

Advanced Fiction Workshop, CRW 4905 The Art of Constraint

Tuesdays: 4:05 PM – 7:05 PM, CBD 0238

Instructor: Camille Bordas

Office: 4211-F

Office Hours: Monday 2PM-4PM, by appointment

E-mail: bordas.camille@ufl.edu

Keep track of this syllabus and feel free to ask questions about it at any time.

Required Texts:

Emailed Readings—You must print emailed readings and bring them to class on the days they are to be discussed. I will email you most of the readings for the course by the end of the week, or as the semester proceeds.

Readings by Students—At the very beginning of each of our last seven class meetings, two students will hand in fourteen copies of their stories: one for each member of the workshop, and one for me. If you miss class or come late, it is your responsibility to get hold of these stories. As with the emailed readings, you must bring these to class on the days we are scheduled to discuss them.

About Our Class

Our time in class will mostly consist of discussing the works assigned. You are expected to read the works closely and come to class with a list of 3 insightful questions, comments or thoughts you've had about what you read.

We will devote the first half of the semester to the discussion of published fiction. The second half will be a traditional fiction workshop, the requirements of which will be discussed in detail later on, but which can be described, in general, as a format in which we apply the same critical skills to our own work as those we've learned to apply to the assigned readings.

Discussion: Apart from in-class exercises, this workshop is 100% discussion-based. You must participate in discussion. Disagreements will arise during discussions, as they should. However, personal attacks will not be tolerated. You must conduct yourself in a manner that at all times respects the members of the workshop.

First part of the semester (Weeks 2 to 8)

We will read and talk about pieces of published fiction (stories and novel excerpts), and we will try to see what makes them work the way they do. After these discussions, we'll engage in writing exercises that relate to the fiction we have discussed. Some of these exercises will be done in class, some at home. Often, we will share them.

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Second part of the semester (Weeks 9 to 15): traditional workshop

The Fiction of Others: the last seven weeks of the semester, you will come to class having read two student stories. You must read every story at least twice. You must line-edit each student-story and write a deeply considered critique-letter to its author. I may, at any given time, ask you for a copy of your critiques. I may ask you to read them aloud during workshop.

Your Fiction: Over the course of these seven weeks, you must turn in one story. Its due-date will appear on the calendar I will email you by the end of the week. You may not turn your story in late. You may not email it. You must have fourteen copies with you at the beginning of class on the day it is due. If you fail to turn in on the day your work is due, you will fail the class.

IMPORTANT NOTE: We will concern ourselves with literary fiction, written for adults, rather than genre fiction (young adult or children's fiction).

All stories **MUST** be

1. 4-12 pages in length
2. typed in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font
3. double-spaced with one-inch margins
4. page-numbered
5. titled
6. by-lined
7. stapled

Errors in grammar, usage, and spelling: I expect your work to be devoid of them. If you have questions about grammar, usage or spelling, please make use of a dictionary, and/or Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*.

Laptops, Etc.:

Laptops, iPads etc. are not allowed in class. If there is a special reason why you must use a laptop or an iPad, please let me know before the course begins.

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Attendance/Punctuality

You will be allowed one absence for the semester. Barring very extreme circumstances, you will automatically fail the course if you miss more than one class. If you are more than twenty minutes late to class, you will be marked absent.

Plagiarism

Will lead swiftly to failure and lots of embarrassment.

Additional Information:

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/>.

Student disability services:

Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.

Grading:

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:

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>

UF Reading and Writing Center:

The Reading and Writing Center at the University of Florida is an excellent resource for improving reading comprehension and writing skills. For more information, see: <http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/>

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Harassment:

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

Course Calendar
(subject to change)

Week 1, January 8 – Introductions; Discuss: various “Exercises in Style,” by Raymond Queneau

Week 2, January 15–To discuss: “Political Science,” by Thomas Bernhard, and “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place,” by Ernest Hemingway.
In-class exercises.

Week 3, January 22– To discuss: excerpts from *Autoportrait*, by Edouard Levé, and *The Interrogative Mood*, by Padgett Powell (I will send you excerpts of these novels).
In-class exercises.

Week 4, January 29- To discuss: “The Day the Mice Failed to Arrive,” by Gerald Murnane, “Killing Cats,” by Brian Evenson.
In-class exercises.

Week 5, February 5–To discuss: Letter to a Funeral Parlor, Lydia Davis, My Brother Stanley, Jenny Diski.
In-class exercises.

Week 6, February 12– To discuss: “For Esmé, With Love and Squalor,” by J. D. Salinger, and “The Toast,” by Rebecca Curtis.
In-class exercises.

Week 7, February 19— To discuss: “Four Institutional Monologues,” by George Saunders, excerpt from *Europeana*, by Patrick Ourednik.
In-class exercises.

Week 8, February 26— To discuss: excerpt from *Time’s Arrow* and *Night Train*, by Martin Amis.
In-class exercises.
First two students (TBD) turn in fiction to be workshopped in the next class.

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**March 5—SPRING BREAK
START OF TRADITIONAL WORKSHOP**

Week 9, March 12– To discuss: Stories by TBD
Turning in for the following week: TBD

Week 10, March 19— To discuss: Stories by TBD
Turning in for the following week: TBD

Week 11, March 26— To discuss: Stories by TBD
Turning in for the following week: TBD

Week 12, April 2nd— To discuss: Stories by TBD
Turning in for the following week: TBD

Week 13, April 9— To discuss: Stories by TBD
Turning in for the following week: TBD

Week 14, April 16— To discuss: Stories by TBD
Turning in for the following week: TBD

Week 15, April 23— To discuss: Stories by TBD
Turning in for the following week: no one, end of semester.