

Fall 8-15-2014

ENG 2007-001: Creative Writing: Fiction

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Markelis, Daiva, "ENG 2007-001: Creative Writing: Fiction" (2014). *Fall 2014*. 108.
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2007-001

ENGLISH 2007, Fall 2014

Creative Writing: Fiction

T/TH 9:30 to 10:45

Coleman Hall 3159

Dr. Daiva Markelis/348-9230/dmmarkelis@eiu.edu

Office: Coleman Hall 3375

**Office Hours: W 12:00 to 2:00, TR 3:15 to 4:30
and by appointment**

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, a method widely used in writing courses of all kinds.

Catalog Description of the Course

An introduction to the reading and writing of fiction with class time devoted to various principles of the genre through writing exercises and workshop discussion.

Prerequisite: ENG 1002G.

Credits: 3

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 Beautiful Wishes of Ugly Men by Adam Prince

Writing Fiction (8th edition) by Janet Burroway

Notebook for in-class writing

Folder for typed stories

Requirements

1. Read the assigned material by the assigned date and participate in class discussions and occasional in-class writing exercises. There may also be a few homework assignments.
2. Participate in workshops: 1) Submit **two** 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 your stories, including revisions. Your portfolio will also include 1) the short short story written the first week of class; 2) at least three in-class writing pieces you've revised and typed up.

Grade Breakdown

Writing: 70%

Participation: 20%

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 2-4 typed paragraphs for every story we workshop.

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.

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>) 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.)** In class you read the first 2-3 paragraphs of your story out loud. Class members have a few minutes to look over their typed comments. 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.

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.

NOTE: When you turn in a workshopped essay to me, please also submit all of the copies marked up by your fellow classmates as well as their typed up comments. Written feedback on essays counts as participation.

CLASS SCHEDULE

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|----|----|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| #1 | T | 08/25 | Introduction/In-class writing |
| | TH | 08/27 | <i>Homework for Tuesday:</i> read the following VERY short stories by Adam Prince:
1) No Women Tonight
2) Six Months In, Another Kind of Undressing
3) Kink
ALSO: Write your own VERY short story—no longer than two pages
BRING THREE copies to class |
| #2 | T | 09/02 | Discussion of short stories |
| | TH | 09/04 | <i>Homework for Thursday:</i> read pages 1-51 in Burroway
Discussion of Burroway
<i>Homework for Tuesday:</i> read Big Wheels for Adults, Action Figure, and Tranquility in the Prince book |
| #3 | T | 09/09 | Discussion of Prince stories |
| | TH | 09/11 | <i>Homework for Thursday:</i> read 73 to 89 in Burroway
Read <i>Everything that Rises Must Converge</i> by Flannery O'Connor on page 286
Discussion of Burroway and O'Connor
<i>Homework for Tuesday:</i> read 116 to 138 in Burroway
Read <i>Bullet in the Brain</i> by Tobias Wolff on 147
Read <i>My Kid's Dog</i> by Ron Hansen on 282 |
| #4 | T | 09/16 | Discussion of Burroway. Discuss of Wolff and Hansen stories |
| | TH | 09/18 | In-class writing |
| #5 | T | 09/23 | Workshop |
| | TH | 09/25 | Workshop |
| #6 | T | 09/30 | Workshop |
| | TH | 10/02 | Workshop |
| #7 | T | 10/07 | Workshop |
| | TH | 10/09 | Workshop |
| #8 | T | 10/14 | Workshop |
| | TH | 10/16 | Workshop |
| #9 | T | 10/21 | Workshop |
| | TH | 10/23 | <i>Homework for Thursday:</i> read pages 300 to 316 in Burroway
Read <i>Who's Irish</i> by Gish Jen on 323
Read <i>Reply All</i> by Robin Hemley on 332
Discuss Burroway. Discuss Jen and Hemley stories |

			<i>Homework for Tuesday:</i> Read 164- 180 in Burroway Read <i>A Visit of Charity</i> by Eudora Welty on 202
	TH	10/30	TBA/ I will be out of town
#11	T	11/04	Discuss of Burroway. Discussion of Welty story
		11/06	Workshop
#12	T	11/11	Workshop
	TH	11/13	Workshop
#13	T	11/18	Workshop
	TH	11/20	Workshop

THANKSGIVING BREAK WEEK

#14	T	12/02	Workshop
	TH	12/04	Workshop
#15	T	12/09	Workshop
	TH	12/11	Workshop

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 Wednesday, December 17th at 5PM, in my office

NO FINAL EXAM in this class