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ENGL 301, Advanced Fiction Writing, Fall 2013

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Advanced Fiction Writing ENG 301
Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:45 — Palmer 211
 Texts: *Writing in General and the Short Story in Particular*, Rust Hills
The Early Stories, 1953-1975, John Updike
The Selected Stories, Alice Munro
The Collected Stories, Peter Taylor
In Persuasion Nation, George Saunders
Birds of America, Lorrie Moore

Aug	22	Introduction			
	27	Updike, pp. 1-66		8	Taylor "A Wife of Nashville," "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time," "1939"
	29	Updike, pp 67-125;			
	30	Narrative #1 Due		10	Workshop, Group 2, Story 2
Sept	3	Updike: "Dear Alexandros," "Wife-Wooing," "The Lifeguard"		15	Midterm Break
		"Unstuck," "Giving Blood," "The Day of the Dying Rabbit"		18	Taylor, "What You Hear from 'Em?" "Guests," "Heads of Houses" " <i>Je Suis Perdu</i> "
	5	Workshop, Group 1, Story 1			
				22	Saunders, pp. 1-88
	10	Updike, "The Music School," "Sublimating," "Eros Rampant," "Separating" "Problems"		24	Workshop, Group 3, Story 2
				29	Saunders, pp. 89-end
	12	Workshop, Group 2, Story 1		31	Workshop, Group 1, Story 3
	17	Munro, "Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You," "The Ottawa Valley," "Material,"	Nov	5	Moore, pp. 5-46
				7	Workshop, Group 2, Story 3
	19	Workshop, Group 3, Story 1		12	Moore, pp. 47-95; 177-211
				14	Workshop, Group 3, Story 3
	24	Munro, "Wild Swans" "The Beggar Maid," "The Moons of Jupiter"		18	Narrative #3 Due
	26	Munro, "Friend of My Youth," "Menasetung," "Vandals"		19	Moore, pp. 212-291
				21	Workshop, Group 1, Story 4
	27	Narrative #2 Due			
				26	Workshop, Group 2, Story 4
				28	Thanksgiving Break
Oct	1	Taylor, "Dean of Men," "The Other Times," "At the Drugstore"			
	3	Workshop, Group 1, Story 2	Dec	3	Workshop, Group 3, Story 4
					Portfolios Due

English 301 Policies

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this class we will read, discuss, write, and revise **literary short fiction**. Literary fiction discloses truths about human experience in a moving and artful way. It strives for seamless mimesis while simultaneously making resourceful and aesthetically sound use of all the various aspects of storytelling, including language, point of view, plot, character, setting, metaphor, symbolism and tone. In short, you will endeavor to write *literature*. For the purposes of the class, you cannot write genre fiction—that is, fantasy, science fiction, mystery, children’s fiction, young adult fiction, and so on.

WRITING LOAD: Each of you will write and revise four (4) complete short stories during the course of this semester. You may write about whatever you wish. Each story submitted for discussion must consist of at least 6 double-spaced pages and should be “complete,” with a worked out ending—even a bad one. (Coming up with better endings is one of the things workshop is for). If you are working on a novel or a novella, you can submit installments, yet these, too, must consist of self-contained units (i.e., “chapters” or “parts”). At the end of the semester, you will gather these revised stories into a portfolio, which you will submit to me for final evaluation. While there is no page limit on the total number of pages you write, there is a minimum requirement of 25 typewritten, double-spaced pages. If, for whatever reason, one of your stories does not make the packet, your portfolio grade will automatically be docked a full grade.

Everyone will also write three (3) three-to-five page narratives, either complete “short-short” stories or self-contained episodes from stories that might or might not someday exist. These narratives can be about whatever you wish. The only guidelines are as follows:

Narrative #1 [August 30] In honor of John Updike’s “Olinger Stories,” write a 3-5 narrative reconstruction of a famous episode from an equally famous television sitcom—*The Brady Bunch*, *Leave It To Beaver*, *Family Matters*, *Saved by the Bell*, *The Cosby Show*, etc—being careful to cast the entire piece as a detailed homage to and/or parody of Updike’s style, complete with his ornate similes, winding sentences, and tactical precision.

Narrative #2 [September 27]: Using the third-person objective point of view in the present tense, write a 3-5 page episode cast entirely in dialogue in which two lovers engage in a civilized but still intense argument in the course of which person one either discovers something about the other that he/she didn’t know and which causes a change of heart, or inadvertently reveals something about him/herself that causes a reevaluation of the terms of the argument. Use no quotation marks to distinguish between text and speech, and keep expository prose down to no more than a sentence or two per paragraph.

Narrative #3 [November 18]: Write a 3-5 page piece (or “short short”) that exhibits all the primary components of narrative art—point of view, character, narrative, conflict, resolution—but which has been cast in one of the following forms: the script for a television commercial; a group of questions from the SAT, LSAT, GRE, or the equivalent; a student essay with the teacher’s comments attached; a letter, or series of letters, of complaint to a company regarding that company’s faulty product (and the letter writer’s experience with same); an annotated “discography” of someone’s CD collection.

These narratives will be graded. I will evaluate them according to how convincingly they imitate their models, how accurately they employ the required conventions, how apt those conventions are to the narrative’s subject matter, and how good they are, as a whole, basically. These narratives can be used, in whatever way you deem fit, in subsequent stories, but may not be culled from stories already submitted for workshop.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: We will workshop 3-5 stories per week. Your stories will be due according to a rotating system, so that you come up for discussion about every three or four weeks. 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

I will also begin most Tuesday classes with a brief "pop quiz" on the assigned reading. A failed grade on one of these quizzes will result in an absence on top of any other absences you might already have accrued. Failure to arrive at Thursday workshop with a carefully annotated story packet will also result in an unexcused absence.

ATTENDANCE: You may miss two classes, excused or otherwise, totally free of charge. So skip class wisely, because if you fall ill after you've used up your two misses, too bad. Failed pop quizzes also count as absences. For every absence *after* those initial two, you will be docked a full tier reduction in your fiction portfolio grade (B+ becomes B, B becomes B-).

GRADING:	Fiction Portfolio	70%
	Narratives	30%

PLAGIARISM: All work submitted for this course must be not only new but also your own. If you want to turn in a revised version of a story you wrote for another fiction-writing class here at Rhodes or elsewhere, *you must get permission from me in advance*. This is very important. See especially the attached sheet. In general, the stories are, without caveat, subject to the requirements of the Honor System.

STORY GROUPS

GROUP 1

GROUP 2

GROUP 3
