

ENGLISH 618A

Professor Mark Brazaitis

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Office Hours: Tuesday (12-1), Thursday (12-1) and by appointment

Email: Mark.Brazaitis@mail.wvu.edu

Class Hours: Monday 7-9:50 p.m.

Class Location: 223 Colson Hall

Objective: In this class, you will learn to become a better fiction writer. To become a better fiction writer, you must dedicate yourself to both writing and reading fiction, and this class will allow you to do both.

Requirements: Over the course of the semester, you will read two novels (James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and Francisco Goldman's *Say Her Name*), selections from two collections of short stories (Joyce Carol Oates's *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories* and Marie-Helene Bertino's *Safe as Houses*), and other works.

Grades: Grades will be based on the effort you put into all aspects of the class. I expect everyone to earn an 'A.' If you are doing less than 'A' work, I will let you know.

Submitting Work: Your stories (or novel chapters) are due a week before they are critiqued and will be handed out in class. You should make photocopies for everyone in the class and your instructor. If you fail to hand in your story on time, it's your responsibility to get your story to your instructor and your classmates well ahead of the next class. (Emailing your story is not acceptable). If you miss a class during which stories are handed out, please contact the author about getting the story. You may turn in a maximum of forty pages per submission period (as long as it is a continuous work—i.e. a very long story or a series of novel chapters). You may turn in three short-shorts at a time.

Feedback on Your Peers' Work: You should provide a page or so of typed (12 point) comments on each piece you critique. In-text comments are helpful and appreciated but not required. Your comments should be professional, courteous, and clear. Should workshop members fail to provide adequate feedback, or should the feedback fail to be professional, courteous, and clear, a system of undergraduate-style grading of feedback will be implemented.

Workshop Method: Do not address the writer by name. Refer to the writer as "the writer" or "the author." When called on, be prepared to offer one positive comment (what you thought was effective about the work) and one suggestion (what could be improved in the work and how). Do your best not to repeat the comments of your classmates.

Your Work: I would love to read everything you've ever written. Unfortunately, I have to restrict myself to what you submit to this class. Exception: if you've asked me to chair or be a part of your thesis committee.

Class Schedule and Day-to-Day Assignments

Monday, August 19 Get acquainted.

Monday, August 26 Workshop. Read James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*.

Monday, September 2 Labor Day

Monday, September 9 Workshop. Read "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Yellow Wallpaper" (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)

Monday, September 16 Workshop. Read "Battle Royal" and "Sonny's Blues" (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)

Special Event: Thursday, September 19, at 7:30 p.m. in Colson Hall room 130, fiction and nonfiction writer Gary Fincke will be reading.

Monday, September 23 Workshop. Read "Are These Actual Miles?," "The Things They Carried," and "Edison, New Jersey" (*Oxford Book of American Short Stories*)

Monday, September 30 Jenisse Ray reading. No class.

Special Event: Thursday, October 3, at 11 a.m. in Colson Hall room 130, fiction writer Sarah Gerkenmeyer will answer questions about writing and the writing life.

Monday, October 7 Workshop. Read "Free Ham," "Sometimes You Break Their Hearts, Sometimes They Break Yours," and "The Idea of Marcel" by Marie-Helene Bertino.

Monday, October 14 Fall Break

Special Event: Thursday, October 17, at 7:30 p.m. in the Robinson Reading Room of the downtown library, memoirist Beverly Donofrio will read.

Monday, October 21. Workshop Read: "North Of," "This is Your Will to Live," and "Great, Wondrous" by Marie-Helene Bertino.

Monday, October 28 Workshop. Read: "Safe as Houses" and "Carry Me Home, Sisters of Saint Joseph" by Marie-Helene Bertino.

Special Event: Tuesday, October 29, at 10 a.m. in room 130 of Colson Hall, singer and poet Hugh Blumenfeld will read and perform.

Monday, November 11 Workshop. Read: *Say Her Name* by Francisco Goldman (chapters 1 through 10).

Special Event: Wednesday, November 13, at 7:30 p.m. in the Rhododendron Room of the Mountainlair: “Extending a Hand: Personal, Literary, Historical, and Political Perspectives on U.S. Efforts to Aid the Developing World” (panel led by Mark Brazaitis)

Monday, November 18 Workshop. Read: *Say Her Name* by Francisco Goldman (chapters 11 through 18).

Thanksgiving Break --- Enjoy

Monday, December 2 Read: *Say Her Name* by Francisco Goldman (chapters 19 to the end of the book).

Monday, December 9 Workshop. Conversation on publishing.

Core Values/Social Justice at West Virginia University

The following core values establish the foundation for Social Justice at West Virginia University.

Every person has intrinsic worth and dignity;

Respect for the law is fundamental;

Freedom from fear is universal;

A climate of opportunity, mutual respect, and understanding engenders a feeling that the future should be shared by all community members;

There is an absence of discrimination and harassment based on age, color, disability, ethnic origin, marital status, pregnancy, race, religious beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, and veteran status; and

The rich diversity of people, their cultures, and the bonds that tie people together are appreciated and celebrated.

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. Also, Accessibility Services has moved to Suite 250 at 1085 VanVoorhis Rd (beside Applebee’s and across from the Mountaineer Station transportation center). The phone number is 304-293-6700, and email is access2@mail.wvu.edu. Access the website at <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu>