

CRW1101: Beginning Fiction Writing Section 0218

Instructor: Yolanda Kwadey

Class Time & Location: T6-8 (12.30 PM – 2.30 PM), MAT 0006

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Office hours: By appointment, 4339 Turlington, R (2 PM – 4 PM)

Required Texts

Janet Burroway (with Elizabeth Stuckey-French & Ned Stuckey-French), *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, Tenth Ed.

Novel Reading: James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*

Note: I will provide you with all other readings for this course.

Course Objective

In these fifteen weeks, we will read, discuss, and craft fiction. For the purposes of this course, the term “fiction” will be used interchangeably with “literary fiction”. Although you will be expected to write short literary stories for this course, be assured that many of the elements that work well in literary fiction also work in genre fiction and vice versa. Thus, ideally, our class discussions should be useful for whichever fiction type you choose to write in the future.

CRW1101 is structured around various craft elements: we will read essays about the crucial aspects of fiction and use close readings to examine these aspects in existing works of fiction. Our exploration of these stories will, in turn, serve as a model as we attempt our own fictions. By reading and discussing different works of fiction, in different styles, of different lengths, and by a range of different authors, we will discover the many ways in which it is possible to tell a story well. You are not required to like a story, but this course discourages you from passing judgment on a story — whether written by an established author or one of your own peers — based only on your initial sentiments, preferred styles, likes, and dislikes. This means you must give specific and insightful critiques that will benefit the writer and the rest of the class. **Please do the assigned readings beforehand and be prepared to engage in a lively discussion.**

While I will not burden you with an outrageous amount of reading, your weekly workload will generally involve reading 2-3 short stories. We will discuss one novel every month. You will also have either a craft assignment or a reading response to complete each week.

CRW1101's objectives align with the [General Education Objectives of the University](#). A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

Writing Requirements

This course meets the Writing Requirement of 6,000 words of written work that will receive feedback and a grade. All work must be completed to satisfy the Writing Requirement. The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades have two components. 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.** As such, evaluation and feedback on all written assignments – with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization – will be provided.

Assignment Requirements

The major written assignments in this class are two short stories (7-10 pages each) and one reflective essay (4-5 pages). **A copy of all major assignments and in-class exercises, including instructor comments, should be kept, and handed in at the end of the semester (See Final Portfolio Section).**

Coursework (Grade Distribution)

Workshop Critique Letters, Line Edits & Reactions (2450 words min.)

For those class meetings that have published stories assigned for reading, you will write and submit responses (200-300 words each) via Canvas. When we read multiple stories, you can respond to any one of them. The response should address one or more of the aspects of fiction we will study during our course time (i.e., plot, structure, character, point of view etc.).

On workshop days, it is expected that you will come to class having read your fellow students' pieces carefully, at least twice (one assignment per week). You will be expected to make careful line edits to a hardcopy of your peers' stories. In addition, you must provide a (250 words min.) critique letter for each story submitted to workshop (except your own). You must submit a softcopy on Canvas before class for my access, and hand the author a hardcopy version at the end of class. Providing responses to your fellow writers is a fundamental element of the workshop. As such, you are expected to offer your peers the same high level of useful criticism you hope to receive.

Short Story Submissions (2,000 words min.)

Your first story must be approximately 7-10 pages (typically 2,000 – 2,500 words). There are no restrictions (apart from those that align with university policy) on the subject matter that you choose to write about. However, I do caution against writing about overburdened topics such as particular fantastical creatures and post-apocalypses, as well as pieces that play along the lines of plagiarism (e.g., fan fiction). All writing will be critiqued based on quality. Excerpts from an original novel are acceptable.

For your final writing 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. Making only grammatical or technical revisions is unacceptable; your story must develop and grow.

Participation (600 words min.)

You are expected to attend class regularly, participate actively in class discussions, and critique the work of your peers with diligence and respect. Participation will be assessed through creative writing prompts in class as well as contributions of constructive comments in class discussions. These exercises are meant to stir your creativity and encourage you to experiment with language and techniques in a relaxed environment inside or outside the classroom.

Writing activities will include devising dialogues from people-watching on campus, producing narratives around art pieces, and developing stories for characters we encounter in a music video.

Unexcused absence will affect your participation points for that week. Three instances of tardiness are equal to one absence. 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.

Final Portfolio (1250 words min.)

At the end of the semester, you will create a final portfolio consisting of your revised workshop submission, a 2-paged essay on the selected novel, what you (dis)liked and which craft elements used by the author contributed to this, and a 3-4 paged letter describing your development as a writer this semester, why you chose the writing exercises attached, and how you developed your revision with your first workshop feedback in mind. You may also include in the letter which class readings inspired a particular aspect of your crafting process.

Grading:

For information on UF Grading policies, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Excused absences must be properly excused via the appropriate means. Please refer to UF's attendance policies for further distinctions between (un)excused absences: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. If you know your excused absences ahead of time — such as university or religious events — you must inform me when you know, not after the fact.

Three instances of tardiness = one unexcused absence. You cannot miss your workshop day. Because we only meet once a week, two unexcused absences will result in automatic failure.

Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Conduct Code](#). The use of AI to generate your submissions for this class counts as academic dishonesty and will be subjected to the same penalty as plagiarism. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with me.

In-Class Conduct

I expect you to be always courteous and respectful of others, even when you encounter diverse opinions, which may be often. **You will be asked to leave the class if your behavior is disruptive or offensive in any way, including anything that denigrates others on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or religion.** Your dismissal will be considered an absence. Of course, this is not to say that our discussions should be censored, but more so that you must always provide justifiable and constructive criticism. **Using your cellphone or perusing media unrelated to the course during class time is rude and prohibited.**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

Assignment Submissions

All papers must be submitted at the specified time on the specified date. Workshop pieces must be typed using 11- or 12-point Times New Roman, Calibri, or Cambria, and double spaced. Page numbers should be at the top right corner. Submissions that fail to meet the above conditions will not be accepted.

When submitting your story for workshop, you will post your story to the Canvas Discussion Board as a Microsoft Doc attachment seven (7) days before your workshop date. Should you miss this class without contacting me in advance, you will not be workshopped, and you will fail that assignment.

Scribble Buddies

Every month, you will be assigned a classmate to share your work and drafts with for peer feedback and encouragement. This will also allow you to interact with classmates, access outside perspective more confidently, and enjoy the writing process a little more.

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 subject to change, and I will send an email in such an instance.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

The Writing Studio

The University Writing Studio is located in Turlington 2215 and is available to all UF students. Free appointments can be made up to twice a week. They are currently offering online appointments. See <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> to learn more.

Accommodations

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, please see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

Students who are in distress or who need counseling or urgent help should 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.

One, 8/25 — Welcome & Overview of Class

Syllabus Perusal, including discussion of workshop method, “scribble buddies”, and submission order.
Chimamanda Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story”
Weike Wang, “Battle” – Illustration of Literary Fiction
Anne Lamott, “Shitty First Drafts”
Writing Activity

Two, 9/1 — No Class (Holiday)

Three, 9/8 — Plot

Burroway, Ch.6: Plot & Structure
Margaret Atwood, “Happy Endings”
Uwem Akpan, “Baptizing the Gun”
James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1-4)
Writing Activity
Due: Reaction Papers before class

Four, 9/15 — Setting, Tone & Style

Burroway, Ch.5: Fictional Setting

Fyodor Dostoevsky, "A Novel in Nine Letters"

Jhumpa Lahiri, "A Temporary Matter"

James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (5-8)

Writing Activity

Due: Reaction Papers before class

Five, 9/22 — Characters Made Real; Choices & Details

Burroway, Ch.3-4: Characterization

Langston Hughes, "Thank you, Ma'am"

Richard Ford, "Under the Radar"

Janet Frame, "You Are Now Entering the Human Heart"

Writing Activity

Due: Reaction Papers before class

Six, 9/29 — Point of View

Burroway, Ch.7: Point of View

Alan Gurganus, "Art History"

William Trevor, "Mrs Silly"

James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (9)

Writing Activity

Due: Reaction Papers before class

Seven, 10/6 — Dialogue

Burroway, Ch.2: Showing and Telling

David Leavitt, "The David Party"

Lydia Mathis, "Let the Church Say"

Shirley Jackson, "Trial by Combat"

Writing Activity

Due: Reaction Papers before class

Eight, 10/13 — Workshop

Student 1

Student 2

Student 3

Student 4

Student 5

Due: Critique Letters and Line Edits before class ends

Nine, 10/20 — Workshop

Student 6

Student 7

Student 8

Student 9

Writing Activity

Due: Critique Letters and Line Edits before class ends

Ten, 10/27 — Workshop

Student 10

Student 11

Student 12

James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (10-12)

Writing Activity

Due: Critique Letters and Line Edits before class ends

Eleven, 11/3 — Workshop

Student 13

Student 14

Student 15

Student 16

Student 17

Due: Critique Letters and Line Edits before class ends

Twelve, 11/10 — Workshop

Student 18

Student 19

Student 20

Student 21

James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (13-14)

Due: Critique Letters and Line Edits before class ends

Thirteen, 11/17 — Workshop

Student 22

Student 23

Student 24

Student 25

James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (15-16)

Writing Activity

Due: Critique Letters and Line Edits before class ends

Fourteen, 11/24 — No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

Fifteen, 12/1 — Revision

Due on 12/8: Revision of your first short story & Final portfolio