ENGLISH 4361.001
ADVANCED FICTION WORKSHOP
Fall 2023, Ferguson 177
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:45 AM

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Office hours: 1-2PM (MW), 11-Noon (TTH), 9-10AM (F), and by appointment.

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION (from University Bulletin)
Classroom analysis and discussion of student writing. Prerequisites: 12 hours of English including ENG 2307 and ENG 3361 or graduate standing or consent of instructor. May be repeated once for up to 6 hours.
ENGL 4361 “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
The Ecco Anthology of Contemporary American Fiction, Christopher R. Beha and Joyce Carol Oates, ed.

I will download additional required readings to the D2L page for this course. Student stories will also be distributed via SFA e-mail.

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 a logic, a consistency, a conflict, some rules, and an outcome sprung from the characters’ actions. 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.

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<tr>
<th>GRADING BREAKDOWN</th>
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<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE</td>
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<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
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<td>PEER EDITING</td>
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<td>SHORT STORY 1</td>
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<td>SHORT STORY 2</td>
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<td>CRAFT ANALYSIS</td>
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<td>FINAL PORTFOLIO</td>
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ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (10%)  
If you want to do well in this course, you should attend every class period and actively participate in discussion. I give everyone two absences without docking your grade, after that your grade will drop precipitously. Miss more than six periods, you will fail the course.

DON’T MISS DAYS ON WHICH YOU HAVE WORK DUE.  
The effort you put into assignments, group work, and class discussion will count toward your grade. 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!

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.

FICTION
You’re going to write three stories this semester. I don’t forbid genre work (horror, sci fi, mystery, romance), but my background is largely in literary fiction. (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. Avoid unnecessary gore and erotica. 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. I will compare your earlier version to your portfolio versions. I expect improvement. 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 (10.4)
The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or
financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

**WITHHELD GRADES Semester Grades Policy (5.5)**
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 coursework 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 to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to [https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf](https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf).

**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 promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**STUDENT WELLNESS AND WELL-BEING**
SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

**ON CAMPUS RESOURCES:**

**The Dean of Students Office** (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
[www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents)
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

**SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic** Human Services, Room 202
The Health and Wellness Hub “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

Crisis Resources:

- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

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.

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**

**8/29**  
Introduction to the course.  
Explain the rules and structure of the course.  
HOMEWORK: Review course policy statement, syllabus.

**8/31**  
Discuss readings.  
HOMEWORK: Read “Lobster Night” by Russell Banks.

**WEEK TWO**

**9/5**  
Discuss Banks.  
HOMEWORK: Read “Off” by Aimee Bender.

**9/7**  
Discuss Bender. Distribute first group’s stories for workshop.  
HOMEWORK: Read “Ranch Girl” by Maile Meloy.

**WEEK THREE**

**9/12**  
Workshop 1.  
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

**9/14**  
Workshop 1.  
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.  

**WEEK FOUR**

**9/19**  
Workshop 1.  
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

**9/21**  
Workshop 1.  
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.  
Read “Once in a Lifetime” by Jhumpa Lahiri.
| WEEK FIVE       | 9/26     | Workshop 1.                                      |
|                |          | HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. |
|                | 9/28     | Workshop 1.                                      |
|                |          | HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. |
|                |          | Read “The Love of My Life” by T.C. Boyle.        |
| WEEK SIX       | 10/3     | Workshop 1.                                      |
|                |          | HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. |
|                | 10/5     | Workshop 1.                                      |
|                |          | HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. |
|                |          | Read “The Girl Who Left Her Sock on the Floor” by Deborah Eisenberg. |
| WEEK SEVEN     | 10/10    | Workshop 1.                                      |
|                |          | HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. |
|                | 10/12    | Workshop 1.                                      |
|                |          | HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. |
|                |          | Read “Paper Losses” by Lorrie Moore.             |
| WEEK EIGHT     | 10/17    | Last Workshop 1. First stories due for Workshop 2!|
|                |          | HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. |
|                | 10/19    | First Workshop 2.                                |
|                |          | HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. |
|                |          | Read “The Red Bow” by George Saunders. **Write Craft Analysis.** |
| WEEK NINE      | 10/24    | **CRAFT ANALYSIS DUE.** Discuss story and reading.|
|                |          | HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. |
|                | 10/26    | Workshop 2.                                      |
|                |          | HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. |
|                |          | Read “Sault St. Marie” by David Means.           |
WEEK TEN
10/31
Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

11/2
Workshop 2
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
Read “People in Hell Just Want a Drink of Water” by Annie Proulx.

WEEK ELEVEN
11/7 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

11/9 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
Read “Disaster Stamps of Pluto” by Louise Erdrich.

WEEK TWELVE
11/14
Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

11/16 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
Read “To Those of You Who Missed Your Connecting Flights Out of O’Hare” by Amy Hempel

WEEK THIRTEEN
No class. Happy Thanksgiving holiday!

WEEK FOURTEEN
11/28 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read handout on short-short stories for next class.

11.30 Last day of workshop.
HOMEWORK: Write your short-short stories.

WEEK FIFTEEN
12/5 Flash readings? Yes!
HOMEWORK: Work on Short-shorts and revisions.

12/7 Short-Short Readings.
HOMEWORK: Revise stories for portfolio.

Drop off portfolio to LAN 214 by Noon on Wednesday, December 13th.

You’re done. Enjoy your winter break!