

English 90 – Summer 2014
Syllabus and Schedule (subject to change)
Dana Kletter (dkletter@stanford.edu)
Monday/Wednesday 11:00 – 12:50
Office Hours: 3:30 – 5:00 M/W
Margaret Jacks Hall, Room 209

“The universe is made of stories, not of atoms.” *Muriel Rukeyser*

DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the art and craft of fiction writing. To this end, we will read an array of short stories, as well as essays on the craft and mechanics of writing. Through them, we'll examine how established authors address fundamental issues such as character, dialogue, point of view, narrative arc, and plot. We will also attend to smaller issues, writing on the sentence level, for instance, the multiple ways word order and choice can strengthen and clarify your prose. Our readings will serve as both inspiration and models for the stories you will write. We will focus a great deal of our energy on learning to revise the rough material of your drafts into sophisticated and well-crafted prose. Good writing is built, not born; it is a craft, a skill. Good ideas are important, but learning to grow those ideas, to translate them into words, to revise and refine them is just as important. In addition to writing exercises, and shorter story assignments, each student is expected to complete three assignments. The first is a prelude to a short story, the assembling of a cast of characters and a scene. The second is a flash fiction (no less than 2, no more than 3 pages) which we will workshop in small groups. The third assignment is a long story of no less than 7 and no more than 10 pages, and first drafts of these will be discussed and critiqued in a full-class workshop. Students will then revise these drafts, based on feedback from peers, teacher, and (most importantly) their vision of the story they want to write.

Please remember that this class should be fun, that you have the freedom to experiment and exercise your imagination. Keep in mind what is expected of you as well: to show serious effort, to demonstrate improvement in style and craft, and above all, to be supportive of one another.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Course Reader: available at CopyAmerica, 344 S. California Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94306 (650) 566-0344
- A writing notebook reserved for this class alone
- A budget for photocopying and printing your work. Please note that you will be required to print and photocopy enough copies of your story to distribute to the class (one for each student and one for me)

EXPECTATIONS

Students will:

- Complete the three writing assignments, including a revision of the second and third.
- Submit drafts of stories for full-class workshops.
- Read stories and essays, and be prepared to lead discussions in class.
- Respond to prompts on the class blog.

- Produce in-class writing in response to prompts.
- Be responsible for participating in workshops. Every student will also produce brief, thoughtful critiques (one to two typed pages), one copy for each student whose piece is being workshopped and, one copy for me.
- Use in-class exercises to generate ideas and work on specific craft issues (character, plot, dialogue, structure, setting, language.)
- Have the opportunity to workshop shorter assignments in small group workshops.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

A short quarter and big ambitions mean that your full attendance is required. Missing even one class will be detrimental to both writers and workshoppers. There is no make-up assignment or exercise that will substitute for your physical presence during workshops. To be a student in this class is to become part of a writing community, and to be responsible to all its other constituents. If you have a legitimate reason to be absent, please work this out with me in advance. Unexcused absences will reduce your course grade by a 1/3rd of a letter grade. An absence is excused only if I give permission in advance in writing, or if extraordinary circumstances apply. If a class session conflicts with your religious holidays, please notify me in the first week of the term so we can make alternative arrangements. Three late arrivals will equal one absence. Chronic absence or lateness will significantly affect your grade.

GRADING I will do my best to grade assignments in a consistent, meaningful, and constructive way, with the aim of helping your growth and development as a writer.

Your letter grade will be determined by the following:

- Production of both short and long story (composing and handing-in drafts in a timely manner, distributing workshop drafts to the class at the assigned date and time, being present for your own workshop, turning in revisions when they are due, having all materials for your portfolio assembled and turned in on time) – **40%**
- Class Participation (includes attendance, punctuality, student-led discussions and presentations of assigned stories, contribution to general discussions, posts to the class blog, short writing assignments (both in-class and homework) – **40%**
- Peer Critiques: **20%**

PARTICIPATION

Taking an active role in class discussion is crucial to your success. When I assess participation grades, I will consider:

- Attendance
- Preparedness for class (readings and assignments completed)
- Contributions to class discussions, keeping in mind that I expect you to be respectful of the differing opinions offered in class, and that your comments will be considered for their quality, not their quantity
- Comportment and demeanor in the classroom, being a good citizen of both classroom and workshop

IN THE CLASSROOM

- Turn off your cell phone.
- No computers in class (see me if you have any questions).
- Always bring a pen and a notebook for in-class writing exercises.
- Anyone texting will be asked to leave class, resulting in an unexcused absence.
- Be prepared to ask and answer questions about readings. You'll be expected to propose interpretations, and initiate and participate in discussions of class materials (stories, poems, essays and articles on craft). All good writers are good readers.
- Participation counts.

TURNING IN YOUR WORK/FORMAT

- Writers will be responsible for distributing their story **one week** before their workshop. If your story is being workshopped, bring hard copies of your story for each member of the class. If you are workshopping other student's stories, print a TWO hard copies (one for the writer and one for me) and bring them to class.
- Stories and all other written work will be formatted as follows: double-spaced Times New Roman 12-point with 1-inch margins on top, bottom and both sides.

WORKSHOP/PEER CRITIQUES

- **One week before rough drafts are due**, you will distribute copies of your stories to your peers, and to me.
- On the day of the workshop, come to class with two copies of your critiques, one for me and one for each student being workshopped. These critiques should be one or two typed paragraphs of thoughtful feedback for each of member of your group.
- Read "How To Workshop A Draft" (included in the coursepack.) As you write your critiques, think about what will be helpful to your peers. Be specific.
- The purpose of the workshop is to give you the opportunity to see what other people are getting from your story and to give you some experience thinking critically about the writing of others. Workshop is about supporting and helping each other, sharing work, and honing our thoughts and writing.
- Workshop others as you would have them workshop you.

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

For each day an assignment is late, I deduct a half letter grade. If you feel that your situation merits an extension, talk to me well before the paper is due. Please do not send me an email

the night before a due date. Emailing me your paper as an attachment is not acceptable; it is your responsibility to make sure I get the paper in my mailbox at the first available time.

CONFERENCES

Students will meet with me at least once during the course of the semester. If you would like to meet more than that, you can drop by during my office hours or schedule an appointment via email. I will need 24-hour advance notice if you have to reschedule an appointment. **If you miss a scheduled appointment, it will count as an unexcused absence.**

OFFICE HOURS

Please feel free to come by my office (during office hours) if you need help with ideas, structure, organization or any questions you might have concerning the class.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Please turn off ALL electronic devices (cell phones, iPods, iPads, laptop computers, etc.) BEFORE class begins. Anyone texting will be asked to leave class, resulting in an unexcused absence.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, using ideas, information or quotes from published work or online sources without providing proper citations; copying all or part of an assignment from someone else; *turning in work you did for other classes.*

MEETING YOUR NEEDS

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must immediately initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (located at 563 Salvatierra Walk; phone: 650-723-1066).

HONOR CODE

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:

The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:

1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.
2. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.
3. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK ONE

Monday, June 23 – Introductions, Syllabus, “Significant Detail” exercise (Food, Animal, Building), “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid, in-class writing

For Wednesday, June 25:

Read: Essay “Character: Casting Shadows” from Gotham Writers’ Workshop Guide, “No One’s A Mystery” by Elizabeth Tallent, “Reunion” by John Cheever, “Jinx” by Aimee Bender, “Dog Life” by Mark Doty, “How To Write Flash Fiction” (handout)

Post: response to blog prompt.

Write: Character exercises (“Your Turn”) from the essay

Wednesday, June 25 – Discuss readings. Story map. In-class writing (“Where Were You Last Night”), and Flash Fiction.

For Monday, June 30:

Read: “Beginnings” from *What If*, “How To Write Flash Fiction” (handout), “Pygmalion” by John Updike, “Blind Girls” by Jayne Anne Phillips, “Bullet In The Brain,” by Tobias Wolff

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Assignment #1 “Dramatis Personae.” Print 12 copies and bring in to class for small group workshops.

WEEK TWO

Monday, June 30 – Discussion (workshop and revision), small group workshops, in-class writing

For Wednesday, July 2

Read: “How To Write Flash Fiction,” (handout), “Gesture” by Francine Prose, “The Fly” by Katherine Mansfield, “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Assignment #2 Flash Fiction, Due Monday, July 7

Wednesday, July 2 - Discussion, in-class writing, story mapping

For Monday, July 7

Read: “Point Of View” (handout), “Brownies,” ZZ Packer, “The Leopard” by Wells Tower, “A Fable With Slips Of White Paper Spilling From The Pockets,” by Kevin Brockmeier

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Flash Fiction

WEEK THREE

Monday, July 7 – **Flash Fiction Due** – Print and bring four copies to class for small group workshop, discussion, in-class writing,

For Wednesday, July 9

Read: “Dialogue” (handout), “Everything That Rises Must Converge,” by Flannery O’Connor, “Midnight, Licorice, Shadow” by Becky Hagenston, “Revising Flash Fiction” (handout)

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Assignment #3 - First two pages (rough draft) of Long Story, bring in 4 printed copies for small group workshops

Wednesday, July 9 – discussion, in-class writing, small group workshop

For Monday, July 14

Read: “Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin, “Scene and Summary” (handout)

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Assignment #3 - “Draft Zero” of Long Story (three to five pages), bring in four copies for small group workshops, and Flash Fiction Revision

WEEK FOUR

Monday, July 14 – Discussion (Plot), story map, small group workshops

For Wednesday, July 16

Read: “Raising The Stakes,” (handout) “This Is What It Means To Say Phoenix Arizona” by Sherman Alexie, “St. Lucy’s Home For Girls Raised By Wolves” by Karen Russell

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: “One Moment” exercise, Flash Fiction Revision, and first draft of Long Story

Wednesday, July 16 – **FLASH FICTION REVISION DUE**, Discussion, small group workshop (“One Moment”), in-class writing

For Monday, July 21

Read: “Sensory Detail” (handout), “Battle Royale” by Ralph Ellison, “This Blessed House” by Jhumpa Lahiri

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Long Story

WEEK FIVE

Monday, July 21 – Discussion, in-class writing

For Wednesday, July 23

Read: “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been” by Joyce Carol Oates

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Long Story or critiques for stories

Wednesday, July 23 – Workshops 1, 2 3

For Monday, July 28

Read: “Two Kinds” by Amy Tan

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Long story (composition or revision) or critiques for stories

WEEK SIX

Monday, July 28 – Workshops 4, 5, 6

For Wednesday, July 30

Read: “Superfrog Saves Tokyo” by Haruki Murakami

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Long story (composition or revision) or critiques for stories

Wednesday, July 30 – Workshops 7, 8, 9

For Monday, August 4

Read: “Sarah Cole: A Kind Of Love Story” by Russell Banks

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Long story (composition or revision) or critiques for stories

WEEK SEVEN

Monday, August 4 – Workshop 10, discussion, conferences

For Wednesday, August 6

Read: Revision (handout)

Post: Response to blog prompt

Write: Long Story Revision

Wednesday, August 6 – Student Conferences – No Class

For Monday, August 11

Read: “The Isabel Fish” by Julie Orringer

Post: Study Julie’s online notebooks (follow link) and then respond to prompt.

Write: Long Story Revision

WEEK EIGHT

Monday, August 11 – Work Day (bring computers to class)

For Wednesday, August 13

Write: Long Story Revision

Wednesday, August 13 – End of Quarter Celebration and Reading

PORTFOLIO DUE FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, BY 5:00 PM