

English 318

Mark Brazaitis, ENGL 318, Fall 2003, Topics in Creative Writing

Writing the Past, Writing the Future

ENGLISH 318/001

Professor Mark Brazaitis

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Class Hours: Tuesday, 4-6:50

Class Location: Stansbury 46C

Office Hours: Tuesday (2:30-3:45), Thursday (2:30-3:45) and by appointment

Objective: In this class, you will learn how to write historical fiction and fiction about the future. (I am purposely avoiding the term "science fiction.") You will learn how to write in these genres by both reading and writing.

Requirements: Over the course of the semester, you will read four short stories and a novella by Andrea Barrett, a novel by Alex Shakar, a novel by Howard Bahr, and a novel by Margaret Atwood. In addition, you will be required to complete six short writing exercises, one short story of at least five, double-spaced pages (but no more than 20, double-spaced pages) and one short-short story (of 1500 words or less).

Quizzes: Whenever a reading is assigned, you will be quizzed on it. This brief, objective quiz is designed to give credit to students who do the reading and to encourage everyone to participate in class discussion about the works we read. Although there will be no make-up quizzes, your worst quiz score, including a quiz you might have missed, will be eliminated.

Take-Home Exercises: Take-home exercises are given below. They should be at least 3/4 of a page but no more than three pages. You should type all take-home exercises because you will be handing them in. Please hand in the take-home exercises on time, as late exercises will be penalized. (If you're going to miss class, have a classmate deliver your take-home exercise to me or send it to me as an email attachment before class.)

Texts: *Ship Fever* by Andrea Barrett; *The Savage Girl* by Alex Shakar; *The Year of Jubilo* by Howard Bahr; and *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood.

Grades: Grades in this class will be based on the following: attendance/class participation (20 percent), quizzes (20 percent), take-home exercises (30 percent), short stories (30 percent). Attendance grades are calculated as follows: 0 to 1 absence (A); 2 absences (B); 3 absences (C); 4 absences (D); five or more absences (F).

Class Schedule and Day-to-Day Assignments

Tuesday, August 19 Get acquainted.

Tuesday, August 26 Read: "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds" (page 11) and "Rare Bird" (page 59) by Andrea Barrett. **Due**: First take-home exercise (bring in three copies). Take-home exercise: Write a scene in which a character from the present is influenced by an event in the distant past.

Tuesday, September 2 Read: "The English Pupil" (page 34) and "Birds with No Feet" (page 103) by Andrea Barrett. **Due**: Second take-home exercise (bring in three copies). Take-home exercise: Write a scene in which two characters from a historical period exchange letters.

Tuesday, September 9 Read: "Ship Fever" (page 159). **Due**: Third take-home exercise (bring in three copies). Take-home exercise: Write a scene set in an especially difficult historical situation (a war, a famine, a plague, etc.).

Tuesday, September 16 Read: Pages 1 to 98 of *The Savage Girl* by Alex Shakar. **Due**: Fourth take-home exercise (bring in three copies). Take-home exercise: Describe a product (kitchen appliance, soft drink, automobile, whatever) from the year 2025.

Tuesday, September 23 Read: Pages 99 to 193 of *The Savage Girl* by Alex Shakar. **Due**: Fifth take-home exercise (bring in three copies). Take-home exercise: Think of a current problem (global warming, AIDS, terrorism, etc.) and write a scene set fifty years from now in which this problem is portrayed.

Tuesday, September 30 Read: Page 194 to the end of *The Savage Girl* by Alex Shakar. **Due**: Sixth take-home exercise (bring in three copies). Take-home exercise: Write a love scene set some time in the future.

Tuesday, October 7 Read: Pages 1 to 50 of *The Year of Jubilo*. Workshop.

Tuesday, October 14 Read: Pages 51 to 100 of *The Year of Jubilo*. Workshop.

Tuesday, October 21 Read: Pages 101 to 150 of *The Year of Jubilo*. Workshop.

Tuesday, October 28 Read: Pages 151 to 200 of *The Year of Jubilo*. Workshop.

Tuesday, November 4 Read: Pages 201 to 250 of *The Year of Jubilo*. Workshop.

Tuesday, November 11 Read: Pages 250 to 300 of *The Year of Jubilo*. Workshop. **Due**: a short-short story (1500 words or less) in the genre you didn't write in for your first story. Bring in three copies of your story.

Tuesday, November 18 Read: Pages 300 to the end of *The Year of Jubilo*. Workshop.

THANKSGIVING RECESS

Tuesday, December 2 **Due**: A five-page review of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. (Suggestions about specific approaches to the review will be handed out in class.)

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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.