

Fall 2024 syllabus: CRW 2100

Course CRW2100
Section 1656
Class# 11853
Days/Period M9-11
Bldg/Room MAT 0007

Instructor: Albertine Clarke
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Office: TBD
Office hours: TBD

Required reading This semester we will be reading four short novels:

The Dry Heart, Natalia Ginzburg
Strangers on a Train, Patricia Highsmith
If Beale Street Could Talk, James Baldwin
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, Philip K Dick

Alongside these novels, we will be reading a selection of short stories, which I will post to Canvas. Please do **all** required reading before class and come prepared to participate in lively discussion.

Course Objectives This class is designed to both give you greater control over your use of written language, and to provide an opportunity for creative self-expression. We will be rigorously examining the various aspects of good writing in order to build an understanding of what makes something “good”, and attempting to penetrate the meaning or significance of a story by examining how and why it works the way it works. This does not require you to like a story. The course discourages you from passing judgment on a story—whether written by an established author or one of your own peers—based on your initial sentiments, particular styles, likes, and dislikes. Please do the assigned readings beforehand and be prepared to engage in a lively discussion.

You will also be called upon to exercise your imaginations in order to complete creative written work. This requires a different sort of diligence: a willingness to express yourself without self-consciousness, and an open mind when it comes to the outcome. Self-criticism to a degree is useful, but after a certain point it will only hold you back.

Critical Analysis (20%) Each student will complete a close textual analysis of 1500 words, focusing on a thematic aspect of a text from the syllabus, due in the final week of the semester. Language analysis is essential here: a close reading relies on understanding the relationship between cause and effect in literature. The goal of a close textual analysis is to connect how the piece makes you feel to why and how the author has produced that feeling.

Reading Responses (20%) Every week students will complete a discussion post of between 300 and 600 words, outlining initial thoughts and responses to that week's section of the reading, due 9am the morning of class. You do not have to reinvent the wheel; just note down what caught your eye and why. Use at least one quote per post. These are to insure everybody comes to class with something to say.

Portfolio (50%) Each student will complete a creative writing portfolio for submission at the end of the semester. This portfolio will consist of five prompt-based writing exercises of ~500 words each, which we will complete throughout the semester, and one longer creative project of 2000 words which will be an extension of one of those exercises.

Occasionally I will choose a piece of writing anonymously to be workshopped as a class. The purpose of this is to strengthen our skills as critical readers, and to work collaboratively to improve a piece of writing. Quality will have **no** bearing on the pieces I select.

Participation (10%) I expect a high level of engagement throughout the class. This includes completing **all** required reading, contributing to class discussions, and submitting writing exercises in a timely manner. Failure to do any of these things will lower this portion of your grade. I also reserve the right, in cases of disrespectful behaviour, to lower your individual paper grades accordingly.

Course Policies:

- *Assignments:* You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
- *Attendance:* Given that we meet only once a week, you are allowed **one** absence without explanation or excuse (though prior notice would be greatly appreciated given the nature of the course). Subsequent unexplained or unexcused absences will affect your grade. **If you have more than 2 absences, you cannot pass the course.**

Excused absences, such as athletic events, theater commitments, illnesses, family emergencies, etc. **require appropriate documentation AND advance notice given to me.** You will be responsible for meeting with me outside of class to make a plan for completing work missed due to absences. You will also be responsible for turning in any assignments regardless of whether you are in class or not. For UF's official attendance policy, you can visit:

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

- *Tardiness:* Be on time to show respect to your colleagues and me. Should lateness be unavoidable, understand that **3 late arrivals without advance notice = 1 absence.**

- *Classroom Behavior:* Please be respectful and attentive to your colleagues and to me when we are talking, whether during discussion of published poets or during workshop of our own work. In particular, be respectful of your colleagues' diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and beliefs. Critique others as you would like to be critiqued—for me, that means substantive, actionable feedback that respects the intention and inherent validity of the submitted work.

You are also responsible for keeping up with your UF email, as this is how I will contact you outside of class. Feel free to reach out to me via Canvas messaging anytime—I'll try to respond within 24 hours on business days.

No use of phones or laptops during class unless I specifically instruct you to use your laptops for in-class work.

- *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/>
- *Paper Format & Submission:* All assignments should be typed in a readable, 12 pt. font with standard 1 in. margins. All assignments except poems should be double-spaced. (Poems should be single-spaced.) **Submit all stories**, whether to me or for workshop, **via email in class AND on Canvas. If you would like to submit via paper, you are responsible for bringing enough copies of your story to class, the week prior to your workshop date.**
- *Late Papers/Assignments:* Acceptance of late papers/assignments will be at my discretion and dependent on circumstances. **Here, as with absences, advance notice is key.**
- *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
- *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.

As specified 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.

In short, show respect to yourself, your colleagues, and me by submitting original work earnestly and honestly produced by you for all assignments.

- 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.
- *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 at (352) 392-1575. You can also contact them online at <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

If you are experiencing unmanageable stress or other emotional or physical distress during the semester, please **ask me for help finding resources**. In addition to teaching you to read and write fiction, I am committed to helping you succeed in a rigorous academic environment and to introducing you to the myriad resources for mental, physical, and emotional help and for time- and stress-management available on campus.

- For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
- *Grade Appeals*. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount (cblount@ufl.edu), Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
- *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>

Grading Scale and General Rubric:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
93-100	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	0-59

4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	1.33	1.0	0.67	0.00
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"A"- A paper at this level is truly high quality. It demonstrates a clear understanding of critical concepts, creatively addresses the subject matter, and exceeds the expectations of critical analysis. A paper with this grade will be free of grammatical errors.

"B"- A paper with this grade has met the standards of the assignment at a high level. This assignment may need revision but is organized in a logical way and avoids fallacies or mistakes in critical analysis. A paper with this grade may contain grammatical errors but will be readable.

"C"- A paper that earns a "C" has done everything that was required, but no more. This assignment may require significant revision to more thoroughly examine critical elements or may need reorganization. A paper with this grade will generally contain a few grammatical errors but will still be readable.

"D"- This paper does not adequately fulfill the assignment to a satisfactory degree. One portion of an assignment may be missing or there may be a misused critical element. Papers with this grade tend to be disorganized and contain many grammatical errors.

"E"- This paper does not address the assignment prompt or is unreadable/incomplete.

Semester class schedule

Please keep in mind that that this schedule is subject to change: I may make adjustments via e-mail and it is your responsibility to read them with attention.

08/26/24 - The short story

What makes a short story unique? How does structure relate to form?

Reading:

“Victory Lap,” George Saunders

“Letter From Cambridge,” JD Daniels

“The Last Flight of Dr Ain,” James Tipree Jr (Alice Bradley Sheldon)

Holiday

09/09/2024 - First sentences, first paragraphs, first chapters

How do we begin a narrative? How do we introduce a reader to a set of circumstances that they’ll believe? What makes a reader want to keep reading?

Writing exercise

Reading: *The Dry Heart*, part 1

09/16/ 2024 - The novella

Why choose a novella over a novel? What can short novels do that longer ones can't?

What is the difference between a novel and a novella?

Writing exercise

Reading: *The Dry Heart*, part 2

09/ 23/ 2024 - Character and voice

How do we create believable characters? How do we build our own voice, through the voices of those characters? How do we write believable dialogue?

Writing exercise

Reading: *Strangers on a Train*, part 1

09/ 30/ 2024 - Building setting

How do we establish a strong sense of space? How do we use our visual sense as writers?

Reading: *Strangers on a Train*, part 2

Writing exercise

"The Garden Party," Katherine Mansfield

10/ 07/ 2024 - Tension, mystery, and suspense

How do we build suspense? How do we use tension to keep the reader engaged? To what extent is stress useful in fiction?

Writing exercise

Reading: *Strangers on a Train*, part 3

10/ 14/ 2024 - Dialogue: arguments, insults, attraction

How do we make our dialogue believable? How do we convey extreme emotions like anger, lust, love and loss? How can we use dialogue to build characters?

Writing exercise

Reading: *If Beale Street Could Talk*, part 1

10/21/2024 Fiction and politics

How do we integrate political messages into our writing? Why write a story and not an essay?

Reading: *If Beale Street Could Talk*, part 2

Writing exercise

"Previous Condition," James Baldwin

10/28/ 2024 - Science fiction: establishing a concept

Why choose science fiction? How do we build a world without straying into exposition?

What makes a science fiction narrative feel "real"?

Writing exercise

Reading: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* part 1

11/ 04/2024 - Science fiction: writing robots

How do we write nonhuman characters? How does science fiction utilise doppelgangers, automatons, and other uncanny figures?

Writing exercise

Reading: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* part 2

Stanislaw Lem, "The Star Diaries" excerpt

Holiday

11/18/2024 Science fiction: reflecting life

What is cognitive estrangement? How can we use science fiction to write about reality?

Is science fiction really any different from literary fiction?

Writing exercise

Reading: *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* part 3

"I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon," Philip K Dick

Thanksgiving

Final class: no reading assigned