

Fall 2015
TUR 2334
Wed Period 9-11

Email: cjberndt@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Wed/P. 6-8/TUR 4337

“ ‘The aim of literature,’ Baskerville replied grandly, ‘is the creation of a strange object covered with fur which breaks your heart.’ ” —Donald Barthelme, *Come Back, Dr. Caligari*

“The writer’s business is to find the shape of unruly life and to serve her story.” —Dorothy Gallagher

“I am not here to write, but to be mad.” —Robert Walser

“Calmly write a not calm story.” —Padgett Powell

Required Texts:

Making Shapely Diction by Jerome Stern
Object Lessons edited by Lorin Stein
The Little Disturbances of Man by Grace Paley
What We Talk About When We Talk About Love by Raymond Carver

Suggested Texts:

Reality Hunger by David Shields
(You may also use this link <http://realityhunger.com/>)
The Anchor Book of New American Short Stories edited by Ben Marcus

Course Objectives:

1. To leave this course a more precise, surprising, forceful, and controlled writer.
2. To leave this course a more aware, engaged, careful, and voracious reader.

Course Format:

1. **Readings** - To be a great writer you must read. We will be reading a variety of contemporary short fiction. Some of it deals with material that may be unfamiliar and potentially offensive or upsetting. Issues of sexuality, race, class, gender, and religion appear frequently. It is essential that I offer you as comprehensive a survey of voices as I can to build a framework for good writing.
2. **Writing** - To be a great writer you must write, and you must write frequently. You will be writing in class everyday. You will be writing extensively at home. You will be revising your work. This is work that takes time and thought. Last minute writing is not sufficient.
3. **Critiquing** - To be a great writer, you must critique thoughtfully and frequently, knowing that this close reading of another’s prose should, in fact, help your own. This will also make you a more thorough and decisive reader.

***This course is reading intensive and writing intensive. Do not fall prey to the pandemic impression that creative courses are easy. This course will be demanding. You will have upwards 60 pages of reading a week. You will be writing every week.

Again, please be advised that the discussions in this course will be ones that may be sensitive, complex and difficult. I think these are important conversations to have. However, it will certainly never be my intention to make anyone feel uncomfortable. You are under no obligation to agree with me, or anyone else. You are, however, obligated to be respectful of others opinions and to engage with sensitive material thoughtfully. If reading and discussing material dealing with issues of sexuality, gender, religion, etc will be upsetting to you, this may not be the best course for you.

Assignments:

Reading

Read. Class time is wasted if no one has anything to say about the reading. Because of this, I have required specific questions and reactions to the assigned works. I will know if you haven't done it. If I feel people are not reading, I will give quizzes. On the schedule, the "Reading" section tells you what you should have read by that date.

Writing

Critical Responses- You will complete six 800-word (~3 pages) critical essays over the course of the semester. You may turn them in any week, on any readings. You may only complete one per week though, so you may not write three papers a week for the last two weeks of class. If it were me, I would get these out of the way in the first half of the semester, before workshops begin. If you decide to discuss more than one story, the essay needs to put the stories in conversation with each other. These essays will examine the assigned readings and discuss various aspects of content, style, craft, and form. These essays will be held to the conventions of general academic writing—if you make a claim, it must be supported by evidence (i.e., a quoted passage from the reading in question). These are not opinion pieces that discuss whether or not you "hated" or "loved" a story, but serious critical analyses, though I urge you to choose stories to discuss that entice/surprise/confuse/enrage/delight you, stories on which you have something to say. You can discuss perceived strengths and weaknesses of stories as long as you are addressing a specific element (character, structure, prose style, etc.) of the story and you support your claims with evidence. These essays will be discussed in greater detail as they are assigned. A rubric for these essays can be found in subsequent pages of the syllabus.

Stories- Beginning midway through the semester, we will be workshopping your original short fiction. You will bring a copy of your six- to twelve-page* story for each class member the week before you are scheduled for workshop. The Schedule is law. Do not upset the Scheduling Gods. Do not miss the class on which you are scheduled for workshop—consequences will be disastrous, grade-wise.

Following workshop you will revise your final story and turn this in as the course's terminal (and most heavily weighted) assignment. This revision will be a total rewrite of your story, not simply corrections of grammar and a character name change. I want to see the

application of workshop comments and the inclusion of the style and craft elements we have been discussing. I want risks being taken. I want better, livelier, more polished stories. Stories should avoid college tropes (parties, break-ups, dorm/greek life, drug/“trip” narratives) and genre (sci-fi, fantasy, zombie, vampire, My Little Pony fan-fic). These genres are specialized forms that require specialized knowledge to do well: you must learn to walk before you can run, and other such platitudes. There is a very slight amount of wiggle room here that will be addressed on a case-by-case, ad hoc basis, but I want you to be writing literary fiction. That is what we are reading, and therefore learning to write, and that is what I am qualified to teach. This doesn’t mean we can’t have fun. I like fun. We will read some really fun, zany stories. But your stories need to be character driven and written for an adult, literary audience.

*I am giving you such a large range because I want you to write in service of the story, not in service of the course. Do not overwrite a story because you are trying to meet some page requirement. Do not give up on a story that is working and needs more time because you are trying to keep it under a certain page count. That said, do not give me a single page or thirty pages.

“What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our tools, the way we spend our time, our rhythms. To question that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us. We live, true, we breathe, true; we walk, we open doors, we go down staircases, we sit at a table in order to eat, we lie down on a bed in order to sleep. How? Why? Where? When? Why?” —Georges Perec, “The Infra-Ordinary”

Workshop Letters- You will compose workshop letters (-one page, double-spaced) that offer thoughtful criticism of your peers’ work. You should be prepared to read these letters aloud if called upon to do so. The general form of the workshop letter will be discussed in greater detail as the second half of the semester approaches. Bring two printed copies, one for the student whose story is being workshopped, and one for me.

Creative Exercises- (-one page) in-class and at-home assignments in the fictive mode will be assigned every week. Bring printed copies of at-home assignments to class.

Revision Response- Along with the revision you will be turning in an 800 word critical paper discussing your revision and revision process. This paper can bring in stories we looked at in-class or that you read on your own that you used to help structure/inform/enliven your story. It can directly cite helpful criticism you received in class. It can discuss difficulties or excitements of the revision process. It can move however you would like, as long as I get a clear understanding of how and why you revised the way you did. The real writing comes after the first draft (usually, for many people) and I want to see that reflected in both your actual revision and your response to that revision.

Warning: *There is no late delivery.* There is no switching. No last-minute writing. Get the work done. And remember: You are responsible for knowing the basic conventions of style and usage—see Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style*, or me, for guidance.

It is required that you come to class each day fully prepared. We are here to study and create serious fiction, which requires serious work. **If you're hoping for an easy A, this class is not for you.**

Graded Assignments and Other Course Components

1. Class Participation*:	150 points
2. Creative Exercises:	150 points
3. Critical Response Papers:	300 points
4. Story:	150 points
5. Critical Revision Response:	75 points
6. Final Story Revision:	175 points

1000 points total

** Class participation includes written and oral peer critiques as well as your presence and regular contributions in class.*

Attendance

You are allowed one absence *without explanation*, but **do not miss the day your story is workshopped**. Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade for that story. Each absence after the third will lower your final grade by **one full letter**.

There is **no distinction** between excused and unexcused absences. Arriving late to class is considered an absence. Leaving class early is considered an absence.

Meeting Outside of Class

I will give you a day during which you may meet with me about your story. I am also happy to speak with you outside of class at any other point during the semester if you arrange a meeting with me.

Final Notes

1. **You are responsible for checking your university emails.** I will sometimes give or change assignments via email, as well as make any necessary changes to the schedule. *You are responsible for checking your email and approaching me with any questions.* If I have sent an email to you, I will assume you have read and understood it.

2. I may change anything on this syllabus at any time.

3. **Use of cell phones (with hands or ears) is NOT permitted in class.** (That is rude.)
The following is useful information on university policies you should know. Please read over the links provided.

Statement of Writing Requirement fWRY

This course can satisfy 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 educational 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/scer/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>

Assessment Rubric for critical papers

Below are the criteria by which I will grade your critical response papers.

CONTENT	Ideas and analyses should be complex and critical. Papers should offer personal, fresh insights into the material. Go beyond surface matter!
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Use an orderly structure that facilitates reading, sustaining the reader's interest through effective paragraph development and use of proper transitions, presenting a logical flow of ideas.
RISK-TAKING	You must deal with the material in creative and challenging ways, developing main points based on self-initiated criteria independent of my class discussion comments, and avoiding summary unless necessary.
EVIDENCE	You must support your ideas with actual examples from the text, and use relevant details from stories that explain and support your main ideas. Try to use quotations from stories that support your points (one or two lines will do—you will be marked down for excessive use of quotations).
DEVELOPMENT	Analyze evidence in a way that supports your claims and overall thesis, including identifying literary devices/figures of speech and explaining how they contribute to the meaning of the text. AVOID SUMMARY.

MECHANICS	Spelling, grammar, punctuation must be correct. Papers must show careful proofreading, subject-verb agreement, no run-on sentences or sentence fragments, clear pronoun usage.
-----------	--

Schedule

* Readings scheduled are the readings that will be **discussed** in class that day. They will come from your required texts, online (links provided), or as handouts from me.

August 26th: Orientation

We will meet, talk about the syllabus and class expectations, and do some creative exercises. Be prepared to discuss reading and writing and get to know each other. Building a congenial environment is essential to facilitate lively and respectful discussions. We will be reading and discussing a story in class, which I will have for you, and also, Joy William's essay on writing, *Uncanny the Singing That Comes From Certain Husks*.

<https://extensivereadinguae.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/16-uncanny-the-singing-that-comes-from-certain-husks.pdf>

Sept 2nd: What is a story and who's story is it?— Appropriation, Reality, Truth

Read: *Keality Hunger* by David Shields, pg. 21-45 or sections C & D online

Interview: <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/3059/the-art-of-fiction-no-76-raymond-carver>

Gazebo by Raymond Carver

On the Deck by Donald Barthelme

Ten Stories from Flanberthg Lydia Davis (OL)

Write: Observation Exercise

Due: First Writing Exercise

Sept 9th: Structure & Architecture—How to build it up and tear it down

Read: *Why Don't Yon Dance?* by Raymond Carver (OL- make sure you read the introduction by David Means)

Last Night by James Salter

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/11/18/last-night-2>

Emmy Moore 's Journal bj Jane Bowles (OL)

Write: Structure Exercise

Due: Critical Response
Observation Exercise

Sept 16th: How to tell a life— Plot vs. Story, Tension

Read: *Mr. Coffee and Mr. Fixit* by Raymond Carver

The Lady with the Dog by Anton Chekov

http://www.shortstoryamerica.com/pdf/classics/chekhov_lady_withthe_pet_dog.p df

An Literest in Life by Grace Paley

Write: Character Sketch

Due: Critical Response
Structure Exercise

Sept 23rd: Voice and Style

Read: *Will Yon Tell Me?* by Donald Barthelme (handout)

Except for the Sickness Em Quite Healthy Now. You Can Believe That, by T. Glynn (OL)
City Boy by Leonard Michaels (OL)

Write: Style Imitation

Due: Critical Response
Character Sketch

Sept 30th: POV

Read: *Victory Lap* by George Saunders

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/10/05/victory-lap>

Another Drunk Gambler by Craig Nova (OL)

Goodbye and Good Luck by Grace Paley

Write: POV/Perspective Exercise

Due: Critical Response
Imitation Exercise

Oct 7th: Confession/Identity/the Unsayable—Truth?

Read: *Reality Hunger*, section G, pg. 63-81

Drinking Coffee Elsewhere by ZZ Packer

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2000/06/19/drinking-coffee-elsewhere>

In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried by Amy Hempel

<http://fictionaut.com/stories/amy-hempel/in-the-cemetery-where-al-jolson-is-buried.pdf>

Write: Confession/Identity Exercise

Due: Critical Response
POV/Perspective Exercise

Oct 14th: Workshop Begins

Credibility & the (un)Reliable Narrator

Read: *Pelican Song* by Mary Beth Hughes (OL)

The Loudest I Pice by Grace Paley

Car Crash While Hitchhiking by Denis Johnson (OL)

Due: Critical Response
Confession Exercise

Workshop : _____

Oct 21st: Dialogue

Read: *Bangkok* by James Salter (OL)

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love by Raymond Carver

Due: Critical Response

Workshop:. _____

Oct 28th: Memory

Read: *JLealify Hunger* by David Shields pg. 45-63, sections E & F

Younger by Brian Evenson

<http://arthurmag.com/2009/08/11/younger-a-new-short-story-by-brian-evenson/>

Everything Stuck to Him by Raymond Carver

Write: Memory Exercise

Due: Dialogue Exercise

Critical Response

Workshop : _____

Nov 4th: Character

Read: *Something That Needs Nothing* by Miranda July

[https://laurentamra2judson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/something-tiaat-needs-](https://laurentamra2judson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/something-tiaat-needs-nothing-july.pdf)

[nothing-july.pdf](https://laurentamra2judson.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/something-tiaat-needs-nothing-july.pdf)

*Tor Esme—With Eove and Sqnalorhy*JiD. Salinger

[http://materlakes.enschool.org/ourpages/auto/2013/2/25/50973306/Nine Stories](http://materlakes.enschool.org/ourpages/auto/2013/2/25/50973306/Nine%20Stories_by_J_D_Salinger.pdf)

[_by_J_D Salinger.pdf](http://materlakes.enschool.org/ourpages/auto/2013/2/25/50973306/Nine%20Stories_by_J_D_Salinger.pdf)

Due: Critical Response

Memory Exercise

Workshop : _____

Nov 18th: Time

Read: *Dimmer* by Joy Williams (OL)

*The Swimmer*hy John Cheever

[http://www.loa.org/images/pdf/Cheever Swimmer.pdf](http://www.loa.org/images/pdf/Cheever_Swimmer.pdf)

Workshop : _____

Dec 2nd: The End of the Story

Read: *Two Short Sad Stories from a Long and Happy Efe* by Grace Paley

A Perfect Day for Bananafish by J.D. Salinger

[http://materlakes.enschool.org/ourpages/auto/2013/2/25/50973306/Nine Stories
_by_J_D Salinger.pdf](http://materlakes.enschool.org/ourpages/auto/2013/2/25/50973306/Nine%20Stories_by_J_D_Salinger.pdf)

Due: Last Chance —> Critical Responses

Workshop : _____

Dec 9th: Wrap Up

Due: Final Story Revision

NOTE: Final drafts of stories & final critical responses due at the beginning of class!

“Art is not truth; art is the lie that enables us to recognize truth.”—Picasso