

Creative Writing: Fiction (212) Section: 002 CRN: 13396	
Spring 2019 Building: ARM-D Room 119	
Instructor: Daniel Al-Daqa	
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Office: Colson Hall 230	Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday 10:15-11:15 AM or by appointment

Required Materials

- You won't need to purchase any books for this class. Instead, course texts will be posted to eCampus or occasionally distributed in person.
- A writer's journal
- Please bring a notebook and pen or pencil daily. Laptops will not be necessary.
- Online readings, your own manuscripts, and workshop letters should always be printed and brought to class.

Introduction

Welcome to English 212 Fiction. This course explores the craft of writing and the process of reading fiction. In addition to weekly (usually daily) readings of published work, we'll be using a workshop model to share our own writing and providing feedback as a way of learning to talk about fiction. If you are not willing to share your work with other developing writers, this class isn't for you.

Throughout the course we will focus on realism. Texts may at times be brutal. They will make you feel something. Ultimately, though, they will show you how to portray real life. We will not be focusing on science fiction or fantasy. At this stage, an understanding of and reckoning with reality needs to come first.

You will leave this class a better writer. It may be a struggle at times. Fiction is tough work but it's also rewarding and unlike any other work you've done.

Grading

Our course is divided into 1,000 points.

- **Portfolio:** 600 pts. Due at the end of the semester. This includes:
 - A revised version of one short story
 - A reflective piece about your growth and utilization of journaled material in the writing process
 - An array of reading responses, feedback letters, and writing activities to show your growth throughout the course
- **Writing Assignments:** 200 pts. Due throughout the semester
 - Creative writing exercises
 - Reading responses and quizzes
 - Writing process reflections
- **Class Participation:** 200 pts. Includes:
 - Submitting two clean, polished stories to workshop throughout the semester
 - Writing workshop response letters to your peers (also bring a copy for me)

- Contributing to class discussion. You'll find the course far more enjoyable when everyone participates

Overall, you will be graded on effort in all aspects of the course. Please note that late assignments are not accepted. If you anticipate being unable to complete an assignment on time, you must discuss this with me *in advance* of the due date. Perhaps more importantly, you must be present for your workshop day. Failing to be present or failing to provide your peers with constructive criticism will have a significant impact on your grade.

Assignment Guidelines

Stories: Each story you turn in must be on time, typed, proofread and polished, page numbered, and you must provide a hard copy for each class member including myself. Stories may not be emailed. Novel excerpts are not permitted. Your first submission should be a story of at least 6 double spaced pages. This submission should be no longer than 15 double spaced pages. Your second submission will be flash fiction and should be no longer than 1,200 words long.

Writing Exercises: These will take many forms. I will assign prompts in advance of deadlines. Common exercises include undertakings, using found dialogue, reacting to assigned readings, etc.

Feedback: For each workshop you must provide a 250 word (minimum) workshop letter as well as margin comments on each printed manuscript. Comments must be respectful, constructive, and aware of differences in taste. Remember, we are here to workshop stories, not writers. Consider plot, style, character development, setting, etc. rather than critiquing the writer. Late feedback is not accepted unless you discuss with me in advance of the due date.

Journal: This is something you should have on you at all times. You should be recording dialogue/detail that you see out in the world. These details will be used in some of our writing prompts. For example, I might ask you to take a line of dialogue you hear and write a flash fiction piece surrounding it. Journaling is one of the more important parts of the writing process. Especially when it comes to realism. You never know when you'll encounter those details that you just can't make up. Journals will be used when it comes to portfolio reflective writing so plan on writing something weekly (or even better, daily).

Attendance

Attendance is required for this course. I know that sometimes personal situations and required university events make it impossible for you to be in class. That's why a couple absences are allowed but make sure you use them for emergencies.

- Students may miss three days (1 week) of class without penalty.
- Students who miss more than three days (1 week) of class may be penalized up to one letter grade for each additional absence.
- Students who miss more than nine days (3 weeks) of class will be assigned a failing grade for the course.
- Students should note that being late to class three times counts as an absence (six lates counts as two absences and so on...)
- Students who are fifteen minutes or more late to class will not be admitted and will be considered absent

**All absences (*including excused absences*) incurred from the date you register for the course will be recorded and counted toward your total number of absences.

If you are unexpectedly ill or if you have some other personal emergency, contact me immediately and we may be able to negotiate a special arrangement. If you are a **military service person** with possible drill events or deployments please speak to me about a plan for successfully completing all coursework.

Remember, if you miss class on the day you are workshopped you will interrupt the schedule of work for everyone. As previously stated, this *significantly* impacts your grade.

Social Justice

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

Academic Integrity

You are responsible for the integrity of your work. This means that all of your work for this course must be your own and must be created specifically for this course. Failing to maintain the integrity of your work will have serious consequences. We will discuss academic integrity as part of our course, but here are a few things you need to know right away:

Submitting someone else's paper, including papers you obtain online, as your own writing is fraud. It will result in a failing grade for the course and may result in additional action by the Office of Student Conduct.

Copying paragraphs or other passages of someone else's writing without properly citing them is plagiarism. It may result in a grade reduction or failing the course. It, too, may result in additional action by the Office of Student Conduct.

The Eberly College of Arts and Sciences provides a helpful online resource for undergraduate students on understanding and avoiding plagiarism (<http://eberly.wvu.edu/undergraduate/ug-studies/preventing-plagiarism>). If you have any questions about when and how to document sources, or any other question that will help you avoid unintentional plagiarism, please talk with your instructor, a librarian, or one of the Writing Center tutors in Colson Hall.

Resources

Well WVU: The Students' Center for Health provides resources to help manage stress, improve relationships, make healthy lifestyle choices, and face new challenges and transitions.

Schedule of Work

This course will meet regularly in ARM-D 119. There may be occasional meetings in different locations or canceled classes for conferences, so please pay attention to the schedule of work and regularly check your MIX email for updates. The schedule of work below is subject to changes based on our progress.

Weeks	Topics and Activities	Assignments and Readings
Week 1 January 7-11 *January 7 is the first day of classes	Monday: -Introductions -Syllabus Review -How to talk about fiction -Realism	**Unless distributed in class (or otherwise noted), readings will be available on eCampus**
	Wednesday: -Reading discussion -The fiction/non-fiction line -In-class writing	Due: Read “How to Tell a True War Story” by Tim O’Brien. Write a short reading response and upload it to eCampus <u>before class</u> . I’ll post a sample reading response as an example.
	Friday: -Reading Quiz -“Real Life” discussion -POV, opening lines, tension -Opening lines handout	Due: Read “Real Life” by Donald Ray Pollock. Upload a reading response to eCampus <u>before class</u> . Discuss openings and the promise they make about the story which follows. Expect a reading quiz.
Week 2 January 14-18	Monday: -Reading Quiz -Sharing Undertakings -“Bettering Myself” discussion -Introduce Submission #1 with guidelines	Due: Read “Bettering Myself” by Ottessa Moshfegh -Undertaking #1 to be submitted in class as a paper copy (one full single spaced page) -NO READING RESPONSE THIS WEEK -Expect a reading quiz
	Wednesday: -Reading Quiz -Warm-up writing: Start with “We were on our way to...” -Reading discussion	Due: Read “Ysrael” by Junot Diaz -Upload a reading response to eCampus before class. Discuss how Spanish terms and phrases are used. Consider setting and character motivation. -Expect a reading quiz
	Friday: -Reading Quiz -“Anything Helps” discussion -Considering POV	Due: Read “Anything Helps” by Jess Walter -Upload a reading response to eCampus before class. Focus on insider knowledge and the use of unique details. Expect a reading quiz
Week 3 January 21-25 *Monday Jan 21 is MLK Day	Monday: NO CLASS	
	Wednesday: -Reading quiz -Sharing Undertakings -Reading discussion -Considering how to handle immoral characters	Due: Read Tim McLaurin excerpt -Upload a reading response to eCampus. Discuss how “bad” characters are humanized and the effect that has on the reader. -Undertaking #2 due in class as a hard copy (one single spaced page) -Expect a reading quiz
	Friday: -Workshop protocol/expectations (one thing	Due: Read the opening chapter of David Joy’s <i>The Line That Held Us</i>

	you like, one critique you might make) -Reading discussion	-Upload a reading response to eCampus. Consider dialect and setting building -Expect a reading quiz
Week 4 January 28- February 1	Monday: -Reading Quiz -Found Dialogue Discussion -Reading Discussion (tension building)	Due: Read "Mr. Z" by Oscar Casares. -Found Dialogue #1 due in class as a hard copy (one single spaced page) -NO READING RESPONSE DUE -Expect a reading quiz
	Wednesday: -Generating Ideas -Situation and Voice Activity -Writerly videos and advice (The Rough South of Tim McLaurin)	No Homework
	Friday: -Generating ideas continued -Picture prompts	Due: First story submission (on eCampus before class) -Copies of submission #1 distributed for the first round of workshop on Monday
Week 5 February 4- February 8	Monday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters (one copy for me and one for the writer)
	Wednesday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Friday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
Week 6 February 11- February 15	Monday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Wednesday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Friday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
Week 7 February 18- February 22	Monday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Wednesday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Friday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
Week 8 February 25- March 1 *Mid-semester reports due March 1 by noon	Monday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Wednesday: CONFERENCES (NO REGULAR CLASS MEETING)	
	Friday: -Harry Crews documentary clips -Discussion	Due: Harry Crews Reading TBA
Week 9 March 4- March 8	Monday: -Reading Quiz -Discussion	Due:

	-Further considering the fiction/non-fiction line	-Read "Corn Maze" by Pam Houston. Upload a reading response to eCampus before class. Focus on what advice you found meaningful -Expect a reading quiz
	Wednesday: -Reading Quiz -Discussion -Stereotypical characters	Due: Read Scott McClanahan excerpt -Upload a reading response to eCampus -Expect a quiz
	Friday: -Reading quiz and discussion -Real life experience and its role in fiction writing	Due: Undertaking #3 (one single spaced page) -Read "Get a Job: The Importance of Work in Prose and Poetry" by Benjamin Percy -NO READING RESPONSE DUE -Expect a reading quiz
Week 10		
SPRING BREAK		
Week 11 March 18-March 22 *March 22 is the last day to drop a class	Monday: TBA BASED ON READING	Due: Larry Brown Reading TBA
	Wednesday: -Polishing the second submission -Writing backstory using one of your characters -What needs to be on the page, what needs to be in your mind	No Homework
	Friday: -Syntax -The little things that make a big difference	Due: Workshop Submission #2 submitted on eCampus before class - Manuscript copies for those being workshopped in round 1 on Mon.
Week 12 March 25-March 29	Monday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters (one copy for me and one for the writer)
	Wednesday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Friday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
Week 13 April 1- April 5	Monday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Wednesday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Friday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
Week 14 April 8-April 12	Monday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Wednesday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Friday:	Due: Workshop Letters

	Workshop	
Week 15 April 15-April 19 *University closed April 19	Monday: Workshop	Due: Workshop Letters
	Wednesday: TBA based on workshop progress	Due: BREECE PANCAKE READING TBA
	Friday: NO CLASS (UNIVERSITY CLOSED)	
Week 16 April 22-April 26 * April 25 – last day to withdraw * April 26 – last day of classes	Monday: TBA based on Workshop progress	Due: READING TBA
	Wednesday: CONFERENCES (NO REGULAR CLASS MEETING)	
	Friday: End of Semester Party	Due: Final Portfolio submitted in person as a stapled and page-numbered hard copy