

CRW 1101: Fiction Writing: Section 1879, Fall 2017

RNK 0215; Thursday, Periods 9-11 (4:05pm–7:05pm)

Instructor: Evan Grillon

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Office: Turlington 4321

Office Hours: By appointment

Required Texts:

Textbooks:

Jerome Stern, *Making Shapely Fiction*: ISBN-13: 978-0393321241

Texts:

Coursepack.

Course Description and Objectives:

To make better readers and writers. This course provides introductory instruction in fiction writing, and since careful and reflective reading is the best way to learn how to write, an introduction to the art of close reading. We will read, write about, and write the contemporary short story.

We will devote the first half of the semester to the discussion of professional stories. The second half will be a traditional fiction workshop, the requirements of which will be discussed in detail later on, but which can be described in general as a format in which we apply the same critical skills to our own work that we've learned to apply to the assigned readings.

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for Composition (C). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Course Format:

Reading: Short stories, chapters from the textbook, and essays.

Writing: In-class exercises/quizzes, ten 600-word (approximately 2.5 pages) critical responses, notes for workshop stories, and two stories (plus revisions).

In-class Participation.

Graded Assignments and Other Course Components:

Class Participation: (200 points)

For the first part of the semester, we will discuss professional examples of contemporary short fiction. These stories will be posted online on Canvas under the assignment heading as .pdf's; it is the student's responsibility to print them and bring them to class. Students who do not bring their books or hard copies of the stories or work to class will be marked absent.

In the second half of the semester, we will workshop: on workshop days it is expected that you will come to class having read each piece carefully *at least once*, and that you have spent time formulating a **typed** response to it. I urge you to read the piece once, without marking it, before writing your marginal notes during the second read. In addition to your marginal comments in ink or pencil, attach your typed response to the author's story with a staple. In addition, provide me with a copy of your typed response. These typed responses will form part of your participation grade.

In-class discussion, preparedness (including timely response to all class emails), and (especially) engagement/attitude are all parts of participation. A writing workshop should be a safe place where everyone should feel encouraged and welcome to share their thoughts—be courteous or your grade will suffer.

Critical Summaries: (600 points)

Ten 600-word (approximately 2.5 pages) critical summaries. Each week over the course of the semester there will be **two** stories to read; we will discuss both in class, but **you will only write a response to 1**. The structure and content of the critical summaries (worth 60 points each) will be taught in class, both explicitly and organically as a result of our classroom discussions about the stories we read. I encourage you to think in terms of emotional stakes (What matters to the characters? What do they want, and what are they willing to do to get it?) rather than in terms of themes or symbols. The analyses will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

demonstrated reading of the stories/chapters; critical thinking; depth of analysis.

My goal is that your critical responses achieve the following:

1. Constitute a complete and nuanced summary of the story's plot and emotional arc. Answer the questions: what happened? Where does the character begin emotionally, where does she end? How is our understanding of the character expanded at the end of the story?
2. Provide textual support for your claim from the story being discussed. Point to the specific words, using quotations, in the text of the stories that support your reading of the story.

Rubric of Evaluation for Critical Responses

A: Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops sophisticated ideas. Has exceptionally well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

B: Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops sophisticated ideas. Has well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

C: Contains some analysis of the texts and develops some original ideas about them. Has adequately well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), adequately-supported claims, and some appropriate stylistic elements.

D: Contains minimal analysis of the texts. May lack well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, and/or a persuasive organizational structure. Fails to adequately support its claims and/or use appropriate stylistic elements.

E: Lacks analysis of the text, and therefore fails to demonstrate reading and/or comprehension.

Short Stories: 20% (200 points)

Two short stories, the first worth 100 points, the second 100 points. The first manuscript will be discussed in tutorial, the second must be delivered to the class *the week before* they are to be workshopped. There is no late delivery. There is no switching. No last-minute writing. If you are unable to turn in the story on time, an entire letter grade will be deducted from your final grade. Please bring enough copies for everyone. If your story is to be more than 20 pages, I require that it be a revision of a story you turned in for tutorial.

These will be graded as artifices: attention to detail and clarity matter, so do depth and demonstrated understanding of your characters and plots.

Tutorial:

Every student will be required to attend one twenty minute tutorial (a one-on-one office hours meeting). The student will turn in a draft of their story a week in advance of the tutorial, and then will meet to discuss potential strategies for revision for that story. If you do not schedule a meeting with me and fail to turn in that story, you will receive a 0 on that story.

On September 28th, class proper will be canceled, and I will have time for 8 tutorials

during that period. Those 8 students will sign up on a first come, first serve basis. As these spots are limited, the other half of the class must sign-up for tutorials *before* that class.

It will be the student's responsibility to schedule that meeting with me. You **do not have to** revise that story; you are not required to incorporate my suggested revisions. You may turn in something entirely different altogether for workshop. My goal is to encourage thinking of writing as revision; thus, you are welcome at any point in the semester to schedule an additional tutorial with me so long as you (a) schedule a time to meet at least a week in advance with me and (b) provide a hard copy in my mailbox in Turlington. As I am serious about revision, I will offer this deal: **Each additional tutorial after the first will earn a student 10 extra credit points so long as they bring new or revised work. This goes for the students scheduled for September 28th, as well.**

Formatting:

Each assignment will be submitted at the beginning of class in double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman (Or Calibri or Courier New or Garamond) font. Please staple, number your page, and title your story or response. **Please also turn in all your assignment on Canvas.** You are responsible for photocopying your workshopped stories. Each formatting failure will result in a 5% deduction on the grade of that assignment. I will not be able to accept stories or responses that aren't stapled. There is a free stapler in Library West.

Attendance:

You are allowed one absence without explanation, but do not miss the day you are going to be workshopped. **Two absences will result in a failure.** Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, are exempted from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade for that story. Being late twice to class will be counted as an absence.

Class Policies:

Classroom Behavior:

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diverse student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal—and accordingly absence—from the class.

Cell Phones:

Cell phones are not allowed in class. You may not text in class. You may not have your phone out on your desk during class. If you are asked to put your phone away during class, you will be marked absent that day (see absence policy above).

Laptops, Etc.:

Laptops, iPads etc. are not allowed in class (see cell phone policy above). If you have a special

reason you must use a laptop or an iPad, please let me know before the course begins.

Notes:

- +If you have missed class, it is your responsibility to catch up by getting notes from a classmate. Please do not email me to ask if you missed anything important.
- +The syllabus is subject to change.

Additional Information:

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

Plagiarism.

A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
 2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.
- (University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 8 July 2011)

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came.

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

UF Reading and Writing Center:

The Reading and Writing Center at the University of Florida is an excellent resource for improving reading comprehension and writing skills. For more information, see: <http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/>

Student Disability Services:

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Harassment:

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

Grading:

A: 94-100; A-: 90-93

B+: 87-89; B: 84-86; B-: 80-83

C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 60-62

E: 0-59

UF has recently instituted minus grades. As a result, letter grades now have different grade point equivalencies. For more information, see:
<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Schedule of Assignments:

August 24th, Week 1:

“Girls,” Jamaica Kincaid

In-Class Exercise

August 31st; Week 2:

Reading Making Shapely Fiction (MSF): Introduction and Part II: ‘Write What You Know’; **Metafiction** (pg 152); “Cathedral” – Raymond Carver, “Car-Crash While...” -- Denis Johnson

Critical Summary 1 Due

September 7th; Week 3:

MSF Reading: **Sentimentality** (pg 212); Online Lecture: [“The Percheron in the Tunnel”](#); “Honored Guest” – Joy Williams; “Proto-scorpions of the Silurian” – Jim Shepard

Critical Summary 2 Due

September 14th; Week 4:

MSF: **Epiphany**; Essay: “That’s What Dogs Do” – Amy Hempel; “In the Cemetery...” – Amy Hempel; “Bullet in the Brain – Tobias Wolff;

Exercise 1 Due

Critical Summary 3 Due

September 21st; Week 5:

MSF: **Irony** (pg 148); “Emergency” -- Denis Johnson ; “Edison, New Jersey” –

Junot Diaz;

Exercise 2 Due; Critical Summary 4 Due

September 28th; Week 6:

“Afterlife” – Amy Hempel; “Wants” — Grace Paley;

***NO CLASS THIS WEEK. We will have tutorials instead. You still must read the stories and turn in a Critical Summary on Canvas.**

Critical Summary 5 Due

October 5th; Week 7:

“The Reason for Stories” – Robert Stone; “Helping” – Robert Stone; “Boy’s Town” – Jim Shepard;

Critical Summary 6 Due; *Note: First four workshop stories due

October 12th; Week 8:

“The Day We Got Drunk on Cake” – William Trevor; **Marginalia and Note for**

Workshop 1, 2, 3, 4

Critical Summary 7 Due;

October 19th; Week 9:

CLASS CANCELLED

October 26th; Week 10:

“Tenth of December” – George Saunders; **Workshop**

Reading from MSF ;

Critical Summary 8 Due

November 2nd; Week 11:

Workshop

Reading from MSF;

November 9th; Week 12:

Workshop

November 16th; Week 13:

Elizabeth Tallent – “No One’s a Mystery”; Discussion of “My First Goose”

Critical Summary 9 Due; Stories for November 30th Due

November 23rd; Week 14.

No Class: Thanksgiving

November 30th; Week 15: Last Class

Workshop

Critical Summary 10 Due