

Fall 8-15-2018

ENG 3063-001: Intermediate Fiction Writing

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ENG 3063: Intermediate Fiction Writing—3 cr hrs

Coleman 3159 * MWF 1-1:50 pm

Instructor

Dr. Bess Winter

bwkosinec@eiu.edu

Office: Coleman 3576

Office Hours: Mon and Weds 2pm-3:30pm, Fri 2pm-3pm, or by appointment

Texts & Materials

- A blank notebook. Choose something that makes you want to write in it.
- A good pen. Choose something that makes you want to write with it.
- *Writing Fiction*, Janet Burroway, Elizabeth Stuckey-French & Ned Stuckey-French, 8th ed.
- Selected readings (*available on d2l*)

Course Description

Catalog description: (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

This class is not a “class” in the traditional sense. When we come together in this group we become a community of writers. Think 1920s Paris, Algonquin Round Table, the Harlem Renaissance, the Beat Poets. We share ideas, we question societal assumptions, and we challenge ourselves and each other. Debate and dialogue are encouraged here, as the only way to grow as a writer is to grow as a person, and to become a keen observer of other people. Most importantly, the success of the class depends on your contribution, your voice, your empathy toward your classmates and yourselves. And, of course, your willingness to spend time hacking it out at the keyboard.

The chief goal of this course, then, will be to take your writing from the level of a hobby or interest to an artistic practice, and to give you the tools you need to be able to speak critically about the craft of fiction. You will be fully expected to assume the role of writer and put in significant work this semester—and graded on your engagement with the process: the whole messy, exciting, sometimes scary business of creating, workshopping, and revising stories. You will also be encouraged to explore how your fascinations make your writing unique and fully yours.

If you write and revise consistently, read voraciously, and engage deeply in class discussion, you will undoubtedly be a better writer by the end of the term.

By the end of this class you will:

- Be able to read, and analyze, fiction like a writer of fiction
- Be familiar with the tools of writer’s craft
- Understand how to participate in writers’ workshop

- Be familiar with a selection of techniques for revision and know how to implement them
- Have produced one revised short story plus a handful of drafts

Assignments & Grading

You will be graded on the following:

Portfolio – 30%

- Story revision – 15%
- Artist's statement – 15%

Craft Reflections—30%

Discussion Kickoff—5%

Workshop Leadership—10%

Participation (includes attendance, participation in class discussion, workshopping, one-on-one meetings)—25%

**I reserve the right to hold pop quizzes and minor in-class and out-of-class writing assignments as the class's needs arise.*

On Grades

Your grade in this class is based on the amount, and quality, of effort you put into the course. This is measured by how you've changed or grown as an artist and a student of writing (in short, how invested you are in the process—you tell me how much in your artist's statement and our own meeting), not by your talent or promise as a writer.

Writing a Craft Response

In Unit 1, you'll write a weekly response, due every Friday by 9am. Your responses will be 300 words in length and address our reading/discussion on craft as it relates to the stories we read for class that week, as well as the writerly process and your individual process as a writer. You can refer to your own work in addition to the works we read. These responses can be as creative or associative as you'd like, meaning you can write them as pieces of fiction, as comics, etc. Post them to our craft response forum in d2l, under that week's topic.

Discussion Kickoff

You will be assigned one day during Unit 1 on which you're expected to come prepared to share your initial thoughts on the reading as well as a well-considered discussion question for the class.

Workshop Leadership

During Unit 2, you will be responsible for leading workshop for the other writer up that day. As workshop leader, you kick off the first 2-3 minutes of the discussion by giving us a 30 second summary of the story,

Writing a Workshop Response

In Unit 2, You will be prepared for every workshop class by doing the following:

- 1) Write comments in the margins of stories up for discussion.
- 2) Write a 1 page critique for each peer-written story we read this semester and post it to D2L. This should be well thought-out and honest (based on more than one reading), while respectfully pointing out both aspects of the story that are working, and those that aren't.

If you're submitting a story to be workshopped: Stories should be submitted a week (7 days) before class, via D2L. Non-submissions or late submissions will be reflected in your participation grade. You will also be responsible for kicking off discussion of the other story being workshopped that day.

Journals

Nearly all writers keep journals. Why keep a journal? To keep track of your ideas. To sketch out drafts. To take note of images you find interesting. To write down conversations you overhear. Maybe even to write down your dreams. You will be expected to keep a journal throughout the course of the semester, simply because that is what an observant writer does. It is private; it is yours; it won't be collected or graded—but I do expect to see you writing in it when we do in-class exercises and carrying it proudly in your bag.

The Final Portfolio

This will contain your revised short story. Fiction should be double-spaced, 12-point font, with one-inch margins. Please include, also, a 900-word artist's statement. In this statement, you will discuss your revision process: the revision techniques you chose, the decisions you made, how you made those decisions, and what effect you see them having on your work.

What should you submit for workshop?

Be as creative as you like with the work you bring to class. It can, and should, push boundaries and challenge you, as a writer. Most importantly, you should enjoy writing it. However, there are some ground rules for writing submitted for this workshop:

- 1) **Submit work you've spent time on and invested thought and energy in.** Though great writing sometimes comes to us in a flash, it never arrives fully formed and ready to publish. Also, please run a spelling and grammar check before you submit work to your peers.
- 2) **No fan fiction, please.** Unless you can use Spiderman/Harry Potter/Ctulthu/Batman to say something that has a scope beyond the Marvel/DC universe or Hogwart's (ie. subvert the genre in order to make art), they do not belong in this workshop. There are lots of venues online where you can share this work. If you have questions about this, please discuss them with me.
- 3) **Similarly, genre fiction (sci-fi/fantasy/romance/erotica) has its own rules that we're not covering in this course. As such, genre fiction should only appear in this workshop if it's used to say something beyond the scope of the genre — ie. if it has a literary fiction-type plot.** Ray Bradbury, Isaac

Asimov, Larry McMurtry, Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter, and even Stephen King have written "genre" fiction that transcends the genre in order to shed new light on the world we live in. Stephanie Meyer writes about teen vampires.

- 4) **Gratuitous sex or violence is boring.** Violence and sex can hold a lot of weight and meaning in a piece. Violence and sex without purpose make the piece a boring read. Make sure any use of violence, sex, or combination thereof is fully motivated and justified by the story.
- 5) **Sections of larger works, like novels, should be accompanied by a synopsis.** See me for details.
- 6) **Stories should be 15 pages max; there is no page minimum.**

Course Policies

Attendance & Late Assignments

You are free to take up to five (5) unexplained absences. Further absences will result in a loss of 50 points (half a letter grade) per day on your overall grade (see EIU's official policy here: <http://castle.eiu.edu/auditing/043.php>). Don't bother sending excuses for absences after the fact, and please do not send emails asking if we did anything important (we did), or to be caught up or assigned make-up work for an unexplained absence. Do, however, let me know ASAP beforehand if you need to request an emergency extension on an assignment, otherwise late assignments will receive a deduction of 50 points per day. Extensions are granted at my discretion, and you must provide a valid reason (emergency, documented health issues, etc) with your extension request. **Repeated tardiness (more than once or twice) reduces your participation grade.**

**This course makes use of EIU's Early Alert system. Repeated absences beyond your allotted 5, failure to turn in assignments, etc, all mean you may be contacted by your advisors.*

Email Policy

This policy is borrowed from Dr. Tim Taylor's ENG 1001 syllabus.

I welcome emails if you have questions or concerns about your work in this class. However, I expect you to write emails in a professional manner-not like you are texting a close friend.

If you want to send me an email, follow the guidelines below. Emails should:

- Have a clear and concise subject line that provides gist of the email, such "Absent This Friday" or "Question about Revision" or "Availability for a Meeting?"
- Begin with a formal address, such as "Dr. Winter:" or "Dear Dr. Winter,"
- Use a respectful tone
- Provide questions or information in a succinct manner
- Use paragraph breaks for reading ease and strong organization
- Be edited and proofread effectively so as not to cause confusion
- Refrain from using abbreviations, "text-prose," or emojis
- Close with a short statement followed by a comma and your name, such as "Thanks for your time," or "Sincerely," or "Have a good weekend,"

If an email does not follow these guidelines, I will simply reply to the email with this message: "Please resend this email once it's been revised to fit the standards of a professional email. See pages 4-5 of my course policy." I do my best to reply to all emails within 24 hours of receipt, but you're not likely to receive an instant reply, particularly if you're emailing within an hour of class. In that case, please speak to me directly after class.

Plagiarism

EIU English Department's Statement on Plagiarism: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

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>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Accommodation for Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and are 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. Stop by Ninth Street Hall, room 2022, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

Once you have received your accommodations letter, please meet with me immediately, during office hours, in order for us to plan on arrangements specific to your needs and this course's assignments.

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, text 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.

Schedule

Unit 1: Craft of Fiction

Week 1, Aug 20-24 – Introduction – Mining your fascinations— What is a short story?

For Weds Aug 22: Read Burroway, pgs 8-12, get a blank journal, do Claudia Johnson's "menu" exercise on the middle of pg. 10: make a menu of your concerns. *What makes you angry? What are you afraid of? What do you want? What hurts? What really changed you? Who really changed you?* Etc.

For Friday Aug 24: Read Lydia Davis "The Old Dictionary" and Matt Bell, "An Index of How Our Family Was Killed" (d2l), do the "pillow book" exercise on pg. 10 of Burroway and make lists of "things" from your life.

Weekly reflection due by 9am

Week 2, Aug 27-31—Character & Dialogue

For Mon Aug 27: Read Burroway pgs. 116-124, Tobias Wolff "Bullet in the Brain" pgs. 147-151.

For Weds Aug 29: Read Burroway pgs. 73-82. Go to a public place with a lot of activity. This can be a store, a park, a cafeteria or restaurant, etc. Listen to dialogue between people and write down as much as you can in your notebook.

For Fri Aug 31: Read Z.Z. Packer, "Every Tongue Shall Confess" pgs. 100-112.

Weekly reflection due by 9am

Week 3, Sep 3-7—Place and World-Building

Mon Sep 3: Labor Day, no class

For Wed Sep 5: Print out and bring to class a map of a place you know well. This can be the neighborhood you grew up in, a place you remember visiting as a child, etc etc.

For Fri Sep 7: Read Eudora Welty "A Visit of Charity" pgs. 202-206

Weekly reflection due by 9am

Week 4, Sep 10-14—Description, Voice, Metaphor

For Mon Sep 10: Read Burroway pgs. 22-28, Tim O' Brien "The Things They Carried" (d2l)

For Wed Sep 12: Read Burroway pgs. 30-37, write exercise posted to d2l

For Fri Sep 14: Read Gersão, "The Red Fox Fur Coat" pgs. 67-70

Weekly reflection due by 9am

Week 5—Sep 17-21—Time

Mon Sep 17: Read Burroway pgs. 209-2011, excerpt from Barbara Comyns *Our Spoons Came from Woolworths* (d2l) and John Updike "A&P" (d2l). Divide a page from your notebook in half. Write your life story on one half of the page.

Wed Sep 19: Read Jesmyn Ward "Cattle Haul" (d2l) and Steven Millhauser "Getting Closer" (d2l)

Fri Sep 21: Read excerpts from Amis *Time's Arrow* (d2l) and García Márquez *A Hundred Years of Solitude* (d2l)
Weekly reflection due by 9am

Week 6—Sep 24-28—POV

Mon Sep 24: Read Burroway pgs 305-middle of 308, Sandra Cisneros "Eleven" (d2l)

Wed Sep 26: Read Burroway pgs. 301-top of 304 and handout on 3rd person vs 1st person (d2l), Joyce Carol Oates "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" (d2l)

Fri Sep 28: Read excerpt from Adam Johnson, "Johnson on Second-Person Point of View" (d2l) and Lorrie Moore, "How to Become a Writer" (d2l)

Weekly reflection due by 9am

Week 7—Oct 1-5—Plot

Mon Oct 1: Read Burroway pgs. 249-252, Flannery O' Connor "Everything That Rises Must Converge" pgs. 286-298

Wed Oct 3: Read handout on d2l, "Vasilisa the Beautiful" (d2l)

Fri Oct 5: Read Camila Grudova "Hungarian Sprats" (d2l)

Weekly reflection due by 9am

- **Schedule one-on-one meetings**

Unit 2: Workshop

Week 8—Oct 8 & 10—How to Workshop & Beginning of Workshop

Mon Oct 8: Read Burroway pgs. 15-18, handout on d2l, and sample story (d2l). Come to class prepared to workshop this story (you don't have to write a letter to the writer this time, but do take some notes).

Wed Oct 10: Workshoppers 1&2

Week 9—Oct 15-19—Workshop

Mon Oct 15: Workshoppers 3&4

Wed Oct 17: Workshoppers 5&6

Fri Oct 19: Workshoppers 7&8

Week 10—Oct 22-26—Workshop

Mon Oct 22: Workshoppers 9&10

Wed Oct 24: Workshoppers 11&12

Fri Oct 26: Workshoppers 13&14

Week 11—Oct 29-Nov 2—Workshop

Mon Oct 29: Workshoppers 15&16

Wed Oct 31: Workshoppers 17&18

Fri Nov 2: Workshoppers 1&2

Week 12—Nov 5-9—Workshop

Mon Nov 5: Workshoppers 3&4

Wed Nov 7: Workshoppers 5&6

Fri Nov 9: Workshoppers 7&8

Week 13—Nov 12-16—Workshop

Mon Nov 12: Workshoppers 9&10

Wed Nov 14: Workshoppers 11&12

Fri Nov 16: Workshoppers 13&14

Week 14—Mon Nov 19—Fri Nov 23—Thanksgiving Break—no classes

Week 15—Nov 26—30—Workshop

Mon Nov 26: Workshoppers 15&16

Wed Nov 28: Workshoppers 17&18

Fri Nov 30: Overflow/discuss final portfolio

Week 16—Dec 3-7—Revision

Readings TBA

FINAL PORTFOLIO AND ARTIST'S STATEMENT DUE by Tues Dec 11, 5pm