

CRW 2100-1656

Fiction Writing

W 9-11

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“Why does the writer write? The writer writes to serve — hopelessly he writes in the hope that he might serve — not himself and not others, but that great cold elemental grace which knows us.”

--Joy Williams

Course Description:

I'm Jacob Guajardo, a graduate student in the MFA program. I received my BA in writing from Grand Valley State University, in Allendale, Michigan. I'm a native Michigander, born and raised in St. Louis. I *love* writing! By the end of the course, I'm hoping you will, too! My interests include, but are not limited to: Game of Thrones, fragrances, shoes, online shopping, hiking for short periods of time, dancing (also for short periods of time), Evanescence, Tori Amos, P J Harvey, Amanda Palmer, Fiona Apple, Marvel Comics, Domino's Pizza, and 90's anime.

This course will balance a workshop with a discussion of the elements of fiction. The theme of the class is “How did they do it?” We will be reading two collections of short stories by Karen Russell and Brad Watson respectively. Each story we discuss will prompt the question, how did they do it? We will discuss two or three stories a week. You will receive critical practice and a foundation for later courses in the series. Because this course serves as a form of freshman composition, you will exit the course able to write coherent passages that link logically and are free of usage errors. You will leave this course able to write prose well at the college level. My goal as your instructor is to train you to write well, regardless of your decision to continue in the creative-writing program.

For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/liberalarts/alc/english.aspx> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

Guidelines for University of Florida Writing Requirement

You will be writing assignments that count toward the University Writing Requirement. These assignments should contain extended analysis and develop original, sophisticated ideas, not merely present hastily written or cursory thoughts. UF Writing Requirement assignments include well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis or hypothesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., introduction, body, conclusion; introduction, methods, results, discussion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

Your reading list for the semester includes:

- ***Making Shapely Fiction*** by Jerome Stern
- ***Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*** by Karen Russell
- ***Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives*** by Brad Watson
- ***The Book of Three*** by Lloyd Alexander
- ***The Elements of Style*** by Strunk and White (recommended, not required)
- Miscellaneous Readings

Books will be available through the University of Florida bookstore and the text adoption website, and they are **required**. Remember, you can find previous editions very cheap on Amazon or ABE. The texts I've required are inexpensive and, importantly, *good!*

Class Requirements:

Reading: Short stories, chapters from ***Making Shapely Fiction***, and essays addressing craft.

Writing: In-class exercises/quizzes, 6,000 words of critical response, two stories (length TBD).

Critique: You will critique the texts, essays, and stories we read, and your peers' work.

Absence and tardiness policies:

You will have two excused absences; do not waste them. Attendance in this class is mandatory. Student athletes and band members will be excused for athletic events, but must make up the work they missed. You need to give me your schedules ahead of time. If you have an instance of serious injury and can provide documentation, these will be excused on a case by case basis.

Latecomers receive partial absences, and must see me after class so I know you attended.

Basically, don't miss class.

Graded Assignments and Other Course Components

Class Participation: (25 points)

Completing your assigned reading is only half of the assignment. In-class discussion of the material will be the other half. You must contribute to the class discussion. If you are shy, write down a topic for conversation on a notecard and hand it to me at the beginning of class. I will bring it up. Seriously. Although, I may ask you to elaborate because the notecard method is simply a trick!

On workshop days it is expected that you will come to class having read each piece carefully at least once. It is often helpful to read once without making any editorial marks and, on your second read, begin to make marginal notes.

Your thoughts are welcome and my workshop is a safe space. If you disagree with something, let's have a conversation and not an argument!

If you miss class, you lose participation points.

Critical Essays: (200 points)

I will teach the structure and content of these critical analyses both explicitly and organically as a result of our classroom discussions. I will evaluate the analyses 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 feedback.

You will turn your Critical Essays on Canvas

My goals for your critical responses are as follows:

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 source of the author's achievement 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. Point to 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." We will work during the semester to develop your ability to talk about fiction, but

please keep in mind that these are published, professional writers, meaning whether you enjoyed their writing or not, they probably have something to teach you about the practice and art of the written word.)

Presentations: (50 points)

During the course of this semester, you will sign up to lead the class discussion about one of the stories we have read for that corresponding week. I will pass out a sign-up sheet during the second week of class. You must select three words from the glossary section of *Making Shapely Fiction* and use those words to discuss that week's story. For

Part 1 of the assignment: You must select three words from the glossary section of *Making Shapely Fiction* and use those words to discuss that week's story. For

For example: Amy Hempel's "In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried" uses atmosphere and flashback to shape its characters. (The terms here are atmosphere, flashback, and character.)

Basically, you are presenting your Critical Response. You may even read aloud from your Critical Response for that week's story if you wish.

Part 2 of the assignment: Come prepared with three questions to ask your peers about the story. These questions should lead us to a better understanding of the story.

For example: Why does the Point of View (POV) in "In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried" change?

Journal Entries: (25 points)

Journal entries will be brief (200-300 words). They are meant to reflect on your creative process, our weekly readings, and daily minutia. These are low-stress exercises in free-writing. You will turn these journal entries in weekly. I will use them to steer our discussions in the appropriate direction.

Short Stories: (25 points each)

I will evaluate your stories based on the same criteria as your writing exercises. I will be looking for clarity, attention to language, and a developing understanding of the building blocks of fiction. We will sign up for a Workshop Schedule in class. Manuscripts must be delivered **the week before** they are to be workshopped. **No excuses.** If you do not submit a story on time you will not be workshopped. Deadlines are very important. Print a copy of each story and make marginal notes. **Do not** make notes in Word, and **do not** e-mail your comments. Bring a hard copy of the story, with marginal comments the day of the workshop. In addition, you will fill out a Workshop Worksheet to guide your discussion of the piece.

Formatting:

Each assignment will be due at the beginning of class and must be double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman (a font with a serif is preferred) font. Number your pages. Staple your pages. I will not accept anything which is not stapled. There should be a title, a good title! If handwritten, the handwriting must be legible and in either a No. 2 pencil or ink that is blue or black.

Class Policies:

Classroom Behavior:

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. Any disrespectful behavior that I witness or that is reported will result in dismissal from the class. I do not tolerate hate speech of any kind. I do not tolerate bullying.

Cell Phones:

Don't text in class. If I see you with your phone out during class I will kindly tell you to put it away the first time. The second time I may not be as nice. However, I'm hip, I'm cool, I know that people don't go anywhere without their phones anymore. I'll have my phone on me, and you'll probably see me checking my Snapchat before and after class. Just be respectful of my time and yours! I may have you use your phones to complete writing assignments from time to time.

Laptops, etc.:

Laptops are where I draw the line. Don't have them out unless I instruct you to have them out. They are *giant* distractions. Of course, if there is a special reason you need to use a laptop or an iPad, please let me know before the course begins and I will accommodate you!

Additional Information:

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

Plagiarism.

A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.

2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

(University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 8 July 2011)

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came.

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Statement of Writing requirement (WR):

This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/gordon.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/>

Student Disability Services:

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

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/>

Grading:

A: 94-100; A-: 90-93

B+: 87-89; B: 84-86; B-: 80-83

C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 60-62

E: 0-59

UF has recently instituted minus grades. As a result, letter grades now have different grade point equivalencies. For more information, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Final grade appeals

You may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant.<cblount@ufl.edu>

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Schedule:

Here is a run-down of daily reading assignments, writing activities, and significant due dates.

	<u>Readings and Classwork</u>	<u>Homework Due</u>
	<u>Week 1</u>	
8/23	– Introductions HW: Listen to Joy Williams’ “Why I Write.”	Write and record a five-minute podcast titled “Why I Write.” (500 words)

	<u>Week 2</u>	
8/30	<p>-Discuss “Why I Write” and do in-class writing activity.</p> <p>HW: Read Making Shapely Fiction (MSF) Part II (pages 61-76)</p>	Due: “Why I Write” podcast
	<u>Week 3</u>	
9/6	<p>-Discuss MSF Part II</p> <p>In-class activity – write an example of a “don’t.”</p> <p>HW: Read MSF Part 1 (Façade, Juggling, Trauma)</p> <p>Read “A Father’s Story” by Andre Debus</p> <p>Write Essay 1 (800 words) answering the following question: “Using Making Shapely Fiction’s glossary, pick three terms and discuss ‘A Father’s Story’”</p>	Due: Story 1
	<u>Week 4</u>	-
9/13	<p>Discuss “A Father’s Story” by Andre Debus</p> <p>Presentations</p> <p>HW: Read “Ava Wrestles the Alligator” and “Haunting Olivia” by Karen Russell</p> <p>Write Essay 2 (800 words) answering the following question: “Using Making Shapely Fiction’s glossary, pick three terms and discuss either ‘Ava Wrestles the Alligator’ or ‘Haunting Olivia.’ Answer the question, How did she do it?”</p>	Due: Essay 1
	<u>Week 5</u>	
9/20	<p>Discuss “Ava” and “Haunting Olivia”</p> <p>Presentations</p>	<p>Due: Essay 2</p> <p>Due: Story 2</p>

HW: Read "Z.Z.'s Sleep-Away Camp for Disordered Dreamers" and "*from Children's Reminiscences of the Westward Migration*" by Karen Russell

Write Essay 3 (800 words) answering the following question: "Using Making Shapely Fiction's glossary, pick three terms and discuss either stories from this week. Answer the question, How did she do it?"

Workshop 1 (Groups)

Week 6

Discussion

Presentation

Workshop 1 (Round 1)

9/27 HW: Read "Accident Brief, Occurrence #00/422" and "The Star-Gazer's Log of Summer-Time Crime" by Karen Russell **Due: Essay 3**

Write Essay 4 (800 words) answering the following question: "Using Making Shapely Fiction's glossary, pick three terms and discuss either stories from this week. Answer the question, How did she do it?"

Week 7

Discussion

10/4 Presentation **Due: Essay 4**

Workshop 2 (Round 1)

HW: Read "The Mission" by Joy Williams

Week 8

10/11 Discuss

Presentation -

Workshop 3 (Round 1)

HW: Read "Brokeback Mountain" by Annie Proulx

Week 9

Presentation

Workshop 4 (Round 1)

HW: Read "Vacuum" and "The Misses Moses" by Brad Watson

10/18

Write Essay 5 (800 words) answering the following question: "Using Making Shapely Fiction's glossary, pick three terms and discuss either stories from this week. Answer the question, How did he do it?"

Week 10

Workshop 5 (Round 1)

HW: Read "Terrible Argument" and "Visitation" by Brad Watson

10/25

Write Essay 6 (800 words) answering the following question: "Using Making Shapely Fiction's glossary, pick three terms and discuss either stories from this week. Answer the question, How did he do it?"

Due: Essay 5

Due: Story 3

Week 11

Workshop 1 (Round 2)

HW: Read "Fallen Nellie" and "Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives" by Brad Watson

11/1

Write Essay 7 (800 words) answering the following question: "Using Making Shapely Fiction's glossary, pick three terms and discuss either stories from this week. Answer the question, How did he do it?"

Due: Essay 6

Week 12

11/8 Workshop 2 (Round 2) **Due: Essay 7**
HW: Read Chapters 1-5 from *The Book of Three*

Week 13

11/15 Workshop 3 (Round 2)
HW: Read Chapters 6-10 from *The Book of Three*

Week 14

11/22 Workshop 4 (Round 2)
HW: Read Chapters 11-15 from *The Book of Three* -

Week 15

11/29 Workshop 5 (Round 2)
HW: Read Chapters 16-20 from *The Book of Three*

Week 16

12/6 - **Due: Final Paper**

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.

“Part of my job as a teacher is first to try to help my students determine what is worth writing and what is not. If they want to write science fiction or detective stories, that’s fine with me; I just want to make sure they know what they are doing, to make sure they realize they are not writing the kind of fiction that can crush the heart with a living memory.”

--Harry Crews