

CRW 3110—Advanced Fiction Workshop
Tuesdays 4:05-7:05 in Little Hall 217
Camille Bordas, bordas.camille@ufl.edu
Office hours: by appointment

Keep track of this syllabus and feel free to ask questions about it at any time.

Required Texts:

Emailed Readings/Linked Readings—You must print emailed and linked readings and bring them to class on the days they are to be discussed. I will email you all the readings for the course by the end of the week.

Readings by Students—At the very beginning of most class meetings, two (sometimes three) students will hand in FIFTEEN copies of their stories: one for each member of the workshop, and one for me. If you miss class or come late, it is your responsibility to get hold of these stories. As with the emailed readings, you must bring these to class on the days we are scheduled to discuss them.

About Our Class

Each class will be divided between traditional workshop (we'll talk about your stories—this will take most of our class time), and a short conversation about a published story I'll have assigned.

Discussion: Workshop is 100% discussion-based. You must participate in discussion. Disagreements will arise during discussions, as they should. However, personal attacks will not be tolerated. You must conduct yourself in a manner that at all times respects the members of the workshop.

The Fiction of your Workshop peers: Most weeks, you will come to class having read two student stories. You must read every story twice. I ask you to approach the first reading the same way you would approach reading a book you've elected to read on your own, for pleasure, and to treat it the same way. That is: I ask you to try to read the piece on its own terms, and as if it were already published, all its ducks in a row—as if the writer has deep intentions behind every line (which hopefully they do), and you, the reader, want to understand those intentions, and to enjoy the process. I ask that you don't make notes or line-edits until the second time you read the piece, and at that point, you make your notes and line-edits toward helping the writer achieve what you have perceived them to be after. If a writer is working in a tradition you're not fond of, don't try to line-edit them into a different one: just try to help them to do what they want to do better, and note where their piece pulls you forward, where it stalls you out, and why. You'll want to map your comments to lines, phrases, words, and moments in the story. We want to use the story to discuss the story. We want to locate and then accurately describe problems. Same goes for victories.

You are required to come to class

- 1) having line-edited each piece of student work we'll be discussing that week
- 2) having written a list of **AT LEAST three questions** you have about each piece
- 3) having written a list of **AT LEAST three comments** you have about each piece
- 4) having written **one (or more) suggestion(s)** for each author, regarding how you think he might improve his piece.

These questions, comments, and suggestions, are to be given to the authors at the end of workshop.

I may ask to see your lists of questions and comments at any given time. I may ask you to read them aloud during workshop.

Published stories: Each week, we'll read a short story by a published author. You're required to come to class with thoughts, comments and questions you have about the piece. Write them down before class. I may ask to see them at any point. Write down, also, where you thought the story was particularly successful (a scene you liked, or a bit of dialogue, for example), the key moments, how it surprised you.

Questions you'll want to ask yourselves as you read other people's work:

- 1) What do we know about the protagonist? What do we suspect about the protagonist?
- 2) In what kind of world is the story set (ours, ours+, fantastical, etc.)?
- 3) Where exactly is the story set? If this is unclear, make an informed guess. Be descriptive.
- 4) What is at stake? At what point do we realize what is at stake?
- 5) What questions does the story address?
- 6) What is/are the primary source/s of narrative tension? Another way to phrase that: what is propelling us through the story? (note: don't just say "the voice." If that's the answer, then describe the qualities of the voice that propel us.)
- 7) What is the author asking us to pay attention to? How do we know?
- 8) What are the scenes/images that stick with you the most? Why?

Your Fiction: Over the course of the semester, you must turn in 2 stories. Their due-dates will appear on the calendar I will email you by the end of the week. You may not turn your stories in late. You may not email them. You must have fifteen copies with you at the beginning of class on the day they are due. If you fail to turn in on the day your work is due, you will fail the class.

The first story you turn in must be 6 pages or less. The second story you turn in must be 12 pages or less.

All stories **MUST** be

1. typed in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font
2. double-spaced with reasonable margins
3. PAGE-NUMBERED
4. titled
5. by-lined
6. stapled

Errors in grammar, usage, and spelling: I expect your work to be devoid of them. If you have questions about grammar, usage or spelling, please make use of a dictionary, and/or Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*.

Conferences: I will confer one-on-one with each of you about your work. We will do this immediately after class on the day your work is discussed.

Attendance/Punctuality

You will be allowed one absence for the semester. Barring very extreme circumstances, you will automatically fail the course if you miss more than one class. If you are more than twenty minutes late to class, you will be marked absent.

Plagiarism

Will lead swiftly to failure and lots of embarrassment.

Cell phone and Laptops

Their use is not allowed during class. You must come to class with a paper copy of the materials to be discussed that day.

Course Calendar

Week 1, August 20 — Introductions.

Turning in: two volunteers

Week 2, August 27—To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “Bullet in the Brain” (Tobias Wolff)

Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 3, September 3—To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “The Starlight on Idaho” (Denis Johnson)

Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 4, September 10—To discuss: Stories by TBD (3 students), (no published fiction this week)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 5, September 17— To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “The Day We Got Drunk on Cake” (William Trevor)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 6, September 24—To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “Exhortation” (George Saunders)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 7, October 1— To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried” (Amy Hempel)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 8, October 8— To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “Harrison Bergeron” (Kurt Vonnegut)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 9, October 15— To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “Taj Mahal” (Deborah Eisenberg)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 10, October 22– To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “Sunken Park” (José Emilio Pacheco)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 11, October 29— To discuss: Stories by TBD (3 students), (no published fiction this week)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 12, November 5— To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “The Lazy River” (Zadie Smith)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 13, November 12— To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “The Moment They Were Waiting For” (Ken Kalfus)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 14, November 19—To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), “Letter to a Funeral Parlor” (Lydia Davis)
Turning in for next week: TBD

Week 15, November 26—To discuss: Stories by TBD (2 students), Presentation on “The Christmas Miracle” (Rebecca Curtis)
Turning in for next week: no one

Week 16, December 3—No workshop/conclusion