

## **CRW 1101 – Beginning Fiction Writing** (Section 1879, Class #12439), Fall 2020

**Instructor Name:** Cassie Fancher

**Course meeting times & locations:** Friday, Periods 3-5 (9:35am-12:35pm), synchronous sessions via Zoom

**Office Location and Hours:** Wednesday, 2:00pm-4:00pm via Zoom, and by appointment

**Course website:** Canvas

**Instructor Email:** cassiefancher@ufl.edu

**Course Description:** In this course, we will read, discuss, and write short fiction. We will spend the first part of the semester reading and discussing published short stories with a particular focus on what we can learn from reading as writers. These discussions will be accompanied by short lectures on some crucial elements of fiction—plot, character, dialogue, etc. We will also do creative exercises in class, allowing you to take what you have learned in readings and discussion and translate those ideas into short, informal pieces that may or may not inspire complete work. In the second part of the semester, we will begin workshoping each other's stories. This will require insightful, respectful criticism and lively in-class discussion. At the beginning of the semester we will work together to create classroom norms and discussion expectations so that our workshop will be a safe and constructive space for everyone.

**COVID-19 Statement:** In light of the continuing impacts of COVID-19, this course will be offered entirely through online course sessions. We will meet synchronously on Zoom nearly every Friday, during periods 3-5. Outside of class time, you are responsible for completing readings, responses, and your own creative work. Our classes will rely heavily on discussion which, I hope, will help to bridge some of the gap between our computer screens. Please be sure to download Zoom on your personal computer before the start of the class and familiarize yourself with how it works. I will send instructions to the class via Canvas about how to join our Zoom meetings.

If you as an individual have any COVID-related hardships which may obstruct your performance in this class, please communicate with me as well as making use of all UF resources available to you. We can then assemble a plan to help you complete the class and fulfill all requirements in the way most beneficial for you.

### **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 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.

**Required Texts:** You do not need to purchase any texts for this course. I will upload all required readings to our course Canvas page.

**Recommended Texts:** If you're interested in further reading, most of the stories assigned for this class come from short story collections that I highly recommend.

### **Assignments:**

This course meets the University writing requirement of 6,000 words of written work that will receive feedback and a grade. You can find more information about the **University Writing Requirement** [here](#).

### **Critical Responses (40%)**

Over the course of the semester, you will be required to write eight 750-word (approximately three page) critical responses. Each class with assigned readings also has an assigned critical response, due the same day as the reading discussion. For classes with multiple stories assigned, you may respond to one or all of the stories. If you choose to respond to all of the stories, you may compare and contrast in a single essay, or submit smaller separate reflections on each story that cumulate in 750 total words. These reflections should address questions of craft. Avoid stating your like or dislike for a particular story. Instead, focus on specific things you notice about the text. Why and how does the story function in the way that it does? These critical responses will be a place to gather your thoughts for in-class discussion. With that in mind, consider what questions you have about a particular story. Are you surprised by any of the author's choices? Feel free to explore questions for which you do not necessarily have an answer, and to bring these questions to class for further discussion. Your final critical response will address your own creative work over the course of the semester and will be due as part of your final portfolio. We will discuss more specific formatting requirements in class. (See below for a grading rubric)

### **Workshop Critiques and Classroom Participation (30%)**

Participation in this course will consist of several components. You will be expected to attend class regularly and to participate actively in class discussions and peer workshops. I reserve the right to deduct points for instances of disrespectful behavior.

You will also be expected to make detailed line edits on your peers' stories, using the commenting tool on Microsoft Word. These comments should clearly explain your reaction to the story. What is working and why? What are your big picture suggestions, and why do you think they could strengthen the piece? In your critique, you should avoid making value statements ("I like/don't like this.") as these types of comments will not help your classmates develop their writing. You should also avoid providing comments relating to grammar or spelling technicalities.

One copy of your annotated story should be uploaded to Canvas, and another copy should be emailed to the story's author. Respectful and diligent critique is essential. Instances of disrespectful workshop behavior or inadequate feedback will result in a lower grade.

### **Writing Exercises (10%)**

At times, we will do in-class writing exercises. These are intended to get you started thinking about how published stories and ideas discussed in class might translate into your own work. These exercises are also meant to be experimental and fun—a chance to try new techniques and to generate ideas for your longer stories. These exercises should be a minimum of 200 words. You will be graded on completion and little else, as these exercises are meant to be a low-stakes way to take risks with your writing.

### **First Short Story (10%)**

Your first short story should be 6-10 pages (approximately 1,500-2,500 words). Please do not submit more than 12 pages (approximately 3,000 words). Your story should incorporate elements of craft learned and discussed in class. Your story can be about anything you want, though we will take time to discuss appropriative writing and overused tropes, both of which should be avoided. You will need to submit this story in your final portfolio, so if you choose to revise this story after your workshop, please do so in a separate document, preserving both drafts for easy comparison.

### **Second Short Story OR Revision of First Short Story (10%)**

For your second short story, you may submit either

- 1.) An entirely new story, following the guidelines above. This story should still incorporate feedback from your first workshop. For example, if you received feedback on your first short story that your characters could be further developed, your second short story should exhibit more fully developed characters, even if they are different characters.
- 2.) A revision of your first short story. This revision must take into account the feedback you received on your first short story. Most importantly, a revision of your first short story requires significant, big-picture changes. Taking risks is encouraged. Simply changing a few words, patching up grammatical errors, or rearranging a few paragraphs will not suffice.

### **Conferences**

You are required to have one conference with me outside of class to discuss your story and possible revisions. I recommend scheduling your conference sometime in the week following your workshop. It is your responsibility to schedule an appointment with me and you will not receive reminders.

### Course Policies:

1. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
2. **Attendance:** Like all lecture-discussion courses, this one needs you! Use your allotted absences wisely (for emergencies, major illness) as you would for any job. You will fail the course if you accrue **six** 50-minute absences. Note that missing a triple session counts as three absences. You will know your workshop date far in advance and you **may not** miss that day.  
You can review university policy, including information about excused absences here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
3. **Tardiness:** Latecomers receive partial absences and must see me after class so I know you attended.
4. **Classroom Behavior and Etiquette:** All in-class discussion is expected to be respectful and constructive. Repeated instances of disrespect will result in a lowered grade. On the first day of class we will determine classroom norms and, once these are finalized, all classroom participants are expected to abide by these norms.
5. **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/policy-statement/>
6. **Paper Format & Submission:** All papers should be submitted on Canvas via Turnitin. Papers should be double-spaced and written in a 12-point, clearly legible font. Stories for Workshop should be emailed to me in .doc or .docx form and I will forward the stories to the entire class.
7. **Late Papers/Assignments:** Since all assignments correspond directly to in-class discussions, they must be submitted on-time. It is especially important to submit stories for workshop on-time, one week before your scheduled workshop, since your classmates will need that time to carefully read and respond to your work. In general, late submissions will not be awarded credit, although if a situation arises, especially related to the current pandemic and any associated difficulties, please let me know as soon as possible and I will do my best to work out a solution.
8. **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:** Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
9. **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 (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.

The UF Student Honor Code defines plagiarism as such:

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.>

10. **Accommodations for students with disabilities:** 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 me early in the semester. I also encourage you to make use of campus resources like the Writing Studio (<https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>). Finally, if there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or participating, please let me know as soon as possible. Your success in this class is important to me and I would like to work together to make sure that all students have their learning needs met in this course.
11. **Counseling Services:** 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/>
12. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
13. **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.
14. **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://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>

**SYLLABUS (subject to change—I will let you know of any changes in advance)**

<b>Wk</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Read/View for Class</b>	<b>DUE</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>Introduction to the course, syllabus, classroom norms</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>9.11</b>	<b>Plot &amp; Narrative Shape</b> To Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "David Sherman, the Last Son of God" Rion Amilcar Scott (from <i>The World Doesn't Require You</i>)</li> <li>○ "The Third and Final Continent" Jhumpa Lahiri (from <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i>)</li> </ul>	<b>Critical Response #1</b>

<b>3</b>	<b>9.18</b>	<b>Character</b> To Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "Someone Ought to Tell Her There's Nowhere to Go" Danielle Evans (from <i>Before You Suffocate Your Own Fool Self</i>)</li> </ul>	<b>Critical Response #2</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>9.25</b>	<b>Dialogue</b> To Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "The Gift" Edwidge Danticat (from <i>Everything Inside</i>)</li> <li>○ "Fatherland" Viet Thanh Nguyen (from <i>The Refugees</i>)</li> </ul>	<b>Critical Response #3</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>Asynchronous Class—Literary Magazine Activity</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>Narrative Point of View</b> To Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "The Swim Team" Miranda July (from <i>No One Belongs Here More Than You</i>)</li> <li>○ "The Thing Around Your Neck" Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (from <i>The Thing Around Your Neck</i>)</li> <li>○ "Light" Lesley Nneka Arimah (from <i>What it Means When a Man Falls From the Sky</i>)</li> </ul>	<b>Critical Response #4</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>10.16</b>	<b>Negative Space</b> To Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried" Amy Hempel (from <i>Reasons to Live</i>)</li> <li>○ "Stay Brave, My Hercules" Ernie Wang</li> </ul> <b>Workshop</b>	<b>Critical Response #5</b>  <b>Workshop Critique(s)</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>10.23</b>	<b>Setting</b> To Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "In the Fall" Alistair MacLeod (from <i>The Lost Salt Gift of Blood</i>)</li> <li>○ "Borders" Thomas King</li> </ul> <b>Workshop</b>	<b>Critical Response #6</b>  <b>Workshop Critique(s)</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>10.30</b>	<b>Style &amp; Experimental Form</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "Real Women Have Bodies" Carmen Maria Machado (from <i>Her Body and Other Parties</i>)</li> <li>○ "Reading Comprehension: Text No. 1" Alejandro Zambra, translated by Megan McDowell</li> </ul> <b>Workshop</b>	<b>Critical Response #7</b>  <b>Workshop Critique(s)</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>Workshop</b>	<b>Workshop Critique(s)</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>11.13</b>	<b>Workshop</b>	<b>Workshop Critique(s)</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>11.20</b>	<b>Workshop</b>	<b>Workshop Critique(s)</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>11.27</b>	<b>NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK</b>	
<b>14</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>End of Semester Reading</b>	<b>FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE</b>

## **Grading:**

Please note that your Critical Responses and Workshop Critiques are graded more heavily than your short stories and in-class writing exercises. This is because close reading, careful feedback, and constructive discussion are key elements of this course. It is also to give you more freedom to work creatively on your own stories, rather than towards a grade. This grade distribution does not mean that your stories matter less in the scheme of the class—it is simply an attempt to place grading emphasis where it is most useful.

## **Assessment Rubric for Critical Responses:**

**A:** Demonstrates a deep engagement with the text and the development of original, sophisticated ideas. Paragraphs are exceptionally well-crafted and ideas are organized logically. Writing is clear and makes use of appropriate stylistic elements.

**B:** Demonstrates good reading comprehension. Original, sophisticated ideas are discussed. Paragraphs are well-crafted and ideas are organized logically. Writing is clear and some stylistic elements are used.

**C:** Demonstrates basic reading comprehension and includes some original ideas. Paragraphs are adequately crafted and ideas are mostly well-organized. Writing is clear and some stylistic elements are used.

**D:** Engages with the text only on a superficial level. Contains very little original thought and/or fails to adequately support claims with textual evidence. Paragraphs are poorly crafted and ideas are unorganized.

**E:** Fails to engage with the text in a way that demonstrates reading and/or comprehension.