

# ENGLISH 618A

Professor Mark Brazaitis

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Office Hours: Tuesday (11:30-1), Thursday (11:30-1) and by appointment

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Class Hours: Tuesday, 4-7 p.m.

Class Location: 121 Armstrong

Objective: In this class, you will learn to become a better fiction writer. To become a better fiction writer, you must dedicate yourself to both writing and reading fiction, and this class will allow you to do both.

Requirements: Over the course of the semester, you will read two novels (Janet Peery's *The River Beyond the World* and Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*), selections from three collections of short stories (Thisbe Nissen's *Out of the Girls' Room and Into the Night*, Julio Cortázar's *Blow-Up and Other Stories*, and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*) and a short story by Guillermo Martinez.

Grades: Grades will be based on the effort you put into the class, both in terms of your own writing and your response to the work of other students and the assigned readings. I expect everyone to earn an 'A.' If you are doing less than 'A' work, I will let you know.

Submitting Work: Your stories (or novel chapters) are due a week before they are critiqued and will be handed out in class. You should make photocopies for everyone in the class and your instructor. If you fail to hand in your story on time, it's your responsibility to get your story to your instructor and your classmates well ahead of the next class. If you miss a class during which stories are handed out, please contact the author about getting the story. You may turn in a maximum of sixty pages per submission period (as long as it is a continuous work—i.e. a very long story or a series of novel chapters). You may turn in three short-shorts at a time.

Feedback on Your Peers' Work: You should provide a page or so of typed (12 point) comments on each piece you critique. In-text comments are helpful and appreciated. Your comments should be professional, courteous, and clear. Should workshop members fail to provide adequate feedback, or should the feedback fail to be professional, courteous, and clear, a system of undergraduate-style grading of feedback will be implemented. Let's not go there.

Workshop Method: Do not address the writer by name. Refer to the writer as "the writer" or "the author" or, if you're feeling Elizabethan, "the begetter of these words." When called on, be prepared to offer one positive comment (what you thought was effective about the work) and one suggestion (what could be improved in the work and how). Do your best not to repeat the comments of your classmates.

## Class Schedule and Day-to-Day Assignments

Tuesday, August 25 Get acquainted

Tuesday, September 1: Read: pages 1-100 of *The River Beyond the World*. Workshop

Tuesday, September 8 Read: pages 101 to 200 of *The River Beyond the World*. Workshop

Tuesday, September 15 Read: pages 201 to the end of *The River Beyond the World*.  
Workshop.

Tuesday, September 22 Read: “Mushroom Girl,” “Apple Pie,” “Mailing Incorrectly,” and  
“Accidental Love” by Thisbe Nissen. Workshop

**Special Event:** Monday, September 28, at 7:30 p.m. in the Gold Ballroom of the  
Mountainlair, poet Campbell McGrath will be reading.

Tuesday, September 29 Read: “Jono, an Elegy” and “The Girl at Chichén Itzá” by Thisbe  
Nissen. Workshop

Tuesday, October 6 Read: “Out of the Girls’ Room and Into the Night” by Thisbe Nissen.  
Workshop

Tuesday, October 13 Read: “House Taken Over” and “Continuity of Parks” by Julio  
Cortazár.

**Special Event:** Monday, October 19, at 7:30 p.m. in 202 Brooks Hall, novelist and short  
story writer Janet Peery will be reading.

Tuesday, October 20 Read: “Bestiary” and “Blow-Up” by Julio Cortazar. Workshop

Tuesday, October 27 Read: “Vast Hell” by Guillermo Martinez (handout). Workshop.

**Special Event:** Monday, November 2, at 7:30 p.m. in the Gold Ballroom of the  
Mountainlair, fiction writer, poet, and tea drinker Mark Brazaitis will be reading.

Tuesday, November 3 Read: “Unaccustomed Earth” by Jhumpa Lahiri. Workshop.

Tuesday, November 10 Read: “Hell-Heaven” by Jhumpa Lahiri. Workshop.

Tuesday, November 17 Read: “A Choice of Accommodations” by Jhumpa Lahiri.  
Workshop

**Thanksgiving Week – Enjoy!**

Tuesday, December 1 Read: Pages 1 to 150 (chapters 1 through 13) of *The Sun Also Rises*. Workshop

Tuesday, December 8 Read: From page 151 to the end of *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway. Conversation on publishing and (possibly) workshop.

## Core Values/Social Justice at West Virginia University

The following core values establish the foundation for Social Justice at West Virginia University.

Every person has intrinsic worth and dignity;

Respect for the law is fundamental;

Freedom from fear is universal;

A climate of opportunity, mutual respect, and understanding engenders a feeling that the future should be shared by all community members;

There is an absence of discrimination and harassment based on age, color, disability, ethnic origin, marital status, pregnancy, race, religious beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, and veteran status; and

The rich diversity of people, their cultures, and the bonds that tie people together are appreciated and celebrated.