“Art makes the familiar strange so that it can be freshly perceived. To do this it presents its material in unexpected, even outlandish ways: the shock of the new.” – Viktor Schlovsky

**Introduction**

The purpose of Elements of Craft is to help fiction writers improve their writing by training them to actively engage with texts—to read as a writer, rather than as a reader. In this course, we will be reading and discussing seven larger texts (mostly novels) and a number of films, and while we will be discussing all of the elements that make up a piece of narrative art—setting, dialogue, characterization—the main thrust of this particular Elements course is concerned with the examination of humor in art.

**Texts**

*Abbott Awaits* by Chris Bachelder  
*How to Behave in a Crowd* by Camille Bordas  
*White Noise* by Don DeLillo  
*How Should a Person Be?* by Sheila Heti  
*Straight Man* by Richard Russo  
*Pastoralia* by George Saunders  
*Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart

**Assignments**

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<td>Participation</td>
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<td>First Analysis</td>
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<td>Second Analysis</td>
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<td>Mimesis One</td>
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<td>Mimesis Two</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
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**Attendance Policy:** Mandatory. You are allowed two (2) absences. Your third absence will result in a half-letter grade reduction. Your fifth absence will result in a failing grade. I take roll within five minutes of the beginning of class.

**Decorum**

Immature behavior—texting in class, falling asleep, etc.—will not be tolerated.

**Note:** Unless you and I have come to an agreement, assume the following: I do not accept late work. I do not accept emailed work. I expect all work to be completed and turned in at the time I ask you to turn it in.

**Analysis and Mimesis**

We will go into the particulars of these assignments later. The general idea here is that you will write an annotation—a close reading of an aspect of a novel—for two of the novels.

**Presentation**

From the seven novels, you will be assigned one (along with one other student). The selections will be made by your professor. The selections will be arbitrary. You and your partner will be expected to begin class discussion for the week(s) we will be discussing the novel at hand.

**Final Paper**

Your final paper will be an amalgamation of formal academic criticism and personal response to the works. Which is to say, it will be a well-articulated and researched personal essay.

**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/.

**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

**Schedule**

Week of Aug. 27
Introduction to the Course

Sept. 3
Super Sad True Love Story

Sept. 10
How to Behave in a Crowd

Sept. 17 – 24
Abbott Awaits

Oct. 1
White Noise
First Analysis Due
Oct. 8
How Should a Person Be?
Mimesis One Due

Oct. 15 – 22
Pastoralia

Oct. 29 – Nov. 12
Straight Man
Analysis Two Due

Nov. 19 – 26
Straight Man
Mimesis Two Due

Dec. 3
Conferencing

Dec. 13
Final Due