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ENG 3063-001: Intermediate Fiction Writing

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ENG 3063: Intermediate Fiction Writing—3 cr hrs

Coleman 3159 * TR 2pm-3:15 pm

Instructor

Dr. Bess Winter

bwkosinec@eiu.edu

Office: Coleman 3576

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 1pm-2pm, Wednesdays 1pm-3pm

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, workshoping, 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 (out of 1000 points)

Portfolio – 350

- Story revision – 200
- Artist’s statement – 150

Craft Responses—200

Workshop Leadership—150

Participation (includes attendance, participation in class discussion, workshopping, one-on-one meetings)—250

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

If you are experiencing trauma or distress

While writing can be a very personal act, this class is not a therapeutic environment and should not be taken in place of therapy. If you are experiencing personal issues, depression, anxiety, trauma, etc, your best resource is always the EIU Counseling Clinic, 1st floor of the Human Services Building, which takes walk-in appointment requests and can also be reached at 217-581-3413 during the day, and 1-866-567-2400 in case of after-hours emergency. Do not hesitate to take advantage of this resource—it’s yours. As a State of Illinois employee, I’m a Mandated Reporter and must also report incidents of sexual assault or violence to our Title IX Coordinator.

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 Thursday by 9am. Your responses will be 150-300 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.

Workshop Leadership

During Unit 2, you will be responsible for advocating for the work of one of your classmates by serving as workshop leader. As workshop leader, you kick off the first 2-5 minutes of the

discussion by giving us a 30 second summary of the story, advocating for the story's strengths, and raising questions or concerns about the draft.

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 150-300 word 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, by the date specified on our syllabus, via D2L dropbox. 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 on your workshop 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 900-1000-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) should only appear in this workshop if it's used to say something beyond the scope of the genre.** Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Larry McMurry, 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. Slasher fiction is slasher fiction. If you fall into a pattern of writing about gory murders or bank heists in the spirit of a Netflix series, expect me to call you on it and challenge you to expand your horizons.
- 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.**
- 7) **Work submitted for this class MUST be new work, written this semester.** Do not submit the novel you've been working on since middle school, the story that earned you a gold star in high school, or the story you workshoped to great acclaim in Intro to Creative Writing. You will develop as an artist and learn much about craft during your time in this class—therefore, you should use this class to workshop fresh, new pieces that reflect your growing knowledge of the genre.

Course Policies

Attendance & Late Assignments

You are free to take up to five (5) unexplained absences. Further absences may 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>). Four tardies will also amount to a deduction of half a letter grade.

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 per EIU's policy, 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.

**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

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. 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.

Please note that submitting work you have completed/are completing for another class counts as self-plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and will be treated as such unless you get permission from me first. Permission is granted on a case-by-case basis.

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 19-23 – Introduction – Mining your fascinations— What is a short story?

For Thurs 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.

Week 2, Aug 26-30—Character & Dialogue

For Tues Aug 27: Read Burroway pgs. 116-124, Afsheen Farhadi, “Magic Words” (d2l) and Tobias Wolff, “Bullet in the Brain” pgs. 147-151.

For Thurs Aug 29: Read Burroway pgs. 73-82, Z.Z. Packer, “Every Tongue Shall Confess” pgs. 100-112. 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.

Weekly reflection due by 9am

Week 3, Sep 2-6—Place and World-Building

For Tues Sep 3 : Read Burroway pgs. 167-177, and Edward P. Jones “The Store” (d2l). 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 9-13—Description, Voice, Metaphor

For Tues Sep 10: Read Burroway pgs. 22-28, Tim O’ Brien “The Things They Carried” (d2l)

For Thurs Sep 12: Read Burroway pgs. 30-37, Carmen Maria Machado, “The Husband Stitch” (d2l), Joy Williams “Eternally Yours” (d2l)

Weekly reflection due by 9am

Week 5—Sep 16-20—Time

For Tues Sep 17: Read Burroway pgs. 209-211, and Annie Proulx, “Brokeback Mountain” (d2l—give yourself time to read this piece, as it’s long)

For Thurs Sep 19: Read Steven Millhauser “Getting Closer” (d2l) and possibly additional d2l readings TBA.

Weekly reflection due by 9am

Week 6—Sep 23-27—POV

For Tues Sep 24: Read Burroway pgs 305-middle of 308, Sandra Cisneros “Eleven” (d2l), and Jennine Capó-Crucet, “How to Leave Hialeah” (d2l)

For Thurs 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)

Weekly reflection due by 9am

Week 7—Sep 30-Oct 4 —Plot

Tues Oct 1: Read Burroway pgs. 249-252, Flannery O’ Connor “Good Country People” (d2l)

Thurs Oct 3: Read handout on d2l, “Vasilisa the Beautiful” (d2l), Camila Grudova, “Hungarian Sprats” (d2l)

Weekly reflection due by 9am

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

--Round 1 workshop stories due via d2l dropbox by 11:59pm Fri Oct 4—

Unit 2: Workshop

Week 8—Oct 7-11—How to Workshop & Beginning of Workshop

Tues 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).

Thurs Oct 10: Workshoppers 1 & 2

Week 9—Oct 14-18—Workshop

Tues Oct 15: Workshoppers 3 & 4

Thurs Oct 17: Workshoppers 5 & 6

Week 10—Oct 21-25—Workshop

Tues Oct 22: Workshoppers 7 & 8

Thurs Oct 24: Workshoppers 9 & 10

Week 11—Oct 28-Nov 1—Workshop & Craft Special Topics pt. 1

Tues Oct 29: Workshopper 11 & readings TBA

Thurs Oct 31: (tentatively) no class—away at a conference

--Round 2 workshop stories due via d2l dropbox by 11:59pm Fri Nov 1--

Week 12—Nov 4-8—Workshop

Tues Nov 5: Workshoppers 1 & 2

Thurs Nov 7: Workshoppers 3 & 4

Week 13—Nov 11-15—Workshop

Tues Nov 12: Workshoppers 5 & 6

Thurs Nov 14: Workshoppers 7 & 8

Week 14—Nov 18-22—Workshop & Craft Special Topics pt. 2

Tues Nov 19: Workshoppers 9 & 10

Thurs Nov 21: Workshopper 11 & readings TBA

Week 15—Nov 25-29—Thanksgiving Break—No Classes

Week 16—Dec 2-6—Final Portfolio and Revision

Tues Dec 3: Workshop overflow/revision/TBA

Thurs Dec 5: Discuss final portfolio/revision - readings TBA

FINAL PORTFOLIO AND ARTIST'S STATEMENT DUE VIA D2L by Mon Dec 9 at 4:45pm