

CRW 2100 – Fiction Writing, (Section 2500, Class 12474) Fall 2020

**Instructor Name:** Dan Grossman

**Course meeting times & locations:** Friday; Period 6-8 (12:50 PM - 3:50 PM), via Zoom

**Office Location and Hours:** Thursday 4:00-5:00pm, Monday 4:00-5:00pm, via Zoom

**Course website:** Canvas link forthcoming

**Instructor Email:** dgrossman1@ufl.edu

This course provides instruction in the writing of literary fiction, and since careful and reflective reading is the best way to learn how to write, an introduction to the art of close reading.

We will devote the first half of the semester to the strategies, styles, challenges and joys of the short story. The second half will be a traditional fiction workshop: two or more students will turn in stories each week, and the rest of the class will provide feedback the next time we meet.

Remember! We can't be good writers if we aren't good readers. It is essential that all of the reading is not only done but done well. I expect students to come in with passages—lines, sentences, moments, phrases—they want to discuss, as well as questions they would like to explore.

**COVID-19 Statement:** In light of the continuing impacts of COVID-19, this course will be offered entirely through online course sessions. We will meet synchronously on Zoom every Friday, during periods 6-8. Outside of class time, you are responsible for completing readings, responses, and your own creative work. Our classes will rely heavily on discussion which, I hope, will help to bridge some of the gap between our computer screens. 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 via email 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.

**Recommended Text:**

*The Elements of Style* by Strunk & White

### **General Education Objectives:**

This course confers General Education credit for Composition (C). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).

- 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.

### **Course Policies:**

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. Attendance: You are required to come to class. Excused absences must be properly excused, via the proper means. If you know your excused absences ahead of time—such as university events—you must tell me when you know, not after the fact. Also please let me know ahead of time if you are experiencing technical difficulties with Zoom. Three instances of tardiness = one unexcused absence. You cannot miss your workshop day.
3. Because we only meet once a week, three unexcused absences will result in automatic failure.
4. 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. Diverse 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.
5. *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/>

6. *Paper Format & Submission*: Submissions on canvas for the critical responses; emailed drafts for workshop; MLA format—that is: double spaced; 12 point font (Times New Roman, Calibri, Cambria); pages numbered in the bottom-right corner; an MLA header and a title for your submission. Critical responses may be titled “Critical Response 1” and so forth, but workshop stories may not be titled “Workshop Story.”
7. *Late Papers/Assignments*: Critical responses for a class missed can be emailed to me up to one week after the missed class period (this does not apply to classes not missed). Workshop stories cannot be missed.
8. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*. Keep copies on your hard drive of all work submitted in this course.
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, in the Department office (4008 TUR). 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>

## **Grading**

*Class Participation (350 points):* The greatest writers are great because of their passion and dedication to the craft. Therefore, your enthusiasm, your commitment to the work, and your commitment to your fellow students are more important than any preexisting knowledge that you bring about “literature.” Class participation is very important for this class, even though we are meeting online.

For the first part of the semester, we will discuss short fiction. These stories will be posted online on Canvas under the assignment heading. It is the student’s responsibility to read, mark them up and come to class ready to discuss. Be prepared to talk about the stories in question. (If you are uncomfortable talking in class, please come speak to me after class.)

In the second half of the semester, we will workshop. On workshop days it is expected that you will come to class having read your fellow students’ pieces carefully, and that you have spent time preparing a response to it. Read the story once, without marking it, then make your marginal notes during the second read. In addition to your marginal comments in ink or pencil, append your typed response (one-page minimum) to the author's story. I will occasionally collect these typed responses, which will count toward your participation grade.

*Critical Responses (500 points):*

Seven 700-word critical responses. Each week over the course of the first half of the semester there will be stories to read; we will discuss them in class, and you will write a response to one of those stories. Our classroom discussions will provide a model for how to write these critical responses.

For the first two weeks, I will give prompts and questions to help generate ideas for your responses. For the last three responses, you will generate your own topic. Each response should be in the form of an argument: you will need a thesis and evidence.

*Workshop and Revision (150 points):*

You will write one story that your classmates will workshop. The story must be delivered to the class the week before the scheduled workshop. You will send an email with an attachment to the rest of the class. There is no late delivery. There is no switching. If you

are unable to turn in the story on time, an entire letter grade will be deducted from your final grade.

Good writing takes time. Don't put off writing your stories for workshop. Everyone will be able to tell if you wrote it the night before and your workshop will reflect that. Give your creative process the time it deserves.

At the end of the semester, you will write an 1100-word letter describing your development as a writer this semester and your choices for how you went about your revision. You will turn in this letter alongside your revised story by **December 6<sup>th</sup>**.

### **Discussing Published Work**

In terms of discussion, there are three things to accomplish with each of the stories we examine:

**WHAT** does the story accomplish?

*What is it doing? What is going on here? What is its effect on you?*

- Descriptive

**HOW** does it accomplish these things?

*What are the craft elements of the piece that accomplish a particular effect?*

*Feeling?*

- Investigative

**WHY** does the story accomplish it?

*Why does the author make these choices? Why do they do it this way?*

- Interpretive

We need to know **WHAT** is going on before we can analyze it. This includes the plot, argument, or surface level meaning of a piece as well as our reading experience of it.

From there, we can look at **HOW** an author accomplishes those things, and **WHY** they do it in that way.

Often our first impulse in literature classes is to interpret, but because this is a writing class we need to describe in order to break down and investigate the work.

Think of writing as a type of engineering. We have to take it apart to understand how it works, and ultimately, to figure out how we can build our own.

### **Discussing Stories in Workshop**

When we talk about student stories in class, we will talk about it the way we talk about published stories. We are in the trade of constructive criticism. It means we are giving our peers the tools to build a better piece, and to build each other up into better writers. That's why it's a workshop.

There is certainly a place to say what we liked or didn't like—we all want to hear the reactions of our readers—but together we will use discussion to talk about what **works** and **doesn't work**, and see if as a group we can reveal something about the author's story that they may not be able to realize on their own.

It is our job to help our fellow writers notice their work again—what is interesting about it, what is compelling, and what is possible—and by paying attention and reading closely, we can give them a valuable gift. **Treat other work as you want your work to be treated, read it as you want it to be read, and comment on it in a way that you would find most helpful.**

### Schedule:

9/4: *Introduction to CRW 2100*

“The School” by Donald Barthelme

9/11

“A Temporary Matter” by Jhumpa Lahiri

“Bullet in the Brain” by Tobias Woolf

Critical Response #1 due

9/18

“Most Die Young” by Camille Bordas

“Leopard” by Wells Tower

“Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid

CR#2 Due

9/15

“The Laughing Man” by JD Salinger

“Help Me Follow My Sister into the Land of the Dead” by Carmen Maria Machado

CR#3 Due

10/2

“The David Party” by David Leavitt

“When I Look at a Strawberry, I Think of a Tongue” by Édouard Levé

“A Conversation with My Father” by Grace Paley

CR#4 Due

10/9:

“Bloodchild” by Octavia Butler

“Exhalation” by Ted Chiang  
CR#5 Due

10/16:  
Workshop Stories #1

10/23:  
Workshop Stories #2

10/30:  
Workshop Stories #3

11/6  
Workshop Stories #4  
TBD: CR #6

11/13  
Workshop Stories #5

11/20  
Workshop Stories #6

12/4  
“Lull” by Kelly Link  
“Thank You” by Alejandro Zambra  
CR#7 Due

Rubric of Evaluation for Critical Responses:

A: Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops sophisticated ideas through close reading. 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 sophisticated ideas through close reading. 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. Minimal close reading. 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 or close reading. Fails to adequately support its claims and/or use appropriate stylistic elements.

E: Lacks analysis of the text, and therefore fails to demonstrate comprehension.

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Percentage Grade</b>	<b>Grade Point Average (GPA)</b>
A	93-100%	4.0
A-	90-92%	3.7
B+	86-89%	3.3
B	83-85%	3.0
B-	80-82%	2.7
C+	76-79%	2.3
C	73-75%	2.0
C-	70-72%	1.7
D+*	66-69%	1.3
D	63-65%	1.0
D-	60-62%	0.7
F	59%	0.0