

CRW2100-2333: Fiction Writing Fall 2017

Instructor: Charlie Sterchi

When: W 10-E1 (5:10 PM-8:10 PM)

Where: RNK 0225

Office Location and Hours: TBD

Course website: TBD

Email: sterchi@ufl.edu

Course Description:

In this course, we will read, write, and study literary fiction. Readings will be lively and varied. We hope the same will be true of your writing. We want to avoid boredom. We want to avoid pedantry. We want to keep ourselves awake.

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.

Students should 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:

The Complete Stories, Flannery O'Connor
Art is Short, Life is Shorter, Shields and Cooperman
Object Lessons, Lorin Stein
Airships, Barry Hannah
Elements of Style, Strunk and White

Texts that will be available on Canvas:

Making Shapely Fiction – Jerome Stern

Assignments

In addition to your readings, you will be responsible for creative exercises, reading quizzes, writing two short stories of your own, and keeping a reading journal, which will contain analytical and argumentative writing. In total, you will write at least 6,000 words of argumentative/analytical writing for this course.

Participation: 75

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 typed response to it wherein you note the piece's strengths and weaknesses. 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

You will complete 2 creative exercises at the beginning of the semester (25 points each). For these exercises, you can either pick the first or last sentence of an assigned story and use that as the starting point for your own piece. You will be borrowing a line from the story but it should take on a life of its own. Forge yourself a new path. These should be about one page 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.

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).

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. Your policy on ***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 an appropriate signature. Please maintain a professional tone in any emails you send to me. Include a greeting, write in complete sentences, and end with an appropriate signature. Keep in mind that I do not check my email after 8 PM or before 10 AM.
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 23—INTRODUCTION

August 30

Read: “Greenleaf” by Flannery O’Connor
“Murderers” by Leonard Michaels (*ASLS*)
“Water Liars” by Barry Hannah
“Old Birds” by Bernard Cooper (*OL*)

In Class: Reading Quiz #1
Share Exercises

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

September 6

Read: “A Late Encounter with the Enemy” by Flannery O’Connor
“Pretty Ice” by Mary Robison (*ASLS*)
“Dimmer” by Joy Williams (*OL*)
“All the Old Harkening Faces at the Rail” by Barry Hannah

In Class: Reading Quiz #2
Share Exercises

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

September 13

Read: “Good Country People” by Flannery O’Connor
“Green Gets It” by Barry Hannah
“In the Animal Shelter” and “The Orphan Lamb” by Amy Hempel (*ASLS*)
“Funes, the Memorious” by Jorge Louis Borges (*OL*)

In Class: Reading Quiz #3
Share Exercises

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

September 20**WORKSHOP BEGINS**

Read: “Everything That Rises Must Converge” by Flannery O’Connor

“The Old Dictionary” by Lydia Davis (*ASLS*)

“Car Crash While Hitchhiking” by Dennis Johnson (*OL*)

In Class: Reading Quiz #4

Workshop

Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)

Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

September 27

Read: “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid (*ASLS*)

“In the Cemetery Where Al Jolston is Buried” by Amy Hempel (*ASLS*)

In Class: Reading Quiz #5

Workshop

Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)

Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

October 4

Read: “Enoch and the Gorilla” by Flannery O’Connor

“Except for the Sickness I’m Quite Healthy Now. You Can Believe That.” By Thomas Glynn (*OL*)

In Class: Reading Quiz #6

Workshop

Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)

Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

October 11

Read: “The School” by Donald Barthelme (*ASLS*)

“The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin (*ASLS*)

In Class: Reading Quiz #7

Workshop

Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)

Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

October 18

Read: “Ten Stories From Flaubert” by Lydia Davis

“Scarliotti and the Sinkhole” by Padgett Powell

“A Temple of the Holy Ghost” by Flannery O’Connor

In Class: Reading Quiz #8

Workshop

Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)

Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

October 25

Read: “Our Secret Home” by Barry Hannah

“Several Garlic Tales” by Donald Barthelme (*OL*)

“A Good Man is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor

In Class: Reading Quiz #9

Workshop

Due: Reading Journal Entries (Canvas)

Workshop Response Letters (a hard copy for the writer)

November 1

Read: “Why Do the Heathen Rage?” by Flannery O’Connor
 “Why Aren’t You Dancing?” by Raymond Carver (OL)
 “Trick or Treat” by Padgett Powell

In Class: Reading Quiz #10
 Workshop

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

November 8

Read: “Constant Pain in Tuscaloosa” by Barry Hannah
 “Judgment Day” by Flannery O’Connor

In Class: Reading Quiz #10
 Workshop

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

November 15

Read: “Coming Close to Donna” by Barry Hannah
 “Likely Lake” by Mary Robison (OL)
 “Midnight and I’m Not Famous Yet” by Barry Hannah

In Class: Reading Quiz #10
 Workshop

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

November 29

Due: Final Revision by NOON (Canvas)

Grading & Rubric:

CONTENT	Ideas and analyses should be complex and critical. Papers should offer personal, fresh insights into the material. Go beyond surface matter!
ORGANIZ AND COHEREN	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-TAK	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).

DEVELOP	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

“The aim of literature,’ Baskerville replied grandly, ‘is the creation of a strange object covered with fur which breaks your heart.’” – Donald Barthelme, *Come Back, Dr. Caligari*

“There is at the back of every artist's mind something like a pattern or a type of architecture. The original quality in any man of imagination is imagery. It is a thing like the landscape of his dreams; the sort of world he would like to make or in which he would wish to wander; the strange flora and fauna of his own secret planet; the sort of thing he likes to think about. This general atmosphere, and pattern or structure of growth, governs all his creations, however varied.” – G. K. Chesterton

“All writing is garbage. People who come out of nowhere to try and put into words any part of what goes on in their minds are pigs. All writers are pigs. Especially writers today.”
– Antonin Artaud

“How can I know what I mean until I see what I say?”

—Anonymous old woman, quoted both by E. M. Forster and Flannery O’Connor

“Writing is about everything human, and we are made out of dust, so if you don’t like getting your hands dusty, you shouldn’t be a writer. It’s not a grand enough job for you.”

—O’Connor

When asked by an interviewer whether writing workshops discouraged young writers, O’Connor replied, “I don’t think they discourage enough of them.”

“Never put yourself in a position of moral superiority to your characters.”

—Notorious writing guru Gordon Lish

Lish’s law: “Enough is enough.”

“Good writing never soothes or comforts. It is no prescription, neither is it diversionary, although it can and should enchant while it explodes in the reader’s face.”

—Joy Williams, “Why I Write”

“The writer doesn’t write for the reader. He doesn’t write for himself, either. He writes to serve...something. Somethingness. The somethingness that is sheltered by the wings of nothingness—those exquisite, protecting wings.”

—Williams

“Writing requires maximum ambition, maximum audacity, and programmatic disobedience.” – Elena Ferrante

“Some people . . . run to conceits or wisdom but I hold to the hard, brown, nutlike word. I might point out that there is enough aesthetic excitement here to satisfy anyone but a damned fool.” – from “The Indian Uprising,” Barthelme

“My best stories come out of nowhere, with no concern for form at *all*.” – Barry Hannah

“Learn to play your instruments, then get sexy.” – Debbie Harry

“Calmly write a not calm story.” – Padgett Powell

“The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately released.” – T. S. Eliot, 1920

“Then there is the other secret. There isn't any symbolism [mis-spelled]. The sea is the sea. The old man is an old man. The boy is a boy and the fish is a fish. The shark is all sharks no better and no worse. All the symbolism that people say is shit. What goes beyond is what you see beyond when you know.” – Hemingway to Bernard Berenson, 1952, SL 780

“Keep them people, people, people, and don't let them get to be symbols.”
– Hem to Dos Passos, 1932, SL, 354

“... a writer should create living people; people, not characters. A character is a caricature.” DA, 191

“Mice: Do you know what is going to happen when you write a story?”

Y.C.: Almost never. I start to make it up and have happen what would have to happen as it goes along.” –By-Line: Ernest Hemingway, 217

“I am very much taken with your books and their wonderful imaginative energy. The more fantastic the action the more precise the writing and this is the way it ought to be.”

– Flannery O’Connor to John Hawkes (“experimental” writer, 1950, HB, 292)

“Eschew the monumental. Shun the epic. All the guys who can paint great big pictures can paint great small ones.”

– Hemingway to Maxwell Perkins, 1932, SL, 352

“This much is clear: inspiration arrives best and brightest when it arrives on the pogo-sticks of the unexpected and the improbable.” – Franklin Rosemont

“What an opossum does is climb a tree and get himself out on a limb when he feels threatened.” – Walt Kelly