

## **CRW 1101 – Beginning Fiction Writing, (Section 4229, Class 10736), Summer B 2023**

**Instructor Name:** Ikechukwu (Roy) Udeh-Ubaka

**Course meeting times:** M, T, W, R, F, Period 5 (2:00 PM – 3:15 PM)

**Location:** MAT 0102

**Office Location and Hours:** Location TBA, Tuesdays 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

**Course website:** TBD

**Instructor Email:** [iroy.udehubaka@ufl.edu](mailto:iroy.udehubaka@ufl.edu) (Roy will generally answer your email in one business day)

### **Course Description:**

This course provides instruction in the writing of literary fiction, and since careful and reflective reading is the best way to learn how to write, an introduction to the art of close reading.

We will devote the first half of the semester to the strategies, styles, challenges, and joys of the short story. The second half will be a traditional fiction workshop: two or more students will turn in stories each week, and the rest of the class will provide feedback the next time we meet.

Remember! We can't be good writers if we aren't good readers. It is essential that all of the reading is not only done but done well. I expect students to come in with passages—lines, sentences, moments, phrases—they want to discuss, as well as questions they would like to explore.

### **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 and boosted, get vaccinated and boosted. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit [one.uf](http://one.uf) 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 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.

### **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.

### **Recommended Texts:**

*The Making of a Story* by Alice LaPlante (optional)

*Craft in the Real World: Rethinking Fiction Writing and Workshopping* by Matthew Salesses (optional)

### **Assignments:**

(Barring illness or emergency, Roy will try to grade your assignments in 1-2 days)

*Discussion Notes / Workshop Letters (230 points, 10 points each, 23%)*

For most of the first part of the semester, we will discuss short fiction. These stories will be posted online on Canvas under the assignment heading. It is the student's responsibility to read, mark them up, write discussion notes, and come to class ready to discuss. Be prepared to talk about the stories in question. Discussion notes will be required to be turned in on Canvas before class.

In most of the second part of the semester, we will workshop. On workshop days, it is expected that you will come to class having read your fellow students' pieces carefully at least twice. You will mark up the printed story, take notes, and prepare a response to it in the form of a letter to the author. Workshop letters will be turned in on Canvas before class, and either printed out and given to the author or emailed to them with me cc'ed.

*In-class Writing Assignments (192 points, 16 points per assignment, 19%)*

Four days a week, we will have a creative writing prompt in-class, unless we have a workshop. Though I will try to allot enough class-time to finish them in class, students who do not finish them in class will be expected to turn them in by the end of the day. The purpose of these writing prompts will be meaningful experiments that can lead to a longer project.

*Class Participation (80 points, 3-4 points per non-writing day), 8%*

A successful workshop requires the full participation of every student. By being in a workshop, you are dedicating yourself to learning the craft of writing fiction, and then using your skills, knowledge, and insights to both craft your own story in progress and help your classmates with theirs. Though writing is often perceived as a solitary act, no writer succeeds without the help of fellow writer-readers. Having writer-readers not only gives you the encouragement needed to pursue the highest potential in your story,

but practical insights into how to get there and what is holding the story back. Therefore, your enthusiasm, your commitment to the work, and your commitment to your fellow students are more important than any preexisting knowledge that you bring about “literature.” Class participation is very important for this class. Each student is required to talk once per class to receive the day's participation points. Writing days will not count.

In preparation for workshop, I expect every student to practice discussing craft and writing of the published stories in an intelligent and productive way. It will not only solidify your own understanding of how stories work, but also create new insights by listening and responding to your peers. If you are uncomfortable talking in class, please come speak to me after class. Unexcused absences and tardies will affect your participation points for that week.

### *Workshop Submission (200 points, 20%)*

You will write one story that your classmates will workshop (3,000 words minimum, 5,000 words maximum) thoughtfully using craft elements to accomplish your goals for the story. The story must be delivered to the class the week before the scheduled workshop. You will post your story to the canvas Discussion Board as an attachment (ideally you should use Microsoft Word). There is no late delivery. There is no switching. If you are unable to turn in the story on time, an entire letter grade will be deducted from your final grade.

Good writing takes time. Don't put off writing your stories for workshop. Everyone will be able to tell if you wrote it the night before and your workshop will reflect that. Give your creative process the time it deserves.

### *Final Portfolio (300 points, 30%)*

At the end of the semester, you will create a final portfolio that will comprise of your workshop submission, your revision, two in-class writing assignments you are proud of, and a 1000-word letter describing your development as a writer this semester, why you chose your in-class writing assignments, and your choices for how you went about your revision. Final Portfolios will be due August 5th.

### **Course Policies:**

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* You are required to come to class. Excused absences must be properly excused, via the proper means. If you know your excused absences ahead of time—such as university events—you must tell me when you know, not after the fact. Three instances of tardiness = one absence. You cannot miss your workshop day.
  - o Six absences will result in automatic failure. You will earn a lowered course grade if you accrue four absences. Please refer to UF's attendance policies for further distinctions between (un)excused absences: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
  - o In general, acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused.

- If you are experiencing symptoms or have potentially been exposed, please stay home and attend class via Zoom. If there are three or more students on Zoom, I will move the whole class to Zoom for pedagogical reasons.
- 3. Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diverse student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal—and accordingly absence—from the class.
- 4. *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/about/title-ix-rights/>
- 5. *Paper Format & Submission*: Submissions on canvas for the critical responses; emailed drafts for workshop; MLA format—that is: double spaced; 12 point font (Times New Roman, Calibri, Cambria); pages numbered in the bottom-right corner; an MLA header and a title for your submission. Workshop stories may not be titled “Workshop Story.”
- 6. *Late Papers/Assignments*: Email me in advance if you need an excused extension. Otherwise, you will lose 10% per day if it is late. Excused extensions are usually for medical/personal/technical emergencies.
- 7. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
- 8. *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.

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:

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. 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.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. *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/>
7. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
8. *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.

9. *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://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>

## SYLLABUS

Wk	Date	Read/View for Class	DUE
1	M 7/3	Go over syllabus	
	T 7/4	<i>Holiday</i>	
	W 7/5	Tobias Wolff, "Bullet in the Brain" Alice LaPlante, "Glossary"	Discussion notes before class In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
	R 7/6	Details Alice LaPlante, "Details, Details", "Why You Need to Show and Tell" <i>Sign up for workshops</i>	Discussion notes before class In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
	F 7/7	Details Jhumpa Lahiri, "A Temporary Matter" Joyce Carol Oates, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been"	
2	M 7/10	Characters Alice LaPlante, "Recognizable People" (ppg. 418-434) Matthew Selassee, "Character Arc / Story Arc"	
	T 7/11	Characters Flannery O'Connor, "Good Country People" Flannery O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must Converge"	Discussion notes before class In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
	W 7/12	Plot, Conflict Alice LaPlante, "The Shapely Story" Matthew Selassee "Plot", "Conflict"	Discussion notes before class In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
	R 7/13	Plot, Conflict Arinze Ifeakandu, "God's Children Are Little Broken Things" Chimamanda Adichie, "The Thing Around Your Neck"	Discussion notes before class In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
	F 7/14	Writing day	

3	M 7/17	Voice Alice LaPlante “Who’s Telling This Story Anyway?”	Discussion notes before class In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
	T 7/18	Voice Lorrie Moore, “How To Be An Other Woman” Kachi Jidenna, “Until It Doesn’t”	Discussion notes before class In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
	W 7/19	Dialogue Novel Writing Help, “9 Rules for Writing Dialogue”	Discussion notes before class In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
	R 7/20	Ernest Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants” Amy Hempel, “In The Cemetery Where Al Jolson Is Buried” (discuss workshop in class)	Discussion notes before class In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
	F 7/21	Writing day	
4	M 7/24	Workshop Students 1, 2	Workshop discussion notes before class
	T 7/25	Workshop Students 3, 4	Workshop discussion notes before class
	W 7/26	Workshop Students 5, 6	Workshop discussion notes before class
	R 7/27	Workshop Students 7, 8	Workshop discussion notes before class
	F 7/28	Writing day	
5	M 7/31	Workshop Students 9, 10	Workshop discussion notes before class
	T 8/1	Workshop Students 11, 12	Workshop discussion notes before class
	W 8/2	Workshop Students 13, 14	Workshop discussion notes before class
	R 8/3	Workshop Students 15, 16	Workshop discussion notes before class
	F 8/4	Workshop Students 17, 18	Workshop discussion notes before class
6	M 8/7	Workshop Students 19, 20	Workshop discussion notes before class
		Workshop Students 21, 22	Workshop discussion notes before class
	T 8/8	Revision Alice LaPlante, “Learning to Fail Better” (go over final project in class)	Discussion notes before class In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
		Revision	Discussion notes before class
	W 8/9	Raymond Carver, “The Bath” Raymond Carver, “A Small, Good Thing”	In-class writing exercise by the end of the day
	R 8/10	Writing day	
	F 8/11	<i>Last Day of Class</i> Grace Paley, “Wants”	Discussion notes before class Final projects by the end of the day

## Discussing Published Work

In terms of discussion, there are three things to accomplish with each of the stories we examine:

WHAT does the story accomplish?

*What is it doing? What is going on here? What is its effect on you?*

- Descriptive

HOW does it accomplish these things?

*What are the craft elements of the piece that accomplish a particular effect? Feeling?*

- Investigative

WHY does the story accomplish it?

*Why does the author make these choices? Why do they do it this way?*

- Interpretive

We need to know WHAT is going on before we can analyze it. This includes the plot, argument, or surface level meaning of a piece as well as our reading experience of it.

From there, we can look at HOW an author accomplishes those things and WHY they do it in that way.

Often our first impulse in literature classes is to interpret, but because this is a writing class we need to describe in order to break down and investigate the work.

Think of writing as a type of engineering. We have to take it apart to understand how it works, and ultimately, to figure out how we can build our own.

## Discussing Stories in Workshop

When we talk about student stories in class, we will talk about it the way we talk about published stories, centered around craft elements, only we will acknowledge they are *works in progress/in process*. We are in the trade of constructive criticism. It means we are giving our peers the tools to build a better piece and to build each other up into better writers. That's why it's a workshop.

There is certainly a place to say our general reactions—but together we will use discussion to talk about what works and doesn't work. We will use observations, questions, and suggestions and see if as a group we can reveal something about the author's story that they may not be able to realize on their own.

It is our job to help our fellow writers notice their work again—what is interesting about it, what is compelling, and what is possible—and by paying attention and reading closely, we can give them a valuable gift. Treat other work as you want your work to be treated, read it as you want it to be read, and comment on it in a way that you would find most helpful.

## Grading Rubric:

Note that because this course will involve a breadth of assignment types, an exhaustive rubric isn't possible. This rubric describes a few general features common to assignments that earn a particular score.

A: Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops sophisticated ideas through close reading. Has exceptionally well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

B: Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops sophisticated ideas through close reading. Has well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

C: Contains some analysis of the texts and develops some original ideas about them. Minimal close reading. Has adequately well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), adequately-supported claims, and some appropriate stylistic elements.

D: Contains minimal analysis of the texts. May lack well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, and/or a persuasive organizational structure or close reading. Fails to adequately support its claims and/or use appropriate stylistic elements.

E: Lacks analysis of the text, and therefore fails to demonstrate comprehension.

Letter Grade	Percentage Grade	Grade Point Average (GPA)
A	93-100%	4.0
A-	90-92%	3.7
B+	86-89%	3.3
B	83-85%	3.0
B-	80-82%	2.7
C+	76-79%	2.3
C	73-75%	2.0
C-	70-72%	1.7
D+*	66-69%	1.3
D	63-65%	1.0
D-	60-62%	0.7
F	59%	0.0