rather not hear. If you want only praise, you should call your mom.

Academic Integrity

When you're stressed about a deadline or just have trouble with a story, contact me before it is due. I will help you as best I can, and you will maintain your integrity.

If you choose to get "help" in any way—by copying someone else's work entirely, by copying it partly, by changing a few words here or there, or anything in between—I will fail you.

Electronic Equipment

Your cell phones, laptops, iPods, etc., are not allowed in this class. Please set your social life aside till the break or after class. I will give you a warning for a first offense, will dismiss you from the day's class for a second, will dismiss you and fail you for a third.

Attendance

This class is based on your writing and your responses to your fellow students' writing. Your commitment to the success of the class is required, so you must attend class regularly.

You have two free absences. If you're absent three times unexcused by me, you will fail.

Do not miss the day your story is workshopped. Doing so will result in a failing grade.

You may be counted absent for any class in which you are not prepared to participate.

You have two tardies. After that, I may count you absent, and you'll be subject to the rules described in the previous paragraphs.

By tardy, I mean you are late by 1-15 minutes. If you're more than 15 minutes late, you are absent, and you should go home.

It is your responsibility to know whether I've counted you tardy or absent. If extenuating circumstances occur, you must inform me in a timely manner beforehand. You will keep further your academic integrity by doing so.

Contribution

An excellent contribution grade depends, first and foremost, on your willingness to raise your hand and speak about the matter at hand.

It depends on your completion of in-class writing and your willingness to volunteer to read samples of your in-class writing.

It depends on your completion of outside reading assignments and whatever homework I assign.

You will be counted absent if you aren't prepared to contribute, so please don't show up unprepared.

Reading

Reading assignments will include classmates' submissions, published short stories, and whatever other material I ask you to look at and respond to. You must read assignments on time. Failure to do so may lead to your dismissal from class (yes, you'll be counted absent). If you find dismissal a positive outcome, you should consider working with a different instructor.

People who fall behind generally stay there. I highly recommend reading, taking notes, and annotating pages every day.

Submissions and Graded Work

Workshop Basics

Over the second half of this semester, you will print and submit any combination of stories that equal 12 pages the week before your submission is due. Your classmates and I will read the submission for homework. We will discuss them during scheduled class time in a workshop.

Subjects

Make something up. Be creative. Set aside your preconceptions of what fiction can or should be. Disregard what seems popular or cool to so-called normal people. Open your weird mind.

Late Submissions

Do not ask me to either read or grade late submissions.

Final Revision

The final revision will be like a final exam. You will take one of your submissions and, as the title suggests, revise it thoroughly.

It will demonstrate what you have learned from reading, writing, and discussing fiction this semester. It will demonstrate your ability to respond effectively to the criticism you have received. It will demonstrate your ability to write college-level English. It will also demonstrate your ability to think about and describe how you operate as a writer.

Consider the best advice you've received in the workshop. Also consider examples of quality fiction, strategies, and methods we have discussed in class. Think about which characters do and do not work, what kinds of scenes should be added or trashed, etc. Then make adjustments. Yes, we'll discuss how to accomplish these things this semester.

Grade Breakdown

Class Contribution:	100 points
25 Critical Responses @ 12 pts:	300 points
Workshop Story:	250 points
Story Revision:	350 points
Total:	1000 Points

Critical Responses

In 250-word responses, critically analyze each fiction assigned for the given class day. Certain days will have three or four readings assigned and two responses due. On those days, choose any two to respond to.

The responses will be graded based on a 12-point maximum point scale, of which you will earn either 12, 8, or 4 points.

A 12-point critical response:

- Critically analyzes the prescribed fiction with thoughtful analysis, creative and risky approaches, and an acute attention to literary methods in the story in 250 words and no less.
- Has been proofread, with as many structural, grammatical, and mechanical issues resolved.
- Strictly follows the provided MLA friendly Critical Response document format.

Any deviation from these criteria will result in 12, 8, or 4 points. Be a 12-pointer by taking the class seriously and following instructions. Be a 0-pointer by not turning in anything.

Grading scale for submissions and final grades.

A=95

A-=91

B+=88

B=85

B-=81

C+=78

C=75

C-=71

D+=68

D=65

D-=61

F=55 (or lower)

Friends, anything below a “C” should also be translated as “You have not written college-level English;” “This class is not the joke you hoped it was;” “Your friend, the English major, is not the best editor in the world;” “Radically reconsider your approach to everything in regard to this class before it’s too late;” and/or “You may not be ready.”

The following is useful information on university policies that you should know. Please read over the links provided.

Statement of Composition (C) credit

This course can satisfy the General Education requirement for Composition. 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:

<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/writing-math.aspx#writing>

Statement of 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/>

Statement on harassment

UF provides an education 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://regulations.ufl.edu/chapter1/1006.pdf>

Statement on academic honesty

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 on grades and grading policies.

Note: UF has recently instituted minus grades. As a result, letter grades now have different grade point equivalencies. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Statement on University Policies:

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Statement on Evaluations:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>

Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

University Writing Studio

If you find that you need additional help with your writing outside of class, I strongly recommend that you acquaint yourself with the University Writing Studio (formerly the Reading and Writing Center). The Writing Studio is a free service for current UF graduate and undergraduate students. Students have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a consultant on issues specific to their own particular development. More info is available here: <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-center/>

Final grade appeals

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

Schedule

Aug 24

Introductions
Syllabus Overview
Schedule Workshops

Aug 31

“Sea Oak” George Saunders
“Everything Ravaged, Everything Burned” Wells Tower
Making Shapely Fiction: Beginnings, Exposition
Critical Response #1 & #2 Due

Sep 7

“Tiny, Smiling Daddy” Mary Gaitskill
“The Girl in the Flammable Skirt” Aimee Bender
Making Shapely Fiction: Atmosphere, Cliff-hanger, Crisis, Episode, Frame story, Plot, Premise, Scene, Structure, Tension
Critical Response #3 & #4 Due

Sep 14

“Do Not Disturb” A.M. Homes
“I’m Slaving” Sam Lipsyte
“The Sound Gun” Matthew Derby
Making Shapely Fiction: Character, Epiphany, Interior Monologue, Names, Stereotype
Critical Response #5 & #6 Due

Sep 21

“The Caretaker” Anthony Doerr
“Gentleman’s Agreement” Mark Richard
“Down the Road” Stephen Dixon
Making Shapely Fiction: Comedy, Diction, Genre, Grotesque, Metafiction, Stream of Consciousness, Style, Voice
Critical Response #7 & #8 Due

Sep 28

“The Father’s Blessing” Mary Caponegro
“You Drive” Christine Schutt
“Short Talks” Anne Carson
Making Shapely Fiction: Objective Correlative, Cliché, Description, Imagery, Imagination, Mise-en-scene, Places and Place Names, Showing and Telling, Symbolism, Texture
Critical Response #9, 10, & #11 Due

Oct 5

“People Shouldn’t Have to Be the Ones to Tell You” Gary Lutz
“The Life and Work of Alphonse Kauders” Aleksander Hemon
“Letters to Wendy’s” Joe Wenderoth
Making Shapely Fiction: Dialect, Dialogue
Critical Response #12, #13, & #14 Due

Oct 12

“The Paperhanger” William Gay

“Histories of the Undead” Kate Braverman

Making Shapely Fiction: Flashback, Imagination, Immediacy, Legend

Critical Response #15 & #16 Due

Oct 19

“The Old Dictionary” Lydia Davis

“When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” Jhumpa Lahiri

“All American” Diane Williams

“Up the Old Goat Road” Dawn Raffel

Making Shapely Fiction: Bathos, Catharsis, Cliché, Didacticism, Melodrama,

Sentimentality, Sex, Subtlety

Critical Response #17, #18, & #19 Due

Oct 26

“X Number of Possibilities” Joanna Scott

Workshop

Making Shapely Fiction: Trust Your Material, Endings, Revision

Critical Response #20 Due

Nov 2

“Two Brothers” Brian Evenson

Workshop

Critical Response #21 Due

Nov 9

“Field Events” Rick Bass

Workshop

Critical Response #22 Due

Nov 16

“Someone to Talk to” Deborah Eisenberg

Workshop

Critical Response #23 Due

Nov 23

NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

Nov 30

Workshop

Dec 7

“Scarliotti and the Sinkhole” Padgett Powell

“Where I Work” Ann Cummins

Critical Response #24 & #25 Due

Final Revision due