

CRW1101: Beginning Fiction Writing
Fall 2021
Section: 1650

Instructor: Maria Vix Gutierrez
Days/Period: Tues/9-11 (4:05-7:05pm)
Location: MAT 0015
Instructor Email: mv.martingutierr@ufl.edu
Office hours: TBD
Course Website: Canvas

Description:

This class will focus on short literary fiction. Through close reading, practice, and discussion, we will identify the key elements of fiction writing and learn how to use them with attention, purpose, and skill.

The first half of the course will be centered on craft. Through assigned readings of published literature, we will develop a clearer understanding of how the various elements of craft function within a story. We will practice learned ideas through in-class writing exercises and interactive discussion. The second half of the course will be about application. Students will write and revise one (or two) work(s) of fiction for workshop in class. Each week—for the assigned published texts, and the peer submissions—students will write a critical response.

Objectives: To gain confidence and skill as readers and writers of literature by learning how to make informed choices toward a desired effect.

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:

Readings to be assigned

Suggested Text:

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

Assignment Requirements:

The major written assignments in this class are:

- One short story (up to 12 pages, double spaced) and one revision OR another short story.
- Writing notes for each submitted story, where you will reflect on your writing decisions.
- A critical response (one to two pages) for each assigned story, including peer submissions.

The total of all written assignments will equal 6000 words. You can find information about the **University Writing Requirement** [here](#).

A copy of all major assignments and in-class exercises, including instructor comments should be retained.

Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* You are expected to attend class and show up on time. If you cannot attend class for any reason, please communicate ahead of time. You will receive a lowered course grade after **three** 50-minute absences (or equivalent) + automatic failure if a student misses **2 weeks** of class (failure *at* the sixth 50-minute absence). Since this is a three hour workshop, one missed class session equals three absences. Please note that there is a distinction between excused and unexcused absences. In the case of extenuating circumstances and pending proper communication on your part, I may grant you an excused absence. For further information on excused/unexcused absences please see the link below. 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.
3. Tardiness: Being tardy 3 times = 1 absence.
4. You can review UF's attendance policies here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
Please note that assignments and due dates may be announced in class, and it is your responsibility to contact me regarding any missed information.

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 must be submitted at the beginning of class on the specified date. They must be typed in black ink, using MLA manuscript format and 11 or 12 point-Times New Roman font, DOUBLE SPACED, and one-inch margins. Submissions that fail to meet the above conditions will not be accepted. Each assignment is due in class on the date specified. When submitting your story for workshop, you must email a digital copy to the class listserv (every member of the class including myself) the week PREVIOUS to your workshop. Late papers will not be accepted and I will not accept papers over email. If you miss this class, and do not contact me in advance, you will not be workshopped and you will fail that assignment. This aspect is taken very seriously.
7. *Late Papers/Assignments*: I will not accept late papers/assignments unless a student has made arrangements with me in advance.
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 <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.>
Plagiarism is defined 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.>
10. 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.
11. 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: 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 Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

1. *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://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>

Participating/Etiquette:

The outcome of this class will depend on your participation, including attention, thoughtful application of ideas, and preparation. In writing, as in life, words are economy. As such, we will participate in thoughtful transactions, employing active listening as well as verbal communication that contributes to the discussion at hand in a meaningful way. This classroom is a safe and welcoming space. Discrimination based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ableism, ageism, or otherwise will result in a grade deduction, and/or you may be asked to leave.

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.)

Grade Complaints:

You are expected to read and follow the grading guidelines for this course. If you have questions or concerns about your grading on an assignment, please come see me and I will be happy to make suggestions for ways to improve ongoing and future work.

Workshop Guidelines:

Every manuscript is a work in progress/in process. So, workshop will be a space in which to talk about writing as a process. The workshop is a space uniquely situated to talk about unfinished work. That is its one major benefit, what it offers that reading published stories cannot. We will learn how to focus our feedback and phrase our comments to best serve our goal of giving constructive feedback as suited to the author's intention/goals.

Turning in Assignments:

Any work not turned in on time and without prior approval from me will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment.

For workshop manuscript submissions, it is imperative that you turn them by the specified date. You will send a digital copy of your manuscript to the class the week **PRIOR** to your workshop date. You will be expected to abide by specified word count, and standard formatting guides, **11-12 black font, double spaced, stapled. Digital manuscript, sent to everyone in the class, on the week BEFORE your workshop.** Any variations on these guidelines that have not previously approved by me will result in a missed grade for the assignment.

Coursework (Grade Distribution):

Workshop critique (20%):

You will be expected to give thoughtful feedback on your peers' submissions. This will include line edits/suggestions and a written letter (one page at least) to the author where you will address the macro work. Here, we will focus on our overall comments on observations, questions, and possibilities for revision.

Reading responses (20%):

For each assigned reading of a published story, you will write and print a reading response where you will identify the choices the author made. Here you will be asked to pay attention to the elements of craft and their function within the story.

Writing Notes (15%)

The writing notes will come at the end of each workshop manuscript. These detailed notes should reflect on your writing decisions. They will describe your process, your intentions, the difficulties you faced, your audience, etc. Basically, these notes will reflect on your aesthetics as a writer, what you want to do with your writing, and how. These notes will help guide the feedback you will receive, so specificity is key.

Writing Submission (10%):

You will produce your first story with attention to intention. While the act of writing should be unfettered by convention or expectation, you will be graded on your ability to make effective choices based on your writing goals.

Writing Revision or Second Writing Submission (10%):

If you choose to revise your original story submission, your revision should concern itself with the macro. Meaning, after consideration of feedback and your writing goals, your revised story should closer merge with your writing intentions on the larger scale, beyond grammatical/mechanical edits. If you choose to submit a new story, your writing should reflect skillful awareness of craft and increased competence as a decision maker/creator.

Writing Exercises (10%)

Since this is all about exploration and experimentation, you will not be graded on content, only on your willingness to try. Please retain all written work for your record.

Participation (15%)

In this class, we are all contributors. You will be asked to participate in workshops and discussions, to provide thoughtful and respectful feedback, and to pay close attention. I expect professional behavior in this classroom and reserve the right to lower your grade in the case of disrespectful or inadequate performance.

Semester Course Schedule:

Reading and writing assignments must be completed prior to the day they appear on the schedule.

Come to class prepared to discuss the items listed for that day. Bring your textbook, course packet, and writing journal/notebook to each class for reference. Please keep in mind that that this schedule is always subject to change: I may make adjustments either in class or via e-mail and it is your responsibility to stay up to date.

Week One 8/24: Welcome, introduction, syllabus. Meet your fellow writers. How to write the Critical Response for readings.

Read: "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Week Two 8/31: Plot, Structure, Pacing

Read: "Sea Oak" George Saunders

Critical response to Sea Oak, (Focus on using critical response vocabulary)

Week Three 9/7: Setting, Tone, Voice

Read: "Foster" Claire Keegan

Critical response to Foster (Focus on Plot, Structure, Pacing)

Week Four 9/14: P.O.V., Detail

"Children of the Sea" Edwidge Danticat

Critical Response to Children of the Sea (Focus on Setting, Tone, Voice)

Week Five 9/21: Theme, Metaphor, Symbols

"The Husband Stitch" Carmen Maria Machado

Critical Response to The Husband Stitch (Focus on P.O.V. and Detail)

Week Six 9/28: Characterization, Relatability, Vulnerability

“The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” Ernest Hemingway

Critical Response to The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber (Focus on Theme, Metaphor, Symbols)

Week Seven 10/5: Character Arc/ Story Arc

“A Temporary Matter” Jhumpa Lahiri

Critical response to A Temporary Matter (Focus on Characterization, Relatability, Vulnerability)

Week Eight 10/12: Dialogue, Effective word choice

“The Largesse of the Sea Maiden” Denis Johnson

Critical Response to The Largess of the Sea Maiden due, (Focus on Character Arc/Story Arc)

Week Nine 10/19: Constructive Critique/ Workshop Language

Craft in the Real World, pg 144-172

Week Ten 10/26: Workshop 1

Read Student Manuscripts

Note to author and revision notes

Week Eleven 11/2: Workshop 2

Read Student Manuscripts

Note to author and revision notes

Week Twelve: 11/9: Workshop 3

Read Student Manuscripts

Note to author and revision notes

Week Thirteen 11/16: On Revision/ Workshop 4

Read Craft in the Real World, pg 190-216

Read Student Manuscripts

Note to author and revision notes

Week Fourteen 11/23: Workshop 5

Read Student Manuscript

Note to author and revision notes

Week Fifteen 11/30: Workshop 6

Read Student Manuscript

Note to author and revision notes

Week Sixteen 12/7: Student Readings, Final Submissions Due

Rubric of Evaluation:

A: Demonstrates mastery of expectations and learning goals. Shows advanced understanding and ability to apply and transfer learning with depth and complexity. Student is able to analyze, offer constructive feedback, and effectively critique the work of others.

B: Demonstrates proficiency of the performance expectation or learning goal. Student is able to analyze, and provide constructive feedback on the work of others.

C: Demonstrates partial proficiency of the performance expectation or learning goal. Student is approaching ability to effectively analyze and provide feedback on the work of others.

D: Student provides little evidence of meeting the performance expectations or learning goal. Lacks ability to effectively analyze the work of others.

E: Does not meet performance expectation or learning goal. Lacks ability to effectively analyze the work of others.

Grading Scale:

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

The grading scale will follow UF's current policy:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>