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Introduction to Fiction Writing ENG 201
 MWF 10:20-11:20am — Room 211 Palmer
 Texts: *Writing Fiction*, Janet Burroway [JB]
Short Fiction: Classic and Contemporary, ed. Charles Bohner [SF]

Assignments

Aug	22	Introduction.	12	"Rape Fantasies," 44; "Petrified Man," 1072
	24	Burroway, 27-46; "A&P," 1031 [SF]		Story #2 Due
		Story Basics		
	27	Burroway 53-67: "Greasy Lake"	15	FALL BREAK
	29	"Araby" 1102; "Circling Hand" 570	17	Workshop
	31	"Indian Camp," 479; "The Grave," 899	19	Workshop
		Exercise 1: Description		
		Showing and Telling	22	Theme Workshop
Sept	3	Labor Day	24	Burroway 303-331
	5	Burroway 1-25; "To Build A Fire" 631	26	"Conversion of the Jews" 920
	7	"The Things They Carried," 806		
		Story #1 Due		
	10	Workshop	29	Signs and Symbols "The Death of Ivan Ilych," 987.
	12	Workshop	31	Burroway 268-282; "The Overcoat," 394
	14	Workshop	Nov 2	"Cathedral," 152; "Shiloh," 652
		Character		
	17	Workshop		Other Modes
	19	Burroway 94-109; "Paul's Case," 162	5	"The Magic Barrel" 645
	21	Burroway 127-144 "The Darling," 183; "The Real Thing," 509	7	Story #3 Due
		Ex. 2 Character Sketch Due	9	Workshop
		Point of View	12	Workshop
	24	Burroway 196-213	14	Burroway 332-365
	26	"The Lady With the Dog," 199; "Babylon Revisited," 359	16	"The Metamorphosis," 537.
	28	Burroway 235-260 "Hills Like White Elephants" 475;	19	"Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" 779 "The Swimmer" 175
		Ex. 3 Point of View Due	21	THANKSGIVING BREAK
			23	THANKSGIVING BREAK
		Point of View		
Oct	1	"A Rose for Emily," 348	26	"Lost in the Funhouse," 107
	3	"Friend of My Youth," 750;	28	"Argument and Persuasion," 428
	5	"Sonny's Blues," 69		Story #4 Due
		Ex. 4 Dialogue Due	30	Workshop
		Point of View	3	Workshop
	8	"Everything That Rises Must Converge," 818	5	Workshop
	10	"A Good Man Is Hard To Find," 829	10	Portfolios Due

Policies for English 201

WRITING LOAD: Everyone will write and revise four (4) complete short stories over the course of this semester. Each story *submitted for discussion* should be “complete,” with a worked-out ending—even a bad one. (Fixing bad endings is one of the things workshop is for.) The second and third stories **must exceed 6 pages, double-spaced, in length at time of submission**. You are free to write whatever kind of story you wish, provided you fulfill, at semester’s end, the following requirements:

- One story must be in the first person
- One story must be in the third person
- One story must be told from the point of view of someone *not* your (i.e. the author’s) gender

You will gather the revised versions of **the best three** stories into a final portfolio, which you will submit to me at the end of the semester for final evaluation. This portfolio should consist of polished, well-crafted fiction. In assessing the merit of the completed portfolio, I will pay special attention to the *revisions* you have made to stories that originally appeared in workshop. The portfolio should run anywhere from 5000 to 7500 words (between 16-22 pages), but can certainly be longer.

You will also write five (4) short two-to-three page exercises, which I will grade. The average grade of these four exercises will constitute your “exercise” grade. Finally, your daily progress will be evaluated via SIX “pop” quizzes on the assigned reading. I will drop the lowest grade and average the remaining five quizzes to compute your “quiz” grade. You may not make up missed quizzes, so skip class wisely.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: During workshop weeks, we will workshop roughly three to five stories per one-hour class period. You will submit your stories electronically into my Faculty box, on the appropriate due date. I will then remove the author's name from each piece, compile all the stories into three or four packets of three to five stories each, and place them back on the server. Each of you is then responsible for printing out that day’s packet. Moreover, you will write *at least* a half-page of single-spaced comments for each story up for discussion. You can either write these comments on the packet printout itself or type them out on your own: the former method is easier, the latter option is more conscientious. These comments—both those you compose and those you verbalize in class during workshop—will factor into my evaluation of your final fiction portfolio, so take this process seriously. You will also complete the five exercises and turn them in on the assigned dates. And I will give six pop quizzes throughout the semester, just to keep you honest about the assigned reading.

GRADING:	Fiction Portfolio	50%
	Exercise Average	30%
	Quiz Average	20%

ABSENCES: Because I place a great deal of emphasis on workshops and our discussion of the daily readings, your attendance and participation in class is not only mandatory but also constitutes a fairly large portion of your grade. Absences for illness or religious observance are excused so long as they are verified in advance (when possible) and all work is promptly made up. You are allowed three (3) absences free-of-charge any absences beyond those two will cost your *final course* average a tenth of a point. If you miss more than eight classes, you will fail the course. Simple as that. Sorry.

LATE PAPERS: Each assignment is due on the day stipulated on the syllabus. Any late assignment will be docked a tier reduction for each day that it is delayed. See above.

PROBLEMS? Anytime you have a problem with an assignment or class attendance, PLEASE get in touch with me. My office phone number and e-mail address are listed on the front of this syllabus.

PLAGIARISM: All work submitted for this class must not only be written *specifically* for this class but must also be your own work. You may not turn in stories you wrote elsewhere for other creative-writing classes. What’s more, the stories are, without caveat, subject to the requirements of the Honor System.

How To Submit Stories Electronically

Part I. Submitting Stories

1. Finish your story.
2. If you are using Word, you should have no trouble. If you are using Word Perfect or Claris Works or something else, go under “Save As,” then find Microsoft Word under “File Type.” Save the file as a Word File, the most recent one if possible. I don’t think it matters if you save it as Mac or Windows, so just use whatever platform you’re already on so as to eliminate any translation problems.
3. Exit your word processing program, making sure you know where on your hard disc you’ve saved your story file.
4. Open the Academic Volume.
5. Open Faculty Folders folder.
6. Open Folder reading “A-F.”
7. Find Boswell In-Box. If the icon has a belt on it—as it should if you’re on a Mac—don’t despair. You’re on track.
8. Drag your story file from its folder on your hard disc and drop it into my In-Box. You might get a message that informs you that you do not have access privileges to that box. This is as it should be: once you drop it into my in-box, you can’t retrieve it. I’m the only person who can open that folder.
9. You’re done.

Part II. Retrieving Story Packets

1. Open Academic Volume.
2. Open “Faculty Folders” folder.
3. Open “A-F” folder.
4. Go to *other* Boswell folder. This is my “out” box. You can open this one.
5. Drag Packet file from the “Boswell” folder and onto your Desktop (or some appropriate folder, if you like.)
6. Open Word.
7. Open packet file.
8. Print Packet.

Note: It is important that you follow these instructions. It is particularly important that you use the SAVE AS function—that is, that you save your file as a Word 6 document, with the .doc extension. I’ll give you one (1) pass on this. Once, and only once, can you “forget” to use “Save As.” Afterwards, **if I can’t read it, I won’t accept it.** So make sure you do this right.

Description Exercise

1. First, write a one-to-two paragraph description of a rural landscape, a city street, a cluttered room, or a public space such as a train station or a doctor's office. Use *only* active verbs to describe inanimate as well as animate things. Avoid the pathetic fallacy.
2. Introduce into this setting a character who conveys any one of the following:
 - Complete emotional well-being
 - Fried brains
 - Emotional problems of some severity
 - A coyness that borders on the insipid
 - Profound authority
 - Astonishing arrogance
 - Total timidity
 - Amazing self-absorption

Of course, employ significant, concrete details and strong active verbs only.

NOTE: The one sure way to mess this one up is to employ linking or passive verbs. I will automatically lower your grade on this assignment on grade tier for every linking or passive verb I see. I mean business!

Due Friday, August 31

Character Sketch Exercise

1. First, come up with three entirely disparate characters. These characters can be from anywhere on planet earth (rather than from some other planet) and from any class or part of the world you choose: they simply must all be alive at the same historical moment. For *each* character, fill out a Character Checklist, three copies of which are attached to the end of this syllabus. In other words, you will complete this checklist three times.
2. Write 2-3 page scene set in a public space in which you introduce, one-by-one, each of your three characters. For full credit, the scene **MUST** obey the following restrictions:
 - The setting must be a space that all three characters might plausibly share—i.e., a doctor's waiting room, an airport gate, a restaurant, a principal's office, a sports arena, a public street, etc.
 - The point of view must be *objective third person*. This means you will cast the scene from the perspective of some hovering "camera eye" which sees all that transpires within this setting but which has no access to any single character's mind.
 - Each character must *enter* the setting one after the other, preferably in discrete paragraphs.
 - After all three characters have entered the setting, they must all interact in some way.

The trick here is to present each of your three characters *directly*, imparting to your reader as much of the information from the checklist as you can without resorting to indirect (authorial) characterization or interiority. Each assignment will be evaluated according to how vividly and memorably it presents the three characters while still adhering to the restrictions listed above. NOTE: You will submit **BOTH** the three Character Checklists **AND** the 2-3 page scene.

DUE: Friday, September 21

Point of View Exercise

This one builds on your Character Sketch Exercise. There you introduced three characters into a public space and had them interact. Your perspective was that of an objective narrator. Here, you will rewrite the central scene in that episode **three** different times, each version from the perspective of one of the three characters. What's more, each version will represent a different point of view. For instance:

- One character's version will be cast in the first person
- One character's version will be cast in the second person
- One character's version will be cast in the third-person directed

The three versions should be consistent as regards events, so that each character should be wearing the same thing, and saying the same things, in all three versions. The key is to alter the perspective. Although you can condense or even shorten the overall episode so that the individual scenes are not necessarily as long as the original, you must still remain consistent in the overall presentation of events and so on. For a detailed description of the three types of point of view, see Chapter 7 of the Burroway book.

Due Friday, Feb. 18.

Dialogue Exercise

Select a conflict from the left-hand column below and write a two-to-three-page dialogue in which two characters disagree about which choice to make. At the same time, select an activity from the right-hand column below that will serve as the setting/frame for this dialogue. The characters should not only know each other well—brother/sister, husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend—but should also be easily distinguished from one another—fat/skinny, aggressive/passive, smug/sincere. What's more, the two characters should be evenly matched participants in the conflict at hand. Note: the activity you choose does not necessarily have to reflect the conflict; in fact, it can be at total odds with it!

All dialogue and activity must be presented directly. Punctuation counts.

Conflict

1. Should we really start seeing one another, particularly since we're both seeing other people?
2. Why do you (the parents) insist that I (the child) go to college when I want to work?
3. When are we going to tell the children about the divorce?
4. Which of us is going to tell mom and dad about the dent in the car?
5. When are you going to stop drinking? And when are you going to lay off?
6. Should we really tap into the professor's computer and download tomorrow's test?
7. Should we spend any more money on fertility treatments, or should we simply adopt?

Activity

1. Repairing the sink
2. Playing poker
3. Pumping iron in a gym
4. Painting a room
5. Giving someone a haircut
6. Cleaning out a church
7. Assembling a child's bicycle on

Due Friday, October 5

Character Checklist

1. Character's name and possible nickname
2. Age and Gender
3. Race and Class
4. Color/Style of Hair
5. Most prominent facial feature
6. Most prominent bodily feature
7. Style of dress
8. Family situation
9. Occupation
10. Type of home (apartment? house? trailer?)
11. Kind and name of pet (if any)
12. Hobbies
13. Favorite movies
14. Favorite books
15. Favorite CDs
16. Favorite food(s)
17. Secret fear
18. Secret desire
19. Best and Worst character trait
20. Life's ambition

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