“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

This course’s main intellectual and creative thrust is toward formal innovation: What are the parameters of a short story? Are there any? Can we question the given understandings of what a “good” or “working” short story is and turn these preconceptions on their heads? Unlike the novel the short story is often seen as more open to experimentation, to play, to anarchy, to creative expression. According to Jim Shepard: “You know, the advantage of short fiction is so many fewer people read it. You reach fewer people. You get almost no money. Nobody has heard of you. You put less food on your children's table.” Note Shepard uses the word advantage.

Texts:

*How Fiction Works* by James Wood

Bolts, Nuts:

- Please purchase a blue folder for this course and bring it with you every class meeting. The folder should contain everything that pertains to this class.

- **Attendance is mandatory.** Your third absence will result in a half-letter-grade deduction from your final grade. The fifth absence will result in a final grade of F. It should be noted that my last name, an Anglicized version of Brennenstuhl, originates from Medieval Stuttgart, where historically the Swabian peoples live. Among the qualities they admire most is punctuality. I will be militant in my roll-taking, and will take roll within five minutes of the beginning of class.

- Plagiarism tends to be rare in creative writing classes, but it has been known to happen. Later in this syllabus, in a section required by the state, we will outline
the university’s policy. But know this: plagiarism will lead to a final grade of F for the course.

- You will write two short pieces as mimetic exercises: reactions to something we’ve read. We'll meet one on one to discuss these.
- You will be divided into two groups, Group A and Group B. You will be responsible for annotating and editing the work of those within your group. You'll also be responsible for engaging in lively discussions about both works being workshopped.
- You will write two longer pieces of fiction.
- You will put together a final portfolio.

**Grading Breakdown:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Exercises</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Fiction Pieces</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Responses</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Insofar as: 100-90: A; 89-80: B; 79-70: C; 69-60: D; 59- F

**Policy:**

**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/](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

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

1. The student will demonstrate close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.

2. The student will employ techniques and strategies for crafting carefully composed, competent creative work in a variety of genres (fiction, poetry, literary non-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 and sustain a complete, polished manuscript of substance in the focus-genre.

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 available to help SFA students succeed.

**Schedule**

Jan. 15  
Introduction to the course  
Baxter and O’Connor

Jan. 22  
Wood and Cheever and Yates

Jan. 29  
Exercise One Due

Feb. 5  
Chaon and Tower

Feb. 12  
Exercise Two Due

Feb. 26 – May. 7  
Workshop

May 7 - 11  
Final Portfolio Due