

# ENGLISH 4381

## ADVANCED CREATIVE WRITING: FICTION

Fall 2017  
2:00 PM – 3:20 PM, MW  
Evans 315

Dr. Olivia Clare

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**Office Hours:** MW 11 AM – 12:30 PM  
& by appointment

### COURSE OVERVIEW

You will be reading work by a variety of writers, and you will be writing your own original stories. Together as a community of writers you will share writing exercises and drafts, discuss the techniques employed in assigned readings, and workshop one another's work. I ask that you treat writing as a complex practice, much like musicians treat music. Please be willing to practice as such—with discipline, full engagement, willingness, and persistence.

We will think about what it means to be members of a *community of writers*. Our community is our workshop—yes. But we'll also think about what it means to be members of the larger community of writers around the world.

In addition to workshop, we will spend time discussing craft topics and assigned readings. Craft topics will include: character, dialogue, imagery, setting, point of view, scene, structure, style, the paragraph, and the sentence.

Since this is an advanced workshop, I'll assume that you all have experience with critiquing one another's work. If this is not the case, or if you'd like to talk more about the workshop setting, please don't hesitate to ask, either in class or in office hours.

## TEXTS/COURSE MATERIALS

*Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft, Ninth Edition*, Janet Burroway, Elizabeth Stuckey-French, and Ned Stuckey-French  
*Hunger*, Lan Samantha Chang

Handouts to be distributed in class

Stories by: Kirstin Valdez Quade, Cynthia Ozick, Junot Díaz, Denis Johnson, John Cheever, Richard Ford, Yannick Murphy, ZZ Packer, Mark Richard, Margaret Atwood, James Salter, and more

Writers on Writing: Marlon James, Henry James, Junot Díaz, Marilynne Robinson  
Here and there, some poems by: Claudia Rankine, Tracy K. Smith, Li-Young Lee

Copies of your stories to distribute for workshop

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Attendance and Participation (15%)

**Attendance.** Attendance is not only required, but it's imperative for doing well in this course. If you have more than three absences you will have your final course grade lowered by a letter grade. For each subsequent absence, your grade will be lowered by an additional letter grade. Since I do not distinguish between "excused" or "unexcused" absences, there is no need to show me doctor's notes. Regular attendance also means coming to class on time and not leaving early. Please note that three late arrivals or early departures equal one absence.

If an ongoing emergency or issue is affecting your attendance or work, you should explain the situation to me and submit documentation to the Dean of Students office: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/documents/AbsenceRequest.pdf>.

If you miss a class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed from a classmate.

**Important: When you come to class, be sure to turn off your phone.**

**Participation.** Because of the nature of the workshop, I cannot stress to you enough how important it is that you attend class. Please be alert and ready to engage. I will expect you to act with respect and tolerance towards your peers, and to offer disagreement and criticism constructively.

LAPTOP POLICY: You are welcome to use your laptop for in-class writing, unless the exercise necessitates writing by hand. However, unless we are doing an in-class writing assignment, your laptops should be off your desk during all other discussions, workshops, and activities.

### **Stories for Workshop (25%)**

You will submit two stories for workshop over the course of the semester. Stories need to be photocopied for the class. You will turn these in the class session before your workshop. (Workshop schedule TBA.)

Please plan for this well in advance! Remember that laptops, printers, and photocopiers are not always reliable. Give yourself plenty of time to prepare your printed copies for workshop.

Note: You may not turn in a story you've turned in for another class.

### **Assigned Readings and Writing Exercises (20%)**

For your assigned readings, I'm going to ask that you write a weekly reading response. You will turn these in on Blackboard. We'll talk more about my expectations for these reading responses in class.

Most weeks, you will complete an exercise practicing the element of craft we are discussing that week. You will receive the exercise assignments the week before the exercise is due, so you will have a full week to complete each exercise. Exercises must be typed and turned in on the day they are due to receive credit. You will also turn these in on Blackboard. If you're up for the full class workshop that week, you will not have an exercise due.

In small groups, you'll also review (and briefly present on) one literary journal of your choice. We'll discuss this more in class.

### **Workshop Critiques (15%)**

You will write up your peer review for each workshopped story. In class, you will turn in a hard copy to me on the day of workshop. **You will post your review on Blackboard after class, but no later than midnight of the following day.**

Your peer reviews will be evaluated based on the effort you put in. We'll talk much more about my expectations for these.

### **Public Readings (10%)**

You are required to attend two public readings over the course of the semester. I will also ask for a response of **at least two pages** from each reading. The reading may be in fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. We'll talk more in class about all the opportunities you'll have to attend readings this semester.

### **Final Portfolio (15%)**

The final portfolio will consist of revisions of your stories. You will also write an essay that reflects on your progress over the course of the semester. Final portfolios will be due on the last day of class.

## **ADDITIONALLY**

### **Late Work**

All work is due in class. Any late work will be penalized one full grade for each class period it is late. For example, if the assignment is due on Monday and it is submitted to me at the beginning of the next class session, the grade will be reduced one full letter grade. **Note: Because of the demands of distribution, stories for workshop will not be accepted late.** Failure to submit the story in class on the date it is due will result in a zero for the story. Extensions will be granted only in advance and only in cases of emergency.

### **Formatting**

Everything you turn in should be typed and double-spaced. The font should be Times New Roman. (For your stories, I'll also allow Garamond or Perpetua. If there's a particular font you love, please run it by me. I want to make sure your stories will be legible for us all!) Please title your stories. In the upper right-hand corner, type your name and the story's word count. **Don't forget to number and staple your pages.**

## **Religious Holidays**

Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work. See Student Syllabus Guidelines (<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus>).

## **Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism**

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that range from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, or collaboration, consult the course instructor. See Student Syllabus Guidelines (<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus>).

## **Disabilities Policy**

Also note: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. See Student Syllabus Guidelines (<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus>)

## **Visitors in the Classroom**

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

## **The Writing Center**

Sam Houston Writing Center, located in Farrington 111, is open from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Friday, and 2 - 7 p.m. on Sunday. Writing tutors will work with you one-on-one at any stage of the writing process (brainstorming, generating a draft, organizing a draft, or revising a draft) for any written assignment. The Writing Center operates on an appointment system, so please

call (936) 294-3680 to schedule a session with a writing tutor. In addition to offering one-to-one writing conferences, the Center also offers a computer lab, handouts, style manuals, dictionaries, thesauruses, and handbooks for client use.

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

(subject to change)

### Week 1 (8/23)

8/23: Introductions.

### Week 2 (8/28, 8/30)

8/28: Concrete Language. Specific Details. Observation. In-Class Writing.

8/30: Observation. More on Detail. Beginning to talk about Character. Reading from *Writing Fiction*.

**Due 8/30: Writing Exercise 1**

### Week 3 (9/4, 9/6)

**9/4: NO CLASS – LABOR DAY**

9/6: More on Character. Guidelines for Workshop. Reading from *Writing Fiction*.

**Due 9/6: Writing Exercise 2**

### Week 4 (9/11, 9/13)

9/11: Character. Reading from *Writing Fiction*.

9/13: Character. Mock Workshop.

**Due 9/13: Writing Exercise 3**

### Week 5 (9/18, 9/20)

9/18: Dialogue. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Mock Workshop.

9/20: Dialogue. Workshop.

**Due 9/20: Writing Exercise 4**

### Week 6 (9/25, 9/27)

9/25: Dialogue. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Workshop.

9/27: Workshop.

### Week 7 (10/2, 10/4)

10/2: Setting. In-Class Writing.

10/4: Setting. Workshop. Reading from *Writing Fiction*.

### Week 8 (10/9, 10/11)

10/9: Setting. Reading from *Writing Fiction*.

10/11: Workshop.

**Due 10/11: Writing Exercise 5**

Week 9 (10/16, 10/18)

10/16: Scene. Reading from *Hunger*. Workshop.

10/18: Workshop.

**Due 10/18: Writing Exercise 6**

Week 10 (10/23, 10/25)

10/23: Structure. Reading from *Hunger*.

10/25: Structure. Workshop.

Week 11 (10/30, 11/1)

10/30: Style. Reading from *Hunger*. Workshop.

11/1: Workshop.

**Due 11/1: Writing Exercise 7**

Week 12 (11/6, 11/8)

11/6: Style. Reading from *Hunger*.

11/8: Workshop.

Week 13 (11/13, 11/15)

11/13: Revision. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Workshop.

11/15: Workshop. Revision.

Week 14 (11/20)

11/20: Revision.

**11/22: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week 15 (11/27, 11/29)

11/27: Workshop.

11/29: Reflection.

**Due 11/29: FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE**