

ENGLISH 3381

INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING: FICTION

Spring 2018
11:00 AM – 12:20 PM, TR
Evans 320

Dr. Olivia Clare
Office: Evans 211
E-mail: olivia.clare@shsu.edu
Phone: 936.294.3156

Office Hours: Thursday: 2:30 – 5:30 PM,
& by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

In this course, 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'll discuss more about what I mean by this term: *practice*.

Class sessions will be organized around craft topics and assigned readings. You will have weekly exercises that address craft topics. Craft topics will include: character, dialogue, setting, structure, point of view, style, revision, and more. You will also write one short story or novel chapter in the class.

As part of a workshop, you will critique one another's work for workshop. We'll talk a good deal about the elements of a workshop, and my expectations, in class. In the first part of the semester, several of your weekly exercises will be workshopped in small groups. In the second part of the semester, your stories and novel chapters will be workshopped by the class. You will also meet with me one-on-one before you revise.

TEXTS/COURSE MATERIALS

Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft, Ninth Edition, Janet Burroway, Elizabeth Stuckey-French, and Ned Stuckey-French
The Moons of Jupiter, Alice Munro

Handouts to be distributed in class

Work by: Kirstin Valdez Quade, ZZ Packer, James Salter, Cynthia Ozick, John Cheever, Richard Ford, Margaret Atwood, and more

Writers on Writing: Claudia Rankine, Kirstin Valdez Quade, Marlon James, John Gardner

Copies of your exercises and stories/novel excerpts 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/Novel Chapters for Workshop (20%)

You will submit one story or novel chapter (or in some cases, a longer excerpt) for workshop. After your workshop, you will also be required to meet with me one-on-one before you revise.

Work for workshop needs to be photocopied. You will turn these in the week 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.

Assigned Readings and Writing Exercises (25%)

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.

Each week, 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.

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 one-page response 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 a revision of your piece for workshop. 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 Thursday and it is submitted to me the following morning, the grade will be reduced by one letter grade. If I receive it in class that Tuesday, the penalty is the same. **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 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

1/18: Introductions. In-Class Writing.

Week 2

1/23: Introductions. Concrete Language. Specific Details. Observation.

1/25: Reading from *Writing Fiction*.

Week 3

1/30: Character. Reading from *Writing Fiction*.

2/1: NO CLASS – DR. CLARE OUT OF TOWN

Due 2/1: Writing Exercise 1

Week 4

2/6: Character. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. “Prue” from *The Moons of Jupiter*.

2/8: Character. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Small Group Workshop.

Due 2/8: Writing Exercise 2

Week 5

2/13: Character. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Reading from *The Moons of Jupiter*.

2/15: Character. Small Group Workshop.

Due 2/15: Writing Exercise 3

Week 6

2/20: Dialogue. Reading from *Writing Fiction*.

2/22: Dialogue. Small Group Workshop.

Due 2/22: Writing Exercise 4

Week 7

2/27: Dialogue. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Reading from *The Moons of Jupiter*.

3/1: Setting. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Small Group Workshop.

Due 3/1: Writing Exercise 5

Week 8 (3/6, 3/8)

3/6: Setting. “Akhnilo” by James Salter. Setting. Brief Summary of Takeaways.

3/8: NO CLASS – DR. CLARE OUT OF TOWN FOR A CONFERENCE

Due 3/8: Writing Exercise 6

SPRING BREAK: MARCH 12 – MARCH 16

Week 9

3/20: Plot and Structure. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Mock Workshop.

3/22: Plot and Structure. Class Workshop.

Due 3/22: Writing Exercise 7

Week 10

3/27: Plot and Structure. Reading from *Writing Fiction*.

3/29: Plot and Structure. Class Workshop.

Due 3/29: Writing Exercise 8

Week 11

4/3: Point of View. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Class Workshop.

4/5: Point of View. In-Class Writing. Class Workshop.

Due 4/5: Writing Exercise 9

Week 12

4/10: Style. Reading from *Writing Fiction*.

4/12: Style. Class Workshop.

Due 4/12: Writing Exercise 10

Week 13

4/17: Revision. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Class Workshop.

4/19: Revision. Class Workshop.

Week 14

4/24: Revision. Reading from *Writing Fiction*. Class Workshop.

4/26: Revision. Class Workshop.

Week 15

5/1: Reflection.

5/3: Reflection.

Due 5/4: FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE