

SYLLABUS

MW

English 213

Fiction Writing I

Prof. Carl Schaffer

Office: CLP 214 x4291

Office hrs: TTh 2:3-4

Texts:

Burroway, Jane. Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft. 6 ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.

Pickering, James H. Fiction 100: An Anthology of Short Stories. 10th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson-Prentice Hall, 2004.

A complete handbook on English grammar, punctuation, and usage

Objectives:

The goal of this course is to teach the beginning student the fundamental principles of the craft of short story writing. Basic theories on the genre will be introduced, the work of some of its more prominent artists will be examined, and ongoing projects of the class will be discussed in regular workshops.

Requirements

Each member of the class will be required to submit at least three short stories in the course of the semester for workshop discussion. Each workshop story will be submitted in advance so that there is ample time to copy and distribute it, and to allow students to prepare extensive comments (printed or typed) on their classmates' work. Two weeks after a story is reviewed in the workshop, it **must** be resubmitted for a grade. (The final story has only a one-week window for rewriting.) **Only rewrites receive grades.**

Students should be aware that I take mechanics – i.e. grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, etc. – very seriously. Although students may expect to receive an improved grade on the story after revisions, the grade on mechanics does not get raised – although it may be lowered. Repeated grades of “poor” on mechanics will thus seriously affect the final semester grade.

Useful as workshops can be, one-on-one sessions are often the best means of preparing to revise creative work. I thus encourage all my creative writing students to see me in my office, where we can discuss in detail their work.

In addition, there will a number of smaller assignments geared to increase the student's skills in some of the mechanics of story-telling (creating character, plot, symbol, etc.), and to help generate creative work. Some of these are listed in the syllabus. However, additional assignments may be added to fit the needs of the individual class or student, and the ones presently listed may be cut completely, depending on individual needs.

Students must have three copies of all assignments: one for me to write my comments on; another so that the class can be provided with a clean copy for workshop purposes; and a third for the student's own files.

At the end of the semester, students will submit a portfolio of at least three stories in their final versions, indicating if they have been changed in any way since their last submission.

Finally, since this course is based on the premise that to write well is to read well, students should read the assigned stories carefully and be prepared to discuss them in class. Students who come to

class unprepared are for all practical purposes absent, and will be considered as such.

Absences and Lates

A maximum of two absences will be allowed, after which I have the option of subtracting three points (a +/- grade) for each of the next two absences from the student's overall average. Two lates count as an absence. The student is of course responsible for any work assigned or due while he is absent.

Five absences are grounds for a grade of F ~ not negotiable.

Class Schedule

Note: Students are expected to have read the assigned stories when they arrive at class. Chapter assignments in the Burroway do not include the accompanying stories unless stated on the syllabus.

- Jan. 31 Introduction to the course
- Feb. 2 The structure of fiction
Handouts of microfiction and flash fiction (Udall, Rhys, etc.)
Read Burroway, chs 1 and 2
First exercise to be assigned: description, due next class.
- Feb. 7 Description exercises to be collected
Read Burroway, ch. 3 ("Seeing Is Believing")
Discussion on writing description
- 9 Sudden (short-short fiction)
Read Chopin's "Story of an Hour" and Barthelme's "The School" (handouts)
Description exercises to be distributed for workshop.
- 14 Workshop on descriptive exercises
- 16 "
First story to be assigned: The coming-of-age story. Due 2/23
- 21 The Well-Made Story: "Araby"
Read "Araby," in Pickering, p. 792.
- 23 Choosing a perspective: point of view
Read Burroway, chapters 7 & 8
Two coming-of-age stories:
- 28 Read Updike's "A & P" (in Pickering, p. 1288)
Porter's "The Grave" (p. 1149)
- Mar. 2 Dialogue
Read Burroway, chapter 5
Read Hemingway's "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," Carver's "Neighbors," and Salinger's "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" (all handouts)
First stories due; pick up copies at my office at Friday noon
Dialogue exercise assignment
- 7 Workshop on 1st story
- 14 "
Second story assignment
- 16 Workshop - 1st story
Dialogue exercises due

Spring\Easter Break

28 Finish workshop on 1st story
Dialogue exercises to be distributed.

30 Workshop on dialogue exercises

April 4 “

Second story due

April 6 Character/Gothic

Read Burroway, Chapter 4

Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" (handout)

Oates's "Where Are You Going, Where Have you Been?" (in Pickering, p. 1040)

11 Workshop on 2nd story

13 “

18 “

20 “

Third story assignment

25 Symbol and allegory

Steinbeck's "The Chrysanthemums" (in Pickering, p. 1223)

Read Boyle's "Greasy Lake" (handout)

Read Burroway, chapter six ("Long Ago and Far Away")

27 Revising and Realism

Read Burroway, chapter 11.

Read both Carver stories (handouts)

Third story due. Pick up on Friday.

May 2 Workshop on third story

4 “

9 “

11 “

16 ”

Wrap-up.

Assignment for final