

## ENGLISH 212

Professor Mark Brazaitis

Office: 219 Colson Hall

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Thursdays (3-4 p.m.) and by appointment

Email: Mark.Brazaitis@mail.wvu.edu

Class Hours: TTh 8:30 a.m.-9:45 a.m.

Class Location: Armstrong 403

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

Requirements: Over the course of the semester, you will read more than twenty short stories and one novel and write (and revise) one short story. In addition, you will be required to complete six short writing exercises. Finally, you will read and comment on the work of your classmates.

Quizzes: Whenever a short story 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 stories and novel 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 between 3/4 of a page and three pages (no longer, please). You should type (double space) all take-home exercises because you will be handing them in. For full credit, please hand in the take-home exercises on time. Late assignments will be accepted (with a 10-point penalty) only during the week after they are due. After this, they will receive a zero. If you are 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 Oxford Book of American Short Stories* (edited by Joyce Carol Oates); *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Mohsin Hamid); and *When Mystical Creatures Attack!* (Kathleen Founds).

Grades: Grades in this class will be based on the following: attendance/class participation (10 percent); quizzes (20 percent); written feedback given to fellow students on their stories (10 percent); take-home exercises (30 percent); short story (20 percent); revision of short story (10 percent). Grading Key: 100=A+; 94-99=A; 90-93=A-; 85-89=B+; 83-84=B; 80-82=B-; 75-79=C+; 73-74=C; 70-72=C-; 65-69=D+; 63-64=D; 60-62=D-; 59 and below=F.

Attendance: Attendance will be graded as follows: 0-2 absences (A); 3-4 absences (B); 5-7 absences (C); 8 or more absences (F). (If you are absent eight or more times, you will have difficulty passing this class.)

Extra credit: You may attend and write a one-page review of one or both of the “special events” listed below. A review consists of a summary of the event as well as your opinion of the event. (Please type your review. It should be between 1 and 2 pages.) The extra credit assignment counts for three extra points on one of your take-home exercises.

**Note on your writing:** You are expected to produce quality *literary* writing. Please, no genre writing (science fiction, romance, horror, fantasy). The world you create in your fiction doesn’t necessarily have to be realistic, but your characters must be human and complex. No superheroes, trolls, elves, etc.—unless they are profoundly complex and engaging.

### Class Schedule and Day-to-Day Assignments

Thursday, August 22 Get acquainted

Tuesday, August 27 Lecture (character) and in-class exercises.

Thursday, August 29 **Due:** Take-home exercise. Take-home exercise: Put your protagonist in a situation in which he or she must make a decision between options of equal consequence. Be sure to describe your protagonist physically.

Tuesday, September 3 Lecture (plot) and in-class exercises.

Thursday, September 5 Read: “Red-Headed Baby” (page 360) and “Hell-Heaven” (page 837) in the *Oxford Book of American Short Stories*. **Due:** Take-home exercise. Take-home exercise: Write a brief story or scene in which your protagonist wants something and seeks (with difficulty) to get it.

Tuesday, September 10 Lecture (point of view) and in-class exercises.

Thursday, September 12 Read: “The Tell-Tale Heart” (page 67) and “The Yellow Wallpaper” (page 191) in the *Oxford Book of American Short Stories*. **Due:** Take-home exercise. Take-home exercise: Write a scene from one character’s point of view. Write the same scene from another character’s point of view.

Tuesday, September 17 Lecture (setting) and in-class exercises.

Thursday, September 19 Read: Class will not meet in person. Please email me (as a PDF) your take-home exercise. **Due:** Take-home exercise. Take-home exercise: Write a scene set in a specific place (the Blue Moose, the Mountainlair, the Pleasant Street Bridge, etc.) in Morgantown.

Tuesday, September 24 Lecture (dialogue) and in-class exercises.

Thursday, September 26 Read: “The Man Who Was Almost a Man” (page 365) and “Are These Actual Miles?” (page 610) in the *Oxford Book of American Short Stories*. **Due**: Take-home exercise. Take-home exercise: Write a scene in which two people of very different backgrounds speak to each other.

**Special Event**: Monday, September 30 — writer Megan Steilstra will read at 7:30 p.m. in the Milano Reading Room of WVU’s downtown campus.

Tuesday, October 1 Lecture (style) and in-class exercises.

Thursday, October 3 Read: “Heat” (page 619) and “Edison, New Jersey” (page 857). **Due**: Take-home exercise. Take-home exercise: Write a story opening or scene in the style of one of the authors we’ve read so far in class.

Tuesday, October 8 Read: chapters 1 to 7 of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Thursday, October 10 Fall break — no class.

Tuesday, October 15 Read: chapters 8 to the end of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Thursday, October 17 **Due**: your workshop story, which should be between 5 and 15 typed, double-spaced pages (no longer, please). Bring in enough copies for everyone in the class and your instructor. (This will be approximately 20 copies. I will give you an accurate number as the date approaches.)

**Special Event**: Monday, October 21 — writer Silas House will be reading at 7:30 p.m. in the Milano Room of WVU’s downtown library.

Tuesday, October 22 Workshop Read: “Hills Like White Elephants” (page 353).

Thursday, October 24 Workshop Read: “That Evening Sun” (page 335).

Tuesday, October 29 Workshop Read: “An Alcoholic Case” (page 326).

Thursday, October 31 Workshop Read: “The Country Husband” (page 415).

Tuesday, November 5 Workshop Read: “Battle Royal” (page 441).

Thursday, November 7 Workshop Read: “The Lottery” (page 464).

Tuesday, November 12 Workshop Read: “The School” (page 531).

Thursday, November 14 Workshop Read: “The Persistence of Desire” (page 535).

Tuesday, November 19 Workshop Read: “Give It Up for Billy” (page 644).

Thursday, November 21 Workshop

*Saturday, November 23 through Sunday, December 1 —Fall Recess – Enjoy!*

Tuesday, December 3 Read: From “When Mystical Creatures Attack!” through “Today is My Birthday” in *When Mystical Creatures Attack!*

Thursday, December 5 Read: From “Frankye” to “Their Trunks Were Their Handles” in *When Mystical Creatures Attack!*

Tuesday, December 10 Read: From “Virtue of the Month” to the end of *When Mystical Creatures Attack!*

Thursday, December 12 In-class reading of an excerpt from your revised story. **Due**: Your story revision. Please send it to me as an email attachment by the end of the day.

### **Inclusivity Statement**

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 your classes, please advise your instructors and make appropriate arrangements with [the Office of Accessibility Services](https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/).  
(<https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>)

More information is available at the [Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](https://diversity.wvu.edu/) (<https://diversity.wvu.edu/>) as well.

## **Important Telephone Numbers**

1. [911](#) (9-911 from campus phones)
2. Department of Public Safety / Campus Police: [\(304\) 293-2677](#)
3. Environmental Health and Safety: [\(304\) 293-3792](#)
4. Health Sciences Safety Office: [\(304\) 293-6924](#)
5. Carruth Center for Counseling and Psychological Services: [\(304\) 293-4431](#)
6. Faculty-Staff Assistance Program: [\(304\) 293-5590](#)
7. Parents Club Hotline: [1 \(800\) 988-0096](#)

8. Student Health Service: [\(304\) 285-7200](tel:(304)285-7200)

## **Student Emergencies Numbers**

In the event of emergencies involving WVU students, students and parents should contact the Office of Campus and Community Life at [\(304\) 293-5611](tel:(304)293-5611).

If the emergency occurs outside normal business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:15 am – 4:45 pm), please call the Department of Public Safety at [\(304\) 293-3136](tel:(304)293-3136) where someone is on call 24 hours a day.