ENGLISH 3361.001–Intermediate Fiction Workshop
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00-12:15 pm
Fall 2020
Ferguson 177

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Office hours: 11:00-1PM (MW), 8:30-9:30AM (TU), and by appointment.

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION
Readings and discussion demonstrating the basic structural and technical elements of fiction with opportunities for practice and peer workshop.
Prerequisite: ENG 261 or consent of instructor.

OFFICIAL CREDIT HOUR JUSTIFICATION
ENGL 3361 “Intermediate 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.
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, one short craft analysis essays (roughly 5 pages) 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 hours of work each week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:


I will also download readings to the D2L page for this course. Student stories will be distributed there or in your SFA e-mail.

OBJECTIVES
There are two ways to begin thinking and writing like a fiction writer. The first is to write and we’ll be doing lots of that. The second best way to become a writer is to read, so we’ll be doing lots of that, too. But we won’t be reading in the same way other classes have you read. We’ll be reading as writers—with our focus on the craft and strategies that went into making the art. To meet that goal, we’ll be breaking down the various elements of form and perspective and working on ways to use those elements in our own work. 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 (and really an artist of any sort). Expect to write three complete stories, workshop two of them in class, and give an in-class reading of the last. You will also actively engage in peer editing (and probably have some quizzes, too).

Here are the official Program Learning Outcomes for this course:

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.

That all boils down to a pretty simple goal (we can call them Student Learning Outcomes): you will read a number of professional stories and examine them for craft; you’ll write skillful, original stories and present them in workshop; you will treat your classmates’ work with respect and a keen editorial eye; and you’ll turn in a portfolio of polished, revised work. Sounds good to me!

Since I know you all want to do well as far as grades go, here’s the breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADING BREAKDOWN</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE</td>
<td>100-90 = A</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>89-80 = B</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRAFT ANALYSIS</td>
<td>79-70 = C</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 1</td>
<td>69-60 = D</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 2</td>
<td>59- = F</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT-SHORT STORY</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEER EDITING</td>
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<td>PORTFOLIO</td>
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ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION
If you want to do well in this course, you should attend every class period for your group and actively participate in online discussion.

The effort you put into assignments, group work, and class discussion will count toward your grade. If you are absent for either class discussion days or group work, your grade will be affected. If you doze, pass notes, use your cell phone, or act in a disruptive manner (specifically, talk while others are talking), expect your grade to suffer accordingly.

READINGS
Most of the assignments (and any quizzes) relate to the stories and essays you’ll read for class discussion. Keep up with the readings; they are very important. We will be analyzing them carefully.
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, craft analysis, or the final portfolio), you will fail the course.

FICTION & ESSAY
You’re going to write three stories this semester, two full-length stories (2000 to 4000 words) and one flash fiction (under 1000 words). 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 insist 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 write an homage to Halloween after you’ve mastered the basics, go for it—but not for this class. If you really want to write a disturbingly 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. But you have to be pretty convincing. And see me first.

There will also be one Craft Analysis Essay where you’ll analyze one or two of the stories from your assigned readings and explain an element that the author(s) uses successfully. Expect to quote from the story to back up your argument and use MLA format.

All work will be submitted to me via my SFA e-mail account. For workshop days, I will then distribute it to the rest of the class either via D2L or SFA e-mail.

GRADING
How will I grade creative work? It’s partially subjective, of course, but I give you 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. Perspire a little—no, perspire a lot—and you’ll get an A. If you are spectacularly gifted and turn in sloppy work, you won’t get an A. The race isn’t won by the naturally swiftest; it’s won by the runner who trains the most productively. This course is for the writer-in-training. Consider me a coach.

PORTFOLIO
The last thing you hand in this semester will be an anthology 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 write in September will reappear in December and it must be in a more polished form. I will 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 an introduction to your portfolio, in the form of a brief self-analysis of your work: your strengths, your weaknesses, your intentions for revision.

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.

UNIVERSITY COVID 19 FACE MASK POLICY
Masks (cloth face coverings) must be worn over the mouth and nose at all times in this class and appropriate physical distancing must be observed. Students not wearing a mask or observing social distancing will be asked to leave the class. All incidents of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be reported to the Office of Students Rights and Responsibilities. Students who are reported for multiple infractions of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing may be subject to disciplinary action.
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.

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

### 8/25
- Zoom Introduction to the course.
- Explain the rules and structure of the course.
- HOMEWORK: Review course policy statement, syllabus.

### 8/27
- Discuss readings, establish workshop schedule.
- HOMEWORK: Read WF, Chapter 1, “Whatever Works”

## WEEK TWO

### 9/1
- Discuss readings.
- HOMEWORK: First group finish story for distribution in class.

### 9/3
- Distribute first group’s stories for workshop.
- HOMEWORK: Read WF, Chapter 2, “Seeing is Believing”

## WEEK THREE

### 9/8
- Workshop 1. Discuss WF.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

### 9/10
- Workshop 1.
- HOMEWORK: Read WF, Chapter 3, “Characterization, Part 1.”

## WEEK FOUR

### 9/15
- Workshop 1. Discuss WF.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

### 9/17
- Workshop 1.
- HOMEWORK: Read WF, Chapter 4, “Characterization, Part 2.”

## WEEK FIVE

### 9/22
- Workshop 1. Discuss WF.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

### 9/24
- Workshop 1.
- HOMEWORK: Read WF, Chapter 5, “Fictional Setting.”

## WEEK SIX

### 9/29
- Workshop 1. Discuss WF.
- HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

### 10/1
- Workshop 1.
HOMEWORK: Read WF, Chapter 6, “Plot and Structure.”

WEEK SEVEN
10/6 Workshop 1. Discuss WF.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

10/8 Workshop 1. First stories due for Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read WF, Chapter 7, “Point of View.”

WEEK EIGHT
10/13 Craft Analysis Due. Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

10/15 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read WF, Chapter 8, “Comparison.”

WEEK NINE
10/20 Discuss story and reading. Discuss WF.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

10/22 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read WF, Chapter 9, “Revision and Theme.”

WEEK TEN
10/27 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

10/29 Workshop 2
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

WEEK ELEVEN
11/3 Workshop 2.
Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

11/5 Workshop 2.
Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

WEEK TWELVE
11/10 Workshop 2.
Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

11/12 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
Write Craft Analysis #2.

WEEK THIRTEEN
11/17 Workshop 2.
Homework: Read handout on short-short stories for next class.
11/19   Last on campus class meeting. Discuss handout.  
       Homework: Write your short-short stories.

WEEK FOURTEEN

No class. Happy Thanksgiving holiday!

WEEK FIFTEEN
12/1 Mon.    Zoom short-short Presentations? I think so! 
             HOMEWORK: Work on Short-shorts and revisions.

            HOMEWORK: Revise stories for portfolio.

Submit portfolio to my SFA e-mail on Wednesday, December 9th.

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

You're done. Enjoy your winter break!