

English 312

Mark Brazaitis, English 312, Fall 2006

Professor Mark Brazaitis

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Office Hours: Tuesday (1:00-2:30), Thursday (1-2:30) and by appointment

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Class Hours: Thursday, 4-6:50

Class Location: 48 Stansbury Hall

English 312/001

Objective

In this class, you will learn how 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 (read: require you) to do both.

Requirements: Over the course of the semester, you will read sixteen published short stories and one published novel and write at least two short stories of three pages or more. In addition, you will be required to complete ten short writing exercises. Finally, you will be evaluated on the written feedback you give to your classmates.

Quizzes

Whenever a published short story or novel 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

The Iowa Award: The Best Stories 1991-2000 (edited by Frank Conroy); Because They Wanted To (Mary Gaitskill); and The House on Mango Street (Sandra Cisneros).

Grades

Grades in this class will be based on the following: attendance (10 percent); class participation (10 percent); quizzes (20 percent), take-home exercises (30 percent); feedback given to fellow students (10 percent); short stories (20 percent). (Attendance: 0-1 absence A; 2 absences B; 3 absences C-; 4 or more absences F)

Extra Credit

You may attend and write a one-page review of any two of the “special events” listed below. A review consists of a summary of the event as well as your opinion of the event. (Please type your review.) Each of the extra credit assignments counts for four extra points on one of your take-home assignments. You are encouraged to attend all the events.

Class Schedule and Day-to-Day Assignments

Thursday, August 24 Get acquainted.

Thursday, August 31 Read: “The World With My Mother Still in It” (page 38) and “Nothing” (page 59) in *The Iowa Award* and “The Girl on the Plane” (page 121) in *Because They Wanted To*.

Thursday, September 7 Read: “Hints of His Mortality” (page 1) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: Write about a fight (either physical or verbal). Workshop of stories

Special Event: Tuesday, September 12: Fiction writers Kevin Oderman and Priscilla Rodd will read at 7 p.m. in E. Moore Hall.

Thursday, September 14 Read: “Stealing Trees” (page 91) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: Write a description of a paradise that becomes a hell. (The place doesn’t have to change at all. A character’s reaction to the place might change.) Workshop of stories

Thursday, September 21 Read: “Where Love Leaves Us” (page 101) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: Two friends are canoeing. One of the friends falls into the water and says, “Help, I’m drowning!” The other friend doesn’t know how to swim. Write about what this other friend does or doesn’t do. Workshop of stories

Special Event: Thursday, September 21: Fiction writer Tony Grooms will be reading at 7:30 in the Gold Ballroom of the Mountainlair.

Thursday, September 28 Read: “Ambulance” (page 120) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: Write about a dramatic occurrence such as a bank robbery, a murder, a suicide, or anything else you can think of. Workshop of stories

Thursday, October 5 Read: “The End of Romance” (page 128) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: A man and woman are eating dinner in a restaurant. They begin to argue. Write

the scene from either the man's or the woman's point of view. Next, write the same scene from the waiter's point of view. Workshop of stories

Thursday, October 12 Read: "Igloo Among Palms" (page 146) in The Iowa Award. Due: Take-home exercise: A woman has just left her husband, a man has just lost his dog. They meet in a park. Write what they say to each other. Workshop of stories

Special Event: Monday, October 16: Fiction writer Patricia Henley will be reading at 7:30 in the Gold Ballroom of the Mountainlair.

Thursday, October 19 Read: "Out of the Girls' Room and into the Night" (page 166) in The Iowa Award. Due: Take-home exercise: Write the most captivating opening to a story you can think of. Workshop of stories

Thursday, October 26 Read: "The Oracle" (page 192) in The Iowa Award. Due: Take-home exercise: Describe someone you know without using any adjectives or adverbs, then describe the same person using as many adjectives and adverbs as you want. Workshop of stories

Special Event: Friday, October 27: "Ghosts: A Haunting, Before-Halloween Reading of Poetry and Prose" featuring James Harms, Gail Galloway Adams, Mark Brazaitis, and David Hassler, 6 p.m., Barnes and Noble in Granville (near Target, Dick's, and Giant Eagle)

Thursday, November 2 Read: "The Wrong Thing" (which includes "Turgor," "Respect," "Processing," and "Stuff") in Because They Wanted To by Mary Gaitskill (page 191). Due: Take-home exercise: Write a dramatic monologue (one person speaking). Workshop of stories

Thursday, November 9 Read: Pages 1-55 in The House on Mango Street. Due: Take-home exercise: Revise one of your take-home assignments. Hand in both the first draft and your revision. Workshop of stories

Thursday, November 16 Read: Pages 56 to the end of The House on Mango Street. Workshop of stories

THANKSGIVING RECESS

Thursday, November 30 Read: "Because They Wanted To" by Mary Gaitskill (page 25). Workshop of stories

Thursday, December 7 Read: "Tiny, Smiling Daddy" by Mary Gaitskill (page 1) Workshop of stories

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.