

CRW2100-2333: Fiction Writing Fall 2017

Instructor: Wynne Hungerford

When: F 3-5 (9:35-12:35)

Where: MCCB1108

Office Location and Hours: Fridays 1:30-3:30 (TURL 4307)

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Course Description:

In this course, we will read, write, and study literary fiction. Because this course meets on Fridays and because there are a number of holidays/breaks that fall on Fridays this semester, we have fewer meetings than most other courses. This means we have to move fast and be efficient with our time. Our reading will primarily come from a recent anthology of American fiction that exhibits a variety of voices, styles, narratives, subjects, and perspectives. Our baseline, so to speak, will be stories from *Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives* by Brad Watson. What I seek to *avoid* is boredom.

A Loose Definition of Literary Fiction:

Literary Fiction does not *typically* fit into a genre such as mystery, horror, western, et cetera. Literary Fiction often attempts to represent, explain, and explore the human condition. It is a response to the question: What does it mean to be alive? Literary Fiction is also focused on the craft of writing, the beauty of language. This doesn't mean the particular vein of literature need be boring. Wackiness is encouraged.

Reading as a Writer:

This course will be unlike any typical English courses where you might be assigned a reading and then discuss "themes" and "symbols." The difference is that in this class we are reading as writers, not as critics. We are trying to understand how a thing is written, so we might be able to understand the effective techniques (and not so effective ones) and improve our own writing. I don't like symbols. We won't ever talk about them. Objects can have meaning, of course, but they should also work as simple, physical things. A top hat can represent "class" or "societal privilege" or whatever you want to call it, but it is also just a hat that sits on a fancy dude's head. More on this throughout the semester.

Students who work in an earnest and lively fashion will:

1. Leave this course writing better than they entered, including both academic and creative writing.
2. Leave this course reading better than when they entered.

The ideal student will be:

1. Alive
2. Agog
3. Gumptuous

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for Composition (C), and also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts.

Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.

- 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.

Required Texts:

Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives: Stories – Brad Watson

The Anchor Book of New American Short Stories – Edited by Ben Marcus

Texts that will be available on Canvas:

Making Shapely Fiction – Jerome Stern

Elements of Style – Strunk & White

Assignments (see below for Grading Rubric):

Participation: 75 points

Being prepared for this course means not only doing the reading and writing, but also participating in discussion and engaging in class. You should bring the required reading to class every day. On workshop days, I expect you to come to class having read each piece carefully *at least once*. You should make notes on the story itself and also formulate a response wherein you note the piece's strengths and weaknesses, as well as providing ideas for the next draft. This can be written at the end of the story or typed on a separate page. You should complete this before class begins. Nothing is ruder than doing this in a rush, right in front of the person who worked hard on the story. You should be honest, constructive, and encouraging. **The Golden Rule of Workshop** is to critique others as you would like to be critiqued. The participation of those who fail to respect their peers' thoughts and feelings will be graded accordingly.

Creative Exercises: 50 points

You will complete 2 creative exercises at the beginning of the semester (25 points each). These should be about one page (300ish words) in length.

Reading Quizzes: 250 points

There will be a total of 10 reading quizzes (25 points each) throughout the semester. These are not designed to torture you, but rather make sure you are engaging with the assigned readings. These will be fun.

Critical Reading Journal: 280 points

In this class, you will keep a reading journal. For every assigned story, you will write a 1-page (about 300 words minimum) entry that is a critical response to the story. "Critical response" means the entry should be written with an appropriate, scholarly tone and include evidence from the text (quoted) to support your ideas and arguments. The response should not simply say "I liked this story" or "I didn't like this story." Go deeper than that. You can take whatever approach you like on this. For instance, if you are really interested in dialogue, that could be what you discuss in every entry. I am giving you freedom in your approach so you can find an angle that genuinely interests you. The entries will be evaluated based on the following criteria: demonstrated reading of the stories, critical thinking, depth of analysis, and engagement with the discussion of craft. Your analytical and critical skills are expected to improve over the course of the semester. You will upload responses to Canvas before the class it is due. By the end of the semester, you will have completed 28 entries (10 points each). This will satisfy the 6,000 word requirement.

Two Stories: 200 points

You will write 2 stories (100 points each) that will be workshopped. The first story may be 1-5 pages in length. The second story may be 5-10 pages in length. They should be literary fiction written for an adult audience, which is what we will be reading and studying. They should NOT be "genre" fiction, such as fantasy, sci-fi, zombie, vampire, My Little Pony fanfiction, Harry Potter fan fiction, et cetera. Do not write your stories the night before they are due. I will be able to tell if this is the case and will deduct points accordingly. I am looking for clarity, attention to language, and a developing understanding of the building blocks of fiction writing as discussed in class. Manuscripts must be turned in *the week before* they are to be workshopped. You will print out copies for the entire class and also turn in your story on Canvas. If you turn in a story late, we will not workshop it in class.

Final Revision: 145 points

You will revise 1 story for your final project. Simply fixing typos is *not enough* to constitute a revision. You will not receive full credit if you try to pull this. The best revision I have ever seen barely resembled the first draft that was workshopped. Don't be afraid to make big changes or delete/alter/change what is holding your story back from being the best it can possibly be. Your revision will be due by NOON on December 8th.

Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. **Attendance:** You are allowed one absence without explanation, but do not miss the day your story is workshopped. Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade for that story. A second absence requires a doctor's note. A third absence will result in a failing grade for this class. Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, are exempted from this policy. Two tardies (arriving more than five minutes late, or leaving class early) equals one absence. I keep track of these things.
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>
3. **Paper Format & Submission:** Each assignment must be submitted in double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman typeface. Pages must be numbered. One staple goes in the left-hand corner if you are submitting a hard copy. There must be a title. Formatting failures will result in a point deduction. Concerning submissions, all assignments should be submitted electronically on Canvas. Some assignments will also be brought into class as hard copies. This will not be a

mystery. I will remind you throughout the semester how/when things should be submitted. The schedule will also serve as a guide.

4. **Late Papers/Assignments:** Late assignments will not be accepted.
5. **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.** Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. **Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.** Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
7. Students with **disabilities** who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
8. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
9. **Grade Appeals.** In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
10. **Course Evaluations.** Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
11. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
12. **Classroom behavior and netiquette:** Behave in a respectful manner in class. If you do not, you will be asked to leave. As far as email goes, remember to include a greeting, complete sentences, and have an appropriate signature. Please do not send me frantic emails late at night and expect me to answer. I try to shut down my email around 8PM. Also, please be aware of the tone of your emails. Sometimes students who aren't intending to be rude do indeed come across as rude. This is off-putting and disrespectful. **Also**, please check your email regularly. This is how I will communicate with you to send announcements, changes of readings, cancelled class, et cetera.
13. **UF's policy on Harassment:** UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>
14. **Policy on environmental sustainability.** Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale.)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

August 25—INTRODUCTION

September 1—TWO

Read: "Sea Oak" by George Saunders

"Everything Ravaged, Everything Burned" by Wells Tower

"Vacuum" by Brad Watson

In Class: Reading Quiz #1

Share Exercises

Due: Creative Exercise #1 (Canvas + hard copies for everyone)

Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)

September 8—THREE

Read: “Do Not Disturb” by A.M. Homes
“Gentleman’s Agreement” by Mark Richard
“Fallen Nellie” by Brad Watson

In Class: Reading Quiz #2
Share Exercises

Due: Creative Exercise #2 (Canvas + hard copies for everyone)
Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)

September 15—FOUR

*****WORKSHOP STARTS*****

Read: “The Girl in the Flammable Skirt” by Aimee Bender
“The Caretaker” by Anthony Doerr
“Are You Mister Lonelee?” by Brad Watson

In Class: Reading Quiz #3
Workshop #1

Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)
Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

September 22—FIVE

Read: “The Old Dictionary” by Lydia Davis
“The Father’s Blessing” by Mary Caponegro
“Terrible Argument” by Brad Watson

In Class: Reading Quiz #4
Workshop #2

Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)
Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

September 29—SIX

Read: “The Paperhanger” by William Gay
“The Life and Work of Alphonse Kauders” by Aleksandar Hemon
“Water Dog God” by Brad Watson

In Class: Reading Quiz #5
Workshop #3

Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)
Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

October 13—SEVEN

Read: “When Mr. Prizada Came to Dine” by Jhumpa Lahiri
“X Number of Possibilities” by Joanna Scott
“Ordinary Monsters” by Brad Watson

In Class: Reading Quiz #6
Workshop #4

Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)
Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

October 20—EIGHT

Read: “Two Brothers” by Brian Evenson
“Tiny, Smiling Daddy” by Mary Gaitskill

“Carl’s Outside” by Brad Watson
In Class: Reading Quiz #7
Workshop #5
Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)
Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

October 27— NINE

Read: “The Sound Gun” by Matthew Derby
“Short Talks” by Anne Carson
“Scarliotti and the Sinkhole” by Padgett Powell
In Class: Reading Quiz #8
Workshop #6
Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)
Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

November 3—TEN

Read: “Letters to Wendy’s” by Joe Wenderoth
“Field Events” by Rick Bass
“Noon” by Brad Watson
In Class: Reading Quiz #9
Workshop #7
Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)
Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

November 17—ELEVEN

Read: “Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives” by Brad Watson
In Class: Reading Quiz #10
Workshop #8
Due: Reading Journal Entry (Canvas)
Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

December 1—TWELVE

In Class: Workshop #9

December 8

Due: Final Revision by NOON (Canvas)

Grading & Rubric for Critical Reading Journal:

CONTENT	Ideas and analyses should be complex and critical. Papers should offer personal, fresh insights into the material. Go beyond surface matter!
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Use an orderly structure that facilitates reading, sustaining the reader’s interest through effective paragraph development and use of proper transitions, presenting a logical flow of ideas.
RISK-TAKING	You must deal with the material in creative and challenging ways, developing main points based on self-initiated criteria independent of my class discussion comments, and avoiding summary unless necessary.
EVIDENCE	You must support your ideas with actual examples from the text, and use relevant details from stories that explain and support your main ideas. Try to use quotations from stories that support your points (one or two lines will do—you will be marked down for excessive use of quotations).
DEVELOPMENT	Analyze evidence in a way that supports your claims and overall thesis, including identifying literary devices/figures of speech and explaining how they contribute to the meaning of the text. AVOID SUMMARY.
MECHANICS	Spelling, grammar, punctuation must be correct. Papers must show careful proofreading, subject-verb agreement, no run-on sentences or sentence fragments, clear pronoun usage.

Participation:	75
Creative Exercises (2):	50 (25 each)
Reading Quizzes (10):	250 (25 each)
Reading Journal (28 entries):	280 (10 each)
Two Stories (2):	200 (100 each)
Final Revision:	145

Total: 1000

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