ENGLISH 465.001
Topics in Creative Writing: Short Short Fiction
Spring 2019, Ferguson 177
Tuesdays, 6-8:30 PM

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Office hours: 11:30-12:30 PM (MW), 2:00-3PM (TH), 11-Noon (F), and by appointment.

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION
Topics in Creative Writing - Advanced study of a special topic. Variable topics may include screenwriting, graphic novels, horror fiction, the history of literary magazines, or other related topics. May include workshop component or seminar paper.

REQUIRED BOOKS
Gutshot
Amelia Gray. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 2015

New Micro: Exceptionally Short Fiction

RECOMMENDED OPTIONAL SOURCES
A good dictionary, of course. Do you use one, ever? A style book, too.

OBJECTIVES
What is the contemporary short-short story? Is it just a really short story or something different, a new genre? Does it need all of the elements of a full-length short story? Is it a prose poem? Is it simply a vignette? Let’s figure out some answers to these questions and to the myriad questions we’ll come up with along the way. My expectations? Read and write, a lot. With care. Take your craft seriously and address your classmates’ work with that same attention and respect. Meet deadlines. Actively participate in discussions. Give ample editorial advice to your peers. Read the required material before we discuss it in class. Be an active listener. I’m teaching this course as a workshop hence you will write a lot for your peers and read a lot of your peers work. You will be required to write a considerable amount of short-ish 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 at least six complete short-short stories this semester and workshop at least two batches of them. (I’ll explain what I mean by “batches.”) You will also write two short craft analysis papers (3 or so pages long) focusing on a successful element in at least two of the
Here are the official Program Learning Outcomes. 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 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>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE</td>
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<td>100-90 = A</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>89-80 = B</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEER EDITING</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 1</td>
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<td>SHORT STORIES 2</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS PAPER 1</td>
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<td>ANALYSIS PAPER 2</td>
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<td>SHORT STORIES 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>FINAL PORTFOLIO</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (20%)**
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 one evening without a valid excuse your grade will drop a letter for each additional absence. If you have more than three absences, regardless of the reason, you will automatically fail the course.

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

**DETAILS**
Pay particular attention to each assignment description. This should give you a good idea what I am looking for in each piece and the sort of errors I will mark. I will also go over this in class. 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 six stories this semester. One must be between 1200-1500 words, two must be between 750-1000, and three must be under 500 words. We’re going to spend a lot of time figuring out how to deal with the limits of this framework. As for content, I don’t care what you write about or what genre you might try to tackle, though my editorial advice is most thorough when I’m dealing with literary fiction. If you’re writing in a genre where I don’t know all of the nuances, like sci fi, then I admit my limits. 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. That’s my typical disclaimer. The short-short form will probably trip you up if you try to be gratuitous anyway—you just won’t have the space.

**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 February will reappear in May, but it must be in a more polished form. Save your early drafts. I want to see multiple 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:
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.

Here’s my last advice. Write for fun. Edit for professionalism. Don’t procrastinate. Remember, there is always someone more talented than you, but you can be the hardest worker and that can pay off. Seriously.

**Tentative Syllabus**

**WEEK ONE**
1/22  Introduction to the course. Review of craft issues.
     What do you want from the course? What can you get? What do I expect from you?
     HOMEWORK: Review course policy statement, syllabus.
     Have you been keeping an ideas journal? Read *Gutshot* by Amelia Gray.

**WEEK TWO**
1/29  Discuss Gray. Distribute first group’s stories for workshop.
     HOMEWORK: Readings in *Micro*.

**WEEK THREE**
2/5   Workshop 1
     HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
     Readings in *Micro*.

**WEEK FOUR**
2/12  Workshop 1.
     HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
     Readings in *Micro*.

**WEEK FIVE**
2/19  Workshop 1.
     HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
     Readings in *Micro*.

**WEEK SIX**
2/26  Workshop 1.
     HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
     Readings in *Micro*.

**WEEK SEVEN**
3/5   Workshop 1
     HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
     Readings in *Micro*.
WEEK EIGHT
3/12  Workshop 1.  
     HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.  
     Choose two stories to write about for your craft analysis.

WEEK NINE
3/19  Spring Break

WEEK TEN
3/26  Workshop 2. Write Craft Analysis.

WEEK ELEVEN
4/2   Craft Analysis #1 Due. Workshop 2.  
     HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.  
     Readings in Micro.

WEEK TWELVE
4/9   Workshop 2.  
     HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.  
     Readings in Micro.

WEEK THIRTEEN
4/16  Workshop 2
     Readings in Micro

WEEK FOURTEEN
4/23  Workshop 2.  
     HOMEWORK: Write flash for presentation. Write Craft Analysis #2.

WEEK FIFTEEN
4/30  Craft Analysis #2 due. First Presentations.  
     Homework: Revise and/or work on last flash for presentation.

WEEK SIXTEEN
5/7   Presentations.  
     Homework: Assemble and revise portfolio.

Portfolios due in my office by NOON on Wednesday, May 15th.

I do not accept late portfolios under any circumstances.

You’re done. Enjoy your summer!