

CRW 2100 – FICTION WRITING, Section 8058, Fall 2017

Instructor Name: Neal Hammons

Course meeting time: Thursday, 4:05–7:05 p.m. (periods 9–11)

Course location: Psychology Building (PSY), Room 0129

Office Location and Hours: Turlington 4358, Tuesday and Thursday 2–3 p.m.

Course website: elearning.ufl.edu (UF Canvas website)

Instructor Email: nhammons@ufl.edu

Required Text

Self-Editing for Fiction Writers (2nd edition), Renni Browne and Dave King
Invaders: 22 Tales from the Outer Limits of Literature, Jacob Weisman (editor)

Course Description

This course focuses on what makes fiction writing work. We will analyze classic and contemporary fiction in order to learn how to improve our own stories.

Throughout the semester, we will study various aspects of fiction—character, exposition, dialogue mechanics, point of view, voice, etc.—based on chapters from our textbook, *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*.

Most of our fiction readings will be from the anthology *Invaders: 22 Tales from the Outer Limits of Literature*. While still considered “literary fiction,” these stories generally contain weird/fantastical/non-realistic elements associated with genre fiction.

By the end of this course, you will have produced two pieces of short fiction, critiqued several published stories, and offered constructive feedback to your fellow students about their stories.

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 6,000 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 every week, selections from *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*, occasional interviews with or essays by fiction writers, and your classmates' short stories

Fiction Writing: Two short stories—a 4-page story and a 6- to 10-page story (10–16 pages total)

Critical Writing: Two 1,000-word analytical essays, eight 500-word analyses of the assigned short stories, responses to classmates' short stories

Assignments

Class Participation (20%)

Each week we will read short stories (either published stories or workshop stories) and discuss them thoroughly in class. Our discussions about published stories will be centered around a few specific aspects of fiction writing and how the writer approached these aspects. You will often be called on to read part or all of your weekly analysis of the assigned stories.

Our discussion about workshop stories will be focused on writing—e.g., characterization, conflict, point of view, etc. These discussions will be thoughtful and helpful, with an aim to helping the writer improve the story. If you are disrespectful of your peers' work, your grade will be affected and everyone will hate you.

Short Stories (35%)

You will write two short stories (one 4-page story, one 6- to 10-page story) to be workshopped in class. You must bring enough copies of your story for everyone in the class **THE WEEK BEFORE YOUR WORKSHOP DATE**. You will also turn in a revision of one of your stories during the final week of class.

IMPORTANT: Last-page twists—e.g., the character was dead all along, it was all a dream—are almost never a good idea in short fiction. Please don't use them.

Weekly Analysis and Workshop Critiques (45%)

500-Word Analysis: You will write eight analysis responses, 500 words each (for 4,000 words total). Always bring a hard copy of your weekly analysis to hand in. Each of these responses will analyze the short stories in terms of what we are discussing in class at the time. For example, the Week 2 analysis of Steven Millhauser's "Precursor to the Cinema" will focus on "showing and telling," what Millhauser chooses to show us in-scene and what he chooses to tell us directly. (Each week I will give instructions about what fiction-writing element that your next analysis should focus on.)

1,000-Word Analytical Essay: You will write two analytical essays, 1,000 words each (for 2,000 words total). They will be due on **September 28** and **November 30**. For these essays, you will choose one or two fiction-writing elements that we've discussed and analyze how different authors use these elements in their fiction.

Workshop Critiques: Before each workshop, you will read each story **AT LEAST ONCE**. You will make notes on the manuscript itself, and you will bring a 250-word letter addressed to the writer of the story. The letter, your margin notes, and your comments during the workshop should be constructive, tactful, and craft-centered. Be honest about the story's flaws, but remember that you need to be on the side of the writer.

Attendance

You are allowed up to two absences without explanation, but do not miss the day that your story is workshopped. Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade for that story. Each absence after the second will lower your final grade by one full letter. Three unexcused absences will result in automatic failure.

A few absences due to illness or family crisis may be excused if documented to the instructor's satisfaction. Even documented absences will not be excused if many or prolonged. Students participating in a university-sponsored event (e.g., athletics, theater, music, field trip) will be excused if there is documentation from an appropriate authority. Students excused from an absence are not excused from the work assigned for a class session; each student must arrange with the instructor to make up the work.

Tardiness can be disruptive. Both the overall grade and the grade for class participation may be lowered because of tardiness.

Recommended Writing Manuals

For additional style and usage help, I recommend the following:

- *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White
- *The Chicago Manual of Style* (available online via UF computers)
- The Purdue OWL website (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>)

Final Grade Appeals

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

Final Notes

1. I will use university e-mail to contact you. I may sometimes give/change assignments or adjust our schedule via e-mail.
2. Individual items on this syllabus are subject to change.
3. Don't use cell phones or laptops in class. Bring hard copies of everything.

Course Policies:

1. *You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.*
2. *Attendance:* You are allowed two unexcused absences, but three will result in automatic failure. *Tardiness:* It can be disruptive. Both the overall grade and the grade for class participation may be lowered because of tardiness.
3. *Paper Format & Submission:* For short stories, print out enough copies for everyone in the class and hand them out the week before your workshop. For essays and analyses, bring me one paper copy.
4. *Late Papers/Assignments:* Late papers will receive a lower letter grade.
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. *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/>

University Writing Studio

If you find that you need additional help with your writing outside of class, I strongly recommend that you acquaint yourself with the University Writing Studio (at 302 Tigert Hall). The Writing Studio is a free service for current UF graduate and undergraduate students. Students have the opportunity to work one-on-one with a consultant on issues specific to their own particular development, and some of the Writing Studio tutors are graduate creative-writing students. More info is available here: <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-center/>

Weekly Schedule

Reading assignments, scheduling, and weekly themes are subject to change.

August 24

- Introduction to class
- Review syllabus
- Fiction-writing principles—Conflict

August 31

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #1
 - READ: “A Precursor to the Cinema” by Steven Millhauser and “Three-Ten to Yuma” by Elmore Leonard
 - READ: “Show and Tell” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- Discuss our first fiction-writing assignment (due on September 21)
- In-class writing exercise
- Fiction-writing principles
 - Characters
 - Plot/Structure

September 7

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #2
 - READ: “Escape from Spiderhead” by George Saunders and “Tea” by Nancy Reisman
 - READ: “Characterization and Exposition” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- Talk about workshop schedule/format
- In-class writing exercise
- Fiction-writing principles—Scenes

September 14

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #3
 - READ: “In the Bushes” by Jami Attenberg and “Delicate Edible Birds” by Lauren Groff
 - READ: “Point of View” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- EXTRA CREDIT: Fiction reading at The Bull at 8 p.m.
- Fiction-writing principles—Dialogue

September 21

- DUE: Four-page story (or first four pages) for in-class peer review
- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #4
 - READ: “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” by Sherman Alexie
 - READ: “Dialogue Mechanics” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- Fiction-writing principles—Atmosphere/Setting

September 28

- DUE: Analytical Essay #1
 - READ: “The Squid Who Fell in Love with the Sun” by Ben Loory and “The Wrong Man” by Erin Flanagan
 - READ: “Proportion” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- Fiction-writing principles—Theme/Metaphor

October 5

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #5
 - READ: “Minotaur” by Jim Shepard and “Fat” by Raymond Carver
 - READ: “See How It Sounds” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- Stories due for Kathryn and Rachel

October 12

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #6
 - READ: “Monstro” by Junot Diaz
 - READ: “Interior Monologue” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- WORKSHOP: Kathryn and Rachel
- Stories due for Kaitlin and Sana

October 19

- Stories due for students Jonathan and Marin
- CLASS CANCELED

October 26

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #7
 - READ: “How to Tell a True War Story” by Tim O’Brien
 - READ: “Easy Beats” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- WORKSHOP: Kaitlin, Sana, Jonathan, and Marin
- Stories due for Jared and Kam

November 2

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #9
 - READ: “Amorometer” by Kelly Luce
 - READ: “Once Is Usually Enough” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- WORKSHOP: Jared and Kam
- Stories due for Elizabeth and Kasey

November 9

- DUE: 500-Word Analysis #10
 - READ: “The Retarded Hermit” by Padgett Powell and “Some of Us Had Been Threatening Our Friend Colby” by Donald Barthelme
 - READ: “Sophistication” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- WOKSHOP: Elizabeth and Kasey
- Stories due for Wendy and Morgan

November 16

- READ: “Year of Silence” by Kevin Brockmeier
- READ: “Voice” in *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*
- WORKSHOP: Wendy and Morgan
- Stories due for Martha and Kyla

November 23—NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)November 30

- DUE: Analytical Essay #2
- WORKSHOP: Martha and Kyla
- Discussion of revisions
- LAST CLASS

December 7

- DUE: Final story revision (via e-mail or Canvas)