

CRW 2100: Fiction Writing: Section 132A, Class #13125, Spring 2019

M | Period 10 - E1 (5:10 PM - 8:10 PM)

Classroom: MAT 0051

Instructor: Evan Grillon

Email: evan.grillon@ufl.edu

Office: Turlington 4413

Office Hours: Wed: 1-3:00pm and by appointment

Required Texts:

Textbooks:

Why I Write; Ed. Will Blythe 0316115924

Course Description and Objectives:

To make better readers and writers. This course provides introductory 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 read, write about, and write the short story. We will be concerned with literary fiction, rather than genre fiction: the distinction being that the former is concerned principally with emotions (the intractable, fraught kind) and the latter with plot and genre conventions.

We will devote the first half of the semester to the discussion of the (mostly) contemporary American short story: there is no overarching theme to the selection other than that they are stories often admired by writers. 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 structured, generative feedback in the next class after reviewing the stories. The specific requirements of the workshop 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. We will *always* be close reading. In class, this means rigorous line-by-line readings of the stories in question.

As you might have guessed, the first half of the class is meant to prepare you for the second half. It is meant to get you thinking about how fiction works. It is also meant to provide you with models, as a survey of styles and forms, all of which, in your own work, you may try modeling as practice. In the second half of class you'll have a chance to apply what you've learned in writing your own stories.

Additional Policies:

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 Format:

Reading: Short stories, chapters from the textbook, and essays.

Writing: In-class exercises/quizzes, five 1000-word (approximately 3 pages) critical responses, notes for workshop stories, and two stories (plus revisions).

In-class Participation.

Graded Assignments and Other Course Components:

Formatting:

Each assignment will be submitted at the beginning of class in double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman (Or Calibri or Courier New or Garamond) font. Use MLA formatting. Please visit the Purdue Owl website if you have any confusion over what that entails. Please staple, number your page, and title your story or response. **Please also turn in all your assignment on Canvas.** You are responsible for photocopying your workshopped stories. Each formatting failure will result in a 5% deduction on the grade of that assignment. I will not be able to accept stories or responses that aren't stapled. There is a free stapler in Library West, and another in the Reitz Union.

Class Participation: (400 points)

For the first part of the semester, we will discuss professional examples of contemporary short fiction. These stories will be posted online on Canvas under the assignment heading as .pdf's; it is the student's responsibility to print them and bring them to class. Students who do not bring the reading to class will be marked absent. **Be prepared to talk about the stories in question.**

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 *at least once*, and that you have spent time formulating a **typed** response to it. 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. I will occasionally collect these typed responses, and they 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—be courteous or your grade will suffer.

Finally, your effort in writing, and especially in revising, your creative pieces will be a significant portion of your participation grade. Your tutorials, workshops, and final portfolio will therefore all fall under your participation grade.

Critical Responses: (500 points)

Five 1000-word critical summaries. Each week over the course of the first half of the semester there will be stories to read; we will discuss both in class, and on some weeks **you will write a response to one of those stories.** The structure and content of the critical summaries (worth 100 points each) will be taught in class, both explicitly and organically as a result of our classroom discussions about the stories we read. I encourage you to think in terms of emotional stakes (What matters to the characters? What do they want, and what are they willing to do to get it?) rather than in terms of themes or symbols. In these analyses we will not be interested in evaluating the stories – that is, we will not be asking how good they are; instead, we want to know how they work. The analyses will be evaluated based on the following criteria: demonstrated reading of the stories/chapters; critical thinking; depth of analysis.

My goal is that your critical responses achieve the following:

1. Give a complete and nuanced summary of the story's plot and emotional arc in the first paragraph. Answer the questions: tell the reader what happened, but more importantly, tell the reader where the character begins emotionally and where do they end? How is our understanding of the character expanded at the end of the story? Provide a thesis: the answer to any of the above questions will make for a good thesis.
2. Provide textual support for your claim from the story being discussed in the rest of the paper. Point to the specific words, using quotations, in the text that support your reading of the story. Evaluate the language in those quotes – what do the choices the writer makes in each sentence

tell us about the characters? **The more you pay attention the better.** A good close reading may choose to spend an entire paragraph pulling apart one sentence. A traditional five-page essay “conclusion” is not necessary.

Rubric of Evaluation for Critical Summaries

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 reading and/or comprehension.

Workshop:

One story to be discussed in workshop and to be delivered to the class *the week before* the student is to be workshopped. You will print copies for the rest of the class. 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. If your story is to be more than 20 pages, I require that it be a revision of a story you turned in for tutorial.

The grades on your stories will be folded into your participation grade: attention to detail and clarity matter, so do depth and demonstrated understanding of your characters and plots. Remember that you are writing literary fiction, not genre fiction: in the former, we care about emotions; in the latter, plot.

Tutorial:

Tutorials are twenty-minute one-on-one meetings. The student will turn in a draft of their story a week in advance of the tutorial, and then will meet with me to discuss potential strategies for revision for that story. My goal is to encourage thinking of writing as revision, and tutorials are the best way to give feedback to a writer.

These meetings are optional but encouraged. It will be the student's responsibility to schedule them, so you are welcome at any point in the semester to schedule a tutorial with me so long as you (a) schedule a time to meet at least a week in advance with me and (b) leave a hard copy of the story in my mailbox in Turlington (just across from the elevator bank on the fourth floor). There is no limit to the number of tutorials that you schedule with me.

Final Portfolio (100 points):

No less than 10 pages of creative writing to be turned in to my mailbox in Turlington by April 25th. Accompanied by a revision letter of 1000 words detailing the choices and plan of action the writer made in revising their story.

Attendance:

You are allowed two absences without explanation, but do not miss the day you are going to be workshopped. **Two absences will result in a failure.** Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, religious holidays, or family emergencies and illness, 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. Being late three times to class will be counted as an absence. Critical summaries must be turned in on time to Canvas even if you are going to miss the class – hard copies, in such a case, must be turned into my mailbox.

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. 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.

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. 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 that you must use a laptop or an iPad, please let me know before the course begins.

Notes:

1. 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.
2. The syllabus is subject to change.
3. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.

4. Paper Maintenance Responsibilities: Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
5. 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/>.
6. 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.
7. For information on UF Grading policies, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
8. 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.
9. 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>

Schedule of Assignments:

January 7th ; Week 1

“The School” – Donald Barthelme (Please print and bring to class)

Introduction, Syllabus, In-Class Exercise

January 14th; Week 2

“In Silence” – Robert Stone (in *Why I Write*); “A Good Man is Hard to Find” – Flannery

O’Connor

Exquisite Corpse (Creative Exercise)

January 21st; Week 3:

NO CLASS, Holiday

January 28th; Week 4:

“That’s What Dogs Do” – Amy Hempel (in *Why I Write*); “The Toast” – Rebecca Curtis;

“The David Party” – David Leavitt

Critical Summary 1 Due

February 4th; Week 5:

“Uncanny the Singing that Comes From Certain Husks” – Joy Williams (in *Why I Write*);

“Brownies” – Z.Z. Packer; “Mother” – Grace Paley;

In-class Exercise; Exercise 1 Due

February 11th; Week 6:

“Against Epiphanies” – Charles Baxter (essay on Canvas); “The Semplica-Girl Diaries,”

George Saunders

Critical Summary 2 Due

February 18th; Week 7:

“The Farm” – Joy Williams; “In Cretaceous Seas” – Jim Shepard

Critical Summary 3 Due, Exercise 2 Due

February 25th; Week 8:

“Most Die Young,” – Camille Bordas

Critical Summary 4 Due;

**First four workshop stories due *BRING ENOUGH COPIES, STAPLED, FOR ALL
OF YOUR PEERS***

March 4th ; Week 9;

NO CLASS; SPRING BREAK

Read and Provide Marginal Comments for Your Peer’s Stories for March 11th

March 11th; Week 10:

Workshop Stories

March 18th; Week 11:

Workshop Stories

March 25th; Week 12:

Workshop Stories

April 1st; Week 13:

“The Tumblers,” Nathan Englander

Critical Summary 5 Due; Stories for April 8th Due;

April 8th; Week 14

Workshop Stories

April 15th, Week 15

Workshop Stories

April 22nd; Week 16.

Workshop Stories; Final Portfolio Due April 25th