Short Story Workshop
Dr. Janelle Adsit

Course Information
Office Hours: XX:XX – XX:XX
Contact Information
Office Location: XXX

Course Description
In this course, we’ll survey a range of perspectives on short fiction by reading short stories (and “short short” stories) alongside authors’ statements about the genre. As a means of analysis, you will be asked to imitate, parody, and revise the stories that we’ll read and discuss, in order to broaden your own writerly repertoire. This is a workshop course, and your writing will be central to our discussions. We will learn from each other’s approaches to the craft of fiction as we learn from published authors’ work as well.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, you will be able...
• To experience writing as a meaning-making activity.
• To continue the habit of writing, relying on a variety of methods, processes, craft techniques, and heuristics for generating and revising texts.
• To continue the habit of reading, finding an ever-increasing range of material to borrow and imitate.
• To draw upon a variety sources in your writing; to not only “write what you know” but also “write to know.”
• To read literature as a practitioner; to read closely and employ vocabulary that creative writers use to talk about craft.
• To recognize form as inextricable from content; to put the “message in the means.”
• To offer multiple definitions of “genre” and consider how genre may be used as a tool for writers and readers.
• To identify rhetorical and craft choices in your writing and to consider their effects.
• To write with audience awareness.
• To analyze some of the controversies associated with the craft of fiction writing, including the relationship between art and politics and questions of form and structure.
• To gain a sense of the history of the essay.
• To foster creative thinking, using studies in creativity.
• To consider options for circulating work and changing publication practices.
• To increase your rhetorical, artistic, and cultural sensitivity and versatility.

Required Textbooks
3. Course packet (pdfs will be posted on Blackboard/Canvas/Moodle)
Course Policies and Expectations (Attendance, Plagiarism, Community Expectations, etc.)

See separate sheet.

Grading

Your grade will be determined by the cumulative points earned on the following assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Major Assignment / Project</th>
<th>% of Total Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Version of a Published Story</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Two Short-Short Stories, Two Approaches to Plot and Structure</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Revisions to Unit 2 Stories</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Post-Workshop Revision with Critical Preface</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Daily Participation (Attendance, Discussion &amp; Workshop Contributions)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Course Overview

The following provides an overview of the organization of the course. A day-by-day schedule with assignment due dates will be provided at the beginning of each unit. All assignments will include a detailed checklist of criteria that will be used in evaluating your work.

UNIT 1: CRAFT COMPARISONS

Class Time: Exercises

- Profile Assignment: Who Are You as a Writer?
- Reflection: What Are Your Writing Goals? What Are Your Goals for This Course?
- Agreements: What Kind of Writing Community Do You Want?
- Identifying Preconceptions
- Sharing Your Favorite Short Stories
- Parodies and Imitations: How and Why They Work

Readings

- “Favorite Short Stories”: Texts Assigned by Your Colleagues
- Anton Chekhov, “The Lady with the Little Dog” (course packet).
- Beth Lordan, “The Man with the Lapdog” (course packet).

Major Assignments

- **New Version of a Story (15% of the final grade):** Choose a published piece of writing and write a new version that imitates, parodies, or complements the original. You can decide to write a revision of the story that you shared as your favorite. Or choose to write in response to one of your peers’ favorite stories. Or introduce us to another story that we haven’t yet considered through your approach to this assignment.

UNIT 2: DIVERSE APPROACHES TO PLOT AND STRUCTURE

Class Time: Exercises

- Story Starts: Finding How To Begin
- Developing an Initial Draft That You Can Iterate On
- Visual Representations of Plot
• Mapping Story Structure as Reading Strategy
• Revising Your Story to Follow Burroway’s Recommendations
• Revising Your Story to Imitate Wolff
• Revising Your Story: Oral Storytelling
• Revising Your Story to Imitate Munro
• Considering Melodrama
• Radical Revisions: Inventive Forms
• Revision Exercise: Charting Your Stories’ Plot and Structure
• Partner Workshops of Drafts
• Comparisons Across Unit 2 Readings

Readings
• Anton Chekhov, “The Short Story” (course packet).
• Janet Burroway, Chapter on Plot (course packet).
• “Poe on Short Fiction” (course packet).
• Tobias Wolff, “Bullet in the Brain” (in Sedaris).
• Leslie Marmon Silko, “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective” (course packet).
• Leslie Marmon Silko, “Yellow Woman” (course packet).
• Alice Munro, “What Is Real” (course packet).
• Alice Munro, “Half a Grapefruit” (in Sedaris).
• Charles Baxter, “Counterpointed Characterization” (in Burning).
• Alice Walker, “Everyday Use” (course packet).
• Joyce Carol Oates, “The Girl with the Blackened Eye” (in Sedaris).
• Jincy Willett, “Best of Betty” (in Sedaris).
• Margaret Atwood, “Happy Endings” (course packet).

Major Assignments
• Two Short-Short Stories, Two Approaches to Plot and Structure (15% of the final grade): Choose two of the revisions that we developed in class during Unit 2 to revise and develop for this assignment. Create two polished drafts that demonstrate an ability to approach plot and structure in two different ways. The differences between the plot/structure of the two stories should be immediately apparent to the reader.

UNIT 3: REVISING POINT-OF-VIEW, CHARACTERIZATION AND THEME

Class Time: Exercises
• Character as Action: Plot and Character Are Inseparable
• Revising Your Unit 2 Stories: Iceberg Approach Concision Exercise
• Story Prompt: Breaking Stereotypes
• In-Class Writing: Character Inventory
• In-Class Writing: Using All of Burroway’s Characterization Strategies
• Writing With and Against Epiphanies
• Politicized Stories
• Rewriting Exercise: Changing the Point-of-View Is More than Changing Pronouns
• Revision Exercise: Point-of-View Consistency
• Comparisons Across Unit 3 Readings
Readings
• Raymond Carver, “On Writing” (course packet).
• Raymond Carver, “Errand” (course packet).
• Ernest Hemingway, “Big Two-Hearted River, Parts I & II” (course packet).
• Ernest Hemingway, pp. 1-3 of “The Art of the Short Story” (course packet).
• Joanna Russ, excerpt from The Female Man (in course packet).
• Janet Burroway, Characterization, Parts I and II (in course packet).
• Celeste Ng, “B&B” (in course packet).
• Adam Johnson, “Trauma Plate” (in course packet).
• Nadine Gordimer, “When Art Meets Politics” (in course packet).
• Janet Burroway, Chapter on Theme (in course packet).
• James Alan McPherson, “Elbow Room” (in course packet).
• Charles Baxter, “Against Epiphanies” (in Burning).
• Flannery O’Connor, “Writing Short Stories” (in course packet).
• Flannery O’Connor, “Good Country People” (in course packet).

Major Assignments
• Revisions to Unit 2 Stories (15% of the final grade): Revise both of the stories you completed in Unit 2, attending to issues of characterization, theme, point-of-view, and other craft principles we’ve discussed and practiced in class. You’ll choose one of these stories to submit for workshop in Unit 4.

UNIT 4: WORKSHOPS AND REVISION

Class Time: Exercises
• Collaborative Brainstorm: What Makes for a Productive Workshop?
• Workshops: Identifying Craft Choices and Examining Alternatives
• Comparison of Craft Choices in Essays Submitted for Workshop
• Submitting Your Work for Publication: A Brief Tutorial on Cover Letters, Literary & Little Journals, and Other Considerations
• Reading Event / Celebration of Work

Readings
• Your Colleagues’ Writing.

Major Assignments
• Post-Workshop Revision with Critical Preface (25% of final grade): You’ll submit for workshop one of the stories you’ve composed this semester. Then, after the workshop, you’ll continue to revise, develop, and extend your story to prepare it for final submission. Make use of the feedback you received in workshop to complete a global revision of the story you submitted for workshop. Submit a polished, publication-ready version of your story as a final assignment. Preface your polished text with a reflective story that describes your revision process, and answer all of the following questions: How did you decide what elements of your manuscript to revise? What risks and possibilities did you weigh as you made your craft choices? How did you use the process techniques that we have discussed and practiced in class this semester as you revised your manuscript? Your grade will be based primarily on the effort put forward in your revisions and the thinking you demonstrate in your preface; be sure that both are thorough and substantive.