ENGLISH 461.090
ADVANCED FICTION WORKSHOP
Fall 2019, Ferguson 177
Mondays and Wednesdays, 1-2:15 PM

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Office hours: 10-11AM (MW), 1:50-2:50PM (TTH), and by appointment.

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION (from University Bulletin)
Classroom analysis and discussion of student writing. Prerequisites: 12 hours of English including ENG 261 and ENG 361 or graduate standing or consent of instructor. May be repeated once for up to 6 hours.

ENGL 461 “Advanced Fiction Workshop” (3 credits) typically meets twice each week in 75-minute segments, or one night a week 150-minute segments, for 15-weeks, and includes a 2-hour final examination or Final Portfolio of revised original fiction. This course builds off the skills practiced on the intermediate level. Students are assigned readings, both critical and creative. They are required to complete three original stories (two must be 2000-4000 words long, one must be under 1000 words) for workshop review, two short craft analysis essays (roughly 10 pages total) analyzing an assigned text; participate in workshop by having read and responded to others’ work and submitted editorial comments to their peers (roughly 30 pages of editorial suggestions); to create a self-reflective final portfolio that includes at least two drafts (original and revised) of their short fiction. These activities average at a minimum 6 to 9 hours of work each week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

REQUIRED MATERIAL
None. (We’ll see how that goes. This is an experiment.)

Yet:
Pens, a notebook, a folder, plenty of copy paper, and fresh ink jets are essential. Your brain, your sense of humor, and serious discipline help out, too.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED SOURCES
A good dictionary you won’t hesitate to use (words are your tools—you need to know them...).
A solid book on usage and grammar (Elements of Style by Strunk and White is a must-have, really, if you fancy yourself a writer; it’s not perfect, but it’s still handy.)
OBJECTIVES
Everyone in this class has had some experience telling stories and, importantly, writing stories. You already know in a short story, you don’t have to adhere to any truth except the truth of the world you create in your writing. But in your story, there has to be some truth...some logic, some consistency, some conflict, some rules, some outcome. But you get to make all those elements up as you go. 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 clever dialogue, clear characterizations, gripping plot, unexpected twists, heartbreaking revelations, or 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.

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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<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEER EDITING</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>SHORT STORY 2</td>
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<td>SHORT STORY 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRAFT ANALYSIS</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>FINAL PORTFOLIO</td>
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<tr>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tr>
<td>100-90 = A</td>
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<td>89-80 = B</td>
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<td>79-70 = C</td>
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<td>69-60 = D</td>
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<td>59- = F</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 without a valid excuse your grade will drop a letter for each additional absence. If you have more than
six absences, regardless of the reason, you will automatically fail the course. In
other words, I give you a week’s worth of classes to skip; use those days 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 two freebies 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.
AND I DON'T ACCEPT LATE WORK. EVER.

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 stories 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 paper is worth 15% 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
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. I’ll go into detail on this. Always
remember to proofread!
**FICTION**
You’re going to write three stories this semester. 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. This semester we’re here to hone our initial skills; if you want to be graphic after you’ve mastered the basics, go for it. But this semester I’d avoid unnecessary gore or triple x sex. If you really want to write a graphic story, see me. 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 draft. 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.

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 keep copies of what you write for your own protection in the event your work should be lost or misplaced. It probably won’t be, but the general rule is save everything just in case.

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**

8/26  Introduction to the course.
What do you want from the course? What can you get? What do I expect from you?
HOMEWORK: Review course policy statement, syllabus.

8/28  Discuss readings.
HOMEWORK: Read handout story (John Irving’s “Trying to Save Piggy Sneed.”) (Some of these may be paper handouts; I may give you web addresses for some of the required stories, if that works for the class.)

**WEEK TWO**

9/2  Discuss Irving.
HOMEWORK: Read handout story. First group finish story for distribution in class. Read Marisa Silver’s story.

9/4  Discuss Silver. Distribute first group’s stories for workshop.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
Read handout story (Chekhov).

**WEEK THREE**

9/9  Discuss Chekhov. Workshop 1.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

9/11 Workshop 1.
### HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

#### WEEK FOUR

**9/16**
- Discuss Evans. Workshop 1.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

**9/18**
- Workshop 1.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. Read handout. (Joan Aiken).

#### WEEK FIVE

**9/23**
- Discuss reading. Workshop 1.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

**9/25**
- Workshop 1.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. Read Raymond Carver story.

#### WEEK SIX

**9/30**
- Discuss Carver. Workshop 1.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

**10/2**
- Workshop 1.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. Read handout (TBA).

#### WEEK SEVEN

**10/7**
- Workshop 1.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

**10/9**
- Last Workshop 1. First stories due for Workshop 2.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

#### WEEK EIGHT

**10/14**
- **Craft Analysis Due.** Workshop 2.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

**10/16**
- Workshop 2.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

#### WEEK NINE

**10/21**
- Discuss story and reading.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

**10/23**
- Workshop 2.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. Read handout, too. (Peter Ho Davies.)

#### WEEK TEN

**10/28**
- Workshop 2.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

**10/30**
- Workshop 2
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

#### WEEK ELEVEN

**11/4**
- Workshop 2.
- Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

**11/6**
- Workshop 2.
Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

WEEK TWELVE
11/11  Workshop 2.
Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

11/13  Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
Write Craft Analysis #2.

WEEK THIRTEEN
11/18  Last day for Workshop 2.
Homework: Read handout on short-short stories for next class.

11/20  Discuss handout.
Homework: Write your short-short stories.

WEEK FOURTEEN
No class. Happy Thanksgiving!

WEEK FIFTEEN
12/2  Mon.  Short-short Presentations.
HOMEWORK: Work on Short-shorts and revisions.

12/4  Wed.  Short-short Presentations.
HOMEWORK: Revise stories for portfolio.

Portfolios due in my office by NOON on Wednesday, December 11th.

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

You’re done. Enjoy your winter break!