

English 618

Gail Galloway Adams, ENGL 618, Fall 2002, Graduate Fiction Writing Workshop

English 618A Fall 2002 Graduate Writing Workshop: Fiction

Wednesday 7:00 - 9:50 (1900 - 2150) Stansbury 336

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Texts: *Best American Short Stories 2001*; John Berger, *Pig Earth*; Anton Chekov, *Five Stories*; Harriet Doerr, *Stones for Ibarra*; Janet Frame, *The Reservoir*; Alice Munro, *The Beggar Maid*; Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*; Grace Paley, *Collected Stories*.

This workshop has only sixteen class meetings: one falls on a Day of Special Concern

(9/11); one falls on the Blue Moose faculty Voice Performance Poetry extravaganza

(9/4); and two are introductory class and final class, so it's clear that time has to be used wisely.

Attendance is crucial in order to build workshop camaraderie and skills in

editing/critiquing. There is also a lot of reading that will, of course, enhance your life and

enrich your writing, so organize to do it. Please keep an informal reading response

journal on all you read.

There are eight books. Each of you must choose one book on which you'll present the

class a discussion topic/question (there will be some overlap so have a back-up). For the

BASS 20 stories each of you should decide by the second class on one piece for which

you'll lead discussion. Have some back-ups in case your first choice gets taken. I'll start

us off on the Chekov, but someone can take him over.

It is very important to me that you have time for your own writing and that every class there are stories for critique. It would be great to get two pieces each presented so that one might be revised for final portfolio. Reading responses and, as preface to the final portfolio, an informal overview essay on the term's readings will be required. At any time during the term, a halt can be called in regular assignment to let us explore and examine certain technical/aesthetic aspects of craft/art that engage the class. Expectation is that you would attend some of the scheduled readings (listed on the syllabus) and present a written response. If class/work conflicts make this impossible discuss other alternatives with me. This looks like a great group of writers and I'm looking forward to the strong stories we'll have for review.

No anonymous stories, please. Professional ms set-up ready to go out into the world if need be--that includes word count and running head with pagination. This will be a traditional workshop with manuscripts written on and signed so the writer can contact you later if handwriting needs to be deciphered (in which case you might want to type out your critical comments). I don't need to see these since I'll see them in the final portfolio at the end. The workshopped writer remains respectfully mute, but with mind as warm with rebuttals and/or dimpling modesty. A compatriot or the teacher will write down comments so there can be points of later referral. At the end the writer can respond fitfully/gratefully/thoughtfully/only not combatively. Applause follows. Try and pinpoint one good thing about the mss and perhaps start with this--can move on with a but...but ...try and end with another positive you've noticed. Do not flinch from saying the hard thing that needs to be said, but try always to give that criticism with a suggestion for how it can be improved. Other approaches/formats can be suggested and tried if this doesn't work. Every workshop dynamic is different.

AUGUST

Wed 21 Introduction. Possible parceling out of book responsibilities/story

Responsibilities. In-Class writing exercise. General discussion of the term's

expectations. Who has a story? These will be distributed in Eng department mail-boxes

and e-mailed attachment to those farther afield.

I'd like two for Wed 28. Will set up tentative schedule for bring mss in. Who'll share

Chekov?

Wed 28 House-keeping chores out of the way. Who'll do what when? Begin with Anton Chekov. Please read: The Black Monk/Peasants/Gooseberries. Am assuming just about everybody knows Lady with Toy Dog, fewer House on the Mezzanine--might want to try as an exercise if such things help you to model a passage on any of these. Shared Chekov duties--question comes here. Second half of class Examine two stories.

SEPTEMBER

Please Note: Wed 4 Blue Moose Voice Performance Poetry Extravaganza by WVU English Faculty: Sandy Baldwin/Ben Doyle/Adam Komisaruk/Katy Ryan. We should all attend this as support and to be a present force as mfa literary program. I think it is scheduled for 8:00 so if we wanted to meet at 7:00 to distribute stories or present discussion question on John Berger's fiction we could. Please share your thoughts on this because I am happy to meet the class as regularly scheduled if that's your charge. This would count as attendance at a reading.

Please note: Tuesday September 10th 7:30 Rhododendron Room: Lee Martin, fiction reading.

Wed 11 This is a **Day of Special Concern** and there will be various events on campus including a candle light vigil. If you are involved in these special ceremonies, please let me know. We might in our class do our own commemoration with poems/short pieces. John Berger's *Pig Earth* in its entirety (we'll have had two weeks). Discussion question. Stories to critique.

Wed 18 Harriet Doerr, *Stones for Ibarra*. Follows nicely with the linked stories of Berger. Discussion question. Remember if story discussion rolls over that's okay because we're supposed to link/compare/contrast/etc. Two more stories to critique.

Wed 25 Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*. Discussion question. Two stories to critique.

OCTOBER

Wed 2 Alice Munro, *The BeggarMaid*. Again linked stories. Discussion question. Two stories to workshop. This is also mid-term week so it's possible that discussion of Munro will roll over, but it's already established that that's okay.

Please Note: Dean Young, Sturm Poet in Residence Reading Mon 7th at 7:30 in Gold Ballroom. I also realize that some in the grad workshop might be selected to study with Young and will miss Wed 9 class. We'll make arrangements.

Wed 9 Grace Paley *Collected Stories*. Discussion question. Stories to critique.

Wed 16 Janet Frame *The Reservoir and Others*. Discussion question. Stories to critique.

Wed 23 Begin presentations on *BASS*-can tie these into earlier reading i.e. Munro of *BASS* and *BMaid*. Might also choose in these weeks to present compare/contrast with your *BASS* and a story from earlier collections that might have been slighted. At any time if we think we need to give more time to the collections we will--there is time. Two more stories to workshop.

Wed 30 Continue *BASS* presentation. Two more stories to workshop

NOVEMBER

Please Note: Saturday 11/2 WV Writers Project will have approximately 15-18 Language Arts teachers with a particular interest in creative writing on campus working with Professor Margot Racine. **That afternoon 4:00 Meredith Sue Willis, founder of Writers and Teachers Collaborative**, author of a trilogy published by Scribners, and short story collection and native of Shinnston will read. More information coming.

Wed 6 *BASS* as above. Two more stories to work shop. At anytime if I feel the class is getting into a rut, I'll bring in an exercise and try and energize. You ditto.

Wed 13 *BASS* continues as ever--will we tire of this? Will it never end? Who are all these writers? Help!! Two more stories and/or stories coming back to us substantially revised.

Wed 20 Final *BASS roundup*. Discussion of portfolio matters. Two more stories to workshop. Final stories to be discussed/distributed. There might be only one for the final class and/or a revision in which case the final class will be abbreviated. Evaluations of class this night.

Please Note: Steven Dunn Lecture at 7:30 Gold Ballroom. He's speaking on effects of 9/11 on writers.

THANKSGIVING RECESS 11/23 • 12/01 ResVread/eat well/gather portfolio materials together.

DECEMBER

Wed 4 Unbelievable! **LAST AND FINAL CLASS** and you did all the reading and the reading responses, and your discussion questions, and your attendance at the reading pieces, and your overview assessment of what helped the most in your reading, and revised (somewhat) your one solid story and

spiffed up your second rougher story and organized all the material and felt happy with all you'd accomplished especially given the fact that most of you are teaching/grading and others of you are working and all of you are trying to live, and my god when did you ever find the time to do all this writing? and it's pretty damn good! **Portfolios can be turned in on this night, but Absolute Deadline is Monday 9th at 4:45.** We'll do something fun-dinner at Cafe of India or downtown restaurant--classes choice--my treat.