

CRW1101: Fiction

Instructor: Milan Mosley

Class time: W 9-11

Room: FLII 0101

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Office hours: Wednesday 2-3pm, TUR 4349

Required texts: A course packet with the weekly readings will be distributed prior to class. Texts will be either short stories or excerpts from John Gardner's *Art of Fiction* and Ursula K. Le Guin's *Steering The Craft*.

Course Objective

This course will be split into two parts, one which will focus on dissecting quality fiction so that we may apply the techniques there into our own writing, and the other which will be a standard workshop where we read and react to the writing of your classmates. This course will not preference any one genre, only quality fiction which exists in any genre. The criteria used in separating quality fiction from what's generally negatively referred to as "pulp" is up to the reader, whose tastes will come pre-shaped by the fiction you've read prior to this class, and will be further guided by the advice and expertise of the writers we will be studying.

The first half of this course will be organized around writing assignments. Some of these will be free flowing, other's will follow strict rules. All of these serve the purpose of encouraging you to write often and in ways that are new to you. The assignments will be pulled from "craft books" written by John Gardner, E.M. Forster, and Ursula K. Le Guin, the former a literary writer and the latter a science fiction and fantasy author. Whether you are assigned to read a short story or a section on the craft of writing, you will be expected to pen an informal 300 word response on that topic or story.

The second half of the course will be built around the work of your peers. Every week, two of your classmates will bring in either full stories or selections from longer works. You will be expected to write 300 word responses to these stories as well.

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 will include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences,

purposes, and contexts. Students will 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 the 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.

Assignment Requirements

The major written assignments in this class are weekly reading responses, in-class writing exercises, one text analysis, and a reflection essay. As well as this, you will complete at least one short story to be workshopped. **A (digital) copy of all major assignments and in-class exercises, including instructor comments, should be retained and handed in at the end of the semester.**

Coursework

Graded work has a word count and point percentage included. 1000 points are available overall.

Reading Responses/ Workshop Letters (30%)

This class is structured in order to guide you towards thinking as a writer, and reading as a writer. Therefore, it's important to allow you to meditate on what you've read/written. Therefore, in most weeks you will be asked to write a response letter to a reading, be that a story you've read, advice on the craft, or the writing of your peers. Each of these responses are expected to be 300 words long at a minimum.

Once we move to workshop, you will write a letter addressed to the author being workshopped. This will be posted on a discussion board the day **after** class – please do not post before class has begun.

Close Textual Analysis (1500 words/ 30%) Your first major assignment will be to closely analyze a text of your own choosing. The goal of this assignment is to force you to read as a writer, i.e., read as if you are trying to copy every single technique employed, and not simply for pleasure. The readings and discussions we use in class will assist you in spotting these techniques, and this assignment will force you to pinpoint where and when a text is using them.

Writing Exercises In this class, we will be doing regular writing exercises. They will either be based on the texts we read, or on a particular technique or form of writing.

Short Story (2000 words minimum/ 20%) Toward the end of our craft talk section, you will begin to pen your workshop story. There will be no restrictions placed in terms of content or genre, however, if your content is particularly sensitive of transgressive, it's best to warn people.

Do not go over 4000 words; excerpts from longer works are acceptable.

Revision of First Story (2000 words minimum) and Reflection Letter (500 words) (20%) For your final assignment, you will write a revision of your first story (submit with a copy of the original draft). This must be a significant revision, considering the feedback you have received from your peers and me during your workshop. Your grade will suffer if you only make grammatical or technical fixes—your story must develop and grow. You will also write a 500-word reflection letter discussing the changes you've made.

Participation You are expected to attend class regularly, participate actively in class discussions and critique the work of your peers with diligence and respect. Failure to do any of these things will lower this portion of your grade. I also reserve the right, in cases of disrespectful workshop behavior or lack of adequate peer critique, to lower your individual story or paper grades accordingly.

Course Policies:

- *Assignments:* You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
- *Attendance:* Given that we meet only once a week, you are allowed **one** absence without explanation or excuse (though prior notice would be greatly appreciated given the nature of the course). Subsequent unexplained or unexcused absences will affect your grade. **If you have more than 2 absences, you cannot pass the course.**

Excused absences, such as athletic events, theater commitments, illnesses, family emergencies, etc. **require appropriate documentation AND advance notice given to**

me. You will be responsible for meeting with me outside of class to make a plan for completing work missed due to absences. You will also be responsible for turning in any assignments regardless of whether you are in class or not. For UF's official attendance policy, you can visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

- *Tardiness:* Be on time to show respect to your colleagues and me. Should lateness be unavoidable, understand that **3 late arrivals without advance notice = 1 absence.**
- *Classroom Behavior:* Please be respectful and attentive to your colleagues and to me when we are talking, whether during discussion of published poets or during workshop of our own work. In particular, be respectful of your colleagues' diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and beliefs. Critique others as you would like to be critiqued—for me, that means substantive, actionable feedback that respects the intention and inherent validity of the submitted work.

You are also responsible for keeping up with your UF email, as this is how I will contact you outside of class. Feel free to reach out to me via Canvas messaging anytime—I'll try to respond within 24 hours on business days.

No use of phones or laptops during class unless I specifically instruct you to use your laptops for in-class work.

- *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:* All assignments should be typed in a readable, 12 pt. font with standard 1 in. margins. All assignments except poems should be double-spaced. (Poems should be single-spaced.) **Submit all stories**, whether to me or for workshop, **via email in class AND on Canvas. If you would like to submit via paper, you are responsible for bringing enough copies of your story to class, the week prior to your workshop date.**
- *Late Papers/Assignments:* Acceptance of late papers/assignments will be at my discretion and dependent on circumstances. **Here, as with absences, advance notice is key.**
- *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-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.

As specified by the current UF Student Honor Code: 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.

In short, show respect to yourself, your colleagues, and me by submitting original work earnestly and honestly produced by you for all assignments.

- 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 <https://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 at (352) 392-1575. You can also contact them online at <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

If you are experiencing unmanageable stress or other emotional or physical distress during the semester, please **ask me for help finding resources**. In addition to teaching you to read and write fiction, I am committed to helping you succeed in a rigorous academic environment and to introducing you to the myriad resources for mental, physical, and emotional help and for time- and stress-management available on campus.

- 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 (cblount@ufl.edu), 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://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>

Grading Scale and General Rubric:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
93-100	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	0-59
4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	1.33	1.0	0.67	0.00

"A"- A paper at this level is truly high quality. It demonstrates a clear understanding of critical concepts, creatively addresses the subject matter, and exceeds the expectations of critical analysis. A paper with this grade will be free of grammatical errors.

"B"- A paper with this grade has met the standards of the assignment at a high level. This assignment may need revision but is organized in a logical way and avoids fallacies or mistakes in critical analysis. A paper with this grade may contain grammatical errors but will be readable.

"C"- A paper that earns a "C" has done everything that was required, but no more. This assignment may require significant revision to more thoroughly examine critical elements or may need reorganization. A paper with this grade will generally contain a few grammatical errors but will still be readable.

"D"- This paper does not adequately fulfill the assignment to a satisfactory degree. One portion of an assignment may be missing or there may be a misused critical element. Papers with this grade tend to be disorganized and contain many grammatical errors.

"E"- This paper does not address the assignment prompt or is unreadable/incomplete.

Semester class schedule

Please complete ALL readings before each class, and come prepared to participate in discussion. I will circulate a course packet online before the start of class.

Week One – Welcome and overview of class

Introduction to the course and syllabus. Discussion of writing exercises. Discussion of the workshop method. Meet your fellow writers.

In class writing exercise

Week 2– Around The Literary World

What is Genre Fiction, really? Let's sample a few short pieces from different "genres" and try to distinguish between the "vibes" of each piece. Is one intrinsically stronger than the other? How do plot and structure relate to one another?

Ursula K Le Guin – Vaster Than Empires and More Slow

Denis Johnson - Car Crash While Hitchhiking

300 Word Response on Genre Differences Due

Week 3 – The Sentence

These classes on the sentence and the structure of a good sentence will pull primarily from John Gardner and Le Guin's books. This is really an opportunity for you to acquaint yourself with odd sentences, sentences that are long and breathless, short and terse, as long as a page or as short as a single phrase. Consider it exposure therapy, so that when you return to that highly personal writing that you do on your own, you will have this experience in your back pocket.

Reading: Blood Meridian Excerpt

In Class Exercises

Week 4 – The Sentence Pt. 2

Writing a good literary sentence is like dancing along a tightrope; it's easy to indulge in too much fancy footwork and send yourself falling over. A clumsy analogy, or a clash of register and tone, can completely ruin an otherwise perfectly functional sentence.

TBD – "TBD"

300 Word Response Due

In Class Exercises

Week 5– Structure, Story, and Plot

And then? And then? Freytag's pyramid, three act structure, five act structure. How can we simplify all these little rules of thumb we have in our heads as writers?

E.M Forster – Excerpt from Aspects of the Novel

John Gardner – Excerpt from Art of Fiction

Week 6 – Character

First Workshop

Flat, round, 3D/2D. So much obfuscating jargon is heaped onto the practice of drawing characters that it's hard to get down to the bones of what a good character is. We're going to look at some perspectives from great authors, including some tiny excerpts exemplifying great characterization

E.M Forster – Excerpt from "Aspects of the Novel"

Jorge Luis Borges – Excerpt from "Seven Nights"

300 Word Response on Story/Structure/Plot due

Week 7 – Workshop

Text analysis due

Week 8- Workshop

Italo Calvino – Excerpt from “Invisible Cities”

Week 9 – Workshop

Week 10 – Workshop

Flannery O’Connor – “The Life You Save May Be Your Own”

Week 11 – Workshop

Week 12 – Workshop

Herman Melville – “TBD”

Week 13– Workshop

Week 14– Workshop

Week 15 – Workshop