

# CRW 1101 – BEGINNING FICTION WRITING, Section 6752, Spring 2018

**Instructor Name:** Neal Hammons

**Course meeting time:** Thursday, 4:05–7:05 p.m. (periods 9–11)

**Course location:** Matherly Hall (MAT), Room 0118

**Office Location and Hours:** Turlington 4405, Tuesday and Thursday 2–3 p.m.

**Course website:** [elearning.ufl.edu](http://elearning.ufl.edu) (UF Canvas website)

**Instructor Email:** [nhammons@ufl.edu](mailto:nhammons@ufl.edu)

## Required Text

*Making Shapely Fiction*, Jerome Stern

## Course Description

This course focuses on what makes fiction writing work. We will analyze classic and contemporary fiction in order to learn how to improve our own stories.

Throughout the semester, we will study and discuss various aspects of fiction—characterization, conflict, plot/structure, dialogue, atmosphere/setting—in order to strengthen those aspects of our own stories. Our weekly discussions will be informed by the assigned reading from the textbook, *Making Shapely Fiction*.

By the end of this course, you will have produced two pieces of short fiction, critiqued several published stories, and offered constructive feedback to your fellow students about their stories.

## General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for Composition (C), and also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.

- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6,000 words.

### **General Education Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

### **Course Format**

**Reading:** Short stories every week, selections from *Making Shapely Fiction*, occasional interviews with or essays by fiction writers, and your classmates' short stories

**Fiction Writing:** Two short stories—a 4-page story and a 6- to 10-page story (10–16 pages total)

**Critical Writing:** Two 1,000-word analytical essays, eight 500-word analyses of the assigned short stories, responses to classmates' short stories

### **Assignments**

#### **Class Participation (20%)**

Each week we will read short stories (either published stories or workshop stories) and discuss them thoroughly in class. Our discussions about published stories will be centered around a few specific aspects of fiction writing and how the writer approached these aspects. You will often be called on to read part or all of your weekly analysis of the assigned stories.

Our discussion about workshop stories will focus on writing—e.g., characterization, conflict, point of view, etc. These discussions will be thoughtful and helpful, with an aim to helping the writer improve the story. If you are disrespectful of your peers' work, your grade will be affected and everyone will hate you.

**Short Stories (35%)**

You will write two short stories (one 4-page story, one 6- to 10-page story) to be workshopped in class. You must bring enough copies of your story for everyone in the class **THE WEEK BEFORE YOUR WORKSHOP DATE**. You will also turn in a revision of one of your stories during the final week of class.

**IMPORTANT:** Last-page twists—e.g., the character was dead all along, it was all a dream—are almost never a good idea in short fiction. Please don't use them.

**Weekly Analysis and Workshop Critiques (45%)**

*500-Word Analysis:* You will write eight analysis responses, 500 words each (for 4,000 words total). Always bring a hard copy of your weekly analysis to hand in. Each of these responses will analyze the short stories in terms of what we are discussing in class at the time. For example, the first analysis will focus on characters, so your analysis will focus on what we know about the characters in the stories by Saunders and Carver and how those writers build their characters. (Each week I will give instructions about what fiction-writing element that your next analysis should focus on.)

*1,000-Word Analytical Essay:* You will write two analytical essays, 1,000 words each (for 2,000 words total). They will be due on **February 15** and **April 19**. For these essays, you will choose one or two fiction-writing elements that we've discussed and analyze how different authors use these elements in their fiction.

*Workshop Critiques:* Before each workshop, you will read each story **AT LEAST ONCE**. You will make notes on the manuscript itself, and you will bring a 250-word letter addressed to the writer of the story. The letter, your margin notes, and your comments during the workshop should be constructive, tactful, and craft-centered. Be honest about the story's flaws, but remember that you need to be on the side of the writer.

**Attendance**

You are allowed up to two absences, but do not miss the day that your story is workshopped. Three unexcused absences will result in automatic failure.

## Recommended Writing Manuals

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

- *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White
- *The Chicago Manual of Style* (available online via UF computers)
- 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.

## Final Notes

1. I will use university e-mail to contact you. I may sometimes give/change assignments or adjust our schedule via e-mail.
2. Individual items on this syllabus are subject to change.
3. Don't use cell phones or laptops in class. Bring hard copies of everything.

## Course Policies:

1. *You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.*
2. *Attendance:* You are allowed two unexcused absences, but three will result in automatic failure. Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade for that story. Students participating in a university-sponsored event (e.g., athletics, theater, music, field trip) will be excused if there is documentation from an appropriate authority. Students excused from an absence are not excused from the work assigned for a class session; each student must arrange with the instructor to make up the work.
3. *Tardiness:* It can be disruptive. Both the overall grade and the grade for class participation may be lowered because of tardiness.
4. *Paper Format & Submission:* For short stories, print out enough copies for everyone in the class and hand them out the week before your workshop. For essays and analyses, bring me one paper copy.
5. *Late Papers/Assignments:* Late papers will receive a lower letter grade.
6. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
7. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
8. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
9. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
10. *Grade Appeals.* In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the

Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

11. *Course Evaluations*. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course:  
<https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
12. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online:  
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
13. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>

### **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 (at 302 Tigert Hall). 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, and some of the Writing Studio tutors are graduate creative-writing students. More info is available here: <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-center/>

## Weekly Schedule

Reading assignments, scheduling, and weekly themes are subject to change.

### January 11

- Introduction to class
- Review syllabus
- Fiction-writing principles—Characters

### January 18

Characters

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #1
  - READ: “Escape from Spiderhead” by George Saunders and “Fat” by Raymond Carver
  - READ: “Character,” “Hero,” and “Anti-Hero” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- Discuss our first fiction-writing assignment (due on February 8)
- In-class writing exercise
- Fiction-writing principles
  - Show and Tell
  - Conflict

### January 25

Conflict

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #2
  - READ: “Delicate Edible Birds” by Lauren Groff and “3:10 to Yuma” by Elmore Leonard
  - READ: “Tension” and “Description” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- Talk about workshop schedule/format
- In-class writing exercise
- Fiction-writing principles
  - Scenes
  - Plot/structure

### February 1

Scenes and plot/structure

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #3
  - READ: “Speonk” by David Leavitt and “The Wrong Man” by Erin Flanagan
  - READ: “Structure,” “Plot,” and “Scenes” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- EXTRA CREDIT: Fiction reading at The Bull at 8 p.m.
- Fiction-writing principles—Dialogue

February 8

## Dialogue

- DUE: Four-page story (or first four pages) for in-class peer review
  - READ: “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” by Sherman Alexie and “Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway
  - READ: “Dialogue” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- Fiction-writing principles—Atmosphere/Setting

February 15

## Atmosphere/Setting

- DUE: Analytical Essay #1
  - READ: “Tea” by Nancy Reisman and “Cat Person” by Kristen Roupenian
  - READ: “Atmosphere” and “Sex” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- Fiction-writing principles—Point of View

February 22

## Point of View

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #4
  - READ: “There Will Come Soft Rains” by Ray Bradbury
  - READ: “Point of View” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- Stories due for Students 1 and 2

March 1

## Theme/Metaphor

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #5
  - READ: “The Ceiling” by Kevin Brockmeier
  - READ: “Theme” and “Metaphor” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- WORKSHOP: Students 1 and 2
- Stories due for Students 3 and 4

March 8

- SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS

March 15

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #6
  - READ: “How to Tell a True War Story” by Tim O’Brien
  - READ: “Realism” and “Exposition” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- WORKSHOP: Students 3 and 4
- Stories due for Students 5 and 6

March 22

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #7
  - READ: “Heart of a Broken Story” by J. D. Salinger
  - READ: “Metafiction” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- WORKSHOP: Students 5 and 6
- Stories due for Students 7 and 8

March 29

- READ: “The Retarded Hermit” by Padgett Powell and “Some of Us Had Been Threatening Our Friend Colby” by Donald Barthelme
- READ: “Comedy” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- WORKSHOP: Students 7 and 8
- Stories due for Students 9 and 10

April 5

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #8
  - READ: “The Red Bow” by George Saunders
  - READ: “Symbolism” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- WORKSHOP: Students 9 and 10
- Stories due for Students 11 and 12

April 12

- READ: “Monstro” by Junot Diaz
- READ: “Suspension of Disbelief” in *Making Shapely Fiction*
- WORKSHOP: Students 11 and 12
- Stories due for Students 13 and 14

April 19

- DUE: Analytical Essay #2
- WORKSHOP: Students 13 and 14
- Discussion of revisions
- LAST CLASS

April 26

- DUE: Final story revision (via e-mail or Canvas)