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## ENG 5020-001: Graduate Workshop in Creative Writing

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*Eastern Illinois University*

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# ENG5020-001: Graduate Workshop in Creative Writing Monday 7:00-9:30pm \* Coleman 3159

## Instructor

Dr. Woody Skinner

[wwskinner@eiu.edu](mailto:wwskinner@eiu.edu)

Office: Coleman 3040

Office Hours: M 10:00-11:00 and 6:00-7:00, W 10:00-11:00, F 10:00-11:00, and by appointment

## Required Texts

- Christopher Castellani, *The Art of Perspective: Who Tells the Story*
- Kelcey Parker Ervick, *Liliane's Balcony: A Novella of Fallingwater*
- William Maxwell, *So Long, See You Tomorrow*
- Jon McGregor, *Reservoir 13*
- Toni Morrison, *Jazz*
- Nelly Reifler, *Elect H. Mouse State Judge*
- Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*
- Nick White, *How to Survive a Summer*

## Course Description

This fiction workshop will foreground the concept of point of view and consider its critical relationship to other principles of craft. You'll read classic and contemporary texts, critique your classmates' pieces, and contribute original fiction to the workshop. Along the way, our discussions will be bolstered by a range of supplementary readings on craft and creativity.

## Assignments & Grading

Workshop Submissions	200 points (100 points X 2)
Workshop Critiques and POV Statements	200 points
Workshop Leadership	100 points
English Studies Conference Participation	100 points
General Participation (discussion, exercises, quizzes, etc.)	200 points
Final Portfolio	200 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

## Workshop Submissions:

Your individual workshop submissions should include one of the following: 1) a single full-length short story (roughly 6-30 pages), 2) a packet of flash fictions (6-15 pages), or 3) a standalone excerpt of a novel or novella (up to 30 pages).

## Workshop Critiques:

In response to your classmates' workshop manuscripts, you will provide line-level/marginal notes and a comprehensive endnote that individually describes and

analyzes the following aspects of craft: plot, character, setting/imagery, point of view, scene vs. summary, diction/style. The note should conclude with an overview that draws connections between these individual craft elements (“Right now the point of view limits our understanding of the character’s motivations.”).

Your feedback should be emailed to the writer and me ([wwskinner@eiu.edu](mailto:wwskinner@eiu.edu)) before each workshop.

### **Point of View Statements:**

Before your own workshop, you’ll submit a point of view statement that describes the style of your narration (the person, tense/timing, psychic distance, etc.) and explains how it serves the other aspects of your craft (plot, character, setting/imagery, point of view, scene vs. summary, diction/style). The statement should also position your narration in relation to the styles employed in our readings and in other published works.

### **Workshop Leadership:**

Each student will be responsible for leading one workshop this semester. You’ll introduce your classmate’s story (or stories) by discussing its aesthetic context (including possible influences), its creative goals, its storyline, and its point of view. Afterwards, you’ll describe the story’s greatest strengths and then conclude your presentation by identifying 2-3 aspects of the piece that you have questions about or that might benefit from further discussion.

### **English Studies Conference Participation:**

All students will be required to participate in the English Studies Conference on April 7; the deadline for conference proposals is Friday, March 20th. More information about the conference can be found at the following web address:

<https://www.eiu.edu/english/conference.php>. If, for one reason or another, you are unable to present, please reach out in advance of the proposal deadline—we’ll make alternative arrangements.

### **Final Portfolio**

At the end of the semester, you will turn in a portfolio that includes revised versions of your workshop submissions. Revisions should be based on workshop feedback, and they should be structural rather than superficial. In other words, successful revisions will include new scenes, characters, perspectives, plot points, etc.

## **Course Policies**

### **Attendance**

It will be very difficult to succeed in this class if you do not attend each week. After two unexcused absences, I will deduct a letter grade for each missed class.

### **Classroom Environment**

Constructive university classrooms require professors and students to respect differences—of background, thought, opinion, and belief. This notion holds special significance in our creative classroom, where you will be asked to routinely engage with

your classmates' perspectives and experiences. Therefore, respect will serve as the guiding principle and bedrock expectation of our work together this semester.

### **Policy on Plagiarism**

Here is the English department's plagiarism policy: "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.

### **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 to make an appointment.

### **D2L**

You will use D2L to view the syllabus, access supplemental readings, and turn in major assignments, so it will be important for you to familiarize yourself with the D2L platform. If, at any time, you have questions about our online resources or encounter a course-specific problem with D2L, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### **Schedule**

The following schedule is tentative; I reserve the right to make adjustments for the benefit of the class.

<b>M, January 13<sup>th</sup></b> Intro to Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Openings: <i>The Art of Perspective</i> and <i>How to Survive a Summer</i></li></ul>
<b>M, January 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Class Canceled: Martin Luther King Jr. Day</b>
<b>M, January 27<sup>th</sup></b> Retrospective First-Person Narration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The Art of Perspective</i></li><li>• <i>How to Survive a Summer</i></li></ul>

<b>M, February 3<sup>rd</sup></b> Retrospective First-Person Narration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Art of Perspective</i></li> <li>• <i>So Long, See You Tomorrow</i></li> <li>• Workshop 1</li> </ul>
<b>M, February 10<sup>th</sup></b> Immediate First-Person (Recent Past and Present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Art of Perspective</i></li> <li>• Short Story Packet (available on D2L)</li> <li>• Workshop 2</li> </ul>
<b>M, February 17<sup>th</sup></b> Third-Person Limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Art of Perspective</i></li> <li>• Short Story Packet (available on D2L)</li> <li>• Workshop 3</li> </ul>
<b>M, February 24<sup>th</sup></b> Third-Person Omniscient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Art of Perspective</i></li> <li>• <i>Reservoir 13</i></li> <li>• Workshop 4</li> </ul>
<b>M, March 2<sup>nd</sup></b> Third-Person Omniscient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Reservoir 13</i></li> <li>• Workshop 5</li> </ul>
<b>M, March 9<sup>th</sup></b> Third-Person Omniscient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>White Teeth</i></li> <li>• Workshop 6</li> </ul>
<b>M, March 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Class Canceled: Spring Break</b>
<b>M, March 23<sup>rd</sup></b> Third-Person Omniscient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>White Teeth</i></li> <li>• Workshop 7</li> </ul>
<b>M, March 30<sup>th</sup></b> Rotating Third	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop 8</li> <li>• Liliane's Balcony</li> </ul>
<b>M, April 6<sup>th</sup></b> Rotating Third	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop 9</li> <li>• Liliane's Balcony</li> </ul>
<b>M, April 13<sup>th</sup></b> Unorthodox Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop 10</li> <li>• <i>Elect H. Mouse State Judge</i></li> </ul>
<b>M, April 20<sup>th</sup></b> Evasive Omniscience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Jazz</i></li> <li>• Workshop 11</li> </ul>
<b>M, April 27<sup>th</sup></b> Evasive Omniscience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Jazz</i></li> <li>• Workshop 12</li> </ul>

**Finals Week, May  
4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>**

- **Portfolio due at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>**