

English 312

Mark Brazaitis, ENGL 312, Fall 2005, Creative Writing Wksp: Fiction

Professor Mark Brazaitis

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Office Hours: Tuesday (12:00-1:00), Thursday (2:30-3:45) and by appointment

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Class Hours: Thursday, 4-6:50

Class Location: 46 C Stansbury

Objective : In this class, you will learn how 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 (read: require you) to do both.

Requirements : Over the course of the semester, you will read fifteen published short stories and one published novel and write at least two short stories of three pages or more. In addition, you will be required to complete ten short writing exercises. Finally, you will be evaluated on the written feedback you give to your fellow students.

Quizzes : Whenever a published short story or novel is assigned, you will be quizzed on it. This brief, objective quiz is designed to give credit to students who do the reading and to encourage everyone to participate in class discussion about the works we read. Although there will be no make-up quizzes, your worst quiz score, including a quiz you might have missed, will be eliminated.

Take-Home Exercises : Take-home exercises are given below. They should be at least 3/4 of a page but no more than three pages. You should type all take-home exercises because you will be handing them in. Please hand in the take-home exercises on time, as late exercises will be penalized. (If you're going to miss class, have a classmate deliver your take-home exercise to me or send it to me as an email attachment before class.)

Texts : *The Iowa Award: The Best Stories 1991-2000* (edited by Frank Conroy); *The Dew Breaker* (Edwidge Danticat); and *Birds of America* (Lorrie Moore).

Grades : Grades in this class will be based on the following: attendance (10 percent); class participation (10 percent); quizzes (20 percent), take-home exercises (30 percent); feedback

given to fellow students (10 percent); short stories (20 percent). (Attendance: 0-1 absence A; 2 absences B; 3 absences C-; 4 or more absences F)

Class Schedule and Day-to-Day Assignments

Thursday, August 25 Get acquainted.

Thursday, September 1 Read: “The World With My Mother Still in It” (page 38) and “Nothing” (page 59) in *The Iowa Award* and “People Like That Are the Only People Here” (page 212) in *Birds of America*.

Thursday, September 8 Read: “Hints of His Mortality” (page 1) in *The Iowa Award* and “Willing” (page 5) in *Birds of America*. Due: Take-home exercise: Write about the first—or the most memorable—fight (either physical or verbal) you ever witnessed.

Thursday, September 15 Read: “Stealing Trees” (page 91) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: Write a description of your favorite (or least favorite) place.

Thursday, September 22 Read: “Where Love Leaves Us” (page 101) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: Two friends are canoeing. One of the friends falls into the water and says, “Help, I’m drowning!” The other friend doesn’t know how to swim. Write about what this other friend does or doesn’t do.

Thursday, September 29 Read: “Ambulance” (page 120) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: Write about a dramatic occurrence such as a bank robbery, a murder, a suicide or anything else you can think of.

Thursday, October 6 Read: “The End of Romance” (page 128) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: A man and woman are eating dinner in a restaurant. They begin to argue. Write the scene from either the man’s or the woman’s point of view. Next, write the same scene from the waiter’s point of view.

Thursday, October 13 Read: “Igloo Among Palms” (page 146) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: A woman has just left her husband, a man has just lost his dog. They meet in a park. Write what they say to each other.

Thursday, October 20 Read: “Out of the Girls’ Room and into the Night” (page 166) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: Write the most captivating opening to a story you can think of.

Thursday, October 27 Read: “The Oracle” (page 192) in *The Iowa Award*. Due: Take-home exercise: Describe someone you know without using any adjectives or adverbs, then describe the same person using as many adjectives and adverbs as you want.

Thursday, November 3 Read: “Dreams of Goa” by Gail Adams, who will be visiting our class. (Professor Adams’ story will be handed out at least a week prior to this class.) In lieu of a quiz,

I'll ask you to submit to me (via email) a question you'll ask Professor Adams about her story when she visits. Due: Take-home exercise: Write a dramatic monologue (one person speaking).

Thursday, November 10 Read: "Real Estate" (page 177) in *Birds of America*. Due: Take-home exercise: Revise one of your take-home assignments. Hand in both the first draft and your revision.

Tuesday, November 17 Read: "Terrific Mother" (page 251) in *Birds of America*.

THANKSGIVING RECESS

Thursday, December 1 Read: Pages 1 to 120 of *The Dew Breaker*.

Thursday, December 8 Read: Pages 121 to the end of *The Dew Breaker*.

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.