ENGLISH 463.090 – Elements of Craft  
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 11-11:50 AM  
Spring 2018  
Ferguson 177

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Office hours: 9:00-10:30 AM (MWF), 11:00-Noon (TTH), and by appointment.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:
Sharp Teeth, Toby Barlow  
This is How You Lose Her, Junot Diaz  
Middlesex, Jeffrey Eugenides  
Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk, Ben Fountain  
Her Body and Other Parties, Carmen Maria Machado  
Everything I Never Told You, Celeste Ng  
Where’d You Go, Bernadette? Maria Semple  
Disgruntled, Asali Solomon

You should also have no hesitation with using dictionaries, guides to literary terms, and other reference resources. A writer who doesn’t love words is a musician who doesn’t love notes.

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION (from the General Bulletin):  
Analysis of selected examples (either prose or poetry) with emphasis on technical, generic, and aesthetic features.

OBJECTIVES:  
This course is designed to help fiction writers improve their craft by reading novels and story collections by established writers. Creative writing, like any art form or sport, is based on mastering a host of skills. In this course you will read like a writer—looking at elements such as (but not limited to) setting, dialogue, point of view, and characterization. We will primarily analyze literary fiction, but we will also be looking at the limitations and freedoms authors face when working in a genre (such as horror or comedy). You may not like every book you read for this course—odds are you won’t—but you will see a range of strategies for storytelling which will help you develop your own skills as fiction writers. Assignments include a presentation, two craft analysis papers, and two short stories. There will also be a midterm and a final. When you leave the course, you should be a more attentive reader, a more precise writer, and fully appreciative of the choices that fiction writers are faced with on every page. This will, I guarantee, make your own fiction stronger.
Here are the official Program Learning Outcomes for this course. Your Student Learning Outcomes (beautiful bureaucratic language, isn’t it?) are based on these goals:

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.
3.) The student will articulate useful, critical editorial advice for peer writers.
4.) The student will demonstrate strategic revision on completed creative work.

GRADING:
Your grade in this course will be broken down like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Analysis</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Second Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story #1</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story #2</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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**Grading Scale:**
- 100-90 = A
- 89-80 = B
- 79-70 = C
- 69-60 = D
- 59-0 = F

**ATTENDANCE (5%)**
Attendance and active participation in this course are absolutely necessary. I give every student three excused absences. More than three absences will affect your grade. Each additional absence beyond the excused three will lower your grade half a step (for example, from a B to B-). If you accrue more than nine absences, you will automatically fail the course regardless of your other work. If you are sick or otherwise unable to attend class, please get in touch with me. Being absent is not an excuse for missed information or assignments. You should either contact me or a classmate to find out what went on in class if you are not able to attend. You are responsible for the material discussed in class on the days you were absent.

**Warning:** I do not accept late work or give extensions on papers or stories.

Please do not be late for class. One or two late arrivals is excusable; consistent tardiness is rude and will affect your grade.

**PARTICIPATION (5%)**
Class participation is incredibly important in a course designed like this. I prefer to conduct my classes as an open conversation. I will ask questions and you will
be expected to respond. That should launch us into a discussion about the works. I hope that you will engage not only with me but also with others in the class. I grade class participation in 2 main ways:

Discussion: **Be prepared to talk** about the readings on the day we discuss them in class. If you do not understand the readings, feel free to ask questions about what they mean. Let me stress that I’m not looking for ”right” answers. I want you to tell me what you think and defend it with reasonable examples from the text. If you do not wish to talk in class, know that your grade (as long as you appear attentive) will be no higher than a C. Try to talk at least once a discussion.

Active Listening: I expect you will **listen to your classmates** when they are discussing aspects of the literature we read. There is always a chance that you will think that the person talking is a complete idiot, but then again, they may say something brilliant. Always **treat people with respect** and try to gain the most from what they are saying and you will be treated in the same way.

**EXAMS (40%)**:  
There will be two exams in the course, one covering the first half of the course and the other covering the remainder of the readings. Each exam will have 3 parts: identification, short answer, and a long essay. You will have 50 minutes for the mid-term exam and two hours for the final. There may be a creative option on the last exam.

**PRESENTATION (10%)**  
Each of you will choose an author and work and give a brief 10 minute presentation to the class about some aspect of the work you have researched outside of class discussion. I’m not looking for biographical information here unless it directly relates to a specific technical choice the author makes. We’ll talk more about this assignment as the semester progresses.

**PAPERS & STORIES (40%)**  
You will write **2 Analysis Papers** this semester and **2 Short Stories**. The essays will analyze a single element or technique employed by the author for a particular effect which you will explain clearly and succinctly. 3-4 pages is ample for those assignments. The stories will be anywhere from 2000-4000 words and you will be expected to write a brief preface to your fiction which explains how the reading you have done in the course has affected the decisions you made as an author. I expect you to use techniques that you see in action in the readings or you may react against an author and employ a polar effect. It’s up to you to determine the choice, but you must explain your choice and I must see your choice at work in the fiction you create for the course. This is not a workshop course, so only I will be reading your fiction.

All essays must be typed, double-spaced in MLA format, which will be explained in class. You will be required to use parenthetical citation any time you cite anything from any text. All essays should have a standard heading on the top left
corner of the page (your name, class title, my name, the date). Each paper should have an original title. Please use good quality, white paper. Staple all sequential pages.

Stories will also have strict format requirements: double-spaced, appropriate font, with left header and word count. I expect professional presentation of your fiction.

Always keep copies of what you write for your own protection. Do not give me the only copy of anything. In the event that your work should be lost, or misplaced, you want to make sure you have a back-up copy.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Please contact me if you are having any difficulties with the material due to a documented disability. I’m more than willing to accommodate you in a reasonable manner to help you succeed in this course. Many, many writers have blossomed despite physical, mental, and/or emotional hurdles. Just let me know and we can figure it out with the help of the University’s various and impressive resources.

The university asks us to include this information on all course policies:

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/

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)
I rarely use WH—the circumstances have to be extreme—but the university has asked all faculty to include the official policy on withheld grades:

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.

OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW:
I will FAIL the following:
Late essays & stories (Writing must be ready at the beginning of class)
Incomplete work
Work not typed in standard format
Work with an abundance of spelling/grammatical errors (more than 2 per page)

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR (UNIVERSITY POLICY)

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.

PLAGIARISM

I don’t know why anyone would take a creative writing class and then not use that as an opportunity to do his or her own work, but, hey, stranger things have happened. So, just to remind you, claiming something as your original work when someone else wrote it is called PLAGIARISM. The penalty for plagiarism on any assignment is failure for the course. I will also notify the Dean’s office of any documented case. Plagiarism is theft and it’s a particularly egregious offense to writers. I can’t imagine why anyone would want to plagiarize in a creative writing course, but if you’re ever tempted, just remember, even if no one catches you, you’ll end up with bad, bad karma.

Here’s the university’s official statement on the subject:

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

KEEP ME INFORMED
Please keep me informed about anything you feel I should know about you, particularly if you feel it affects your performance in class. If you are having any difficulty with the material, please know that I will be more than happy to confer with you regarding it.

In this course you are all fiction writers. I will treat you as writers. Read like writers and learn from those who’ve come before you. Like dancers at the barre or musicians playing scales, you can learn to write fiction by imitating—and then departing from—the art that you ingest. Be attentive. Be precise. Be original.

Good luck.

English 463, Spring 2018
Tentative Syllabus

WEEK ONE
17 Jan. Wed. Introduction to the course.
What do you want from the course? What can you get? What do I expect from you?
HOMEWORK: Read course policy statement and syllabus.
Read handouts: excerpts from Chekhov’s letters and Carver’s “A Storyteller’s Shoptalk.”

19 Jan. Fri. Discuss Chekhov, Carver, et al. What is the writer’s role?
What makes a contemporary short story? What makes a collection? What makes a novel?
HOMEWORK: Read Maria Semple.

WEEK TWO
22 Jan. Mon. Discuss Semple.
HOMEWORK: Read Semple

HOMEWORK: Read Semple.

26 Jan. Fri. Discuss Semple
HOMEWORK: Read Semple.
WEEK THREE
29 Jan. Mon. Discuss Semple.
**HOMEWORK**: Read Semple.

31 Jan. Wed. Last day on Semple.
**HOMEWORK**: Read Ng.

2 Feb. Fri Discuss Ng
**HOMEWORK**: Read Ng

WEEK FOUR
5 Feb. Mon. Discuss Ng.
**HOMEWORK**: Read Ng.

7 Feb. Wed. Discuss Ng
**HOMEWORK**: Finish.

9 Feb. Fri. Discuss Ng
**HOMEWORK**: Read Ng.

WEEK FIVE
12 Feb. Mon. *First Analysis Due*. Last day on Ng.
**HOMEWORK**: Read Barlow

14 Feb. Wed. Discuss Barlow.
**HOMEWORK**: Read Barlow

16 Feb. Fri. Discuss Barlow
**HOMEWORK**: Read Barlow.

WEEK SIX
19 Feb. Mon. Discuss Barlow.
**HOMEWORK**: Read Barlow.

21 Feb. Wed. Discuss Barlow.
**HOMEWORK**: Read Barlow

23 Feb. Fri. Last day on Barlow.
**HOMEWORK**: Read Solomon

WEEK SEVEN
26 Feb. Mon. Discuss Solomon.
**HOMEWORK**: Read Solomon

28 Feb. Wed. Discuss Solomon
**HOMEWORK**: Read Solomon.
2 Mar. Fri.  Discuss Solomon.  
HOMEWORK: Finish Solomon.  

WEEK EIGHT  
5 March Mon.  Second Analysis Due. Last day on Solomon  
HOMEWORK: Read Diaz.  

7 March Wed.  Review for Midterm  
HOMEWORK: Study for Midterm  

9 Mar. Fri.  Mid-Term Exam on Semple, Ng, Barlow, and Solomon.  
HOMEWORK: Read Fountain  

WEEK NINE  
12 March Mon.  Spring Break  

14 March Wed.  Spring Break  

16 March Fri.  Spring Break  

WEEK TEN  
19 March Mon.  Discuss Fountain.  
HOMEWORK: Read Fountain.  

21 March Wed.  Discuss Fountain.  
HOMEWORK: Read Diaz.  

23 March Fri.  Discuss Fountain.  
HOMEWORK: Work on Story #1  

WEEK ELEVEN  
26 March Mon.  Discuss Fountain  
HOMEWORK: Finish Fountain.  

28 March Wed.  Last day on Fountain  
HOMEWORK: Read Diaz.  


WEEK TWELVE  
2 April Mon.  First Short Story due. Discuss Diaz  
HOMEWORK: Discuss Diaz. Start working on your Second Story.  

4 April Wed.  Discuss Diaz.  
HOMEWORK: Read Diaz.
6 April Fri. Discuss Diaz.
**HOMEWORK:** Read Machado.

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

9 April Mon. Discuss Diaz
**HOMEWORK:** Finish Diaz

11 April Wed. Last day on Diaz
**HOMEWORK:** Read Machado

13 April Fri. Discuss Machado
**HOMEWORK:** Read Machado

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

16 April. Mon. Discuss Machado
**HOMEWORK:** Read Machado

18 April Wed. Discuss Machado
**HOMEWORK:** Read Machado

20 April Fri. Last day on Machado
**HOMEWORK:** Write Story #2. Read Eugenides

**WEEK FIFTEEN**

23 April Mon. Second Story due. Discuss Eugenides
**HOMEWORK:** Read Eugenides

25 April Wed. Discuss Eugenides
**HOMEWORK:** Read Eugenides

27 April Fri. Discuss Eugenides
**HOMEWORK:** Read Eugenides

**WEEK SIXTEEN**

30 April Mon. Discuss Eugenides
**HOMEWORK:** Finish Eugenides.

2 May Wed Last day on Eugenides
**HOMEWORK:** Review for Final.

4 May Friday Last discussion day
**HOMEWORK:** Study for Final Exam

Final Exam on Wednesday, May 9th, 10:30-12:30PM in F 177.

Happy Summer!