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Office hours: 11-Noon (MWF), 9:30-11AM (TH), and by appointment.

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION
Classroom analysis and discussion of student writing. Prerequisites: 12 hours of English including ENG 261 and ENG 359 or graduate standing or consent of instructor. May be repeated once for up to 6 hours.

REQUIRED BOOKS
How Fiction Works  
James Wood

You should also buy a folder. I will be giving you lots of handouts.

OBJECTIVES
Everyone in this class has had some experience telling stories and, importantly, writing stories. You know it’s crucial to adhere to the truth of the world you create in your writing. Your story has logic, consistency, conflict, and consequence. You also know not everyone likes or admires the same sort of fiction, but the tools we use to tell our stories are the same across the genres: honest and compelling dialogue, clear characterizations, gripping plot, unexpected twists, heartbreaking revelations, poignant actions. Whatever your story is, the craft is the same. Since this is an advanced class, I expect you will take that craft seriously—even if the end result is comedy—and you’ll address your classmates’ work with the same attention and respect. You will be required to write a considerable amount of fiction this semester and you must not be shy about sharing your work with classmates and editing their work as well. Learning to give and accept constructive criticism is an important step in becoming a writer (or artist of any sort). Expect to write three complete stories this semester and workshop two of them. You will also write two short craft analysis papers (3-4 or so pages long), each applying something we have discussed from the Wood book to a story I’ll give you as a handout.

Here are the official Program Learning Outcomes:

1.) The student will demonstrate close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.
2.) The student will employ these techniques and strategies, crafting carefully
composed, competent fiction.

3.) The student will articulate useful, critical editorial advice for peer writers.

4.) The student will demonstrate strategic revision on completed creative work.

5.) The student will compose a complete, polished manuscript of substance.

**GRADING BREAKDOWN**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Breakdown</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100-90 = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>89-80 = B</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEER EDITING</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>79-70 = C</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>69-60 = D</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59- = F</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS PAPER 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS PAPER 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 3</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>FINAL PORTFOLIO</td>
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**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (10%)**

If you want to do well in this course, you should attend every class period. There will be numerous discussions, maybe some quizzes, group activities, and assorted in-class assignments. Your eventual grade will benefit from high attendance and active participation. If you miss more than two classes your grade will drop with each additional absence. In other words, I give you a week’s worth of classes to skip; use them wisely.

In the case of unavoidable extra absences (serious illness, death in the family, your car dies...one auto death per student...), I’ll excuse a limited number of absences IF you give me a valid excuse (from a doctor or the university); if you don’t get in touch with me, then any absence over the one will be unexcused. In any case, being absent is not an excuse for missing assignments. You should either call a classmate or talk to me and find out what went on in class if you were not able to attend.

**DON’T MISS DAYS ON WHICH YOU HAVE WORK DUE— I DON’T ACCEPT LATE WORK AND I DON’T GIVE EXTRA CREDIT.**

The effort you put into assignments, group work, and class discussion will count toward your grade. If you are consistently absent for either class discussion days or group work, your grade will be affected. If you doze or act in a disruptive manner (particularly, talk while others are talking), expect your grade to suffer accordingly.

Tardiness is rude and annoys me more than you imagine. Be punctual. I dock points for every time you come in late.
READINGS
Most of the assignments (and any pop quizzes) relate to the texts you’ll read for class discussion. Keep up with the readings; they are very important. We will be analyzing them carefully. I expect you to have read and thought about the stories before you come to class.

HOMEWORK
There will be a variety of exercises, editing, etc. assigned. Do them and you’ll improve your writing and your grade. Don’t do them and both will suffer.

The craft analysis papers are worth 20% of your grade. Be thoughtful with that work. Present it neatly and make careful observations and you’ll do well. Standard English usage and MLA format applies to those assignments.

Please note that if you fail to turn in a major assignment (a story, analysis, or the final portfolio), you will fail the course.

FORMAT
All in-class assignments must be written neatly in ink. Stories and analyses must be printed by computer; no handwriting for those. Staple pages together. Your work must be presented in a neat and professional manner. No need for separate title pages. Use a left header with your name, the class name, my last name, the date, and the word count. Double space once, center your title, double space once more, and get to your first paragraph.

FICTION
You’re going to write three stories this semester: two 2000-4000 word stories, one short-short story under 1000 words. I don’t forbid genre work (horror, sci fi, mystery, romance), but I prefer if you try your hand at literary fiction first. (We’ll talk more about what I mean by that.) I do ask that you avoid gratuitous sex, violence, or hateful characters. Notice the word gratuitous. Sometimes sex, violence, and hateful characters have their place in accomplished fiction, but it takes skill. Avoid unnecessary gore or triple x sex. If you want to write a really graphic story, see me first. Perhaps you’ll convince me that your skills are up to it and we’ll let the class decide if you succeeded.

GRADING
How will I grade creative work? It’s subjective, of course, but I give you some ground rules in both format and content that should clarify what I’m looking for. Effort counts, too. I don’t know who said it, but art really is 98% perspiration, 2% inspiration. Work hard and you’ll get an A. If you are naturally talented and turn in sloppy work, you won’t get an A. Believe me, I can tell. Consider this: sometimes the most naturally gifted people are too lazy to produce work that’s up to their abilities and potential. They are too accustomed to things coming easily. Sometimes those who don’t have as much talent at the onset work diligently and create better, more interesting, more polished work. Be the latter.
PORTFOLIO
The last thing you hand in this semester will be a portfolio of the work you produced this semester. I expect it to be revised work; nobody produces their sharpest stuff first time out. The work you wrote in September will reappear in December, but it must be in a more polished form. Save your early drafts. I want to see two versions, so I can compare how your manuscript has improved. We'll talk more about this as the semester progresses, but my warning now is you must be prepared to revise. Writing is revision. (Say it again: writing is revision. It should be one of your mantras.) I also want a brief self-analysis of your writing: what you see as your strengths, your weaknesses, etc.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (A-9.1)
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

WITHHELD GRADES SEMESTER GRADES POLICY (A-54)
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services
(ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

AND NOW FOR SOME GRUMPY WARNINGS:

I will fail the following:
- Late major assignments (stories or craft analyses)
- Incomplete work
- Stories not presented in expected format
- Stories with an abundance of uncorrected misspellings or typos (more than 2 per page)—professional editors have no patience with thoughtless errors. Neither do I.

Always back-up your work. Then back up your back-up. Gmail is good for this.

SOME COMFORTING LAST WORDS

If you don't know, ask. If you can't remember, ask. If you panic, talk to me before the night before. Most importantly, relax.

I always give this advice: lose yourself in your art. It’s the best way to create something you are proud of and to which others respond. I believe that each of you can write interesting, well-crafted, perhaps astounding stories this semester. Throw yourself into this course. Abandon your doubt. Focus and work hard. Don’t take yourself too seriously but take your writing seriously.

Do this and you’ll have more fun and you’ll get a better grade. And you’ll be a better writer.
Tentative Syllabus

WEEK ONE
8/28  Introduction to course; go over syllabus, policy statement.

8/30  Get to know each other. What do we know about writing fiction?
     **HOMEWORK**: Read Wood and handout

WEEK TWO
9/4   Discuss Wood.
     **HOMEWORK**: Continue Wood and handout.

9/6   Discuss stories in handout.
     **HOMEWORK**: Read handout.

WEEK THREE
9/11  First stories due for workshop. Discuss workshopping/line editing.
     **HOMEWORK**: Read stories for workshop.

9/13  Workshop 1
     **HOMEWORK**: Read stories for workshop

WEEK FOUR
9/18  Workshop 1
     **HOMEWORK**: Read stories for workshop.

9/20  Workshop 1
     **HOMEWORK**: Read stories for workshop.

WEEK FIVE
9/25  Workshop 1
     **HOMEWORK**: Continue Jackson.

9/27  Workshop 1
     **HOMEWORK**: Finish Jackson

WEEK SIX
10/2  Workshop 1
     **HOMEWORK**: Read Wood.

10/4  Discuss Wood.
     **HOMEWORK**: Write Analysis #1.
WEEK SEVEN
10/9    Analysis due.
      **HOMEWORK:** Read handout

10/11   Discuss handout
      **HOMEWORK:** Work on Workshop 2 stories

WEEK EIGHT
10/16   First Workshop 2 stories due
      **HOMEWORK:** Read and comment stories.

10/18   Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK:** Read for workshops.

WEEK NINE
10/23   Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop

10/25   Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK:** Read stories.

WEEK TEN
10/30   Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK:** Read stories.

11/1 W   Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK:** Read stories

WEEK ELEVEN
11/6    Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK:** Read stories

11/8    Workshop 2.
      **HOMEWORK:** Finish Wood

WEEK TWELVE
11/13   **Analysis 2 due**
      **HOMEWORK:** Read flash fiction handout

11/15   Discuss flash
      **HOMEWORK:** Read flash handout
WEEK THIRTEEN
11/20  Thanksgiving Holiday. No school!

WEEK FOURTEEN
11/27  Discuss flash
   **HOMEWORK:** Work on flash

11/29  Flash Fiction presentations
   **HOMEWORK:** Work on flash

WEEK FIFTEEN
12/4   Last day of flash readings.
   **HOMEWORK:** Come up with last questions

12/6   Last day question.
   **HOMEWORK:** Revise portfolio.

There is no final exam for this course.
Portfolios are due in my office on Wednesday, December 13th by noon.

**I do not accept late portfolios under any circumstances.**

Congratulations. You're done. Have a wonderful winter break!