

CRW 1101 – Fiction Writing, (Section 0218, Class# 12270), Fall 2021

Instructor Name: Janice Whang

Course meeting times: Monday; Periods 9-11 (4:05 PM - 7:05 PM)

Building/Room: MAT 0002; Hyflex option TBA

Office Location and Hours: Location TBA, Mondays 1:30-3:30pm. Zoom link on Canvas website.

Course website: <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/441908>

Instructor Email: jwhang@ufl.edu

This course provides instruction in the writing of literary fiction, and since careful and reflective reading is the best way to learn how to write, an introduction to the art of close reading.

We will devote the first half of the semester to the strategies, styles, challenges and joys of the short story. The second half will be a traditional fiction workshop: two or more students will turn in stories each week, and the rest of the class will provide feedback the next time we meet.

Remember! We can't be good writers if we aren't good readers. It is essential that all of the reading is not only done but done well. I expect students to come in with passages—lines, sentences, moments, phrases—they want to discuss, as well as questions they would like to explore.

Recommended Text:

Craft in the Real World: Rethinking Fiction Writing and Workshopping by Matthew Salesses (optional)

Method and Madness: The Making of a Story by Alice LaPlante (optional)

General Education Objectives:

This course confers General Education credit for Composition (C). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).

- 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 6000 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 Policies:

- You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course

- *Attendance:* You are required to come to class. Excused absences must be properly excused, via the proper means. If you know your excused absences ahead of time—such as university events—you must tell me when you know, not after the fact. Three instances of tardiness = one unexcused absence. You cannot miss your workshop day.
 - Because we only meet once a week, two unexcused absences will result in automatic failure. Please refer to UF’s attendance policies for further distinctions between (un)excused absences: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
- Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diverse student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal—and accordingly absence—from the class.
- *UF’s policy on Sexual Harassment:* The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/>
- *Paper Format & Submission:* Submissions on canvas for the critical responses; emailed drafts for workshop; MLA format—that is: double spaced; 12 point font (Times New Roman, Calibri, Cambria); pages numbered in the bottom-right corner; an MLA header and a title for your submission. Critical responses may be titled “Critical Response 1” and so forth, but workshop stories may not be titled “Workshop Story.”
- *Late Papers/Assignments:* Critical responses for a class missed can be emailed to me up to one week after the missed class period (this does not apply to classes not missed). Workshop stories cannot be missed.
- *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep copies on your hard drive of all work submitted in this course.
- *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’” The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. A Student must not represent as the Student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:
 1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
 2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student’s own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student’s own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
 3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
 4. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.
- Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give your instructor early in the semester.
- *Students who are in distress* or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you. UF’s Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

- For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
- *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.
- *Course Evaluations.* Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages requesting that you do this online: <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>
- *Course Recordings:* Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A class lecture **does not** include **academic exercises involving student participation.** Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section such as uploading or posting, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Grading

Class Participation (350 points): A successful workshop requires the full participation of every student. By being in a workshop, you are dedicating yourself to learn the craft of writing fiction, and then using your skills, knowledge, and insights to both craft your own story in progress and help your classmates with theirs. Though writing is often perceived as a solitary act, no writer succeeds without the help of fellow writer-readers. Having writer-readers not only gives you the encouragement needed to pursue the highest potential in your story, but practical insights into how to get there and what is holding the story back. Therefore, your enthusiasm, your commitment to the work, and your commitment to your fellow students are more important than any preexisting knowledge that you bring about “literature.” Class participation is very important for this class.

For most of the first part of the semester, we will discuss short fiction. These stories will be posted online on Canvas under the assignment heading. It is the student’s responsibility to read, mark them up, write a critical response for one of the stories, and come to class ready to discuss. Be prepared to talk about the stories in question. Discussion notes will be required to be turned in on Canvas before class. (If you are uncomfortable talking in class, please come speak to me after class.)

In most of the second half of the semester, we will workshop. On workshop days it is expected that you will come to class having read your fellow students’ pieces carefully, and that you have spent time preparing a response to it.

Print out the story. Read the story once for pleasure and general impression, without marking it. The second time, write specific questions for specific passages in the margins, highlight and underline as needed. Margin notes will go back to the author. Then you will type up and print two copies of your workshop letter (one for the author, one for the instructor). Letters count toward the participation grade.

Critical Responses (490 points):

Seven 700-word critical responses (70 points each). Each week over the course of the first half of the semester there will be stories to read; we will discuss them in class, and you will write a response to one of those stories. Our classroom discussions will provide a model for how to write these critical responses.

For the first two weeks, I will give prompts and questions to help generate ideas for your responses. From then on, you will generate your own topic. Each response should be in the form of an argument: you will need a thesis and evidence.

Workshop and Revision (160 points):

You will write one story that your classmates will workshop (80 points). The story must be delivered to the class the week before the scheduled workshop. You will post your story to the canvas Discussion Board as an attachment (ideally you should use Microsoft Word). There is no late delivery. There is no switching. If you are unable to turn in the story on time, an entire letter grade will be deducted from your final grade.

Good writing takes time. Don't put off writing your stories for workshop. Everyone will be able to tell if you wrote it the night before and your workshop will reflect that. Give your creative process the time it deserves.

At the end of the semester, you will write an 1100-word letter describing your development as a writer this semester and your choices for how you went about your revision. You will turn in this letter alongside your revised story by **December 13th** (80 points).

Discussing Published Work

In terms of discussion, there are three things to accomplish with each of the stories we examine:

WHAT does the story accomplish?

What is it doing? What is going on here? What is its effect on you?

- Descriptive

HOW does it accomplish these things?

What are the craft elements of the piece that accomplish a particular effect? Feeling?

- Investigative

WHY does the story accomplish it?

Why does the author make these choices? Why do they do it this way?

- Interpretive

We need to know **WHAT** is going on before we can analyze it. This includes the plot, argument, or surface level meaning of a piece as well as our reading experience of it.

From there, we can look at **HOW** an author accomplishes those things and **WHY** they do it in that way.

Often our first impulse in literature classes is to interpret, but because this is a writing class we need to describe in order to break down and investigate the work.

Think of writing as a type of engineering. We have to take it apart to understand how it works, and ultimately, to figure out how we can build our own.

Examples of Specific, Helpful Questions to Ask:

- 1) What is this story about? (Short summary of major beats in the story)
- 2) What does this story have to say about what it's about?
(This question really refers to plot: the how and the why--what is the dramatic, emotional, and thematic significance of these events?)
- 3) What do you know about the main character or characters? What details in the story (voice, appearance, habits, gestures, activities, dialogue) convey those impressions? Do the characters change over the course of the story? How are they different from everyone else?
- 4) Are some primary characters more fully developed than others? What expectations do the characters share or not share? *What more would you like to know? Are there extraneous characters, characters who do not provide an opportunity for emotional connection (or disconnection) and/or do not move the plot forward? Would the story be enhanced by developing them further or eliminating them?* (Italicized questions are for workshop stories only, not published stories)
- 5) What is the conflict-crisis-resolution structure of this story? What choices do the characters make? What does the main character or characters have to lose? What do they stand to gain? How do they accept or reject consequences? What does this story say about free will/agency?
- 6) What central question or problem does the story present? What possible answers exist? What answer is given? How? What do you find thought-provoking, alive, or memorable?
- 7) If you are not engaged by the story, what might be missing that would facilitate your concern over the character's (or characters') fate?
- 8) What concrete, specific, and sensory detail and imagery do you find that is consistent with the story's overall content? Where does the story lack that detail or imagery or appear inconsistent with plot?
- 9) How would you describe the narrator or speaker's voice? Is it consistent and in keeping with the world the writer has established in the story and with the plot? What is the narrator's orientation to the protagonist? To the world? Does the world or orientation towards the world change over the course of the story?
- 10) Where does the voice of the narrator, speaker, or main character contribute to other elements in the work--setting, physical description, dialogue, gestures, action, sound, rhythm, form and image? Where could it be more fully drawn or specific?
- 11) Can you envision the physical elements of the setting? Are the relevant, sensory details present and convincingly integrated with other elements, such as action? What, other than aesthetic value, does description contribute?
- 12) How would you describe the pacing of the story? Does the pacing change throughout the story and what does it accomplish or fail to accomplish?
- 13) Are you conscious of a theme in the story? If so, is it appropriately dominant or under or overstated?

Discussing Stories in Workshop

When we talk about student stories in class, we will talk about it the way we talk about published stories, centered around craft elements, only we will acknowledge they are *works in progress/in process*. We are in the trade of constructive criticism. It means we are giving our peers the tools to build a better piece and to build each other up into better writers. That's why it's a workshop.

There is certainly a place to say our general reactions—but together we will use discussion to talk about what works and doesn't work. We will use observations, questions, and suggestions and see if as a group we can reveal something about the author's story that they may not be able to realize on their own.

It is our job to help our fellow writers notice their work again—what is interesting about it, what is compelling, and what is possible—and by paying attention and reading closely, we can give them a valuable gift. **Treat other work as you want your work to be treated, read it as you want it to be read, and comment on it in a way that you would find most helpful.**

Schedule:

8/23: Introduction to CRW 1101
Tobias Wolff, "Bullet in the Brain"

8/30: Plot: Conflict, Tension, Agency
ZZ Packer, "Brownies"
Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild"
Matthew Selassee, "Plot" and "Conflict"
Landsborough, D. William, "Freytag's Pyramid and the Three-Act Plot Structure", "Alternative Plot Structures for Authors"
Critical Response #1 due

9/6 Holiday

9/13: Character
James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"
Joyce Carol Oates, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been"
Writers Edit, "Create Compelling Characters With These 3 Character Arcs"
CR#2 Due

9/20: Voice: Tone, Point of View
Yiyun Li, "Immortality"
Uwem Akpan, "An Ex-Mas Feast"
Matthew Selassee, "Tone"
CR#3 Due

9/27: Setting (Time and Place), Dialogue
Jamaica Kincaid, "Xuela"
David Leavitt, "The David Party"
Novel Writing Help, "9 Rules for Writing Dialogue"
Matthew Selassee, "Setting"
CR#4 Due

10/4: Form

Jennifer Egan, "Black Box"

Excerpt from Carmen Maria Machado's *Dream House*

Alice LaPlante, "Why You Need to Show and Tell"

Workshop stories due for Students 1, 2, 3

CR#5 Due

10/11: Workshop Stories

Student 1

Student 2

Student 3

Workshop stories due for Students 4, 5, 6

10/18: Workshop Stories

Student 4

Student 5

Student 6

Workshop stories due for Students 7, 8, 9

10/25: Workshop Stories

Student 7

Student 8

Student 9

11/1: World/Character Arcs, Pacing

Louise Erdrich, "The Stone"

Leonard Michaels, "Honeymoon"

Matthew Selassee, "Character Arc / Story Arc" "Pacing"

Workshop stories due for Students 10, 11, 12

CR #6 Due

11/8: Workshop Stories

Student 10

Student 11

Student 12

Workshop stories due for Students 13, 14, 15

11/15: Workshop Stories

Student 13

Student 14

Student 15

Workshop stories due for Students 16, 17

11/22: Workshop Stories

Student 16

Student 17

Jhumpa Lahiri. "A Temporary Matter"

11/29: Revision

Natalie Goldberg, "Rereading and Rewriting"

Camille Bordas, "The Lottery in Almería"

12/6: Ted Chiang, “Exhalation”
Anton Chekov, “Enemies”
CR#7 Due

12/13 (no class): Revisions due

Rubric of Evaluation for Critical Responses:

A: Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops sophisticated ideas through close reading. Has exceptionally well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

B: Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops sophisticated ideas through close reading. Has well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

C: Contains some analysis of the texts and develops some original ideas about them. Minimal close reading. Has adequately well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), adequately-supported claims, and some appropriate stylistic elements.

D: Contains minimal analysis of the texts. May lack well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, and/or a persuasive organizational structure or close reading. Fails to adequately support its claims and/or use appropriate stylistic elements.

E: Lacks analysis of the text, and therefore fails to demonstrate comprehension.

Letter Grade	Percentage Grade	Grade Point Average (GPA)
A	93-100%	4.0
A-	90-92%	3.7
B+	86-89%	3.3
B	83-85%	3.0
B-	80-82%	2.7
C+	76-79%	2.3
C	73-75%	2.0
C-	70-72%	1.7
D+*	66-69%	1.3
D	63-65%	1.0
D-	60-62%	0.7
F	59%	0.0