

**Instructor:** Jason Walker

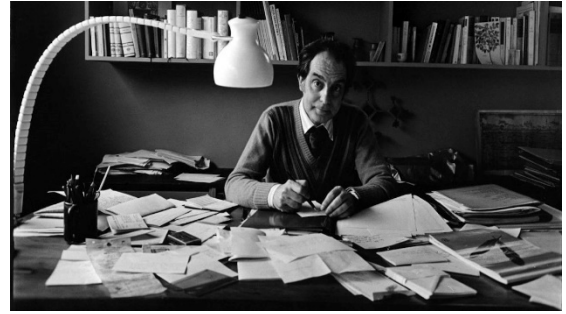
**Email:** [jasonwalker@ufl.edu](mailto:jasonwalker@ufl.edu)

**Course:** CRW1101 / **Section:** 1879 / **Class #:** 12274

**Building/Classroom:** TUR 2306

**Days/Period:** F Period 6-8 = **Friday, 12:50 p.m. to 3:50 p.m.**

**Office Hours:** **Monday**s, 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., by appointment



## Dynamic Fiction

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*Great writers are readers first and foremost:*

"Let others pride themselves about how many pages they have written; I'd rather boast about the ones I've read."

— Jorge Luis Borges

*They feel compelled to write:*

"I think all writing is a disease. You can't stop it."

—William Carlos Williams

*And they aim for what's grand, beautiful, and strange:*

"Beauty is the sole ambition, the exclusive goal of Taste."

—Charles Baudelaire

### Course Description:

"You write in order to change the world, knowing perfectly well that you probably can't, but also knowing that literature is indispensable to the world . . . The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you alter, even but a millimeter the way people look at reality, then you can change it."

—James Baldwin

Writing does create change, no matter how minor that change may seem. In our course, we will read and study fiction (and even a bit of nonfiction and poetry) from a variety of voices, old and new. We will write **Eight Critical Essays (at least 750 words each/totaling 6,000 words for all 8 essays)** related to the stories and books discussed in class. *You must bring your texts and*

*your work to every class.* We shall compose **One Short Story (1,000 words minimum/3,500 words maximum; approximately 4-14 pages)** to submit for workshop. **Several smaller writing exercises and activities will be required, too; for example, I may ask you to write microfiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, or create lists and prompts in class.** The first half of the semester will focus on lectures, discussions, and writing exercises; the second half will center around writing stories or novel excerpts for workshop. We will develop our critical faculties in the first half and put said faculties to work in the second half. Writing isn't a sport—but we *are* on a team. **Your Final Project will include:**

1. **One clean copy of your original workshop story**
2. **One extensive revision of your story or a complete rewriting of it**
3. **A personal manifesto speaking to your aesthetic interests and literary goals**

Some writers we will discuss include but are not limited to César Aira, Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, Paul Auster, James Baldwin, Camille Bordas, Jorge Luis Borges, Sophie Calle, Italo Calvino, Lydia Davis, Graham Greene, Zora Neale Hurston, Shirley Jackson, Edgar Allan Poe, Alice Walker, Kevin Wilson, and Alejandro Zambra. The course, like a short story, packs a lot into a small space: We will study character, theme, plot, setting, dialogue, pacing, tone, voice, conflict, resolution, metaphor, imagery, irony, ambiguity, and many other elements of the craft. Grammar will be emphasized, too. Our course will highlight the importance of imagination in fiction.

**The Goal:** To create a safe, supportive, hyper-productive, and fun atmosphere for reading and writing fiction and literary criticism.

**The Process:** Respectable, hard work is expected from everyone. No one is here to be "a famous author" (please leave the pursuit of fame to vapid celebrities). We are here to put our feet on the ground, our heads in the books, and to—as a favorite teacher of mine once put it—*write, write, write!*



Virginia Woolf: <https://lithub.com/essential-writing-advice-from-virginia-woolf/>

## Required Texts:

We shall read, discuss, and write about the following books:

### Stories

1. *True Stories* by Sophie Calle
2. *Gutshot* by Amelia Gray
3. *Tunneling to the Center of the Earth* by Kevin Wilson

### Novellas

1. *How I Became a Nun* by César Aira, tr. Chris Andrews
2. *City of Glass* by Paul Auster
3. *The Eye* by Vladimir Nabokov, tr. Dmitri Nabokov

### Novels

1. *How to Behave in a Crowd* by Camille Bordas
2. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston
3. *Ways of Going Home* by Alejandro Zambra, tr. Megan McDowell

Everyone is expected to read these short books, as well as other works of fiction distributed via Canvas and/or email. I recommend buying used copies from reliable, independent bookstores:

1. The Strand (New York, NY)
2. Powell's Books (Portland, OR)
3. Thank You Books (Birmingham, AL)

You may also consider checking out books from UF or a public library. *If you have trouble finding or affording books, please let me know so that I can help you.*

**\*Physical texts are a requirement for this course.**

## Reference Materials:

1. You will need access to a **printed dictionary**. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary or any number of professional dictionaries will work. **I expect you to bring your dictionary to every class session. I may ask you to look up words at any moment during class.**
2. You will need a **thesaurus**, too. **Bring your thesaurus to class.**
3. You can access the *Oxford English Dictionary* via UF online.

## Recommended Style Manual:

0. *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White

## More Recommended Texts:

1. Complete Works of Shakespeare
2. Any religious texts: Tao Te Ching, Qur'an, Bible, Talmud, Upanishads, Tibetan Book of the Dead, etc.
3. Any major works of philosophy, history, math, and science

## NOTES:

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Part 1: Close Readings with Discussions and Lectures / Generative Writing:**

#### WEEK 1, AUGUST 27:

1. Introduction to Beginning Fiction and **Workshop Sign-Up**
2. Why Stories?
3. "The Distance of the Moon" by Italo Calvino  
"Everyday Use" by Alice Walker

#### WEEK 2, SEPTEMBER 3:

1. Writing Exercise, Based on *True Stories* by Sophie Calle
2. Focus on Plot
3. "The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allan Poe  
"The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson

#### WEEK 3, SEPTEMBER 10:

1. Writing Exercise, Based on *True Stories* by Sophie Calle
2. Focus on Point-of-View
3. "In a Grove" by Ryūnosuke Akutagawa  
*Rashomon*, directed by Akira Kurosawa

**WEEK 4, SEPTEMBER 17: Critical Essay 1 Due**

1. Writing Exercise, Based on *Gutshot* by Amelia Gray
2. Focus on Conflict and Resolution
3. "Going to Meet the Man" by James Baldwin  
"The Destructors" by Graham Greene

**WEEK 5, SEPTEMBER 24: Critical Essay 2 Due**

1. Writing Exercise, Based on *Gutshot* by Amelia Gray
2. Focus on Character and Tone
3. Discuss Selections from *Tunneling to the Center of the Earth* by Kevin Wilson

**WEEK 6, OCTOBER 1: Critical Essay 3 Due**

1. Writing Exercise, Based on *Gutshot* by Amelia Gray
2. Focus on Voice and Description
3. Discuss Selections from *Tunneling to the Center of the Earth* by Kevin Wilson

**WEEK 7, OCTOBER 8:**

**\*HOMECOMING, NO CLASS**

**Part 2: Generative Writing Continues / Workshop Begins:**

**WEEK 8, OCTOBER 15: Critical Essay 4 Due**

1. Writing Exercise, Based on *True Stories* by Sophie Calle
2. Focus on Improvisational Methods and Observation
3. Discuss *How I Became a Nun* by César Aira, tr. Chris Andrews

**WEEK 9, OCTOBER 22: Critical Essay 5 Due**

1. Writing Exercise, Based on OULIPO
2. Focus on Style and Concept
3. Discuss *City of Glass* by Paul Auster

**WEEK 10, OCTOBER 29: Critical Essay 6 Due**

1. Writing Exercise, Based on OULIPO
2. Focus on Style and Concept Continued

3. Discuss *The Eye* by Vladimir Nabokov, tr. Dmitri Nabokov

**WEEK 11, NOVEMBER 5: Critical Essay 7 Due**

1. Writing Exercise, Based on OULIPO
2. Focus on the Novel: Imagination and Invention
3. Discuss *How to Behave in a Crowd* by Camille Bordas

**WEEK 12, NOVEMBER 12:**

1. Writing Exercise, Based on Prompt Handout
2. Focus on the Novel: Pathos and the Bigger Picture
3. Discuss *How to Behave in a Crowd* by Camille Bordas  
Discuss *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

**WEEK 13, NOVEMBER 19: Critical Essay 8 Due**

1. Writing Exercise, Based on Prompt Handout
2. Focus on the Novel: Imagery, Structure, and Pacing
3. Discuss *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

**Finale: Workshop Ends / Revisions Begin:**

**WEEK 14, NOVEMBER 26:**

**\*HOLIDAY, NO CLASS**

**WEEK 15, DECEMBER 3: Last Day of Class!**

1. Writing Exercise, Based on OULIPO
2. Focus on the Novel: Pushing Boundaries
3. Discuss *Ways of Going Home* by Alejandro Zambra, tr. Megan McDowell

**WEEK 16, DECEMBER 10:**

**\*READING DAY, NO CLASS**

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**FINAL PROJECT DUE:**

# MONDAY, DECEMBER 13,

## BY MIDNIGHT ON CANVAS

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### What to Expect from Our Creative Writing Workshop

Our workshop will be modeled upon Liz Lerman's "Critical Response Process," not the traditional workshop model. You can learn more about her process here: <https://lizlerman.com/critical-response-process/> Drawing heavy influence from Lerman's process, we can expect to play several different *roles* in the midst of workshop:

1. *Artist*: Put time and energy into everything you write. Be prepared to share your work. Be confident yet humble. Focus on serving your art, not your ego. Be willing to question and analyze your own work with the aim of improving it.
2. *Responder*: Create a supportive dialogue with the Artist. Consider the Artist's intentions, which may be quite different from your own. Remember, we all come from different backgrounds and life experiences. Be kind to each other. We are on a team.
3. *Facilitator*: Lead the team and direct its focus toward constructive feedback. Maintain a productive and inquisitive perspective.

The following four "steps" have been transcribed from Lerman's website:

1. Statements of Meaning: Responders state what was meaningful, evocative, interesting, exciting, and/or striking in the work they have just witnessed.
2. Artist as Questioner: The artist asks questions about the work. In answering, responders stay on topic with the question and may express opinions in direct response to the artist's questions.
3. Neutral Questions: Responders ask neutral questions about the work, and the artist responds. Questions are neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them. *This step is one of the most fundamental, challenging, and misunderstood steps of Critical Response Process.*
4. Opinion Time: Responders state opinions, given permission from the artist; the artist has the option to say no.

As a writer myself, I have participated in many creative writing workshops. One of the best workshops that I have ever taken was with Molly Peacock—the great poet, fiction writer, biographer, and editor—who often told us, "The success is in the attempt." Over the past few years, I have taken Molly's generous advice seriously, and I have even more fun writing now than when I first started. We are not here to put each other down or to form cliques. Each member of our workshop is to be respected as an equal. Everyone has something important to share. We are all unique individuals who are coming together to learn, grow, and help each other. We must practice patience, work hard, and stay focused on our writing goals. It is my hope that you will leave our workshop motivated to keep writing beyond academia.

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### **Graded Work:**

**20 Points for Participation:** This includes attendance, discussion, in-class writing exercises, homework, readings, workshop comments, etc.

**50 Points for Critical Essays:** Rubrics/guidelines for your essays will be distributed in-class and/or via Canvas. It is your responsibility to keep up with handouts and Canvas posts related to the Eight Critical Essays.

**10 Points for Workshop Short Story/Novel Excerpt:** Rubrics/guidelines for your stories will be distributed in-class and/or via Canvas.

**20 Points for Final Project:** Rubrics/guidelines for your Final Project will be distributed in-class and/or via Canvas. This assignment includes:

1. One clean copy of your original workshop story
2. One extensive revision of your story *or* a complete rewriting of it
3. A personal manifesto speaking to your aesthetic interests and literary goals

### **UF Official Policies:**

**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 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.

**Attendance:** *You are allowed one absence without explanation, but do not miss the day you are going to be workshopped. Two absences will result in a failure.* Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, religious holidays, or family emergencies and illness, are exempted from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. *Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade for that story. Being late twice to class will be counted as an absence.*

**Classroom Behavior:** 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.

**Cell Phones:** Phones are not allowed in class. You may not text in class. You may not even have your phone out on your desk. If you are asked to put your phone away, you will be marked absent that day. Laptops, iPads, and so on are not allowed in class. Electronic devices must be turned off and/or silenced. Failure to adhere to the cell phone guidelines will result in dismissal from class and an unexcused absence.

**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/>

**Paper Format & Submission:** *Critical Essays shall be submitted electronically via Canvas. Stories shall be submitted via hard copies in class (please print and bring enough stapled copies for everyone); stories shall be submitted via Canvas simultaneously. Stories shall be submitted via Canvas/hard copies brought to class a week prior to your designated workshop date. All assignments shall be formatted as follows: Double-spaced; 12 point Times New Roman or Garamond font only; pages numbered on top right corner via the header; include instructor name and the course title, the story's title, your first and last name, and the turn-in date at the top left of the first page.*

**Late Papers/Assignments/Stories:** *Not accepted.* Results in an F letter-grade for that paper/assignment.

**Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:** *Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.*

**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-studentconduct-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: a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing. b. 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. c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution. d. 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.

**Accommodations:** 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](mailto: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>

Grading scale: • A: 93-100 • A-: 90-92 • B+: 87-89 • B: 83-86 • B-: 80-82 • C+: 77-79 • C: 73-76 • C-: 70-72 • D+: 67-69 • D: 63-66 • D-: 60-62 • E: 0-59

**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). Please contact Ms. Blount at [cblount@ufl.edu](mailto:cblount@ufl.edu) 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/>

**Policy on environmental sustainability:** Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County Friends of the Library annual book sale).

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

**\*The syllabus is subject to change at any time during the semester. It is your responsibility to read and keep up with the syllabus and any changes announced in class or via email/Canvas.**

**\*All email correspondence directed to me must be written in a timely, professional style. I will not answer sloppy emails.**

**\*If you have to miss class for an emergency or an excusable event, please notify me immediately.**

**\*If you have any questions or concerns about the course, please communicate sooner rather than later.**

**\*LAST BUT CERTAINLY NOT LEAST: Our class is a safe-space for LGBTQIA+ students.**

**MORE NOTES:**

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**END OF SYLLABUS.**