

Spring 2015: **English 401/01**

Advanced Fiction Writing

Mark Behr

Wed, 6pm — 8.30pm

901-843 3979

Office Hours: Tue & Thu 9.00 — 11.00, or by appointment

Required Texts: See Syllabus: all stories on Fileserve, and Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*

Overview: This course builds on and the content of the Intermediate Fiction Writing Workshop. By now you are entirely comfortable with the use of elements and concepts of fiction such as Showing and Telling; Characterization; Place; Time; Form, Theme, Dramatic Tension, Plot & Structure as well as Point of View. The aims of this class are to ensure that you write and rewrite two Short Stories that display integrated knowledge of the aforementioned elements of fiction. The greater part of our time will be spent reading published short fiction and writing and critiquing work by members of the workshop. In addition, the purpose of this course is to encourage you to begin living the life of a writer by cultivating attentiveness to the discipline of writing, to language, to literature, and to self and other. By the end of the class you will have produced two short stories that are as close to complete as you are, at this point, able to achieve.

Literary Fiction: In this class we read, write, discuss and revise literary fiction. Literary fiction aims to disclose aspects of experience in a moving and artful way. Literary fiction strives for seamless mimesis while simultaneously making creative and aesthetically appropriate use of various aspects of storytelling, all through the tool of language. For the purposes of this class you cannot write so-called genre fiction, that is, fantasy, science fiction, mystery, children's or young adult fiction, and so on.

Work Load: While we read and discuss published work by a number of writers, much of our time will be invested in critiquing your own writing. You will write two short stories (with a 3500 minimum word count, a 5000 maximum word count) that will be critiqued twice during the semester. In the event of individual participants not producing the quality of writing or re-writing I expect, I reserve the right to request that you write a third short story in order to pass the class. If an earlier draft of your story is clearly not working or seems fatally flawed, I also reserve the right to request that you begin an entirely new project. In the Senior Workshop we will not invest every student's work with the same amount of workshop time: the workshop aims to enhance learning and writing and as such our time will be invested in stories or in elements of stories that offer us the most for useful reflection. If your story or parts of it are not up to standard your work will not be workshopped.

Assignments: You will turn in your own original work. All work must be typed in twelve point, New Century Schoolbook font and double spaced with page numbers. Stories should contain the writer's name. All work must be handed in on time. *Late assignments will be disqualified from submission and will not be graded unless you have an advance*

agreement with me. However, as this is a workshop that depends entirely on your dependable participation while also testing and developing your ability to write and ***produce text on deadline***, it is unlikely that I will allow assignments to be handed in beyond deadline. The deadline for posting stories on-line (both by email and placed in my folder on the file-serve) is **Sunday at noon** preceding the Wednesday of your workshop. Every time you fail to hand in work on deadline, your grade goes down TWO letter grades, i.e from an A to a C. This means that you fail the course if you fail to hand in your work on time on two occasions.

Final Portfolio: At the end of the semester you hand in a final portfolio. The Portfolio will comprise the final versions of both your stories. I will not return your portfolio to you unless you specify to me, in writing, that you will collect it during the first two weeks of the following semester. Students who wish to discuss their portfolios the following semester are encouraged to do so, by making an appointment to see me.

Quizzes, Tests & Exams: There are no scheduled quizzes, tests or exams for this class. However, if class discussion lags or if, in my opinion, reading is not up to scratch, I am very likely to include any of these methods of assessment. Scores for any such unscheduled assessment will be included in your participation grade. Should you miss any such tests for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to reschedule with me.

Attendance: As this class meets only once a week you are allowed only ONE *excused* absence. An absence is not excused unless you have offered me a reasonable motivation such as illness, disease or disaster *before class*. For every unexcused absence your grade goes down a full letter, i.e. from an A to a B. After three absences, excused or unexcused, you fail the course. Being late for workshop will be severely frowned upon. Three late arrivals will constitute an absence. Again: You cannot pass this class after three absences.

Grade:

Class Participation:	15 (includes peer evaluation)
Short Story 1/1:	15
Short Story 2/1:	15
Short Story 1/2	15
Short Story 2/2	15
Final Portfolio:	25
TOTAL:	100

The Hours of Writing: This course requires a substantial amount of reading and writing. I suggest you will have to do at the very least an hour of writing per day in addition to extensive reading in order to complete the course with a reasonable grade.

Classroom Language and Culture: This is a creative writing space. As such, imagination and creativity must be celebrated. This means we will at times be working with provocative material, subject matter and language that may be uncomfortable to some of us. As a teacher I will aim to maintain a safe and respectful space while also at

times making use of provocative remarks and language aimed at stimulating debate, inquiry and creativity. You are free to come and discuss the classroom culture with me if you are experiencing problems in this regard.

Plagiarism: Work handed in for this class is governed by the Honor Code. All work you hand in during the semester must be entirely your own and produced exclusively for this class. Plagiarism is the act of presenting as one's own the work done by anyone else. This act defeats the purpose of education and carries severe penalties. The use of anyone else's ideas or expressions requires giving that person explicit credit. Penalties for plagiarism may include: failing grades for those assignments which were plagiarized; failing grades for the course; suspension from school.

Letters of Recommendation: Students frequently request letters from professors to assist them in being selected for graduate schools and/or into careers in later life. To write an honest, thorough, sincere and appropriate letter of recommendation takes time, effort and focus. In addition to the most basic gesture of respect such as giving your referee ample advance warning and therefore time to compose a meaningful letter and to make submissions, you may consider the use of an occasional note of thanks, or, of keeping your referee abreast of the outcomes of whatever you have applied for. As you may be requesting letters of reference for years to come it may stand you in good stead to keep your referees abreast of major developments in your professional life.

Reading additional drafts: As I am teaching three courses this semester I will be unable to read drafts of stories other than those already handed in for class. My apologies for this: it is simply that a three course load demands that I focus and divide my time carefully for reading, preparation, advising, office hours, feedback, individual meetings with students, and my various other professional campus and off-campus obligations. You are most welcome to discuss your earlier drafts with me during office hours or during a one on one meeting.

Disabilities: Rhodes College makes every effort to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students may request accommodations by making an appointment to speak to Melissa Butler, the Coordinator of Disability Services.

Week 1: 01/14	Introductions Bird by Bird, Anne Lamott
Week 2: 01/21	Barnes, Julian: The Stowaway Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen): Babette's Feast
Week 3: 01/28	We Workshop Group A Glave, Thomas: The Final Inning
Week 4: 02/04	We Workshop Group B A. M Homes: A Real Doll

Week 5: 02/11	We Workshop Group C Nadine Gordimer: The Train From Rhodesia
Week 6: 02/18	We Workshop Group D Edward P Jones: The First Day
Week 7: 02/25	We workshop Group A & B (revised)
Week 8: 03/04	We workshop Group C & D (revised)
Week 9: 03/11	Spring Break
Week 10: 03/18	We workshop Group A George Saunders: Escape from Spiderhead
Week 11: 03/25	We Workshop Group B Annie Proulx's Brokeback Mountain
Week 12: 04/01	Easter Break
Week 13: 04/08	We Workshop Group C Alice Munro: The Bear Came Over The Mountain
Week 14: 04/15	We Workshop Group D
Week 15: 04/22	We Workshop Group A & B (revised)
Week 16: 04/29	Workshop Group C & D (revised)
Week 17:	05/01 Final Portfolio Due by NOON (<i>Hard copy in my door box AND copy by email</i>)

Advanced Fiction Workshop Bibliography

(The stories we read will selected from these. All available on Fileserver in Behr's Public File)

Adrian, Chris. "Stab." A Better Angel. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008. 54-83.

Agosín, Marjorie. "Blood." Happiness: Stories by Marjorie Agosín. Trans. Elizabeth Horan. Fredonia, NY: White Pine Press, 1993. 173-176.

Barthelme, Donald. "A City of Churches." Sadness. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1972. 47-54.

- . "The Zombies." Great Days. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979. 113-119.
- Blixen, Karen (aka Isak Dinesen). "Babette's Feast." Anecdotes of Destiny. New York: Random House, 1958. 21-68.
- Butler, Robert Olen. "Jealous Husband Returns in Form of Parrot." Tabloid Dreams. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1996. 71-81.
- . "Woman Struck by Car Turns into Nymphomaniac." Tabloid Dreams. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1996. 83-98.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Circular Ruins." Collected Fictions. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Viking Penguin, 1998. 101-106.
- . "Cult of the Phoenix." Collected Fictions. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Viking Penguin, 1998. 171-173.
- . "The Lottery in Babylon." Collected Fictions. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Viking Penguin, 1998. 96-100.
- Calvino, Italo. "Theft in a Pastry Shop." Difficult Loves. Trans. William Weaver, Archibald Colquhoun & Peggy Wright. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984. 131-140.
- Dahl, Roald. "Katina." The Umbrella Man and Other Stories. New York: Viking, 1996. 124-155.
- Diaz, Junot. "Fiesta, 1980." Writing Fiction, A Guide To Narrative Craft. 8th Edition. Ed. Burroway. Longman, 2010. 90-100.
- Faulkner, William. "Barn Burning." The Art of the Short Story. Eds. Dana Gioia & R.S. Gwynn. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. 225-238.

- . "Dry September." The Oxford Book of Short Stories. Ed. V.S. Pritchett. New York: Oxford UP, 1981. 330-340.
- Hass, Robert. "My Mother's Nipples."
- Head, Bessie. "The Collector of Treasures." Heineman, 1992.
- Gordimer, Nadine. "The Train from Rhodesia." Selected Stories. New York: The Viking Press, 1975. 43-47.
- . "The Ultimate Safari." Jump and Other Stories. New York: Farar, Straus & Giroux, 1991. 31-46.
- Haskell, John. "Elephant Feelings." I Am Not Jackson Pollock. New York: Farar, Straus & Giroux, 2003. 23-38.
- Hass, Robert. "My Mother's Nipples."
- Holmes, A.M. "A Real Doll." The Safety of Objects. New York: Norton, 1990. 151-173.
- Johnson, Denis. "Emergency." The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction. Eds. Lex Williford & Michael Martone. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1999. 351-360.
- Jones, Edward. P. "The First Day." Lost in the City. Harper Paperbacks. 2004.
- Kafka, Franz. "In the Penal Colony." Kafka's the Metamorphosis and Other Writings. Ed. Helmuth Kiesel. The German Library vol. 65. Continuum: New York, 2002. 97-122.
- Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. "Innocent Eréndira and her Heartless Grandmother." Innocent Eréndira and Other Stories. Trans. Gregory Rabassa. New York, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978. 1-59.
- Moore, Lorrie. "The Nun of That." Anagrams. New York: Warner Books, 1986. 63-228.

- . "Strings Too Short to Use." Anagrams. New York: Warner Books, 1986. 9-39
- Morrison, Toni. Nobel Lecture.
- Munro, Alice. "Comfort". Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage. Vintage, 2001
- Le Guin, Ursula. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." The Art of the Short Story. Eds. Dana Gioia & R.S. Gwynn. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. 531-535.
- O'Connor, Flannery. "A Good Man is Hard to Find." The Art of the Short Story. Eds. Dana Gioia & R.S. Gwynn. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. 678-689.
- . "Parker's Back." Great Esquire Fiction: The Finest Stories from the First Fifty Years. Ed. L. Rust Hills. New York: Penguin Books, 1983. 310-328.
- Poe, Edgar Allen. "The Tell-Tale Heart." The Art of the Short Story. Eds. Dana Gioia & R.S. Gwynn. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. 721-725.
- . "The Pit and the Pendulum." Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe. Ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard UP, 1978. 681-700.
- Proulx, Annie. "The Mud Below." Close Range: Wyoming Stories. New York: Scribner, 1999. 39-78.
- Saunders, George. "Sea Oak." Pastoralia. New York: Riverhead Books, 2000. 91-125.
- Saunders, George. "Escape from Spiderhead." from Tenth of December
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. "Storyteller." Storyteller. New York: Arcane Publishing, 1981. 17-32.
- Walker, Alice. "Roselily." In Love And Trouble: Stories of Black Women, Mariner Books, 2003.

Welty, Eudora. "Why I Live at the P.O." The Art of the Short Story. Eds. Dana Gioia & R.S. Gwynn. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006. 820-829.

Winterson, Jeanette. "Lives of Saints." The World and Other Places. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999. 65-73.

---. "A Green Square." The World and Other Places. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999. 187-203.