

## **Fiction Workshop CRW 3110**

Mondays: 4:05 PM – 7:05 PM, FLI 0115

Instructor: Camille Bordas

Office: 4211-F

Office Hours: Tuesday 2PM-4PM, by appointment

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### **Required Texts:**

***Emailed Readings***—You must print emailed readings and bring them to class on the days they are to be discussed. I will post all readings for the course on Canvas as the semester proceeds.

***Readings by Students***—At the very beginning of each of our last eight class meetings, two students will hand in fifteen copies of their stories: one for each member of the workshop, and one for me. If you miss class or come late, it is your responsibility to get hold of these stories. As with the emailed readings, you must bring these to class on the days we are scheduled to discuss them.

### **About Our Class**

Our time in class will mostly consist of discussing the works assigned. You are expected to read the works closely and come to class with a list of 3 insightful questions, comments or thoughts you've had about what you read.

We will devote the first half of the semester to the discussion of published fiction and in-class exercises. The second half of the semester will be a traditional fiction workshop, the requirements of which will be discussed in detail later on, but which can be described, in general, as a format in which we apply the same critical skills to our own work as those we've learned to apply to the assigned readings.

**Discussion:** Apart from in-class exercises, this workshop is 100% discussion-based. You must participate in discussion. Disagreements will arise during discussions, as they should. However, personal attacks will not be tolerated. You must conduct yourself in a manner that at all times respects the members of the workshop.

### **First part of the semester (Weeks 1 to 7)**

We will read and talk about pieces of published fiction (stories and novel excerpts), and we will try to see what makes them work the way they do. After these discussions, we'll engage in writing exercises that relate to the fiction we have discussed. Some of these exercises will be done in class, some at home. Often, we will share them.

**Questions you'll want to ask yourselves as you prepare your presentation:**

- 1) **What do we know about the protagonist? What do we suspect about the protagonist?**
- 2) **In what kind of world is the story set (ours, ours+, fantastical, etc.)?**
- 3) **Where exactly is the story set? If this is unclear, make an informed guess. Be descriptive.**
- 4) **What is at stake? At what point do we realize what is at stake?**
- 5) **What questions does the story address?**
- 6) **What is/are the primary source/s of narrative tension? Another way to phrase that: what is propelling us through the story? (note: don't just say "the voice." If that's the answer, then describe the qualities of the voice that propel us.)**
- 7) **What is the author asking us to pay attention to? How do we know?**
- 8) **What are the scenes/images that stuck with you the most? Why?**

Second part of the semester (Weeks 8 to 15): traditional workshop

**The Fiction of Others:** the last eight weeks of the semester, you will come to class having read two student stories. You must read every story at least twice. You must line-edit each student-story and write a deeply considered critique-letter to its author. I may, at any given time, ask you for a copy of your critiques. I may ask you to read them aloud during workshop.

**Your Fiction:** Over the course of these seven weeks, you must turn in one story. Its due-date will appear on the calendar I will email you by the end of the week. You may not turn your story in late. You may not email it. You must have fifteen copies with you at the beginning of class on the day it is due. If you fail to turn in on the day your work is due, you will fail the class.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** We will concern ourselves with literary fiction, written for adults, rather than genre fiction (young adult or children's fiction).

All stories **MUST** be

1. 4-10 pages in length
2. typed in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font
3. double-spaced with one-inch margins
4. page-numbered
5. titled
6. by-lined
7. stapled

**Errors in grammar, usage, and spelling:** I expect your work to be devoid of them. If you have questions about grammar, usage or spelling, please make use of a dictionary, and/or Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*.

**Laptops, Etc.:**

Laptops, iPads etc. are not allowed in class. If there is a special reason why you must use a laptop or an iPad, please let me know before the course begins.

**Attendance/Punctuality**

You will be allowed one absence for the semester. Barring very extreme circumstances, you will automatically fail the course if you miss more than one class. If you are more than twenty minutes late to class, you will be marked absent.

**Plagiarism**

Will lead swiftly to failure and lots of embarrassment.

**Course Calendar**

**Week 1, January 9** – Introductions.  
Opening Lines.

**Week 2, January 16**–Holiday/No class.

**Week 3, January 23**– To discuss: Opening lines exercise.

**Week 4, January 30**- To discuss: excerpts from *Autoportrait*, by Edouard Levé, and *The Interrogative Mood*, by Padgett Powell (I will post the excerpts on Canvas).  
In-class exercises.

**Week 5, February 6**–To discuss: “Four Institutional Monologues,” by George Saunders, excerpt from *Europeana*, by Patrick Ourednik.  
In-class exercises.

**Week 6, February 13**– To discuss: story TBD  
In-class exercises.

**Week 7, February 20**— To discuss: story TBD  
In-class exercises.

**Emily and Patrick** turn in fiction to be workshopped in the next class.

**Week 8, February 27**—**START OF TRADITIONAL WORKSHOP**

To discuss: Stories by **Emily and Patrick**  
Turning in for the following week: **Makena and Hailey**

**Week 9, March 6**—To discuss: stories by **Makena and Hailey**  
Turning in for the following week: **Avery and Emma**

**Week 10, March 13**—**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 11, March 20**— To discuss: stories by **Avery and Emma**  
Turning in for the following week: **Anastasia and Nicholas**

**Week 12, March 27**— To discuss: Stories by **Anastasia and Nicholas**  
Turning in for the following week: **Alesha and Aya**

**Week 13, April 3**— To discuss: Stories by **Alesha and Aya**  
Turning in for the following week: **Erynn and Jacob**

**Week 14, April 10**— To discuss: Stories by **Erynn and Jacob**  
Turning in for the following week: **Sarah and Isabella**

**Week 15, April 17**— To discuss: Stories by **Sarah and Isabella**  
Turning in for the following week: **Griffin**

**Week 16, April 24**— To discuss: Story by **Griffin**  
Last class of semester