

ENGLISH 212, Section 003, Creative Writing: Fiction

Instructor: Shane Stricker

Eng. 212, Sect. 003, CRN: 18105

Tuesday/Thursday: 11:30-12:45, 121 Armstrong Hall

Office Location: 228 Colson Hall

Office Hours: 2:00-3:00 Monday/Wednesday

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Texts

Battleborn, Claire Vaye Watkins

Burning Bright: Stories, Ron Rash

Let The Dead Bury Their Dead, Randall Kenan

Description/Requirements of This Course

This class requires that all students think substantially (and creatively), read widely, and write daily. The assignments are given in order to insure that every one of you gains a better understanding of how writing and language, more generally speaking, ‘work’. There’s **no** possible way to become a better writer and reader without reading and writing. The class will be fun but it will also challenge you. Come to class and to the work within the class with an attitude that says, “I want to learn. I want to be better.” The hard work will pay off in the end.

Your final grade will be determined based on informal writing (journal assignments, comments on others’ stories, etc.), participation (including attendance and quantity/quality of participation), and formal writing assignments (two fiction stories). Do not be surprised to see either multiple choice or essay-based quizzes added into the mix if the class (as a whole) demonstrates an unwillingness to read the assigned pages for one or multiple days.

Attendance Policy

I have often had students ask why I take attendance and why they are penalized for not coming to class. You are all ‘grown’ individuals and are responsible for your own behavior. In this life, there is **nothing** that you **have** to do. However, you must deal with the consequences of the choice to do nothing, in life, as well as in this class. We need all of you in class every day in order to facilitate a classroom dialogue and for each of us to grow beyond ourselves and become

better writers (myself, included). With that said, students are granted three absences in this course before a penalty will be assessed to their final grade. If more than three classes are missed, a third of a letter grade will be reduced for each additional absence from the student's overall, end-of-the-semester grade.

Informal writing will be accepted up to a week late with a penalty of up to half the assignment's value. Formal Writing will also be accepted up to a week late. However, because we, as a class, will be expecting to workshop your stories the week after they are due, the penalty for late formal writing will be **substantial**. Anything turned in over a week late **will not** be accepted.

A Note on Workshop

Stories will be e-mailed to your classmates a week before they are to be workshopped by the class. A hard copy (Printed version), as well, will be turned into me a week before your scheduled workshop. If you fail to turn in either the printed version to me or fail to e-mail the class with your story a full week ahead of your scheduled workshop, there will be a reduction in your overall grade for the story in question.

For all student stories that are not your own, you will be required to type up, and print out, comments for the stories we are workshopping. Bring two copies of these comments to class on the day of the workshop (One for me, one for the person being workshopped). Your comments should be approximately a page, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font [broken into the categories as follows: a summary of the plot of the story (approximately 5 sentences), appreciations (at least 3), and areas for improvement/suggestions on how one might do this (at least 3)]. You will receive credit toward your informal writing grade for these assignments.

While it is in your best interest as both writer and reader to look at the work of others, including the work of your peers, with a critical eye, there is a difference between being critical of an author's work and of the author, herself. We will be, to quote one of my former professors, "tough on writing but kind to writers." If there are problems, or if you feel that you are being attacked unfairly, let me know after class. Chances are, since I don't put up with that type of behavior, I will have handled it in the classroom before you'll even need to talk to me. However, do not hesitate to come discuss any issues with me either after class or in my office hours.

Grading

Your grade will be calculated in this manner:

Formal Writing (Fiction Stories): 70%

Informal Writing (Journal assignments/Quizzes/Comment sheets for classmates' stories): 20%

Participation: 10%

For Fiction stories, 70% of each individual story's grade will come from correct formatting and adhering to the assignment guidelines. The stories will all be turned in on time, stapled or paper clipped, have titles and page numbers, meet page requirements (as discussed in class). Margins should be 1.00" top, bottom, inside, and outside. Times New Roman, 12 point font, should be used for all stories. Correct grammar usage (see proofreading) is expected of all writing in this class and will be considered within this 70%. Other restrictions may be given in class.

The remaining 30% of a story's grade will come from the story's merit. This includes an in depth look, on my part, at the story's characters, setting, tension, voice, point of view (POV), dialogue, plot, and other craft related elements of the piece.

These percentages are balanced in this manner in order to help comfort you while writing your stories. I hope, by freeing you, to an extent, from grades, that you will feel comfortable to turn out wonderful stories which both entertain and instruct your readership (i.e. the class).

As well, you will have the option to revise your stories for a final portfolio (This will **NOT** be required). This is an **option** solely for those of you who are unhappy with your previous formal writing grades and hope to bring them up. The stories, in the portfolio, will be revised and refined. They will demonstrate a heavy amount of work done to them during the semester. Included in the portfolio will be the revised (final) drafts, along with any copies of your stories with my notes.

Schedule of Classes/Due Dates for Assignments

January 15th—Introduction to Class; Review of syllabus; Taking down of e-mail addresses; Sign-up for workshop days

January 17th—Vonnegut/Dufresne's rules to writing fiction (On Ecampus; bring printed to class); **Journal #1**

January 22nd—Setting/Character; "Hard Times"—Ron Rash (pgs. 3-18)

January 24th—POV/Plot; "Dead Confederates"—Ron Rash (pgs. 45-74), **Journal #2**

January 29th—Beginnings and Endings/Backstory/Point of Attack; "Return"—Ron Rash (pgs. 127-132); "Into the Gorge"—Ron Rash (pgs. 133-151)

January 31st—Workshop, Workshop

February 5th—Workshop, Workshop, **Journal #3**

February 7th—Workshop, Workshop; “Ghosts, Cowboys”—Claire Vaye Watkins (pgs. 1-23)

February 12th—Workshop, Workshop; “The Last Thing We Need”—Claire Vaye Watkins (pgs. 25-42)

February 14th—Workshop, Workshop; “Rondine Al Nido”—Claire Vaye Watkins (pgs. 43-61)

February 19th—Workshop, Workshop; “Man-O-War”—Claire Vaye Watkins (pgs. 121-152)

February 21st—Workshop, Workshop

February 26th—Workshop, Workshop, **Journal #4**

February 28th—Workshop, Workshop; “Clarence and the Dead (And What Do They Tell You, Clarence? And the Dead Speak to Clarence)—Randall Kenan (pgs. 1-23)

March 5th—Workshop, Workshop; “Things of This World; Or, Angels Unawares”—Randall Kenan (pgs. 24-48)

March 7th—Workshop, Workshop; “The Foundations of the Earth”—Randall Kenan (pgs. 49-72)

March 12th—Workshop, Workshop; “The Origin of Whales”—Randall Kenan (pgs. 73-87)

March 14th—Workshop, Workshop

March 19th—Workshop, Workshop, **Journal #5**

March 21st—Workshop, Workshop; “Wish You Were Here”—Claire Vaye Watkins (pgs. 101—119)

March 26th—**NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**

March 28th—**NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**

April 2nd—“The Past Perfect, The Past Continuous, The Simple Past”—Claire Vaye Watkins (pgs. 63-100)

April 4th—Workshop, Workshop

April 9th—Workshop, Workshop; “Back of Beyond”—Ron Rash (pgs. 19-43)

April 11th—Workshop, Workshop

April 16th—Workshop, Workshop; “Burning Bright”—Ron Rash (pgs. 107-123)

April 18th—Workshop, Workshop

April 23rd—Workshop, Workshop; “Tell Me, Tell Me”—Randall Kenan (pgs. 236-269)

April 25th—Workshop, Workshop

April 30th—Workshop, Workshop; “Lincolmites”—Ron Rash (pgs. 193-205)

May 2nd—Last Day of Class (Joyous/depressing, tearful goodbyes); **Optional Final Portfolios Due**