

ENGLISH 618A

Professor Mark Brazaitis

Office: 219 Colson Hall

Office telephone: 304-293-9707

Office Hours: Tuesday (11:30-1), Thursday (11:30-12:30) and by
appointment

Email: Mark.Brazaitis@mail.wvu.edu

Class Hours: TTh 4-6:50 p.m.

Class Location: 223 Colson Hall

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 (Joshua Ferris's *The Unnamed* and Jaimy Gordon's *Lord of Misrule*), one novella (Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*), and selections from three collections of short stories (Jean Thompson's *Who Do You Love*, Marilene Phipps-Kettlewell's *The Company of Heaven*, and the anthology *20 Under 40*).

Grades: Grades will be based on the effort you put into all aspects of the class. 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. (Emailing your story is not acceptable). 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 fifty 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 by which feedback is graded 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." 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.

Your Work: I would love to read everything you've ever written. Unfortunately, I have to restrict myself to what you submit to this class. Exception: if you've asked me to chair or be a part of your thesis committee.

Class Schedule and Day-to-Day Assignments

Tuesday, August 23 Get acquainted

Tuesday, August 30 Workshop. Read Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*.

Tuesday, September 6 Workshop. Read Chapters 1 through 8 in Joshua Ferris's *The Unnamed*.

Tuesday, September 13 Workshop. Read Chapters 9 to the end of Joshua Ferris's *The Unnamed*.

Special Event: Thursday, September 15^h, at 7:30 p.m. in room 130 of Colson Hall, novelist Glenn Taylor and nonfiction writer and poet Ellesa High will be reading.

Tuesday, September 20 Workshop. Read "Mercy" and "Antarctica" by Jean Thompson

Tuesday, September 27 Workshop. Read "Prologue: Saint Bernadette at Night" and "Down by the River" by Marilene Phipps-Kettlewell.

Tuesday, October 4 Workshop. Read "Second Lives" by Daniel Alarcón and "The Young Painters" by Nicole Krauss in *20 Under 40*.

Special Event: Monday, October 10th, Sturm Writer-in-Residence (and poet) Carol Frost will read at 7:30 in the Gold Ballroom of the Mountainlair.

Tuesday, October 11 Workshop. Read "All Shall Love Me and Despair" and "The Widower" by Jean Thompson.

Special Event: Friday, October 14th, novelist and poet Valerie Nieman will read from her work at noon in Colson 130.

Tuesday, October 19 Workshop. Read "Marie-Ange's Ginen" and "Dogs" by Marilene Phipps-Kettlewell.

Tuesday, October 25 Workshop Read "Birdsong" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and "The Pilot" by Joshua Ferris in *20 Under 40*.

Tuesday, November 1 Workshop. Read "An Arranged Marriage" by Nell Freudenberger in *20 Under 40*.

Tuesday, November 8 Workshop. Read: “What You Do Out Here, When You’re Alone” by Philipp Meyer in *20 Under 40*.

Tuesday, November 15 Workshop. Read: “Blue Water Djinn” by Téa Obreht in *20 Under 40*.

Thanksgiving Break --- Enjoy

Tuesday, November 29 Workshop. Read: Chapters 1 through 25 in *Lord of Misrule* by Jaimy Gordon.

Tuesday, December 6 Workshop. Conversation on publishing. *Read*: Chapters 26 to the end of *Lord of Misrule* by Jaimy Gordon.

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.