

CRW2100 – Fiction Writing, Section 0121 (Class # 12871), Spring 2020

Instructor Name: Timothy Schirmer

Course meeting times & locations: Thursdays, 4:05pm – 7:05pm

Office Location and Hours: Wednesdays 10:30am – 12:30pm, and by appointment, Turlington 4415

Course website: Email based

Instructor Email: timothy.kyle85@ufl.edu

Required Texts:

-*Mrs. Bridge*, Evan S. Connell

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Course Description:

This course will primarily run as a writing workshop, specifically focused on what is called short fiction. Over the term each of you will workshop 2 creative pieces (1,000 minimum – 2,000 words maximum). Ideally you'll be trying to write a story with characters, setting, and situation, in under 2,000 words. Trying to open up a big believable world with a limited space on the page. However, I call them "creative pieces" because they don't necessarily have to be fiction if that proves too challenging at first. You can also write about your or your imaginary dog, the weird guy at the supermarket, or the dream you had last night, or a food you're obsessed with, etc... The main goal of these "pieces" (if they shy away from fiction as it usually described) is that they should at least be interesting bits of life that you believe others might also find interesting because you've taken some time to explain something weird, insightful, beautiful etc... in the world. **Please do not turn in excerpts from longer pieces you may be working on.** This class is meant to help you generate new, fresh material. Stories are made of moments, interesting little parts, and if you keep writing down the parts, you can learn to build a narrative by linking them. Remember that story is powerful, it is a way of saying—through fiction—what is difficult to say in reality.

There's one twist! Your stories this semester will need to be inspired by videos that have gone viral on the Internet. We will discuss how to use these videos as prompts for storytelling, inasmuch as you won't be summarizing the videos you choose, but taking something from them that intrigues you and using that element of intrigue to generate an original story that is not a copy of the video, but something quite different. This semester we are going to try to write stories that describe what it's like to be alive here right now, in *our* culture. Viral videos are an effective medium for inspiration, seeing as they've already been deemed interesting by the culture at large.

In this class we will read two books by Evan S. Connell. *Mrs. Bridge* and *Mr. Bridge*. These novels are composed of many short chapters. You will notice that most of the chapters could potentially stand on their own as successful pieces of short fiction, and in this way they do not rely on each other, but enhance each other. Collected together, they comprise not one, but two novels. Each week we'll devote a portion of our time in class to re-reading a some of *Mrs.* or *Mr. Bridge* as a group, while engaging in thoughtful conversation about characterization, situation, plot, setting, etc... At the beginning of each class there will be a quick easy quiz to make sure you're keeping on top of the reading. The quizzes are worth 10% of your grade, so make sure you're reading the assigned material. Furthermore, remember that daily reading is one of the most important activities for nourishing your writer mind.

To satisfy the Composition (C) and (WR) requirement (in weeks 2, 5, 8, and 11 of the class) you will turn in a 1,500 word critical response. Each student will complete four of these responses over the semester. The first portion of your critical response will be a writing assignment related to the themes and topics covered in the previous week's lectures and readings. These analytical assignments will change from week to week. Each assignment will come with detailed instructions.

For the second portion of each Critical Response you will turn in three story ideas inspired by events or things you observe in the world around you. Please state the thing that caused the idea, and then explain your idea. For example: This week I saw or experienced _____, and it gave me the idea to write a story about _____. The point of this exercise is to connect you with the idea that story is all around us when we're paying close attention, even in the simplest of subjects and details.

In this class we will also read additional material together, watch clips from films, TV, and documentaries, study famous thinkers and artists, listen to podcasts, have discussions, and practice free writing through various exercises.

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.

Writing Assignments:

STORIES:

As mentioned above, each of you will be responsible for turning in 2 pieces of creative prose over the semester. Each piece should be at least 1,000 words in length, but no more than 2,000 words in length. The piece will be submitted to the class on your assigned due date in **(printed)** copies. Printed copies are **mandatory** for every workshop. I will not accept emailed workshop pieces under any circumstance. Turning in your piece late, or via email, runs the risk of excluding classmates who won't see it in time. You must print your work and attend class, especially on days when you're turning in or workshoping. Please print your stories double spaced, size 12, and in an easy to read font. Please also staple your pages. You are expected to respectfully critique your fellow students' work, which means speaking about a piece of writing's strengths, while also pointing out where there's room for improvement.

CRITICAL RESPONSES:

In weeks 2, 5, 8, and 11 you will be responsible for **printing** and handing in a 1,500 word critical response, as detailed above.

Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance*: You are allowed two absences without any effect to your grade. At the point of 3 absences your grade will drop a letter. From A to B, or B to C, etc... Unless all three absences are excused and there is proof of an emergency, medical or otherwise. And remember, please try not to miss class on your scheduled workshop day. If your absence is unavoidable, then we will workshop your piece the following week. Please show up to class on time. If you know you're going to be tardy, please let me know in advance. Extreme or chronic tardiness will count as an absence. You can read more about UF's attendance police here:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>
3. *Paper Format & Submission*: Again, all assignments must be submitted in printed hardcopies as stated above.
4. *Late Papers/Assignments*: If you're late on an assignment, let me know, and we can work out a schedule for you to get the work turned in for full credit. Points will be docked from assignments if it occurs more than twice. Keep in mind that it's important you turn your stories in on your assigned days, otherwise you're disrupting the schedule of the workshop.
5. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism*. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code:
<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
7. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
8. For information on UF Grading policies, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
9. *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, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
10. *Course Evaluations*. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course:
<https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
11. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online:
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
12. *Classroom etiquette*. You are expected to treat each other with patience and courtesy. We will be sharing material that is of a sensitive nature in this

- class, and it's important to be mindful of one another's feelings. Use of personal electronics should be suspended during class unless otherwise instructed.
13. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>
 14. *Policy on environmental sustainability*. Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale.)

Rubric:

1. Class Participation (includes workshop comments, in-class discussion, and in class writing, etc.) —100 points
2. Critical Responses — 300 points
3. Stories — 500 points
4. Quizzes — 200 points

Critical Responses — These will be graded according to clarity, concision, and use of convincing evidence to support your argument.

Stories — These will be graded based on word count and the originality and creativity of the work. There is no such thing as a right or wrong story.

Quizzes — These will be graded based on whether you've read the material. They will total 20% of your grade.

Schedule (subject to change - you will be notified)

Week 1 – January 9th

IN CLASS: *Review the syllabus, Introductions, Storytelling and Life, Practice Noticing, Keeping Loose, Having Fun, and Staying Curious, explain the Critical Analyses assignments, workshop signup sheet*

Week 2 – January 16th

TO READ: *Mrs. Bridge*, Chapters 1-22 (quiz on January 23rd)
DUE: 1st critical response (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Character, Plot, and The Interesting Situation, Viral Videos, Finding Drama Within our Own Weird Culture*

IN CLASS: *Film Screening of Force Majeure, (2014) by Ruben Ostlund*

Week 3 – January 23rd

TO READ: *Mrs. Bridge*, Chapters 23-49 (quiz on January 30th)

DUE: Group A's stories (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Setting, the Six Senses, Descriptive Language, Painting with Words Philosophy, Deeper Themes, Subtlety, Complexity, Nuance, and how to Make Ordinary Life Interesting*

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

Week 4 – January 30th

TO READ: *Mrs. Bridge*, Chapters 50-70 (quiz on February 6th)

DUE: Group B's stories (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Scope, Zooming in, Dialogue, How to Write in Scene, and How Short Fiction Can Grow into Long-Form Fiction*

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

WORKSHOP: Group A's stories

Week 5 – February 6th

TO READ: *Mrs. Bridge*, Chapters 71-96 (quiz on February 13th)

DUE: 2nd critical response (**Printed**)

DUE: Group C's stories (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Metaphors, Comparisons, and Mirroring*

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

WORKSHOP: Group B's stories

Week 6 – February 13th

TO READ: *Mrs. Bridge*, Chapter 97-117 (quiz on February 20th)

DUE: Group D's stories (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

WORKSHOP: Group C's stories

Week 7 – February 20th

TO READ: *Mr. Bridge*, Chapters 1-20 (quiz on February 27th)

DUE: Group E's stories (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

WORKSHOP: Group D's stories

Week 8 – February 27th

TO READ: *Mr. Bridge*, Chapters 21-40 (quiz on March 12th)

DUE: 3rd Critical Response

DUE: Group A's stories (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

WORKSHOP: Group E's stories

Week 9 – March 5th

NO CLASS FOR SPRING BREAK

Week 10 – March 12th

TO READ: *Mr. Bridge*, Chapters 41-60 (quiz on March 19th)

DUE: Group B's stories (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

WORKSHOP: Group A's stories

Week 11 – March 19th

TO READ: *Mr. Bridge*, Chapters 61-80 (quiz on March 26th)

DUE: 4th Critical Response

DUE: Group C's stories (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

WORKSHOP: Group B's stories

Week 12 – March 26th

TO READ: TO READ: *Mr. Bridge*, Chapters 81-100 (quiz on April 2nd)

DUE: Group D's stories (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

WORKSHOP: Group C's stories

Week 13 – April 2nd

TO READ: TO READ: *Mr. Bridge*, Chapters 100-130 (quiz on April 9th)

DUE: Group E's stories (**Printed**)

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

WORKSHOP: Group D's stories

Week 14 – April 9th

WORKSHOP: Group E's stories

IN CLASS: *Group reading and discussion*

Week 15 – April 16th

IN CLASS: *Activity*