

FALL 2014
UST 0108
T 9-11 (4:05-7:05)

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Office hours: T 3:00-4:00

Required Texts:

1. *Making Shapely Fiction* by Jerome Stern
2. Coursepack, Goldberg, Section 1633. Available at Bookit!
3. *Giovanni's Room*, James Baldwin
4. *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis*, Lydia Davis
5. *The Lover*, Marguerite Duras
6. *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Truman Capote
7. *When The Emperor Was Divine*, Julie Otsuka
8. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Muriel Spark

Course Objectives:

1. To leave this course writing better than you did when you entered.
2. To leave this course reading better than you did when you entered.
3. To write fiction with more precision, force, and surprise than before.

Course Format:

1. Reading: to be a great writer, you must read.
2. Writing: to be a great writer, you must write.
3. Critiquing: to be a great writer, you must critique thoughtfully and frequently, knowing that this close reading of another's prose will help your own.
4. Revising: To be a good writer, you must revise. Know that not even the best fiction writers in the world get it right the first time. Revision is part of the writing process.

BEWARE: This course is reading intensive and writing intensive. Do not fall prey to the pandemic impression that creative writing courses are easy. I would err on the side of expecting much work from this course.

Also, please note: readings for this class frequently grapple with complex questions of identity (race, class, gender, religion, sexuality, embodiment). Please know that many of these issues are sensitive, complex, and for some students, triggering. Class discussions will be sensitive, compassionate, and nuanced, but be aware that discussions will also be challenging.

This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx#learning>.

Reading

You are expected to come to class having completed all of the assigned reading. Class time is wasted if no one has anything to say about the assigned texts. Because of this, I have required specific critical response papers to the assigned texts. I will know if you haven't done it; it will be obvious in your writing. I may also give pop quizzes. On the schedule, the "Readings" section tells you what you should have read *prior to* that particular class meeting. In other words, readings must be completed before the dates for which they are listed.

Writing

1. Short creative exercises: you will write short exercises most weeks, which will be assigned in class throughout the semester. Please always bring the completed exercise to class.
2. Critical response papers: you will be required to write ten response papers in response to the assigned readings (see below).
3. Five-page short story: midway through the semester a five-page story (not your workshop story) will be due.
4. Story: twenty copies of your manuscript must be delivered ONE CLASS BEFORE it is to be discussed. Your final story should be written for an adult experience; no science fiction/fantasy/fan fiction. Length: eight-twelve pages. NO emailing stories, NO exceptions.
5. Story Revisions: On the last day of class, you must turn in revised versions of both of the above stories. Revisions should be based on my comments, your colleagues' comments in workshop, and our one-on-one meeting outside of class (see below) and **MUST BE SIGNIFICANT. Proofreading is not revision.** All serious writers revise seriously.

Warning: There is NO late delivery. There is no switching. No last-minute writing. I understand that you have other classes and commitments. But in order to produce good writing, you must take your craft seriously. And remember: you are responsible for knowing the basic conventions of style and usage—see Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* for guidance.

Critiquing

You will write comments on each workshop story: marginal notes in ink or pencil AND a TYPED letter to the author. Attach this letter to the piece and return it to the author at the end of class. You will also deliver one copy of this letter to me. In order for the critique to be valuable, it needs to be balanced and specific. You should come in prepared to ask questions of the class, to give suggestions, and to point out what's working in the story.

Critical Response Papers/Thought Papers

You must write weekly critical responses to the assigned readings. At the end of this syllabus, I have included some detailed suggestions for approaching structuring these responses. Each critical response must be total 600 words. Do not go over or above, please. **No late papers will be accepted.**

Please avoid “rating” the stories with remarks of taste, such as “I hated this” or “I liked this.” We will work during the semester to develop your ability to talk about fiction, but please keep in mind that these are published, professional writers, meaning whether you enjoyed their writing or not, they have something to teach you about the practice and art of the written word.

These papers require no library or Internet research. Your ideas should be original and fresh. Give me your take on the material; you can pick just one passage to concentrate on in depth, or you can do a more general reading of the entire story. Either way, I’m interested to hear it.

It is required that you come to class each day fully prepared (I love cold-calling and don’t feel even a little bad about it). 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*:	200 points
2. Creative exercises:	150 points (25 each)
3. Critical response papers:	250 points (25 each)
4. Story draft:	50 points
5. Story:	100 points
6. Final story revision:	250 points
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	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 two absences 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 second will lower your final grade by one full letter. Students excused from an absence are **not** excused from the work assigned for a class session; each student must arrange with the instructor for make-ups.

There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Arriving late to class is considered an absence (and it is #rude!). Leaving class early is considered an absence.

Meeting Outside of Class

You must meet with me outside of class to discuss your story within the week following your workshop. Making an appointment with me is YOUR responsibility, not mine.

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 cellphones (with hands or ears) is NOT permitted in class. Again, that is #rude.

The following is useful information on university policies you should know. Please read over the links provided.

Statement of Writing Requirement (WR)

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 education 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/sccr/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>

University Writing Studio

If you find that you need additional help with your writing outside of class, I strongly recommend that you acquaint yourself with the University Writing Studio (formerly the Reading and Writing Center). The Writing Studio is a free service for current UF graduate and undergraduate students. Students have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a consultant on issues specific to their own particular development. More info is available here:

<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-center/>

Recommended Writing Manuals

For additional style and usage help, I recommend the following:

- *The Elements Of Style* by Strunk and White
- *The Bedford Handbook* by Diana Hacker
- The Purdue OWL website: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Final grade appeals

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

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). Also, be sure to properly cite!

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

Suggestions for Critical Responses/Thought Papers

You must mention all of the readings of the week in your critical response papers, but you are free to concentrate more on one story that particularly piques your interest.

Here are some suggestions on how to structure and focus your critical responses.

1. Use the Theme of the Week: almost every week, we will be focusing on a specific aspect of writing. For instance, we might be talking about plot that week, or dialogue. For your critical response paper, you could write about that specific aspect as it applies to the readings for the week. So, if we are talking about dialogue, you can analyze the dialogue in the assigned stories. Remember, though, that this means you need to reference Stern as well—it is important to explain the ways in which his take on dialogue applies to the stories. And, as always, you need to include specific quotations from the stories themselves.
2. Do a Close Reading: sometimes just a few lines can be applied to the story as a whole. To do a close reading, you should pick 2-5 lines you think perfectly represent some important aspect of the story. You should quote those lines and analyze their language carefully, then apply that analysis to the entire story. Be sure to, by the end, also mention how this analysis does or does not apply to the other story or stories we've read that week.
3. Compare/Contrast a Specific Aspect: pick something the stories have in common. Compare and contrast the appearance/use of that something in the stories we've read that week. Be sure to use specific quotations as evidence.
4. Look at the Structure: we'll talk more about this later, but there are two basic structures of a story: the checkmark and the character portrait. Using specific quotations, you can decide the structure of each story and make a case for that decision.
5. Something Else I Haven't Thought of: If you have another way to approach the stories that uses specific quotations and mentions all of the readings, please, go ahead!

Daily Schedule

August 28: On Fiction and The Unsayable

Read:

- “On The Unsayable” by Stacey D’Erasmio
- Excerpt from *The Flamethrowers*, Rachel Kushner (pgs 159-154)
- “In The Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried” and “Today Will Be A Quiet Day” by Amy Hempel

September 4: On Close Reading

Read:

- *Giovanni’s Room*, James Baldwin
- *Making Shapely Fiction (A-Z): Character, Dialect, Diction*

Due:

- Critical Response #1

September 11: On Trauma

Read:

- *Delicate Edible Birds*, Lauren Groff
- *Terrific Mother*, Lorrie Moore
- *Making Shapely Fiction (A-Z): Beginnings, Endings, Exposition*
- *Making Shapely Fiction “A Cautionary Interlude”* (pp. 61-76)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #2

September 18: On Language

Read:

- *The Lover*, Duras
- *Making Shapely Fiction (A-Z): Beginnings, Endings, Exposition*
- *Making Shapely Fiction “A Cautionary Interlude”* (pp. 61-76)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #2

September 25: On Disappointment and Wants

Read:

- *Mrs. Silly*, William Trevor
- *Drown*, Junot Díaz

Due:

- Your own “Wants” story
(4-5 pages double-spaced, bring hard copy to class)

October 2: Bad Behavior

Read:

- How to Tell Stories to Children, Miranda July
- Goodbye, My Brother, John Cheever

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #3

October 9: On The (Un)bearable

Read:

- TBD, from The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #4

October 16: On Obsession

Read:

- The Kiss, Anton Chekhov
- Vitamins, Raymond Carver

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #5

October 23: On Sentimentality

Read:

- Breakfast at Tiffany's, Truman Capote

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #5

October 30: On Dark Humor

Read:

- "The School" and "Some of Us Have Been Threatening Our Friend Colby" by Donald Barthelme
- Sea Oak, George Saunders

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #6

November 6: On the "Dykyly Psychotic, Crippled, Creepish"

Read:

- The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, Muriel Spark

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #7

November 13: On Doing "Something Bad"

Read:

- Emergency, Denis Johnson
- The Other Place, Mary Gaitskill
- The Beginnings of Grief, Adam Haslett

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #8

November 20: On Memory

Read:

- When The Emperor Was Divine, Julie Otsuka
- Katherine Mansfield, John Weir

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #9

December 4: On Voice

Read:

- The Loudest Voice, Grace Paley
- Listening, Grace Paley

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #10

Workshop Schedule

The date you are assigned is the date that you will have to TURN IN your story. The stories will then be workshopped during the following class period. You must bring in a copy of your manuscript for every student in the class as well as the instructor. No late delivery. No switching.

TURN IN DATES:

Sept 18:

Sept 25:

Oct 2:

Oct 9:

Oct 16:

Oct 23:

Oct 30:

Nov 6:

Nov: 13