

The Standard Syllabus Stuff

English 618A

Creative Writing Workshop: Fiction

Wednesday 4:00 - 6:50

Colson Hall - Room 223

Professor: Glenn Taylor

Office: G13 Colson Hall

Hours: T/W 12:00-2:00 and by appointment

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Requirements

*Two (or three) fiction manuscripts (stories or novel excerpts), or roughly 25-65 pages (total pg. count for semester), turned in on time: **(60%)**. This means that each time you hand out manuscripts, you should be handing out somewhere between 12 and 25 pages.

*Critiques of fellow student manuscripts: **(10%)**.

*Completion of one-page weekly Undertakings: **(10%)**. If necessary, you are exempt from turning in an Undertaking on the class meeting in which you hand out manuscripts.

*Participation in discussion of assigned readings and workshop discussions: **(10%)**.

*One five-minute presentation on a particular work (or writer) about which you feel strongly: **(10%)**.

Attendance Policy

*Because this class is discussion-based, with in-class planning and writing, regular attendance is essential. I expect you to attend every class meeting. If you accumulate more than two absences, I will begin lowering your final grade.

Important Guidelines

Here's how it will work, week to week:

*As you leave class on Wednesday, you'll be tasked with four responsibilities.

You'll be given, *to read*:

1) **a writerly piece** (handout)

2) **a story or novel excerpt** (handout). Please mark these up and be thoroughly prepared to discuss.

In addition, you'll be given, *to write*:

3) **a one-page Undertaking**

You'll also be given, *to read and write upon*:

4) **two student manuscripts**.

*Your own manuscripts must be turned in on your scheduled date. You must have a copy for each class member, and the work must be proofread and polished, double-spaced, and page numbered.

*Critiques of student manuscripts must be clear, readable, and substantial. Participation in discussion must be based on mutual respect for difference in tastes and interests. We will all be allowed to best speak our minds if we create a space in which no select few dominate workshop discussions.

Non-Standard New Stuff

You'll see that the course calendar boasts a title and subtitle for each week. The titles derive from the assigned readings themselves and are given to you as a nod to how much fun titling can be.

The assigned readings represent voices I think it would be good for you to hear while finding your way along this weird MFA road. I do not necessarily agree with the writerly pieces, and I do not necessarily find every story or novel excerpt to be genius work. But I do not haphazardly pick these readings either, and I ask that you approach them with an open mind. Same goes for weekly Undertakings.

During weeks two and three, you'll notice we're reading a bit of George Singleton. Though it's not set in stone, it looks like George will be here in the fall to give a reading. If you're going to be in my fall workshop, you may get a chance to meet him.

During week nine, Tom Noyes will be here to give a reading. He will also most likely meet with our class on March 5th. You will have read a story by him for that evening's class.

Between weeks eleven and twelve, over the weekend of March 28-30th, the annual conference of the Appalachian Studies Association will take place at Marshall, in my hometown of Huntington. I will be on a panel about poet Louise McNeill. I hope we can work something out where those of you who are interested can make a trip of it (those with the wherewithal having put in the necessary work to procure a little money perhaps), and we can see what happens. Maybe Jim's Spaghetti. Maybe Hillbilly Hotdogs.

During weeks twelve, thirteen, and fourteen, in lieu of assigned writerly pieces, four of you will give a five minute presentation on a writer or work of your choosing. This is your chance to bring to the class who/what you feel strongly about. It can come in any form, and it certainly would be helped by a short handout of your own creation. You could give a short example of the work to the class for context too (you'd hand it out the class meeting prior). We'll work through this new facet of class as we come to it. I am trying it out this semester as a way of encouraging you to think about who you are really influenced by, I suppose, and I think it's also important that I know what you're into. Sign up here:

April 2nd:

April 9th:

April 16th:

Inevitably, I've forgotten something or brought about confusion, but if you'll come to this workshop with an open mind about what stories are and who tells them best and how you might learn a thing or two from

listening, you'll leave a better writer. Just for the hell of it, let's end with a line from Daniel Wallace's latest novel *The Kings and Queens of Roam*, which may or may not fit with this semester's vibe. You are reading the beginning of the novel for next week. In it, we find this passage, about a man who has shamed himself through the perpetuation of a lie:

He had always admired the old men who told stories around the fire, and one day he thought he would become one of them. Instead, he'd become a liar. A storyteller makes up things to help other people; a liar makes up things to help himself.

ENGL 618A
SPRING 2014 COURSE CALENDAR

January 8

Week One: The Woods, Books, Kings and Queens

or

Advice from Norman Maclean and a novel excerpt from Daniel
Wallace

January 15

Week Two: I busted my laptop, a Vaccination

or

Observations from Samantha Irby and a story from George
Singleton

January 22

Week Three: A regular Regular, a Good Thief

or

Advice from George Singleton and a novel excerpt from Hannah
Tinti

January 29

Week Four: Climbing the tower, catching the underground train

or

Observations from Harry Crews and a novel excerpt from John Wray

February 5

Week Five: Between Down's and dyslexic, a Beautiful Truth

or

Remembrances from Mark Richard and a novel excerpt from Colin
McAdam

February 12

Week Six: Strapped to a breathing machine, of the Sea Light
or
Observations from Richard Smolev and a novel excerpt from
Edwidge Danticat

February 19

Week Seven: Homo Fictus, Mr. Norwood
or
Advice from David Jauss and a novel excerpt from Charles Portis

February 26

Week Eight: A Golden Pelt and Carl the Raping Goat
or
Observations from Michael Shou-Yung Shum and a story from Lucy
Alibar

March 5

Week Nine: The Cartographer's Metaphor and Bycatch too
or
Advice from Peter Turchi and a story from Tom Noyes

-----SPRING BREAK-----

March 19

Week Ten: The Cartographer's Bobcat
or
Advice from Peter Turchi and a story from Rebecca Lee

March 26

Week Eleven: The Cartographer's Good Lord Bird
or
Advice from Peter Turchi and a novel excerpt from James McBride

-----NON-REQUIRED WEEKEND FIELD TRIP TO THE H-----

April 2

Week Twelve: Four spotlight picks, The Sounds of Early Morning
or
Four five-minute student presentations and a story from Manuel
Gonzales

April 9

Week Thirteen: Four spotlight picks, The Sound of Things Falling

or
Four five-minute student presentations and a novel excerpt from
Juan Gabriel Vasquez

April 16
Week Fourteen: Four spotlight picks, Long Division
or
Four five-minute student presentations and a novel excerpt from
Kiese Laymon

April 23
Week Fifteen: Penitence
or
Advice to be announced and a story from Alex Taylor