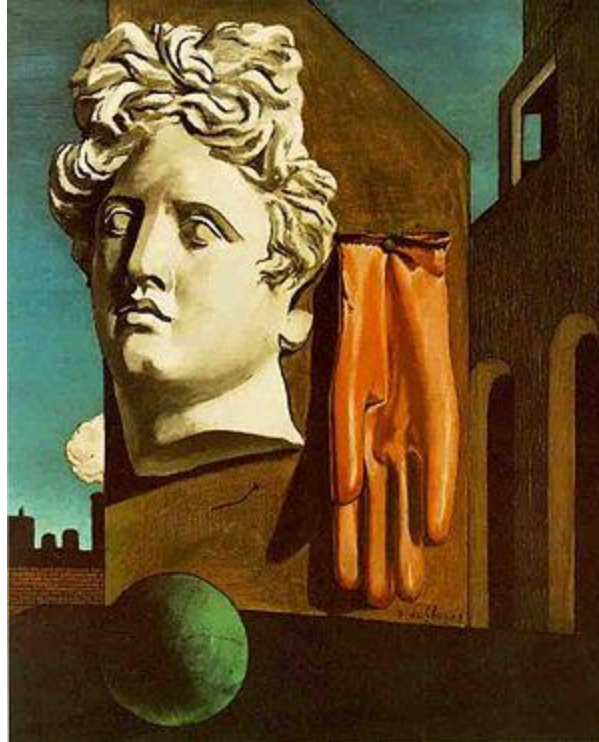


Introduction to Fiction Writing ENGL 201-01
Fall 2015
Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.
Clough Hall 304

Standing at the window and looking out into the garden, the lives of all these books filled the room behind me with a soft murmur.

--Virginia Woolf



The Song of Love, Giorgio de Chirico

Office Hours

Raquel Baker, baker@rhodes.edu, 901-843-3979

Mondays, 12:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.

Wednesdays, 12:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m. and by appointment, 308B Palmer

Course Overview and Invocation (to call the class into being)

This course is designed to develop individual fiction writing skills, emphasizing process and elements of craft rather than product. In this course, we will practice the craft of fiction while also thinking about the broader significance of literature. This course aims to help students develop critical reading skills so we might read as writers, paying close attention to the text. **Writing is risk, revision, and imaginative creation, which is itself a moral act.**

As such, our goal as a class will be to develop generative ways to describe and analyze literary texts, their elements, and their implications. The literary texts we engage with will allow students to explore how writers achieve certain effects using elements of craft as well as how texts help us to understand ourselves and the world around us. Through the reading of literary texts and through the workshop process, we will practice the craft of reading generously, engaging with an author's intent, and discussing our responses to texts.

You ought to be able to discover something from your stories. If you don't, probably nobody else will.
—Flannery O'Connor

Students should leave the course with the ability to

1. Write with a sense of clarity that expresses your own voice.
2. Write from life, literature, and the world and gain an understanding of how our imagination runs parallel to the concrete, sensate world.
3. Feel the rhythm of language.
4. Describe, analyze, and critique literary texts.
5. Be an engaged generous member of a writing community.

Required Texts: available at the Rhodes College Bookstore

Janet Burroway, Elizabeth Stuckey-French, and Ned Stuckey-French, *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, Pearson, 978-0134015316, \$106.00

Ann Charters, *The Story and Its Writer: An Introduction to Short Fiction*, Bedford/St. Martin's, 978-1457664618, \$85.99

Additional readings will be available on Moodle. Print out the readings and bring them to class on the day that they will be discussed.

Assignments and Grades:

Participation: 5

Writing

What Is Literature Freewrite: 1

Interview Story: 2

Place Story Sketch: 2

Story #1 (5 pages): 5

Chronological Story (2 pages): 2

8-page Story: 10

Revised Story: 10

1st-person Narrator Story: 10

POV Story: 10

Reflections

Scene and Summary Reflection: 1

Reaction Reflection Story #1 (3): 3

Analytical Reflection #1: 1

Reaction Reflection Revised Story (15): 5

Revision Reflection: 2

Analytical Reflection #2: 1

Reaction Reflection POV Story (15): 5

Reading Responses

Reading Response #1 (Oates): 2

Reading Response #2 (Beattie): 2

Portfolio: 20

100 points

Class Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction and the Writing Process

WED (8/26):

Introductions/Course Objectives

In class: Top 100 First World Problems. Is this literature? Why? Why not?

Freewrite: What is literature?

Discussion of What is literature? What is fiction? What is narrative?

Homework:

Assignment: Go out and do interview.

Writing: Get some information and turn it into literature-1 page –

Reading: Charters, Raymond Carver “On Writing” 1557-1560

O’Connor “Writing Short Stories” 1592-1597

John Cheever “Why I Write Short Stories” 1408-1410

“Elements of Fiction” 1676-1691

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie “What They Dream about in Africa”

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/hay-festival/9312245/Hay-Festival-2012-What-they-dream-about-in-Africa.html>

Week 2: Showing and Telling, Scene and Summary

MON (8/31):

Share First-World Problems pieces

Review definition of literature, fiction

10 Rules

Why do you write?

Define scene and summary--examples

Homework:

Assignment:

Writing: Scene and Summary Reflection

As you read “Battle Royal” underline showing (scene), highlight telling (summary). In your opinion, what provides the most insight into the text, showing (scene) or telling (summary)? Write a 1-page reflection stating a line or section that provides the most insight. What insight does it provide about the text in your opinion? Is it showing (scene) or telling (summary) or a combination of both?

Reading: Burroway, Chapter 2

Charters: Ralph Ellison, “Battle Royal” 417-428

Charters: Ralph Ellison, “The Influence of Folklore on ‘Battle Royal’”
1420-1421

WED (9/2):
Discuss “Battle Royal”
10 Rules

Homework:

Assignment:

Writing: Place Story Sketch

Write a story about what Memphis means to you. Why are you here? Where did you come from? What do you think about Memphis as a community? Think about the craft techniques we have discussed thus far. Think about how much you will show, how much you will tell, and what kinds of information you will present through each technique.

500 words (about 1.5 page). **Due Wednesday 9/9**

Reading: Charters: Carver, “A Small, Good Thing”
Burroway, Chapter 5

Week 3: Dynamic Characters and Character Dynamics

When the characters are really alive before their author, the latter does nothing but follow them in their action, in their words, in the situations which they suggest to him.

—Luigi Pirandello

MON (9/7): Labor Day No Class

WED (9/9):

Place and Story Sketch Due

Discuss Carver.

Discuss Place Story Sketch.

Define Conflict and Plot.

Homework:

Assignment:

Reading: Burroway, Chapter 3

Charters: Joyce Carol Oates “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”

Read the story once without taking notes or pausing to analyze it; read it simply to enjoy it and see how it affects you. Next, read the questions for the Reading Response. Finally, read the story again, considering how Oates builds characters and the interactions between characters. On your second reading, mark key passages that help you understand how the author has crafted her characters and how this crafting impacts what the characters do.

Writing: Reading Response 1 (1-2 pages). Bring to class.

Week 4: Conflict and Plot

MON (9/14):

Discuss “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”

Homework:

Assignment:

Writing: Story #1. Workshopping stories Wednesday, 9/23

WED (9/16):
Plot structure
10 rules

Homework:

Assignment:

Writing: Finish Story #1.

Week 5: Sending Out Drafts and Getting Feedback

MON (9/21):

Story #1 due

Workshop process

Workshop groups, four groups of four

Homework:

Assignment:

Reading: Stories of workshop group members

Writing: Reaction Reflection for each workshopped story

WED (9/23):

Workshop

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: Burroway, Chapter 7

Charters: Anne Beattie “Janus,” 96-100

Writing: Reading Response #2 (1-2 typed double-spaced pages)

Week 6: Structure—Building Surprise

MON (9/28):

Discuss “Janus.”

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: Charters: Flannery O’Connor “Everything That Rises Must Converge”
1004-1016

Writing: Write a story that is exactly two pages long and is told chronologically. **Due Monday, 10/5**

Analytical Reflection

On page _____, O’Connor describes _____. While this moment may seem insignificant because it does not directly contribute to the development of the plot, it is actually essential to the story. This scene/image/description is important because we learn _____, which helps us understand _____. Bring to class.

WED (9/30):

Discuss “Everything That Rises Must Converge”

Discuss Analytical Reflection

Homework

Assignment:

Writing: Finish 2-page chronological story.

Week 7: Revision: Theseus’ Ship and the Art of Reconstruction

If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it.

—Elmore Leonard

MON (10/5):

2-page stories due

Discuss revision.

Discuss 2-page stories.

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: Burroway, Chapter 9

“A Day in the Life of Half of Rumpelstiltskin,” by Kevin Brockmeier

Writing: Write an 8-page version of your 2-page story and change the chronological structure. When you expand your story, you will have to think about which parts deserve to be lengthened and which can be summarized, what needs to be added in between the facts you started with and how the change in structure will affect your narrative. **Due 10/12**

WED (10/7):

Discuss “A Day in the Life of Half of Rumpelstiltskin,”

Homework

Assignment:

Writing: Finish 8-page expanded story.

Week 8: Voice, Style, and Description—Convincing the Reader

MON (10/12):

8-page story due.

Craft discussion on voice, style, description

Discuss 8-page story

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: Burroway, Chapter 4

Writing: Revise your 8-page story keeping the same narrative (same sequence of events) but changing **ONE** of the following:

Option 1: Change the number of **main** characters. If you add characters, the new additions must still play an important role in the development of the story, and if you subtract characters everything still has to make sense.

OR

Option 2: Change the setting. Make this a substantial change; for example, if your story is set in present-day America, change the setting to Africa, the eighteenth century, or a planet ruled by slugs.

Your story will be graded not only on the quality of your draft but on the extent of your revision, so don't hold back. If you have to make some changes to the narrative to make this work, you can, but I must be able to tell that the second version is still the same story. **Due Wed. 10/21**

WED (10/14):

Discuss Burroway

Homework

Assignment:

Writing: Finish revision.

Week 9: The Craft of Critique

MON (10/19)

FALL RECESS NO CLASS

WED (10/21)

Revised story due

Workshop sign-up

10 rules

Homework

Assignment

Reading: Read 4 workshop stories for Monday

Writing: Reaction Reflection for each workshopped story

Week 10: Doing Storytelling

MON (10/26):

Workshop

Homework

Assignment

Reading: Read 4 workshop stories for Wed.

Writing: Reaction Reflection for each workshopped story

WED (10/28):

Workshop

Homework

Assignment

Reading: Read 4 workshop stories for Mon.

Writing: Reaction Reflection for each workshopped story

Week 11: Talking about Storytelling

MON (11/2):
Workshop

Homework

Assignment

Reading: Read 4 workshop stories for Wed.

Writing: Reaction Reflection for each workshop story

WED (11/4):
Workshop

Homework

Assignment

Reading: Burroway, Chapter 8

Writing: Revision Reflection (1-2 pages)

About Your Story

1. What did you identify as the part of your original 2-page story that was most important to you?
2. How did that differ from your classmates' comments about your piece?
3. What was the most difficult part of the revision process?
4. How did you go about revising your story?
5. What was one mistake or weakness in your writing that you discovered while revising?

Week 12: Point of View

“There is nothing insignificant in the world. It all depends on the point of view.”

—Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

MON (11/9):

Discuss Burroway

Discuss Revision Reflection

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: Charters: Sherman Alexie “The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven” 14-19

Junot Díaz “How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie” 393-396

Jamie Quatro “I.7 to Tennessee” 1156-1166

Writing: Write an 8-page story, scene, or series of scenes using a first-person narrator with a distinctive voice. This does not have to be a voice from another culture or social group; it can simply be a person who has a unique way of speaking. You may want to work out the storyline first, or you may want to imagine the voice and let it guide your story. Due 11/16

WED (11/11):

Discuss stories

10 rules

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: Charters, Flannery O'Connor "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"
1031-1042

Writing: Finish story.

Complete the following analytical reflection: At the beginning of the story O'Connor opens with _____
(discuss a salient aspect of the beginning of the story, this may be setting or some other aspect). This importance of this stylistic is _____. Bring to class.

Week 13: Dialogue

MON (11/16):

Distinctive voice story due

Portfolio Assignment

Discuss stories

Discuss O'Connor

Discuss dialogue

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: Charters, ZZ Packer "Brownies" 1080-1097

Writing: Change the point of view of your first-person narrative. Due 11/23

WED (11/18):

Discuss Packer

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: Charters, Hemingway "Hills Like White Elephants" 588-592

E.L. Doctorow "Edgemont Drive"

www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/04/26/edgemont-drive

Burroway, Denis Johnson "Emergency"

Writing: Finish POV story.

Week 14: Putting It All Together—The Craft of Storytelling

MON (11/23):

POV story due

Discuss Hemingway, Doctorow, Johnson

Workshop sign up

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: 4 workshop stories for Mon. 11/30

Writing: Reaction Reflection for each story

WED (11/25): THANKSGIVING BREAK NO CLASS

Week 15: Workshopping

MON (11/30):

Workshop

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: 4 workshop stories for Wed. 12/2

Writing: Reaction Reflection for each story

WED (12/2)

Workshop

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: 4 workshop stories for Mon. 12/7

Writing: Reaction Reflection for each story

Week 16: Reflecting and Presenting

MON (12/7):

Workshop

Homework

Assignment:

Reading: 4 workshop stories for Wed. 12/9

Writing: Reaction Reflection for each story

WED (12/9)

Workshop

MON (12/14)

Final Portfolio Due

Course Policies

Preparation, Attendance, and Participation Policy:

Rhodes College expects a 4-hour credit course to entail **at least 8 hours** of outside preparation per week by students. This course requires a series of reading, written, and oral assignments designed to improve your analytical and close reading skills and to develop your craft as a writer.

You may miss three classes, excused or otherwise. Each absence after those initial three will cost you 5% of your final grade. I make no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. So if you can attend, you should. **If you miss more than eight (8) classes, you will fail the course.**

LATE PAPERS: Each assignment is due on the day stipulated on the syllabus. Assignments are crafted to support your in-class work, to build upon each other, and to provide your classmates time to process your writing; therefore, turning them in after the due date substantially undermines their purpose, your ability to fully engage in class, and your classmates’ ability to thoughtfully engage with your work.

Your active participation is required for you to grow as a writer. Thoughtful and informed participation is vital to academic success and engagement with the world is essential for your success as a writer. Contributing meaningfully to class discussion and workshops requires speaking in a way that indicates you have read the assigned material; have listened to others and interacted with their comments in a thoughtful, inquisitive way; and have tried to be thoughtful about your tone and delivery style. Thoughtful preparation means coming to class having thoroughly read and re-read assigned readings and with heavily marked up text in hand (you will need to print out all online readings). Failure to contribute regularly to discussion will affect your final grade.

Office Hours and Complaints

Please feel free to drop by my office hours to talk more about the readings, class discussions, lectures, your writing, or anything else pertaining to class. It is a **REALLY** good idea to get into the habit of meeting with your instructors outside of class—a good working relationship with your professors will be invaluable to you during your college career as well as after. If you can’t make office hours, please email me for an appointment. If you have a concern, I strongly encourage you to talk to me, but if after we talk you still don’t feel that your concern has been appropriately addressed, please contact Professor Marshall Boswell, boswell@rhodes.edu, Chair of the English Department.

Suggestions for Success in This Class

Mastery of analytical skills and craft strategies can only be achieved by **READING, WRITING, and QUESTIONING**. This class is meant to be a safe place for you to **TAKE RISKS** and **MAKE MISTAKES** so you can identify what is effective in your writing and

what is less effective. Working through mistakes and revising less effective writing and thinking is where the hard work toward mastery is done. Participating and being actively engaged in class and with your writing, reading, and thinking will allow you to have many such experiences. While I have no doubt that you will excel in this class, you may have to revise some of the strategies you currently have for reading, writing, thinking, as well as for preparing for and participating in class. Be open to new methods and ideas, and above all, be patient with yourself.

It is absolutely essential to your success in this class as well as in your college career that you are an **ACTIVE LEARNER**. This means that you are participating usefully in class—expressing your own ideas and listening thoughtfully. Remember, there are no “right” answers in this class—you are only expected to make an attempt to try to think, speak, and write.

You should keep a notebook in which you write down class notes as well as your own thoughts. I would suggest writing down your initial reactions to each story you read by authors, including and classmates, and then writing down your reaction after a second and third reading. Remember to stay organized by keeping all of your notes in your notebook so that you can refer to them during discussions and in your process statements in your final portfolio.

If you start to fall behind, to panic about your work, or have problems with class participation, **TALK TO ME IMMEDIATELY**. Do not struggle alone—you will do much better if you let yourself talk about what’s hard so we can work together to figure out strategies for your success.

If time management is an issue for you, treat your writing time as if it were a business appointment: schedule an hour-long session with yourself a few days in advance and treat this appointment as something you cannot afford to miss. Let this time be a respite from your busy day.

If you are blocked (cannot start writing), contact me immediately.

Writing Resources

- **Writing Center** Barret Library Room 122.
<http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/default.asp>

Honor Code

All work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with Rhodes’ Honor Code. Students are expected to be familiar with the requirements of the Code and to conduct themselves accordingly in all classroom matters.

Portfolio Requirement:

Each student is required to construct a portfolio for the course. The portfolio comprises

- 2 stories (one may be short) + process statements (brief, subjective remarks on what you're consciously up to)
- 5 in-class writing exercises (with my review comments)
- Your 10 Rules for Writing
- Your thoughts on the most useful piece of the course

The portfolio is cumulative and includes a reflective element on your class experience and your process as a writer.

Electronic Communication

College policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their Rhodes College e-mail address (@rhodes.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences.

Accommodations

I would like to hear from anyone who has a disability which may require seating modifications or testing accommodations or accommodations of other class requirements, so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Please contact me during office hours. A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with [Student Disability Services](#) and then meet privately with me to make particular arrangements.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and any other activities when students present work that is not their own are academic fraud. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter and is reported to the Honor Council. See the Academic and Student Conduct sections of the Rhodes College Student Handbook at

<https://in.rhodes.edu/admin/studentaffairs/Documents/Student%20Handbook%202015-2016.pdf>

The English Department Plagiarism Policy can be found on the website:

<https://in.rhodes.edu/teams/english/Shared%20Documents/Department%20of%20English%20Expectations%20and%20Policies%20Revised%20Nov%202011.pdf>

Mutual Respect

The English Department is committed to creating an academic climate that is safe, respectful, and appreciative of all students, staff, and faculty regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, identity, age, size, socioeconomic background, religion, spirituality, physical ability, mental ability, or any other aspect of one's identity. A climate of mutual respect allows us to ask difficult questions and to participate in honest discussions, even in the context of strong disagreement. Creating this kind of open, honest, and respectful climate is our mutual responsibility.

Sexual Misconduct Disclosure

Sexual harassment is reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the College. It subverts the mission of the College and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Visit

<http://www.rhodes.edu/studenthandbook/29218.asp> for definitions, College resources, and assistance.

I will do my best to help any student who comes to me with non-course related concerns. Please keep in mind, however, that all faculty members are mandated to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that comes to their attention. That means I cannot keep information about sexual misconduct confidential if you share that information with me.

The Rhodes Counseling Center, the College Chaplain, or the Student Health Services Staff can advise you confidentially. Any member of the Title IX Team can also help you access other resources on campus and in the local community. They are Claire Shapiro, the Title IX Coordination (Director of Human Resources, 843-3750, shapiro@rhodes.edu), Melissa Butler (Director of Student Disability Services, 843-3885, butlerm@rhodes.edu); Leigh Powell (Human Resources, 843-3747, powell@rhodes.edu); Dan Schrader (Director of New Student Programs, 843-3509, shrader@rhodes.edu); and Bud Richey (Assistant Vice President for External Programs, 843-3847, richeyw@rhodes.edu).

The Sexual Misconduct Policy is in the Student handbook; it can be found on the InRhodes website at <http://in.rhodes.edu/admin/studentconduct/Pages/Sexual-Misconduct.aspx>.

Student Classroom Behavior

The ability to learn is lessened when students engage in inappropriate classroom behavior and distract others; such behaviors are a violation of the Social Regulations Code. When disruptive activity occurs, a College instructor has the authority to determine classroom seating patterns and to request that a student exit immediately for the remainder of the period. One-day suspensions are reported to appropriate departmental, collegiate, and [Student Development and Academic Services](#) personnel.