

CRW 2101 – Fiction Writing, Fall, 2023

Instructor Name: Ikechukwu (Roy) Udeh-Ubaka

Course meeting times: Wednesdays; Periods 9-11 (4:05 PM - 7:05 PM)

Building/Room: MAT 0005

Office Location and Hours: TUR 4315: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30pm; Thursdays 2:30-3:30pm

Instructor Email: iroy.udehubaka@ufl.edu

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.

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)

General Education Objectives:

This course confers General Education credit for Composition (C). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).

- 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.

Course Policies:

- You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course. This is a part of the university's 6,000-word Writing Requirement.
- *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 unexcused absence. You cannot miss your workshop day.
 - Because we only meet once a week, two unexcused absences will result in automatic failure. Please refer to UF's attendance policies for further distinctions between (un)excused absences: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
 - 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.
- 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.
- *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/>
- *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. Critical responses may be titled “Critical Response 1” and so forth, but workshop stories may not be titled “Workshop Story.”
- *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.
- *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep copies on your hard drive of all work submitted in this course.
- *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. 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.
- 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 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/>
 - 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, 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://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>

Course Criteria:

	Frequency, Words, Points.	Total Points	Grade %	Total WR Words
Critical Analysis of Short Stories	16 stories, 200 words each, 15 points each	240	24%	3200
Critical Analysis Workshop Discussion Notes	19 workshops, 100 words each, 10 points each	190	19%	1900
In-class Writing	8 weeks, 10 points each	80	8%	0
Class Participation	14 days, 5 points each	70	7%	0
Workshop Submission	Once, 3,000-5,000 words, 200 points	150	15%	0
Final Portfolio	Once, revision (<5,000 words), 900-word letter	200	20%	900
Total		1000	100%	6000

Grading:

Critical Analysis of Short Stories (16 stories, 200 words each, 15 points each) 24%

For most of the first part of the semester, we will discuss the craft of short fiction. These stories and their respective craft readings will be posted online on Canvas under the assignment heading. It is the student's responsibility to read the craft readings and write a 200-word critical analysis response for each story, using the ideas in the craft readings and specific examples in the story. Be prepared to talk about the stories in question. Critical Analyses must be turned in on Canvas before class.

Critical Analysis Workshop Discussion Notes (19 workshop stories, 100 words each, 10 points each) 19%

For the second part of the semester, we will focus on workshops. 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 and prepare 100-word critical analysis discussion notes per workshop story. Discussion notes must be turned in on Canvas before class. They must also be shared with the author (handwritten, printed out, or emailed to the author with me cc'ed).

In-class Writing (8 weeks, 10 points each) 8%

For the weeks without workshop, we will have two creative writing prompts in-class. 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 writing prompts will hopefully be meaningful experiments that can lead to a longer project.

Class Participation (14 weeks, 5 points each) 7%

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, who will not only give you the encouragement needed to pursue the highest potential in your story, but practical insights into how to get there. 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.

Sharing your critical analyses will not only solidify your own understanding of how stories work, but you will gain new insights from listening and responding to your peers. If you are uncomfortable talking in class, please come speak to me after class so we can figure out an accommodation if needed. Unexcused absences and tardies will affect your participation points for that week.

Workshop Submission (3,000-5000 words, 150 points) 15%

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 (workshop submission, revision (<5,000 words), two in-class activities, 900-word letter, 200 points) 20%

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 900-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 December 11th.

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 them the way we talk about published stories, focusing on craft elements but acknowledging that 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 voice 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.

Schedule:

Week 1 - 8/30: Introduction to CRW 1101

Kachi Jidenna, “Agnes” (in class)

Week 2 - 9/6: Detail, Showing vs. Telling

In-class free write with prompt

Alice LaPlante, “Details, Details” (ppg. 107-126), “Why You Need to Show and Tell” (ppg. 204-222)

Jhumpa Lahiri, “A Temporary Matter”

Camille Bordas, “Only Orange”

In-class writing exercise

Due: Discussion notes before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day, Canvas quiz on class

Week 3 - 9/13: Character

In-class free write with prompt

Alice LaPlante, “Recognizable People” (ppg. 418-434)

Matthew Selasse, “Character Arc / Story Arc”

Flannery O’Connor, “Good Country People”

Amy Hempel, “The Harvest”

In-class writing exercise

Due: Discussion notes before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day

Week 4 - 9/20: Plot, Conflict

In-class free write with prompt

Alice LaPlante, “The Plot Thickens” (ppg. 375-388)

Arinze Ifeakandu, “God’s Children are Little Broken Things”

Jennifer Makumbi, “Let’s Tell This Story Properly”

In-class writing exercise

Due: Discussion notes before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day

Week 5 - 9/27: Voice

In-class free write with prompt

Alice LaPlante “Who’s Telling This Story Anyway?” (ppg. 258-280)

Lorrie Moore, “How To Be An Other Woman”

T Kira Madden, “The Feels of Love”

In-class writing exercise

Due: Discussion notes before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day

Week 6 - 10/4: Dialogue

In-class free write with prompt

Alice LaPlante, “You Talking To Me?” (ppg. 341-355)

Novel Writing Help, “9 Rules for Writing Dialogue”

Tobias Wolff, “Bullet in the Brain”

Amy Hempel, "In The Cemetery Where Al Jolson Is Buried"

In-class writing exercise

Due: Discussion notes before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day

Due: 10/4: workshop stories for Students 1, 2, 3 by the end of the day

Week 7 - 10/11: Workshop

In-class free write with prompt

Student 1

Student 2

Student 3

In-class writing exercise

Due: Workshop letters and line edits before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day

Due 10/11: workshop stories for students 4, 5, 6 by the end of the day

Week 8 - 10/18: Workshop

In-class free write with prompt

Student 4

Student 5

Student 6

In-class:

In-class writing exercise

Due: Workshop letters and line edits before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day,

Due 10/18: workshop stories for students 7, 8, 9 by the end of the day

Week 9 - 10/25: Workshop

In-class free write with prompt

Student 7

Student 8

Student 9

In-class writing exercise

Due: Workshop letters and line edits before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day,

Due 10/25: workshop stories for student 10, 11 by the end of the day

Week 10 - 11/1: Stories + Workshop

In-class free write with prompt

Ama Ata Aidoo, "No Sweetness Here"

Student 10

Student 11

In-class writing exercise

Due: Discussion notes, workshop letter and line edits before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day

Due 11/1: workshop stories for students 12, 13, 14 by the end of the day

Week 11 - 11/8: Workshop

In-class free write with prompt

Student 12

Student 13

Student 14

Due: Discussion notes, workshop letters and line edits before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day

Due 11/8: workshop stories for students 15, 16, 17 by the end of the day

Week 12 - 11/15: Workshop

In-class free write with prompt

Student 15

Student 16

Student 17

In-class writing exercise

Due: Workshop letters and line edits before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day

Due 11/15: workshop stories for students 18, 19, 20 by the end of the day

Week 13 - 11/29: Workshop

In-class free write with prompt

Student 18

Student 19

Student 20

In-class writing exercise

Due: Discussion notes before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day

Week 14 - 12/6: Revision/Final Class

Raymond Carver, "The Bath" (ppg. 591 in LaPlante)

Raymond Carver, "A Small, Good Thing" (ppg. 597 in LaPlante)

Alice LaPlante, "Learning to Fail Better" (ppg. 542-552)

In-class writing exercise

Reflection

Due: Discussion notes before class, in-class writing exercise by the end of the day, 7-10 pages of your revision

12/11: Final Portfolios due

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