

CRW 2100: Beginning Fiction Writing
Section 2333

Instructor: Karen Britten
Class Time: W 10-E1 (5:10-8:10 PM)
Location: TURL 2306
Email: karenlbritten@ufl.edu
Office: TBA
Office hours: W 8 & 9, and by appointment

Required Texts

Jeremy Stern, *Making Shapely Fiction* (any edition is fine)
ISBN-13: 978-0393321241

Note: you are not required to buy a course packet; all short stories for this class are available online. However, you are required to print out all short stories or bring a computer/tablet to class with the story already downloaded on it. Not doing so will affect your participation grade.

Recommended Texts

Strunk and White, *Elements of Style*
Gary Lutz, *Writer's Digest Grammar Desk Reference*

Course Objective

During our fifteen weeks together, we will read and discuss short fiction. Critical thinking and precise writing will be our focus. We will study how writing functions on a nuts-n-bolts level, not solely what a story *means* but also how it *works*. Do the assigned reading beforehand and be prepared to engage in lively discussion.

CRW 1101 has multiple, parts. The first half we'll discuss plot, point of view, character, and dialogue, the crucial elements of fiction. Our exploration of these stories will in turn serve as a model as we attempt our own fiction. We will then workshop each other's stories, providing specific, insightful, and constructive criticism that will benefit the writer and the rest of the class.

Writing Requirement

This course meets the Writing Requirement of 6,000 words of written work that will receive feedback and a grade. This **does not** include works of fiction, however. Please note that if you do not turn in all critical essays, or if you write less than the required word count on those essays, you will not have written enough words to pass the class. Also note that writing activities, short stories, and critiques on short stories do not count towards this requirement. All critical work must be completed to satisfy the Writing Requirement.

Assignment Requirements

The major written assignments in this class are two short stories (5-10 pages) and 3, 2000-word critical essays. A copy of all major assignments, including instructor comments, should be retained and handed in together at the end of the semester. This portfolio will be kept on file for a year and referenced in the event of a grade appeal.

Assessment Rubric

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Papers exhibit evidence that respond to the topic with critical evaluation and use of sources, and provide an informed discussion with basic use of sources.	Papers either include a claim that is unclear or off-topical or only minimal or inadequate use of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate evidence.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit identifiable structure and topics, including a clear thesis statement and topic sentences.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization and lack any coherent sense of associating and organizing ideas. Documents may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.
ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas strongly supported with evidence. The weak end of the satisfactory range documents may provide generalized discussion or provide adequate discussion on weak support for argument.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little support, as in summaries that fail to provide critical analysis.
STYLE	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display variety and logical structure.	Documents rely on word choice inappropriate for the context or discipline. Sentences may be long or short with awkward construction. Documents contain words used incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct grammar and free presentation of ideas. The end of the satisfactory range may contain a few spelling errors, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive and do not obscure the paper's argument points.	Papers contain so many grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding and undermine the writer's credibility.

Coursework (Grade Distribution)

Workshop Critiques (50)

In addition to the comments you make during class discussions, you must provide two typed copies (250 words min.) of critiques for each of the stories submitted to workshop (except your own). One copy is for me, the other for the story's author. Providing responses to your fellow writers is a fundamental element of the workshop; accordingly, you are expected to offer your peers the same high level of useful criticism you hope to receive.

Critical Essays (300 points)

You are required to write at least 6,000 words in this class, which will be divided into 3, 2000-word critical

essays. In those essays, you will be given a prompt that asks you to analyze and synthesize several assigned stories and their use of craft (plot, voice, dialogue, etc.).

Writing Journal/Exercises (100 points)

We will often do short writing exercises. These are fun exercises meant to jumpstart your creativity and encourage you to experiment with language and techniques in a non-threatening environment. During nearly every meeting during the first half of the semester, we'll start an exercise in class, which you can finish at home that week.

First Pages (50 points)

You will be asked to submit the first page of the short story you would like to submit to workshop. I will provide specific feedback on that first page in an individual conference, and you will be required to use that feedback for the first draft of your short story.

First Short Story (200 points)

Your first short story will need to be approximately 7-10 pages. However, you can go slightly over that amount if you need to. You will produce your first short story while engaged in the study of craft. While I do not want to dictate subject matter, you will be expected to write literary fiction. *No genre fiction will be allowed.*

Second Short Story OR Revision of First Short Story (200 points)

For your final project, you will write a revision of your first short story (to be submitted with a copy of the original draft). This must be a significant revision that takes into account the feedback you have received from your peers and instructor during your workshop. Please know that you **must** revise the story submitted to workshop and cannot write a new one unless given permission.

Participation (100 points)

You are expected to attend class regularly, participate fully in class discussions, and critique the work of your peers with diligence and respect. Failure to do any of these things will lower this portion of your grade. I also reserve the right, in cases of disrespectful workshop behavior or lack of adequate peer critique, to lower your participation grade.

Grading Scale

The grading scale will follow UF's current policy --
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx#grades>

Course Policies

Attendance

What happens in our class sessions is essential to meeting the course requirements and objectives; attendance is mandatory. If you must miss two classes, it is not necessary to tell me why. I will assume you had a good reason and I won't judge between an excused and an unexcused absence. However, missing more than two classes will prevent you from meeting the full requirements of the course, and if you miss more than two classes, for any reason, you will not be able to pass the class. **Again, if you miss 3 classes or more, you will not receive credit for the class.** Also note that three incidents of tardiness (5 minutes late or more) will count as one absence (this also includes leaving class early). In addition, any work done in class (i.e., in-class writing assignments) cannot be made up if you are absent. If you miss a class, do not expect me to contact you; you should contact me to see if you missed any important information or assignment changes.

For more information, please consult the following page:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Academic Honesty

All work in this course should be original and individual, unless I have made a group assignment. Evidence of collusion (someone helped you write the assignment), plagiarism (using someone else's published or unpublished words without acknowledgement) or multiple submissions (handing in the same paper to different classes) will lead to the university's procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the academic honor code.

Grade Complaints

A low grade on a single assignment will not prohibit you from earning a reasonable course grade if your work improves. If you have a complaint or are confused about a grade, you may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Please note, however, that grade appeals might result in higher, unchanged, or lower grades.

Participating/Civility

Actively participating in class will enhance your learning experience, as well as that of others. I expect you to be interested, engaged and prepared. In addition, I expect you to be courteous to and respectful of others—your fellow students and your teacher—at all times, even when you encounter diverse opinions. You will be asked to leave the class if your behavior is disruptive or offensive in any way, including anything that denigrates others on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or religion. Your dismissal will be considered an absence. This is not to say that our discussions should be censored. Say what you think, but prepare to back your statements up.

Class participation will shift your grade one way or the other. This is a workshop based largely on class discussions.

Turning in Assignments

All papers must be submitted at the beginning of class on the specified date. They must be typed, using MLA manuscript format and 12 point-Times New Roman or Garamond typeface, printed in black ink on 8-1/2" X 11" paper, with one staple in the upper left-hand corner. **Submissions that fail to meet the above conditions will receive 10% off.** Each assignment is due by the beginning of class on the date specified. Late papers will not be accepted, period. I will not accept papers over email, with the exception of your first short story, unless we discuss the situation and I agree to allow it. Otherwise, they must be hard copies, in class.

The week before your scheduled workshop, you must email a copy of your story to the class listserv. Again, this must be done by Wednesday of the PREVIOUS WEEK, that is, the week before your workshop, before the end of the day (midnight). If you do not email your story a week in advance, your story will not be reviewed and you will fail that assignment.

Accommodations for disabilities

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities.

For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Semester Course Schedule

Reading and writing assignments must be completed prior to the day they appear on the schedule. Come to class prepared to discuss the items listed for that day. Bring your textbook and story to class each day. Note: The

second half of the course may change depending on enrollment and our progress.

08/27/2014 Welcome

Introduction to the course and syllabus. Writing activity and introductions.

09/03/2014 Plot

Presentation/discussion on structuring a story

Have read:

- Jackson - "The Lottery"
- O'Connor - "A Good Man is Hard to Find"
- The chapters on plot, Freytag's Pyramid, beginnings, and tension in *Making Shapely Fiction*

09/10/2014 Characters Made Real

Presentation/discussion on character development

Have read:

- Walker - "Everyday Use"
- Spencer - "First Dark" ****Not online*
- The chapters on character, anti-hero, hero, and archetype in *Making Shapely Fiction*

09/17/2014 Detail

Due: First Critical Essay

Presentation/discussion on "showing" vs. "telling"

Have read:

- Marquez - "A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings"
- Marquez - "One of These Days"
- O'Brien - "The Things They Carried"
- The chapter on description in *Making Shapely Fiction*

09/24/2014 Dialogue & Point of View

Presentation/discussion on dialogue and point of view

Have read:

- Banks - "Sarah Cole: A Type of Love Story"
- Orozco - "Orientation"
- Oates - "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"
- The chapters on dialogue, narrator, and point of view in *Making Shapely Fiction*

10/01/2014 Style and Voice

Due: Second Critical Essay

Presentation/discussion on style and voice

Have read:

- Saunders - "Sea Oak"
- Barthelme - "The School"
- The chapters on voice in *Making Shapely Fiction*

10/08/2014 What Not to Do

Presentation/discussion on how to workshop properly and how to avoid making "rookie" mistakes

- O'Connor - "Greenleaf"
- Short story for practice workshop

- The chapters on stereotype and cliché, and the section “Short Guide To What Not To Do” in *Making Shapely Fiction*

10/15/2014 Conferences

Due: Third Critical Essay

***Bring in first page of your short story for review

10/22/2014 Workshop

Read: “Eveline” by James Joyce

Stories TBA. 3 people.

10/29/2014 Workshop

Read: “Enemies” by Anton Chekov

Stories TBA. 3 people.

11/05/2014 Workshop

Read: “Signs and Symbols” by Vladimir Nabokov

Stories TBA. 3 people.

11/12/2014 Workshop

Read: “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid

Stories TBA. 3 people.

11/19/2014 Workshop

Read: “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” by Leslie Marmon Silko

Stories TBA. 3 people.

NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

12/03/2014 Workshop

Stories TBA. 3 people.

12/10/2014 Last Day

Your revision of your first short story is due 12/10 by 11:59 PM on Sakai.