

English 212 Creative Writing: Fiction	
Section 2, Fall 2012, CRN 81704	
Tuesday, Thursday 1:00-2:15, Armstrong 123	
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Office Location: Colson 308	Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 11:30-12:50 or by appointment
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Objective:

In this class, you will learn how to become better fiction writers. The only way that I know how to do this is to read and write a lot. Stephen King agrees! In *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, he says, "If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot. There's no way around these two things that I'm aware of, no shortcut." So, that's what we'll be doing. In the process, we'll have a lot of fun.

Requirements:

As per Mr. King's instructions, you will be reading and writing in this class. Let's start with the reading. Throughout the semester, you will read essays on craft, short stories, three short story collections, and your fellow students' work (you will also comment on their stories). There will be reading assigned for each class meeting. You will respond to the readings in a reading journal (more to be explained later) that will be collected four times throughout the semester. Please plan on having a quiz for each reading assignment. For the last short story collection of the semester, you will also help guide classroom discussion for one of the stories (this can be in a group).

Now for the writing. You will write two short stories in this class. Each story should fall between five to fifteen pages (talk to me if it's more or less than that). For your first short story, you will meet with me after you have turned it in. For your second, you will workshop it with the class. You will revise one of them (you can revise both if you want, of course). In addition, you will complete 7 short writing exercises and revise one of them as well. Revisions are due on the final class.

Quizzes:

For each reading assignment, you will be given a short quiz. If you are absent, you cannot make up a quiz. However, I will drop one of the quizzes at the end of the semester.

Writing Exercises:

Every other week, you will be turning in a writing exercise. These exercises should be typed and be roughly between a page to two-pages long. You are required to revise one of the exercises for your final portfolio. Also, feel free to use the writing exercises to help you with your stories. For example, for the characterization exercise, if you want to write about characters you're already thinking about, that is perfectly acceptable. Take risks and chances with these exercises, though. In order for you to grow as a writer, you need to try new things. Writing exercises are due in class. If you are absent, you can either give your exercise to a classmate or email it to me before class. I will accept late exercises with a one-grade decrease penalty the week that it is due. After that, the most you will receive is half credit.

Reading Journals

For every short story we read, I expect you to briefly respond to it. You can simply respond to elements of the reading that intrigued you, look at it from a craft perspective, or write about how it relates to your own writing. The point is to start thinking about reading from a critical and a craft perspective. All responses should be between a half-page to two pages. You do not have to write in paragraphs. You can use bullet points or

questions, but I expect to see critical engagement with the text (summary is unacceptable). For each reading period, you can skip one of the reading responses (you are still required to read the assignment, though).

Workshop:

The second half of the semester you will workshop one of your stories. You are required to make copies for everyone in class (as of writing this syllabus, there are 20 students. I will let you know if there are less when we start workshopping). You are required to hand these out to the students the class period before we workshop your story. Everyone is required to read and respond to the stories. You are required give marginal comments and to type up a response (plan on a half page to a page) and give me a copy of your responses (that means you need 2 copies of your response). You are required to give feedback to the student the day that we discuss the story in class even if you are absent (You can always email me the written response and then turn in the marginal comments in the next class). If you are absent the day someone passes out a story, I will have copies of those stories in my mailbox.

Portfolio:

On the last day of class, you will be turning in a portfolio of your work. In it, you will have revised one of your stories and one of your exercises. You will also write a brief reflection on your work in this class and your revision process.

Texts:

You are required to have three books:

Sherman Alexie's *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven*
 Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*
 Junot Diaz's *Drown*.

I also will be using excerpts of Jerome Stern's *Making Shapely Fiction* throughout the semester. I recommend getting this book because it is such a great resource; however it is not required. There will also be pdfs of stories and essays on ECampus. You are required to have a copy (either a hard or digital copy) when we discuss these stories and essays in class.

Grades:

Stories/Revision 30
 Exercises/Revision 20
 Reading Journal 15
 Workshop Responses 10
 Participation/Attendance 10
 Quizzes 10
 Story Presentation 5

Attendance:

Attendance is key for a workshop class. Therefore, it will factor into your grade. You are allowed up to three absences without it affecting your grade. At four to five absences, you cannot receive more than a B for in-class participation; with six to seven absences, a C; eight absences, a D; and at nine absences, you will fail the class.

Extra Credit:

There will be extra credit opportunities throughout the semester. Please see eCampus for a full list of extra credit options. One extra credit opportunity is to attend a reading. This semester we will have a plethora of readings (a full list will be on eCampus); however, here are a few:

January 26 – Professor Mark Brazaitis and Amanda Leigh Cobb reading from 7:30-9:00 pm in the Gold Ballroom, Mountainlair
 Tuesday 12 – Valentine’s Day Reading to benefit the Appalachian Prison Book Project from 7:30-9:00 pm in 130 Colson.
 February 26 – Professor Kevin Oderman and Jessie van Eerden reading from 7:30-9:00 pm in the Robinson Reading Room, Downtown Library
 March 5 – Valerie Boyd reading from 7:30-9:00 p.m. in the Robinson Reading Room, Downtown Library
 March 20 – Professor Mary Ann Samyn reading from 7:30-9:00 p.m. in 130 Colson
 April 18 – English 418 Reading from 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. in 130 Colson
 April 18 – *Calliope* Reading from 7:30-9:00 p.m. in 130 Colson
 April 25 – MFA Reading from 7:30-9:00 p.m. in the Rhododendron Room, Mountainlair

While attendance is not mandatory, you should try to attend them because we have some amazing authors visiting. Plus, it is always helpful to hear other’s perspectives on writing. However, if you want some extra credit, you can attend a reading and write a one-page summary. You can do this for up to two readings. They are due no later than one week after the reading. Each response will raise a reading journal’s grade up by as much as two-letters.

Additional extra credit opportunities are listed on eCampus.

Note on Writing:

Good writing starts with good characters. I expect quality, well-thought out, *literary* writing. This means that while there can be magical or other worldly elements in your writing, you are first and foremost telling a story about complex characters with wants and desires. In other words, the tension in your stories will come from issues of character, not issues of plot. This will affect your grade. If you have questions, please talk to me.

Plagiarism

I expect all of your work to be original and written for this class. Cases of plagiarism will be taken very seriously and can result in an unforgivable F. If you have questions about this, please talk to me.

Participation/Cell Phone Policy:

Please show up to class prepared. If you are distracted, not paying attention and/or disruptive, I reserve the right to ask you to leave, resulting in an absence for the day. Cell phones are to be off and put away. Excessive cell phone use can result in a lowered participation grade and up to an absence.

Office Hours:

My office hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 12:30-1:20 in Colson 308. If you cannot make any of these times, we can schedule a meeting. Please stop by if you have any questions or concerns (these hours are there for you).

You can email me as well with any questions or concerns and expect a response within 24 hours Monday through Friday. If you are emailing me an assignment, please make sure that you state the assignment in the subject heading and copy the assignment into the body of the email (as well as including it as an attachment). For all emails, please have a subject heading and make sure that you sign your email.

Social Justice Discourse Policy:

WVU takes their Social Justice Discourse Policy very seriously as do I. In order to create an environment where different perspectives can be heard, our classroom needs to be an environment that does not tolerate any form of discrimination.

Accommodations:

If you anticipate needing any accommodations this semester, please see me as soon as possible. At WVU, we encourage everyone to participate and will make sure that any special accommodations required are met. Please know that special disability services are offered at the university. West Virginia University Office of Disability Services, Location: G-30 Mountainlair, Phone: 304-294-6700, Email: access2@mail.wvu.edu

Carruth Center

During the semester if you feel overwhelmed or in need of assistance, I urge you to seek help at the Carruth Center. (304) 293-4431.

Class Schedule

*Based on the dynamics of the class, the syllabus might change.

* Some of the assignments are left intentionally vague so I can adapt the readings to the class's interests.

January		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
1/14 In Class: Discuss Syllabus. Get acquainted HW: Reading #1 on eCampus (due 1/16) and Letter (due 1/18)	1/16 In Class: Discuss plot and Reading #1 HW: Reading #2 on eCampus (due 1/18) and begin Exercise# 1 - Character due 1/23	1/18 Letter Due In Class: Discuss Reading #2 and in-class exercise HW: Reading #3 on eCampus (due 1/23)
1/21 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day No Class	1/23 Exercise #1 - Characters Due Discuss character and Reading #3 HW: Reading #4 on eCampus (due 1/25)	1/25 In Class: Discuss Reading #4 and in-class exercise. HW: Reading #5 on eCampus (due 1/28)
1/28 In Class: Discuss Reading #5 HW: Reading #6 on eCampus (due 1/30)	1/30 In Class: Discuss Setting and Reading #6 HW: Reading #7 on eCampus (due 2/1) and begin Exercise # 2 – Setting due 2/4	2/1 Journal 1 Due (Response to Readings #1-7) In Class: Discuss Reading #7 on eCampus HW: Read "Ysrael," "Fiesta, 1980" from <i>Drown</i>

February		
2/4 Exercise 2 – Setting Due In Class: Discuss <i>Drown</i> HW: Read “Aurora” from <i>Drown</i> and excerpt on conflict on eCampus	2/6 In Class: Discuss conflict and <i>Drown</i> HW: Read “Aguantando” and “Drown” from <i>Drown</i>	2/8 In Class: Discuss <i>Drown</i> and in-class exercise. HW: Read “Boyfriend” and “Edison, New Jersey” from <i>Drown</i>
2/11 In Class: Discuss <i>Drown</i> HW: Read “How to Date...” and “No Face” from <i>Drown</i>	2/13 In Class: Discuss <i>Drown</i> HW: Read “Negocios” from <i>Drown</i> and begin Exercise #3 – Conflict due 2/18	2/15 In Class: Discuss <i>Drown</i> and in-class exercise. HW: Reading # 8 eCampus
2/18 Exercise 3 – Conflict Due In Class: Finish <i>Drown</i> , discuss dialogue and Reading # 8 HW: Reading #9 on eCampus (due 2/20)	2/20 In Class: Discuss Reading # 9 and point of view HW: Reading # 10 on eCampus read and respond to workshop story (due 2/22)	2/22 In Class: Discuss Reading #10 and workshop. HW: Reading #11 on eCampus (due 2/25)
2/25 In Class: Discuss Reading # 11 and workshop. HW: Reading #12 on eCampus read and respond to workshop story (due 2/27)	2/27 In Class: Discuss Reading # 12 and workshop HW: Reading #13 on eCampus, read and respond to workshop story (due 3/1) and begin Exercise # 4 – Dialogue due 3/4	3/1 Journal 2 Due (Response to <i>Drown</i> and Readings #7- 13) In Class: Discuss Reading #13 and workshop. HW: Read “The Book of the Dead” from <i>The Dew Breaker</i> and read and respond to workshop story
March		
3/4 Exercise # 4 – Dialogue due In Class: Workshop and discuss <i>The Dew Breaker</i> HW: Read “Water Child” from <i>The Dew Breaker</i>	3/6 In Class: Workshop and discuss <i>The Dew Breaker</i> HW: Read “The Book of Miracles” from <i>The Dew Breakers</i> and read and respond to workshop story	3/8 No Class
3/11 In Class: Workshop and discuss <i>The Dew Breaker</i> HW: Read “Night Talkers” from <i>The Dew Breaker</i>	3/13 In Class: Discuss <i>The Dew Breaker</i> HW: Read “The Bridal Seamstress” from <i>The Dew Breaker</i> , read and respond to workshop story, and begin exercise # 5 POV due 3/18	3/15 In Class: Workshop and discuss <i>The Dew Breaker</i> HW: Read “Monkey Tails” from <i>The Dew Breaker</i> , read and respond to workshop story
3/18 Exercise #5 – Conflict due In Class: Workshop and discuss <i>The Dew Breaker</i> HW: Read “The Funeral Singer” from <i>The Dew Breaker</i> , read and respond to workshop story	3/20 In Class: Workshop and discuss <i>The Dew Breaker</i> HW: Read “The Dew Breaker” from <i>The Dew Breaker</i>	3/22 In Class: Discuss <i>The Dew Breaker</i> HW: Reading #14 on eCampus (due 4/1), Journal #3

Spring Break!		
April		
4/1 Journal 3 due (Response to <i>The Dew Breakers</i> and Reading #14) In Class: Discuss Reading #14 and finish discussing <i>The Dew Breaker</i> HW: Reading #15 on eCampus and read and respond to workshop story (due 4/3)	4/3 In Class: Workshop and discuss Reading #15 HW: Reading #16 on eCampus, read and respond to workshop story (due 4/5), and begin exercise # 6 – magical realism due (4/8)	4/5 In Class: Workshop and discuss Reading #16 HW: Read Alexie (TBA) and read and respond to workshop story
4/8 Exercise #6 –Magical Realism Due In Class: Present and discuss Alexie. Workshop. HW: Read Alexie (TBA) and read and respond to workshop story	4/10 In Class: Present and discuss Alexie. Workshop. HW: Read Alexie (TBA) and read and respond to workshop story	4/12 In Class: Present and discuss Alexie. Workshop. HW: Read Alexie (TBA) and read and respond to workshop story
4/15 In Class: Present and discuss Alexie. Workshop. HW: Read Alexie (TBA) and read and respond to workshop story	4/17 In Class: Present and discuss Alexie. Workshop. HW: Read Alexie (TBA), read and respond to workshop story, and begin exercise #7 – folklore due (4/22)	4/19 In Class: Present and discuss Alexie. Workshop. HW: Read Alexie (TBA) and read and respond to workshop story
4/22 Exercise # 7 – Folklore due In Class: Present and discuss Alexie. Workshop. HW: Read Alexie (TBA) and read and respond to workshop story	4/24 In Class: Present and discuss Alexie. Workshop. HW: Read Alexie (TBA) and read and respond to workshop story	4/26 In Class: Present and discuss Alexie. Workshop. HW: Reading # 16 on eCampus(due 5/1)
April/May		
4/29 No Class Due to Conferences	5/1 Journal 4 due (Response to <i>Tonto and the Lone Ranger...</i> and Readings #15-16) In Class: Discuss Reading # 17 HW: Write	5/3 Portfolio Due

Portfolio to be passed back during Finals Week, TBA