

English 212 Creative Writing: Fiction	
Section 2, Fall 2012, CRN 81704	
Tuesday, Thursday 1:00-2:15, Armstrong 123	
Rebecca Thomas	Rthoma24@mix.wvu.edu
Office Location: Colson 308	Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 11:30-12:50 or by appointment
Phone (message only) 293-3107	

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."

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 the craft, short stories, one novella (*The Ballad of Sad Café*), and your fellow students' work (you will also comment on your colleagues' 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 five times throughout the semester. Please plan on having a quiz for each reading assignment. During the middle of the semester, you will also help guide classroom discussion for one of the stories (this can be in a group). Because reading is so important in becoming a better writer, I also ask that you read one outside book that is not required for another class (this can be any book or literary journal).

Now for the second half of the becoming a better fiction writer equation: 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 than that). For your first short story, you will meet with me. 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 5 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:

For the beginning half of the semester, you will be turning in one writing exercise a week. 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, I will not accept any exercises.

Reading Journals

For every reading, 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 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. Every three weeks you will turn in your reading journals for a grade. For each reading period, you can skip one of the reading responses (you are still required to read the assignment, though). For the final reading journal, I also expect a reading response from outside reading you are doing.

Workshop:

The second half of the semester, you will be workshopping one of your stories. You are required to make copies for everyone in class (as of writing this syllabus there are 22 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. 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).

Texts:

You are required to have two books: *Collected Stories of Carson McCullers* by Carson McCullers and *ECCO Anthology of Contemporary American Authors* edited by Joyce Carol Oates, 8th edition. 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 two absences without it affecting your grade. At three to four absences, you cannot receive more than a B for in-class participation; with five to six absences, a C; seven absences, a D; and at eight absences, you will fail the class.

Extra Credit:

We have a plethora of readings happening this semester (they are listed below). 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 count for as much as half of one reading response for the reading journal. Upcoming readings:

Jonathan Coleman

Thursday, September 13, 2012, 7:30 p.m., Gold Ballroom, Mountainlair

Kathleen Ryan

Wednesday, October 3, 2012, 7:30 p.m., 130 Colson Hall

Michael Blumenthal and Bruce Bond

Wednesday, October 17, 2012, 7:30 p.m., Robinson Reading Room, Downtown Library

Jaimy Gordon

Monday, October 29, 2012, 7:30 p.m., Robinson Reading Room, Downtown Library

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.

Plagiarism

I expect all of your work to be original. Cases of plagiarism will be taken very seriously and can result in an unforgivable F.

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 Tuesday and Thursday from 11:30-12:50 in Colson 308. If you cannot make any of these times, please see me in person or email me, and 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.

8-21 HW: Reading on ECampus Letter to me due 8/23	8-23 Sign up for date to turn in first story HW: Reading on ECampus Exercise 1 on Characters— Prompt on ECampus
8-28 Exercise 1 Due on Characters HW: Reading on ECampus	8-30 HW: Reading on ECampus Exercise 2 on Setting/Description — Prompt on ECampus
9-4 Exercise 2 Due on Setting/Description HW: Reading on ECampus	9-6 Reading Journal Due HW: Reading on ECampus Exercise 3 on Conflict — Prompt on ECampus
9-11 Exercise 3 Due on Conflict HW: Reading on ECampus	9-13 HW: Reading on ECampus Exercise 4 on Dialogue — Prompt on ECampus

9-18 Sign up for Workshop Dates Exercise 4 Due on Dialogue HW: Reading on ECampus	9-20 Presentations HW: Reading on ECampus
9-25 No Class Due to Conferences	9-27 Reading Journal Due Presentation HW: Reading on ECampus Exercise 5 on Point of View — Prompt on ECampus
10-2 Exercise 5 Due on Point of View Presentation HW: Reading on ECampus	10-4 Presentation HW: Reading on ECampus Respond to Workshop
10-9 Workshop Presentation HW: Reading on ECampus Respond to Workshop	10-11 Workshop Presentation HW: Reading on ECampus Respond to Workshop
10-16 Workshop Presentation HW: Reading on ECampus Respond to Workshop	10-18 Reading Journal Due Workshop Presentation HW: Reading on ECampus Respond to Workshop
10-23 Workshop Presentation HW: Reading on ECampus Respond to Workshop	10-25 Workshop Presentation HW: Reading on ECampus Respond to Workshop
10-30 Workshop Presentation HW: Reading on ECampus Respond to Workshop	11-1 Workshop Presentation HW: Read first half of <i>The Ballad of Sad Café</i> (to page 231) Respond to Workshop
11-6 No Class Due to Election Day	11-8 Reading Journal Due Workshop Discussion of Ballad of Sad Café HW: Finish <i>The Ballad of Sad Café</i> Respond to Workshop
11-13 Workshop Discussion of Ballad of Sad Café HW: Respond to Workshop	11-15 Workshop Discussion of <i>Ballad of Sad Café</i> HW: Respond to Workshop
11-27 Workshop HW: Reading on ECampus Revise	11-29 No class due to Conferences and Revision
12-4 HW: Revise	12-6 Reading Journal and Revisions Due