

CRW 1101: Beginning Fiction Writing

Section

Instructor: Karen Britten
Class Time: W, periods 10-El
Location: AND 0032
Email: karenbritten@ufl.edu
Office: Rolfs 503
Office hours: M, period 5, and T, period 4

Required Texts

Course Packet - available at Target Copy

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, complimentary parts. The first half we'll discuss setting, tone, point of view, character, narrative arc, etc.—the crucial elements of fiction. Our exploration of these stories will in turn serve as a model as we attempt our own fictions. We will then workshop each other's stories. This means giving 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. All 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 one critical essay (4-7 pages). 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.

Coursework (Grade Distribution)

Workshop Critiques (10 %)

In addition to the comments you make during class discussion, you must provide two typed copies (250 words min.) of critiques for each 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.

Reading Responses (10 %)

For those class meetings that have published stories assigned as reading, you will write responses of 300-400 words each. If we are reading multiple stories, choose any one of them. The response should address one or more of the aspects of fiction (i.e., plot, structure, character, point of view, style, setting, theme, etc.).

Writing Journal/Exercises (10%)

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. 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. Each exercise should be one hand-written page, minimum. Always bring your notebook to class, as I may periodically collect journals and grade them solely on whether you completed the exercise or not.

First Pages (5%)

You will be asked to submit the first page of a short story you would like to submit to workshop. The class will read and comment on the first page. The comments and suggestions will need to be taken into consideration for the first draft of your short story.

First Short Story (30%)

Approximately 5-10 pages. You will produce your first short story while engaged in the study of craft. I will not dictate subject matter. Twilight ripoffs will get the same treatment as the most highbrow attempts. The quality of writing is what ultimately matters - not the genre. Do, however, create a story worth telling. This is daunting, I know. Revising, editing, & fearlessness will help. Do not go over 10 pages - excerpts from longer works are acceptable.

Second Short Story OR Revision of First Short Story (30%)

For your final assignment, choose ONE of the following options:

- (1) Write a new story, following the same guidelines as above. Having already written one story, however, you should have a better sense of your craft and voice; therefore this story may weigh more heavily on your final grade.
- (2) Write a revision of your first short story (to be submitted with a copy of the original draft). This must be a significant revision, taking into account the feedback you have received from your peers and me during your workshop.

Participation (15%)

You are expected to attend class regularly, participate fully in class discussions and also 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 individual story or paper grades accordingly.

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 one class, it is not necessary to tell me

why. I will assume you had a good reason and I don't judge between an excused and an unexcused absence. However, missing class will prevent you from meeting the full requirements of the course, and if you miss more than one class, for any reason, it will affect your grade. We meet only once a week - the equivalent of three single-period classes. Three incidents of tardiness will count as one absence (this also includes leaving class early). **Miss 3 classes and you cannot pass the class.** Any work done in class (i.e., in-class writing assignments) cannot be made up. 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.

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, feel free to contact me and I will discuss it with you, so that you can improve your work for the next paper.

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 be prepared 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 not be accepted. 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. They must be hard copies, in class.

When you are going to be workshopped, you must bring copies for every person in the class, including me, the PREVIOUS WEEK, that is, the week before you are to be workshopped. If you miss this class, and fail to have a good reason or to contact me, you will not be workshopped and you will fail that assignment. I take this very seriously - you must have hard copies in class the week before, no email, no lateness.

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, packet, and journal to each class for reference. Note: The second half of the course may change depending on enrollment and our progress.

08/21/13 Welcome

Introduction to the course and syllabus. Discussion of writing journal/exercises. Meet your fellow writers. Grammar and style review.

08/28/2013 Plot

Presentation on structuring the plot of a story.

Have read:

- Jackson - "The Lottery"
- O'Connor - "A Good Man is Hard to Find"

09/04/2013 Detail

Presentation on "showing" vs. "telling"

Have read:

- Marquez - "A Giant Man With Enormous Wings"
- Marquez - "One of These Days"
- O'Brien - "The Things They Carried"

09/11/2013 Characters Made Real

Presentation on character development

Have read:

- Marquez - "Maria Dos Prazeres"
- Jones - "The Pugilist at Rest"

09/18/2013 Who's Talking?

Presentation on Point of View

Have read:

- Calvino - "If On a Winter's Night a Traveler"
- Erdrich - "I'm a Mad Dog Biting Myself for Sympathy"

09/25/2013 Style and Voice

Have read:

- Saunders - "Sea Oak"
- Barthelme - "The School"
- Hemingway - "The Killers"

10/02/2013 Experimentation

Writing unique, fresh fiction

Have read:

Link - "Cavemen"

Dostoevsky - "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man"

***Critical essay due

10/09/2013 Conferences

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

10/16/2013 Workshop

Stories TBA. 3 people.

10/23/2013 Workshop

Stories TBA. 3 people.

10/30/2013 Workshop

Stories TBA. 3 people.

11/06/2013 Workshop

Stories TBA. 3 people.

11/13/2013 Workshop

Stories TBA. 3 people.

11/20/2013 Workshop

Stories TBA. 3 people.

11/27/2013 NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

***Extra credit for attending office hours and discussing your final short story

12/4/2013 - Your second short story OR a revision of your first short story is also due 4/26 by 3:30pm to my TUR mailbox.