

Beginning Fiction Writing

CRW1101, Section 0218, Class #1211, Fall 2022

Instructor Name: Payal Nagpal

Course meeting times and location: M9-11 (Mondays, 4.05-7.05 pm), AND0032

Office Hours: Monday and Thursday, 2.45-3.45 pm in TUR4315, and by appointment

Instructor Email: payalnagpal@ufl.edu

Course Description

This is a class dedicated to reading, discussing, and writing short fiction. In the first half of the semester, you will read published short stories, keeping in mind what you can learn from them as writers. We will discuss them with a particular focus on the formal elements of fiction, like plot, character, point of view, and dialogue. You will also respond to creative prompts in class, which may or may not inspire complete works. The second half of the semester will be dedicated to workshops, where you will engage directly with your peers' work and receive feedback on your own writing. This will require insightful and respectful criticism and lively in-class discussion. My hope is that you will leave this class having sharpened not only your skills as a writer, but as a reader, critic, editor, and collaborator.

COVID Statement

In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit one.ufl.edu for screening/testing and vaccination opportunities.
- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

HB7 Statement

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

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 Reading

You are not required to purchase any books for this class. I will upload all required reading to Canvas.

Recommended Reading

- *Making Shapely Fiction*, Jerome Stern

- *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, Janet Burroway

Assignments

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

- Nine critical responses

You will write a 500-word critical response to any nine of our weekly readings that you choose. These are due the day before the stories will be taught in class, at 11.59 pm on Sunday. In them, I expect you to reflect on the choices the author has made, how you think they impact the reader, and how they engage with the craft element being taught that week. These critical responses should do more than just summarize the text; they should demonstrate analytical thought and engagement.

- The workshop submission

You will submit a 10-15 page short story you will submit to be workshopped in the second half of the semester. You will submit this via email to me by 11.59 pm on the Monday before you're being workshopped. I will forward it to the class. This will not be graded.

- Revised story

Two weeks after your workshop, you will submit a revised version of your story, taking into consideration the various pieces of feedback you received during your workshop.

- Workshop responses

You will write every student being workshopped a short letter that provides them with feedback on their story. These letters should be emailed to the person being workshopped and CC'ed to me the day before their workshop (i.e. 11.59 pm on Sunday). Consider

what is working and why. What questions do you have for the author? 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. Instead, try to reframe your comments as observations or questions. In addition to these letters, I encourage you to annotate the story you’re workshopping with specific comments.

- Class participation

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.

- Reflection

At the end of the semester, you will write a 1,500-word reflection on the workshop experience and your growth as a writer over the course of the semester. In it, I expect you to engage specifically with how you’ve adapted your story as a response to being workshopped, what you learned when you workshopped your peers’ stories, and how you will apply these lessons to the fiction you write in the future.

Grade breakdown:

Assignment	Percentage of grade	Due
Critical responses	18% (2% each)	Every week until Week 10
Revised story	20%	Two weeks after your workshop
Workshop responses	20%	Every week after Week 8
Class participation	20%	

Reflection	22%	Finals week
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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 and major illnesses) 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.
5. Electronics: You can use laptops and tablets to refer to readings in class. You can also use them to complete in-class activities. If caught using electronics for non-class-related purposes, you will receive a grade deduction. Phones must be kept on silent and out of sight for the duration of the class.
6. 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/>
7. Paper Format & Submission: All assignments 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.

8. **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.
9. **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:** Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
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/), 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 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. 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 Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

13. 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>

14. 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.

Schedule

Class	Date	Assigned Reading	In-Class Activities
1 Orientation	Aug 29		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion of the syllabus - Writing activity
No Class	Sep 5		
2 Tension and Atmosphere	Sep 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The Christmas Miracle”, Rebecca Curtis - “The Enormous Radio”, John Cheever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing activity and discussion
3 Structure	Sep 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Everything that Rises Must Converge”, Flannery O’Connor - “Fable”, Charles Yu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing activity and discussion
4 Characterization	Sep 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excerpts from <i>Autoportrait</i>, Edourd Leve - “The Bullet in the Brain”, Tobias Wolf - “Girl”, Jamaica Kincaid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing activity and discussion
5 Point of View	Sep 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The Thing Around Your Neck”, Chimamanda Adichie - “Floweres for Algernon,” Daniel Keyes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing activity and discussion
6 Dialogue	Oct 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing activity and discussion

		Raymond Carver - “Fatherland”, Viet Thanh Nguyen	
7 Style	Oct 10	- Excerpts from <i>Exercises in Style</i> , Raymond Queneau - “Real Women Have Bodies”, Carmen Maria Machado	- Writing activity and discussion
8 Economy and Elegance	Oct 17	- “Goodbye and Goodluck”, Grace Paley	- Discussion - Workshop #1 and 2
9 Subtlety	Oct 24	- “All Will be Well”, Yiyun Li	- Discussion - Workshop #3 and 4
10 Negative Space	Oct 31	- “In the Cemetary Where Al Jolson Was Buried”, Amy Hempel	- Discussion - Workshop #5 and 6
11	Nov 7		- Workshop #7, 8, 9
12	Nov 14		- Workshop #10, 11, 12
13	Nov 21		- Workshop #13, 14, 15
14	Nov 28		- Workshop #16, 17, 18
15	Dec 5		- Workshop #19 - Reflection Activity

Grading Rubric

A: 94-100; A-: 90-9

B+: 87-89; B: 84-86; B-: 80-83

C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 60-62

E: 0-59

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.