

## **CRW 1101: Fiction Writing: Section 1649, Fall 2017**

Instructor: Marsha Sasmor

Wednesdays, Periods 9-11 (4:05-7:05pm); CBD 0210

Office: TBD and by appointment

Office Hours: TBD

Email: [msasmor@ufl.edu](mailto:msasmor@ufl.edu)

### **Required Texts:**

*Textbooks:*

Jerome Stern, *Making Shapely Fiction* (Available on Canvas)

*Other Texts:*

Coursepack (Available on Canvas)

### **Course Overview and Objectives:**

That you leave it writing better than when you entered it. This course provides introductory instruction in fiction writing and, since careful and reflective reading is the best way to learn how to write, an introductory approach to the study of literature. We will write and read with attention to how stories work—structurally, stylistically, and thematically.

We will devote the first half of the semester to a discussion of the elements of fiction. For the second half of the semester we will conduct a traditional fiction workshop. We will discuss the requirements of the workshop in class, and many can be found later in the syllabus, but essentially workshop is a format in which we apply the same critical skills to our own work that we've learned to apply to the assigned readings.

### **General Education Objectives:**

- This course confers General Education credit for Composition (C), and also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

### **General Education Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

*Please note:*

Some of the texts that we will read will have content that some students may find offensive or unsettling. If you do not wish to encounter such content, do not take this course.

### **Course Format:**

**Reading:** Short stories, chapters from text.

**Writing:** 6,000 words of critical response, one story and one revision.

**Discussion:** Critiquing the texts, essays, stories, and the work of your peers.

### **Graded Assignments and Other Course Components:**

#### **Class Participation: 20% (200 points)**

Doing the reading is only half of the assignment. In-class discussion of the material is the other half.

#### **Critical Responses: 60% (600 points)**

Choose one literary term listed at the end of this syllabus and apply an analysis of that concept to the reading for the week. If we have more than one reading that week, you are only required to write a response for one of them. Each response should be 500-600 words (no more, no less). By the end of the semester, this will account for 6,000 words of critical analyses. The structure and content of the critical analyses will be taught in class, both explicitly and organically as a result of our classroom discussions about the stories we read. The analyses will be evaluated based on the following criteria: demonstrated reading of the stories/chapters; critical thinking; depth of analysis; engagement with the discussion of craft. Your analytical and critical skills are expected to improve over the course of the semester, both through practice and in response to my feedback.

My goal is that your critical responses achieve the following:

1. Make a claim about our reading based on Stern's ideas or those we discussed in class. This claim should attempt to get at the function or effect of the story through a discussion of craft (choices the author has made in the telling of the story).
2. Provide textual support for your claim from the story being discussed. Cite the specific words in the text of the stories that made you think what you thought and that support and prove your point.
3. Provide analysis of your claim and the text. Answer the question "so what?" What does this mean within the context of the work as a whole? How does this section contribute to the author's overall intent?

(Please avoid "rating" the stories with remarks of taste, such as "I hated this" or "I liked this." Your ability to have a pointed discussion about fiction will develop over the semester.)

### **Short Stories: 20% (200 points)**

One short story, one revision: each is worth 100 points. Your stories will be evaluated based on the same criteria as your writing exercises. I am looking for clarity, attention to language, and a developing understanding of the building blocks of fiction writing as discussed in Stern's text and during class. **Manuscripts must be delivered to the class *the week before they are to be workshopped*.** There is no late delivery. There is no switching. No last-minute writing. If you are unable to turn in the story on time, an entire letter grade will be deducted from your final grade. Please bring enough copies for everyone.

On workshop days it is expected that you have read each piece carefully *at least once*, and that you have spent time formulating responses to it. Write your responses on the hard copy of the story to return to your peer.

This writing workshop will be a safe place where everyone should feel encouraged and welcome to share their thoughts—the participation of those who fail to respect their peers' thoughts/feelings will be graded accordingly. Do not discuss your peers' work outside of class unless it is with the concerning party.

### **Formatting:**

Double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman font. Pages must be numbered. One staple goes in the upper-left-hand corner. Title everything.

### **Attendance:**

You are allowed one absence without explanation, but do not miss the day you are going to be workshopped. Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, are exempted from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade for that story. Each absence after the first will lower your final grade a full letter grade, and you will automatically fail the class if you miss more than two class periods. Arriving late twice to class will be counted as an absence.

### **Class Policies:**

#### **Classroom Behavior:**

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal—and accordingly absence—from the class.

#### **Cell Phones:**

Cell phones are not allowed in class. You may not text in class. You may not have your phone

out on your desk during class. Please put your phone away.

**Laptops, Etc.:**

Laptops, iPads etc. are not allowed in class (see cell phone policy above). If you have a special reason you must use a laptop or an iPad, please let me know before the course begins.

**Notes:**

If you have missed class, it is your responsibility to catch up by getting notes from a classmate. Please do not email me to ask if you missed anything important.

This syllabus is subject to change at any time.

**Additional Information:**

**Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

**Student disability services:**

Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.

**Grading:**

For information on UF Grading policies, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

**Grade Appeals:**

In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

**Course Evaluations:**

Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>

**UF Reading and Writing Center:**

The Reading and Writing Center at the University of Florida is an excellent resource for improving reading comprehension and writing skills. For more information, see: <http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/>

**Harassment:**

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

**Schedule of Assignments:**

Wk	Day	Agenda / Reading Material	Due
1	8/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Review syllabus</li> <li>• Explain workshop procedure</li> <li>• Discuss critical response guidelines / expectations</li> </ul>	
2	8/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign workshop dates</li> <li>• <i>Making Shapely Fiction (MSF)</i>—Introduction; Part III p79-138</li> <li>• Chekhov—“The Lady with the Little Dog”; “Gooseberries”</li> </ul>	CR1
3	9/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>MSF</i>—Part III, p139-198</li> <li>• James Joyce—“The Dead”</li> </ul>	CR2
4	9/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>MSF</i>—Part III, p199-255</li> <li>• Franz Kafka—“The Hunger Artist”; “A Country Doctor”</li> </ul>	CR3
5	9/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>MSF</i>—Part II</li> <li>• Flannery O’Connor—“A Good Man is Hard to Find”; “Good Country People”</li> </ul>	CR4; stories for next week’s workshop
6	9/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baldwin—“Sonny’s Blues”; “This Morning, This Evening, So Soon”</li> <li>• Workshop #1</li> </ul>	CR5; workshop stories
7	10/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bernard Malamud—“The Girl of My Dreams”; “The Magic Barrel”</li> <li>• Workshop #2</li> </ul>	CR6; workshop stories
8	10/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jamaica Kincaid—“Girl”</li> <li>• Richard Yates—“A Natural Girl”; “The Best of Everything”</li> <li>• Workshop #3</li> </ul>	CR7; workshop stories
9	10/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amy Hempel—“In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried”; “The Most Girl Part of You”</li> <li>• Workshop #4</li> </ul>	CR8; workshop stories
10	10/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lorrie Moore—“How to Talk to Your Mother (Notes)”; “Community Life”</li> <li>• Workshop #5</li> </ul>	CR9; workshop stories
11	11/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary Gaitskill—“Connection”; “Heaven”</li> <li>• Workshop #6</li> </ul>	CR10; workshop stories
12	11/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deborah Eisenberg—“Transactions in a Foreign Currency”</li> <li>• Grace Paley—“Wants”</li> <li>• Workshop #7</li> </ul>	CR11; workshop stories
13	11/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denis Johnson—“Car Crash While Hitchhiking”; “Emergency”</li> <li>• Workshop #8</li> </ul>	CR12; workshop stories
14	11/22	<b>No class, Thanksgiving Holiday</b>	
15	11/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• George Saunders—“Sea Oak”</li> <li>• Workshop #9</li> </ul>	Workshop stories

16	12/6	Last class! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junot Diaz—"The Cheater's Guide to Love"</li> <li>• Workshop #10</li> </ul>	
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**Note:** Your revisions will be due on 12/8 (at the end of the last week of class)

### **List of Some Terms for Critical Responses**

Accuracy  
 Ambiguity  
 Anti-Hero  
 Atmosphere  
 Beginnings  
 Character  
 Cliche  
 Convention  
 Crisis  
 Description  
 Dialogue  
 Diction  
 Endings  
 Epiphany  
 Exposition  
 Flashback  
 Frame Story  
 Freytag's Pyramid  
 Hero  
 Imagery  
 Imagination  
 Immediacy  
 Interior Monologue  
 Intrigant  
 Irony  
 Metaphor and Simile  
 Mise-En-Scene  
 Motif  
 Names  
 Narrative  
 Narrator  
 Negative Positive Knowledge  
 Objective Correlative  
 Plot  
 Point of View  
 Position  
 Premise

Psychic Distance  
Realism  
Resolution  
Revision  
Scene  
Sentimentality  
Short Story  
Showing and Telling  
Stereotype  
Style  
Subtlety  
Suspense  
Suspension of Disbelief  
Symbolism  
Tension  
Texture  
Transitions  
Trust Your Material  
Voice  
Zigzag

*Rubric of Evaluation for Critical Responses*

**A:** Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops original, sophisticated ideas. Has exceptionally well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

**B:** Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops original, sophisticated ideas. Has well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

**C:** Contains some analysis of the texts and develops some original ideas about them. Has adequately well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), adequately-supported claims, and some appropriate stylistic elements.

**D:** Contains minimal analysis of the texts. May lack well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, and/or a persuasive organizational structure. Fails to adequately support its claims and/or use appropriate stylistic elements.

**E:** Lacks analysis of the text, and therefore fails to demonstrate reading and/or comprehension.