ENGLISH 4365.001
Horror Writing WORKSHOP
Spring 2024
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:15 PM Ferguson 177
Mr. Milstead
Department of English & Creative Writing
261 Liberal Arts North
Office phone: 468-2005
e-mail: atmilstead@sfasu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 9:15-12:15 3:15-2:00
OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION (from University Bulletin)
Classroom analysis and discussion of student writing. Prerequisites: 12 hours of English
ingcluding ENG 261 and ENG 361 or graduate standing or consent of instructor. May be
repeated once for up to 6 hours.
ENGL 4365 “Horror Writing 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), one must be under 1000 words) for workshop review; participate in workshop by
having read and responded to others’ work and submitted editorial comments to their peers
(roughly 30-40 pages of editorial suggestions); to create a self-reflective final portfolio that
includes final drafts 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 Long Walk by Richard Bachman (Stephen King).

I will also post required readings on the D2L page for this course and occasionally give you
in-class handouts. Our discussions on readings have a different focus than a traditional
literature class. You are reading in this course as an author rather than an audience. What
that means is that your focus is on what techniques and general writing choices you can
take from the professional authors (or conversely you can focus on what you do not want
to take from their example).
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. 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 dark 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 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 Grading Scale**

- **QUIZZES** 10% 100-90 = A
- **ATTENDANCE** 5% 89-80 = B
- **PEER EDITING** 10% 79-70 = C
- **SHORT STORY 1** 20% 69-60 = D
- **SHORT SHORT** 15% 59- = F
- **SHORT STORY 2** 20%
- **TEACHING** 5%
- **FINAL PORFOLIO** 15%

100%

**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (10%)**

If you want to do well in this course, you should attend every class period. There will be numerous discussions, some quizzes, group activities, and assorted in-class assignments. Your eventual grade will benefit from high attendance and active participation. If you are going to be absent, I expect you to let me know in advance. If you are sick or otherwise unable to attend class, I expect you to leave a message at the above number or e-mail me. I give everyone two free absences. (That's a week worth of class.) After that an absence will mar your final grade by a half letter grade. Miss more than 6 class days and you automatically fail the class, regardless of your other work.

Absence 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 OR WHEN YOUR ART IS THE FOCUS OF DISCUSSION. THAT WILL FURTHER**
HARM YOUR GRADE.
I don't accept late work. Ever. And I never give extra credit.
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, check your cell phone,
text message, or act in a disruptive manner (specifically, talk while others are
talking), expect your grade to suffer accordingly.
Tardiness is rude and annoys me more than you imagine. Be punctual. Every
time you’re late for class, you lose points. No kidding.
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. Standard English usage and
MLA format applies to those assignments.
Please note that if you fail to turn in a major assignment (a story, or the final portfolio), you
will fail the course.
TEACHING
Teaching is the highest level of learning and therefore each of you will teach at least once.
You will sign up for one of the readings and on your assigned day you will come to class with
a 5 question (fill in the blank) quiz and a few open-ended questions for class discussion. Be
prepared and knowledgeable, but realize it will be loose and fun so don’t overly stress about
it. Make sure you have a copy of the quiz specifically for my records. This one teaching
opportunity accounts for 5% of your grade. I will grade your effort on a 100-point scale.
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 dropbox on D2L.
FICTION
You’re going to write three stories this semester 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 do well. If you are naturally talented and turn in sloppy work, you won’t. 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. 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 (UNIVERSITY POLICY)**
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.

**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**

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. Here’s SFA’s official information on it:

*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/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).*

SFASU values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. 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:**

SFASU Counseling Services
www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices
3rd Floor Rusk Building
936-468-2401

SFASU Human Services Counseling Clinic
www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
Human Services Room 202
936-468-1041

**Crisis Resources:**

Burke 24-hour crisis line 1(800) 392-8343
Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1(800) 273-TALK (8255)
Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741
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.

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
1/18 Introduction to the course.
Explain the rules and structure of the course. Discuss writing goals. Sign up for the teaching
schedule.
HOMEWORK: Buy books. Read “The Teacher”. Read “10 Horror Novel Subgenres
with Recommended Reading”. Read Section 7 of On Writing Horror. Begin
working on your first short story of 2000-4000 words long.
WEEK TWO
1/23 Quiz. Discuss readings.
HOMEWORK: Read Section 2 of On Writing Horror. Read Section 3 of On
Writing Horror. Read “The Pear Shaped Man”.
1/25 Discuss readings.
HOMEWORK: Read Section 4 of On Writing Horror. Read “I Have no Mouth
and I Must Scream”. Read “The Human Chair”. Submit Short Story One on
D2L by noon 1/30.
WEEK THREE
1/30 Discuss Readings.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
2/1 Workshop 1.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. **Read Section 5 of On Writing Horror**

WEEK FOUR
2/6 Workshop 1.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. **Read Section 6 of On Writing Horror**

2/8 Workshop 1.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. **Read Section 8 of On Writing Horror**

WEEK FIVE
2/13 Workshop 1.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

2/15 Workshop 1.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. Read Raymond Carver story. Online asynchronous discussion via D2L.

WEEK SIX
2/20 Workshop 1.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

2/22 Workshop 1.
HOMEWORK: Submit Short-Short by 2/27 so that they can be workshopped. Read and comment on stories for workshop.

WEEK SEVEN
2/27 Workshop 1.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

2/29 Class Cancelled.
HOMEWORK: Submit final version of Short Story One online before class on Noon 3-5. Read and comment on stories for workshop.

WEEK EIGHT
3/5 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

3/7 Workshop 2. First stories due for Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. **Read the Long Walk and be prepared for discussion and Mega-Quiz**

WEEK NINE
3/12 Spring Break
3/14 Spring Break
WEEK TEN
3/19 Mega Quiz. Teaching and extended discussion over The Long Walk.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
3/21 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

WEEK ELEVEN
3/26 Workshop 2.
Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
3/28 Easter
Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

WEEK TWELVE
4/2 Workshop 2.
Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
4/4 Workshop 2.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. Submit final version of Short-Short online before class on Noon 4-9.

WEEK THIRTEEN
4/9 Workshop 3.
Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
4/11 Workshop 3.
Homework: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

WEEK FOURTEEN
4/16 Workshop 3.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
4/18 Workshop 3.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.

WEEK FIFTEEN
4/23 Workshop 3.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop.
4/25 Workshop 3.
HOMEWORK: Revise stories for portfolio.

WEEK SIXTEEN
4/30 Workshop 3.
HOMEWORK: Read and comment on stories for workshop. Work on revisions.
5/2 Workshop 3.
HOMEWORK: Revise stories for portfolio.
Submit Short Story Two as well as final portfolio online by noon on May 9th.
**I do not accept late portfolios under any circumstances.**
You’re done. Enjoy your summer!