

CRW1101: Fiction Writing/ Sec. 1650

Thomas Sanders

Fall 2015

MAT 015

T, 6-8 (12:50-3:50 PM)

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Office: TUR 4339

Office hours:

Wednesday 10-12, or
by appointment

Required Texts:

1. *Reading Like a Writer* by Francine Prose
2. *Making Shapely Fiction* by Jerome Stern
3. *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories* (2nd edition) ed. by Joyce Carol Oates

Course Objectives:

1. To leave this course writing better than you did when you entered.
2. To leave this course reading better than you did when you entered.
3. To write fiction with more precision, force, and surprise than before.
4. To develop serious revision skills that will help you deepen, clarify, and heighten your work.

Course Format:

1. Reading: To be a good writer, you must read.
2. Writing: To be a good writer, you must write.
3. Critiquing: To be a good writer, you must critique other writing thoughtfully and frequently, knowing that this close reading of another's prose will help your own.
4. Revision: To be a good writer, you must revise. Know that not even the best fiction writers in the world get it right the first time. Revision is part of the writing process.

BEWARE: This course is reading-intensive and writing-intensive. Do not fall prey to the pandemic impression that creative writing courses are easy. You can expect a lot of work from this course.

This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx#learning>

Reading

Do the reading. Class time is wasted if you have not. Because of this, you will be required to turn in critical response papers every week. I will know if you haven't completed the reading; it will be obvious in your writing. I may also give pop quizzes. On the schedule, the "Readings" section tells you what you should have read *prior to* that particular class meeting. In other words, readings must be completed before the dates for which they are listed.

Writing

1. Critical response papers: You will be required to write twelve short "thought papers" in response to the assigned readings (see below).
2. Five-page, prompt-based story: Early in the semester, a five-page story based on a writing prompt will be due. These stories will be read aloud in class.
3. Workshop story: Twenty copies of your manuscript must be delivered ONE CLASS BEFORE it is to be discussed. Length: Eight-twelve pages. Stories must avoid college tropes (parties, break-ups, dorm/greeklife), genre (sci-fi, fantasy, horror, zombie, vampire, My Little Pony fan-fic), and last-page twists or other things intended to trick the reader. These genres are specialized forms that require specialized knowledge to do well: you must learn to walk before you can run, and other such platitudes. There is a slight amount of wiggle room here that will be addressed on a case-by-case, ad hoc basis.
4. Story Revisions: On the last day of class, you must turn in revised versions of both of the above stories. Revisions should be based on my comments, your colleagues' comments in workshop, and our one-on-one meeting outside of class (see below) and MUST BE SIGNIFICANT. Proofreading is not revision. All serious writers revise seriously.

Warning: There is NO late delivery. There is no switching. No last-minute writing. Get the work done. And remember: you are responsible for knowing the basic conventions of style and usage—see the recommended writing manuals below for guidance.

Critiquing

You will write comments on each workshop story: marginal notes in ink or pencil AND a TYPED letter to the author. Attach this letter to the piece and return it to the author at the end of class. You will also deliver one copy of this letter to me. In order for a critique to be valuable, it needs to be balanced and specific. In every story, there will be both things to commend and things to recommend. A good critique will do both.

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Critical Response Papers/Thought Papers

You must write weekly critical responses to the assigned readings. At the end of this syllabus, I have included detailed direction for these responses. Each critical response must be a minimum of 500 words. Do not go significantly over the minimum word count, please. No late papers will be accepted.

It is required that you come to class each day fully prepared. You may be asked to read your thought paper aloud, and I will not hesitate to cold-call on people. We are here to study and create serious fiction, which requires serious work. If you're hoping for an easy A, this class is positively not for you.

Tentative grade breakdown (subject to change):

1. Class Participation*:	200 points
2. Critical response papers:	300 points (25 each)
4. Prompt-based story:	100 points
5. Workshop story:	150 points
6. Story revisions:	250 points
	1000 points total

*Class participation includes written and oral peer workshop critiques as well as your presence and regular contribution in class.

Attendance

You are allowed up to two absences without explanation, but do not miss the day that your story is workshopped. Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade for that story. Each absence after the second will lower your final grade by one full letter.

A few absences due to illness or family crisis may be excused if documented to the instructor's satisfaction. Even documented absences will not be excused if many or prolonged. Students participating in a university-sponsored event (athletics, theater, music, field trip) will be excused if there is documentation from an appropriate authority. Students excused from an absence are not excused from the work assigned for a class session; each student must arrange with the instructor for make-ups.

Tardiness will be excused if the reasons are acceptable to the instructor (e.g., a long exam in the previous class; a bus breakdown) and if there is valid documentation. Otherwise,

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tardiness is unacceptable because disruptive; both the overall grade and the grade for class participation will be lowered by tardiness.

Meeting Outside of Class

You must meet with me outside of class to discuss your story within the week following your workshop. My office hours will be held on Wednesday 10:00 AM--12:00 PM. If that time does not work for you, making an alternate appointment with me is YOUR responsibility, not mine.

Final Notes

1. You are responsible for checking your university emails. I may sometimes give or change assignments via email, as well as make any necessary changes to the schedule. You are responsible for checking your email and approaching me with any questions. If I have sent an email to you, I will assume that you have read and understood it.
2. I may change anything on this syllabus at any time.
3. Use of cell phones (with hands or ears) is NOT permitted in class.

The following is useful information on university policies that you should know. Please read over the links provided.

Statement of Composition (C) credit

This course can satisfy the General Education requirement for Composition. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general.education.requirement.aspx>

Statement of Writing Requirement (WR)

This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing.

For more information, see:

<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/writing-math.aspx#writing>

Statement of student disability services

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

Statement on harassment

UF provides an education and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://regulations.ufl.edu/chapter1/1006.pdf>

Statement on academic honesty

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Statement on grades and grading policies.

Note: UF has recently instituted minus grades. As a result, letter grades now have different grade point equivalencies. For more information, see:

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

Statement on University Policies:

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at:

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

Statement on Evaluations:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at:

<https://evaluations.ufl.edu>

Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at:

<https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

University Writing Studio

If you find that you need additional help with your writing outside of class, I strongly recommend that you acquaint yourself with the University Writing Studio (formerly the Reading and Writing Center). The Writing Studio is a free service for current UF graduate and undergraduate students. Students have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a consultant on issues specific to their own particular development. More info is available here:

<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-center/>

Recommended Writing Manuals

For additional style and usage help, I recommend the following:

- *The Elements Of Style* by Strunk and White
- *The Bedford Handbook* by Diana Hacker
- The Purdue OWL website: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Final grade appeals

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

Instructions and Guidelines for Critical Responses/Thought Papers

Every week, we will be focusing on a specific aspect of writing. For instance, we might be talking about character that week, or dialogue. For your critical response paper, you should write about that specific aspect as it applies to the fiction reading for the week. So if we are talking about dialogue, you can analyze the dialogue in the assigned story or stories. You will need to directly reference the critical work as well as the assigned fiction reading. Most weeks, the critical reading will be a chapter from Francine Prose's book *Reading Like a Writer*. Her book should be helpful in that she provides several examples from other works of fiction herself. As such, she provides something of a model for you to work from for your own analysis. You should also include specific quotations from the story or stories themselves to support your position.

In addition to the Prose chapter, each week I will include three terms from the glossary ("From Accuracy to Zigzag") of Jerome Stern's book *Making Shapely Fiction* that I think are exemplified in the story or stories that we are reading that week. You must reference at least one of these terms in your response as well.

Your critical responses should NOT:

- Simply make a value judgment about the story, such as "I loved it" or "I hated it." Everything we will read in this class is a good piece of writing by an accomplished writer—I'm looking for you to engage critically with the work on the level of craft.
- Say that you liked a story because "you could relate to it," or did not like a story because "you could not relate to it." This is not analysis, and it is not a valid critique. Good fiction takes us out of ourselves and allows us to experience the consciousness of another person—that is the point.
- Use excessive quotation or summary. You should use evidence to support your points, not to avoid having to make them.

Assessment Rubric for Critical Papers

Below are the criteria by which I will grade your critical response papers. "A" papers will demonstrate a strong command of each of the following criteria.

Content	ideas and analyses should be complex and critical. Papers should offer personal, fresh insights into the material. Go beyond surface matter.
Organization and coherence	Use an orderly structure that facilitates reading, sustaining the reader's interest through effective paragraph development and use of proper transitions, presenting a logical flow of ideas.
Risk-taking	You must deal with the material in creative and challenging ways, developing main points based on self-initiated criteria independent of my class discussion comments, and avoiding summary unless necessary.
Evidence	You must support your ideas with actual examples from the text, and use relevant details from stories that explain and support your main ideas. Try to use quotations from stories that support your points (one or two lines will do—you will be marked down for excessive use of quotations).
Development	Analyze evidence in a way that supports your claims and overall thesis, including identifying literary devices/figures of speech and explaining how they contribute to the meaning of the text. AVOID SUMMARY.
Mechanics	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation must be correct. Papers must show careful proofreading, contain no errors in subject-verb agreement, contain no run-on sentences or sentence fragments, and demonstrate clear pronoun usage.

Class Schedule

August 25

Why Fiction?

Read:

- "How to Become a Writer" by Lorrie Moore (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z); Point of View (pp. 178-192), Reading (199-200)

September 1

Close Reading, Words

Read:

- *Reading Like a Writer* Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1 - 33)
- "A Late Encounter with the Enemy" by Flannery O'Connor (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z): Character, Diction, Plot

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #1

September 8

Sentences

Read:

- *Reading Like a Writer* Chapter 3 (pp. 35-62)
- "Are These Actual Miles?" by Raymond Carver (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "Good People" by David Foster Wallace (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z): Beginnings, Endings, Exposition
- *Making Shapely Fiction* "A Cautionary Interlude" (pp. 61-76)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #2

September 15

Reunions

Read:

- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z): Revision

Due:

- Your own "conversation story" (as discussed last class)
(4-5 pages double-spaced, bring hard copy to class)

September 22

Paragraphs

Read:

- *Reading Like a Writer* Chapter 4 (pp. 63-84)
- "Today Will Be a Quiet Day" by Amy Hempel (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "The School" by Donald Barthelme (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z): Catharsis, Flashback, Motif

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #3
- **NOTE:** *Stories by the first two students submitting for workshop must be turned in today.*

September 29

Narration

Read:

- *Reading Like a Writer* Chapter 5 (pp. 85-108)
- "That Evening Sun" by William Faulkner (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "There Will Come Soft Rains" by Ray Bradbury
- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z): Interior Monologue, Narrator, Showing and Telling

Workshop:

- (Students 1 and 2)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #4

October 6

Rising Action

Read:

- "Fleur" by Louise Erdrich (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "The Things They Carried" by Tim O'Brien (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z): Comedy, Freytag's Pyramid, Intrigants

Workshop:

- (Students 3 and 4)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #5

October 13

Character

Read:

- *Reading Like a Writer* Chapter 6 (pp. 109-141)
- "Mercy" by Pinckney Benedict (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "Edison, New Jersey" by Junot Diaz (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z): Anti-hero, Character, Hero

Workshop:

- (Students 5 and 6)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #6

October 20

Dialogue

Read:

- *Reading Like a Writer* Chapter 7 (pp. 143-192)
- "Filthy with Things" by T. C. Boyle (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "Where is the Voice Coming From" by Eudora Welty (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)

- *Making Shapely Fiction (A-Z) : Accuracy, Dialogue, Voice*

Workshop:

- (Students 7 and 8)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #7

October 27

Dialogue (Continued) and Constraints

Read:

- "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "A Death in the Desert" by Willa Cather (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)

Workshop:

- (Students 9 and 10)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #8

November 3

Details

Read:

- *Reading Like a Writer* Chapter 8 (pp. 193-207)
- "My Son the Murderer" by Bernard Malamud (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "The Mud Below" by Annie Proulx (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- *Making Shapely Fiction (A-Z): Description, Frame Story, Imagination*

Workshop:

- (Students 11 and 12)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #9

November 10

Gesture

Read:

- *Reading Like a Writer* Chapter 9 (pp. 209-231)
- "Sonny's Blues" by James Baldwin (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "An Alcoholic Case" by F. Scott Fitzgerald (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z): Sex, Structure, Tension

Workshop:

- (Students 13 and 14)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #10

November 17

Learning from Writers

Read:

- *Reading Like a Writer* Chapter 10 (pp. 233-248)
- "Battle Royal" by Ralph Ellison (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "The Drowned Life" by Jeffrey Ford (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z): Ambiguity, Realism, Subtlety

Workshop:

- (Students 15 and 16)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #11

November 24

Reading For Courage

Read:

- *Reading Like a Writer* Chapter 11 (pp. 249-268)
- "Children as Enemies" by Ha Jin (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "Bullet in the Brain" by Tobias Wolff (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- *Making Shapely Fiction* (A-Z): Negative Positive Knowledge, Position, Trust Your Material

Workshop:

- (Students 17 and 18)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #12

December 1

Where we come from

Read:

- "The Wives of the Dead" by Nathaniel Hawthorne (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)
- "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" by Herman Melville [*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*]

Workshop:

- (Students 19 and 20)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #13

December 8

Where we are now

Read:

- Two stories of your choice from contemporary publications (as I showed in class, you can find plenty of stories online and through the UF library's various resources)

Due:

- Critical Response Paper #14

Workshop Schedule

The date you are assigned is the date that you will have to TURN IN your story. The stories will then be workshopped during the following class period. You must bring in a copy of your manuscript for every student in the class as well as the instructor. No late delivery. No switching.