Fall 8-15-2017

ENG 3063 001: Intermediate Fiction Writing

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Purpose of the Course
Students will work on developing their eye for detail, dialogue, and voice—all-important components of the short story. Later in the semester we will consider the mechanics of plot and pacing. Several short writing exercises will be required, though the major part of this course will be devoted to the workshop.

Catalog Description of the Course
(3-0-3) F. An intermediate course centered on the writing of fiction. Class time will be devoted to writing, reading, and discussion of fiction. WC

Objectives of the Course
Students will develop a repertoire of artistic strategies in the writing of fiction. They will develop their eye for detail, dialogue, and voice.

Students will better understand the various ways a short story can be structured; they will learn the importance of pacing, tension, and suspense.

Students will deepen their historical understanding of the short story through the reading of past and contemporary authors.

Students will develop critical reading and interpersonal skills through vigorous workshop participation.

Books and Materials
The Story and Its Writer, 8th edition, by Ann Charters
Notebook for in-class writing

Requirements
1. Read the assigned material by the assigned date and participate in class discussions and occasional in-class writing exercises. YOU MUST BRING YOUR BOOK TO CLASS THE DAY WE’RE DISCUSSING STORIES. Failure to do so may result in lower participation grades.
2. Participate in workshops: 1) Submit three short stories for class critique; 2) critique the work of classmates in an insightful and constructive manner, both orally and on paper.
3. Submit a portfolio of creative work at the end of the semester. The portfolio will include all your stories, including revisions. You may also include in-class writing.

Grade Breakdown
Writing Portfolio, including revisions of stories: 60%
Written critique of other people’s stories: 20%
Effectiveness at in-class discussion: 10%
Attendance: 10%
Writing Portfolio
In creative writing courses, grading is a necessary evil. Writers develop at their own pace, and teachers may be partial to certain styles or genres. I have found through experience that a specific grade on every written piece of work sometimes discourages writers. Often they look at the grade and skip the comments. Or, if their grade is a B, they ask themselves, “Why not an A?” However, students also have the right to know what they might expect at the end of the semester, grade-wise. I’ll give you the option of having your individual stories graded, with the understanding that you can rewrite pieces to include in the final portfolio. Part of your grade will be determined by how thoughtfully you incorporate the suggestions of others as well as how well you develop your own inner writing critic. Final drafts of stories included in the portfolio must be free of grammatical and mechanical errors. Please visit the Writing Center if you need help with verb tense, sentence structure, comma use, etc.

Participation
Participation includes not only actively discussing the readings, but also making insightful and constructive comments on the writing of your peers. You must submit 2-3 typed paragraphs for every story we workshop. **You may email these to the author, or you may attach them to your copy of the story after the workshop. You must also send the same typed critique to me. I must get the critique before the beginning of class. No exceptions. You may also hand me the typed critiques at the beginning of class.**

Attendance
Since the format of this class is primarily workshop, participation is extremely important. In addition, many of the ideas used in your essays will be generated in class discussions or in-class writing. I do allow for excused absences if they are properly documented. These include approved university activities and illness. Unexcused absences are pretty much all others—oversleeping, finishing papers for other classes, out-of-town trips “because I’m homesick.” More than one unexcused absence will lower your attendance grade by one grade. More than two unexcused absences will lower your attendance grade by two grades. And so on.

Tardiness and Cell Phone/Computer Use
I expect you to be in class on time. Excessive tardiness may result in lower attendance grade. No cell phone use in class other than in emergencies. Computers to be used ONLY for class purposes—writing or reading others’ stories. No checking social media, no emailing, no Googling.

University Policies
(1) Academic integrity - Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU’s Code of Conduct ([http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php](http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php)). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

(2) Students with disabilities - If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583.

(3) The Student Success Center - Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals
are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

Workshopping Procedure
A large part of this course will be devoted to the workshop, a popular method of critiquing creative writing. This is how it works: You make a copy of your piece for all class members and submit it to them the class period before workshopping. You may email the story if you like, but it must be mailed out at least two days in advance. So, if your piece is workshopped on a Tuesday, you must email essays out by Sunday evening at the latest. I realize that emergencies do arise. In such a case, email or phone me to let me know your piece will be late. Even in emergency situations, however, no essays can be mailed to the class later than 8pm on the day before we workshop—we will simply do something else in class that day and your grade for workshopping (a requirement in this course) will go down. In class you read the first 2-3 paragraphs of your story out loud. Class members discuss strengths and weaknesses while you remain silent. At the end of discussion you respond to the critique and have the option of asking for more feedback on specific sections that the class may have overlooked. Feel free to take notes on what is said in order to help you revise. NOTE: You MUST have a paper copy of your own piece. No reading the story from your phone. No asking your neighbor to borrow his/her copy.

The idea of class critique makes some people nervous. You may feel uncomfortable at first. Over the course of the semester, however, you will begin to find the comments and suggestions of the class and the instructor invaluable.

Guidelines/policies for criticism:

1) We’ll begin with a more general opinion of the work. Example: “My sense is that you’re trying for a tone of ironic humor throughout the piece. I think that, for the most part, you’ve succeeded, though the ending seems too flippant.” Or: “I like this piece; especially the dialogue, but feel that it’s too long.”

We’ll then move on to more specific comments. Example: “There’s a lot of repetition of the word ‘interesting’ in paragraph three.” Or: “You have a tendency to overuse commas.”

2) Be honest. False praise does not help the writer in any way and compromises your role as critic.

3) Criticism should not be mean-spirited or vengeful. And it goes without saying that sexist, racist, homophobic or otherwise inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.

4) When it comes to taking criticism, be open-minded, but remember that what you revise—what you leave in, add, leave out—is ultimately your decision. Some remarks will resonate more clearly than others for you.
### CLASS SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>T 08/22</td>
<td>Class introductions</td>
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|      | TH 08/24 | **INTRODUCTION TO STORY ONE**  
**Read** *How to Become a Writer* by Lorrie Moore (921),  
*Things You Should Know* by A.M. Homes (552) and *Stories* by John Edgar Wideman (1382) |
| #2   | T 08/29 | *Barbie Q* by Sandra Cisneros (285), *How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl or Halfie* by Junot Diaz (385), *Escort* by Chuck Palahniuk (1093), and *Girl* by Jamaica Kincaid (760) |
|      | TH 09/31 | *Church Cancels Cow* by Amy Hempel (544), *Television* by Lydia Davis (381), and *Snow* by Annie Beattie (108) |
| #3   | T 09/05 | Workshops 1 ____________ 2 ____________ 3 ____________ |
|      | TH 09/07 | Workshops 1 ____________ 2 ____________ 3 ____________ |
| #4   | T 09/12 | Workshops 1 ____________ 2 ____________ 3 ____________ |
|      | TH 09/14 | Workshops 1 ____________ 2 ____________ 3 ____________ |
| #5   | T 09/19 | Workshops 1 ____________ 2 ____________ 3 ____________ |
|      | TH 09/21 | Workshops 1 ____________ 2 ____________ 3 ____________ |
| #6   | T 09/26 | **INTRODUCTION TO STORY TWO**  
*Everything That Rises Must Converge* by Flannery O’Connor (1016) and *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry (1141) |
|      | TH 09/28 | *Hills Like White Elephants* (539) by Ernest Hemingway and *A Small Good Thing* by Raymond Carver (201) |
| #7   | T 10/03 | *Say Yes* by Tobias Wolff (1390), *I Stand Here Ironing* by Tillie Olsen (1065), and *The Girl with Bangs* by Zadie Smith (1220) |
|      | TH 10/05 | Workshops 1 ____________ 2 ____________ 3 ____________ |
| #8   | T 10/10 | Workshops 1 ____________ 2 ____________ 3 ____________ |
|      | TH 10/12 | Workshops 1 ____________ 2 ____________ 3 ____________ |
INTRODUCTION TO STORY THREE

August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains by Ray Bradbury (172), The Invasion from Outer Space by Steven Millhauser (905) and Harrison Bergeron by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr (1328)

The Werewolf by Angela Carter (188), The Rememberer by Aimee Bender and The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe (1128)

Job History by Annie Proulx (1146), Happy Endings by Margaret Atwood (64) and Why I Live at the P.O by Eudora Welty (1351)

THANKSGIVING BREAK WEEK

NOTE: I may make minor changes to this syllabus in order to suit the needs of the class. Changes will always be announced in advance.

FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE on Monday, December 11th at NOON

NO FINAL EXAM in this class