

**Required Texts:**

—*Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft, 8th Edition* by Janet Burroway

—Stories given to you in class.

**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 should, in fact, help your own.

**Beware:** this course is reading intensive and writing intensive. Do not fall prey to the pandemic impression that creative courses are easy.

**Reading**

Read. Class time is wasted if no one has anything to say about the reading.

Because of this, I have required specific 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 "Readings" section tells you what you should read in between that date and the next class.

**Writing**

1. **Short creative exercises:** You will write short exercises most days, 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 critical papers in response to the assigned reading (see below).
3. **Five-page draft of story:** Midway through, the first five pages of your final story will be due to your three-person peer group and me.
4. **Story:** Twenty copies of your manuscript must be delivered two classes before it is to be discussed. Your final story should be character-driven and written for an adult audience. Length: eight - twelve pages.

**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.

### Critiquing

You will write comments on each workshop story (whether for peer group or the whole class): 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. There will be one story to which you will be the First Responder. This means I will expect you to begin the discussion. 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

You must write **two critical responses to the assigned reading a week.** At the end of this syllabus, I have included some detailed suggestions for approaching and structuring these responses. Each critical response must total **600 words.** No late papers will be accepted. (Note that you will be required to turn in **ten responses**, though we have six weeks of class. This means you may choose two responses not to turn in, *though you should still read the stories.*)

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. Just 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.

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**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.**

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### 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:	too 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 three 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 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

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.

2.1 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 (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 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/chapter/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/scct/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.

### Suggestions for Critical Responses

You must mention all of the readings for 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.

**I. Use the Theme of the Week:** Almost every week, we will be focusing on a specific aspect of writing. This aspect, or theme, will be introduced by the chapter you read in Burroway. 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 Burroway as well—it is important to explain the ways in which her take on dialogue applies to the stories. *And, as always, you need to include specific quotations from the stories themselves.*

**II. 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.

**III. 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.

**IV. 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.

**V. 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!

**Recommended Reading:** In choosing the readings for this course, I tried very hard to mix more established stories with newer stories because I think college-level courses should give you a good foundation in the tradition of literature while also introducing you to writing you might not see otherwise. Here is a list of very recommended reading that did not make it onto the schedule: “A&P” by John Updike, “Happy Endings” by Margaret Atwood, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor, “Hills Like White Elephants” and “The Killers” by Ernest Hemingway, “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien, “A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner, “A Small, Good Thing” by Raymond Carver, “Hands” by Sherwood Anderson, “Babylon Revisited” by F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Mrs. Silly” by William Trevor, “Hunters in the Snow” by Tobias Wolff, “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson, *Jesus’ Son* by Denis Johnson, “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” by J.D. Salinger, “Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry, “You’re Ugly, Too” by Lorrie Moore, “Woman With the Little Dog” by Anton Chekhov, “Gusev” by Anton Chekhov. I also urge you to take a look at the “Art of Fiction” interviews on *The Paris Review*, ([www.theparisreview.org/interviews](http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews)) **Faculty Reading List:** The collected stories of David Leavitt, *Haifa Life*, a memoir by Jill Ciment, *The Interrogative Mood* by Padgett Powell, *Why Did I Ever* by Mary Robison. You should also take a look at *Subtropics*, the MFA@FLA’s literary journal.