

## **CRW 1101-1632**

### **Beginning Fiction Writing**

Instructor: Karen Britten  
Class Time: 9-11  
Location: CBD 212  
Email: karenlbritten@ufl.edu  
Office: 2315  
Office hours: E1, E2 & 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 2100 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 respond to the topic with critically evaluating and sources, and provide an discussion with basic un of sources.	Papers either include a c that is unclear or off- top only minimal or inadequ of ideas. Papers may also sufficient or appropriate
ORGANIZATION AND COHE	Documents and paragra exhibit identifiable struc topics, including a clear statement and topic sent	Documents and paragra clearly identifiable organ lack any coherent sense associating and organizi may also lack transitions coherence to guide the r
ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasi confident presentation o strongly supported with the weak end of the satis documents may provide generalized discussion c provide adequate discus on weak support for arg	Documents make only w generalizations, providin support, as in summaries that fail to provide critic
STYLE	Documents use a writing word choice appropriate context, genre, and disci Sentences should displa and logical structure.	Documents rely on worc inappropriate for the cor discipline. Sentences ma long or short with awkw construction. Document words incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature corre free presentation of idea end of the satisfactory ra may contain a few spelli punctuation, or gramma that remain unobtrusive obscure the paper's argu points.	Papers contain so many grammatical errors that t the reader's understandi undermine the writer's c

### 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.

**01/12/2015 Welcome**

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

**01/19/2015 NO CLASS – MLK JR. DAY**

**01/26/2015 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*

**02/02/2015 Characters Made Real**

Presentation/discussion on character development

Have read:

- Walker - “Everyday Use”
- Adichie – “Birdsong”
- The chapters on character, anti-hero, hero, and archetype in *Making Shapely Fiction*

**02/09/2015 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*

**02/16/2015 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*

**02/23/2015 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*

**03/02/2015 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

**03/09/2015 Conferences**

*Due: Third Critical Essay*

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

**03/16/2015 Workshop**

*Read: "Eveline" by James Joyce*

4 people.

**03/23/2015 Workshop**

*Read: "Enemies" by Anton Chekov*

4 people.

**03/30/2015 Workshop**

*Read: "Signs and Symbols" by Vladimir Nabokov*

4 people.

**04/06/2015 Workshop**

*Read: "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid*

4 people.

**04/13/2015 Workshop**

*Read: "The Man to Send Rain Clouds" by Leslie Marmon Silko*

3 people.

**04/20/2015 Last Day**

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