

ENGLISH 312

Professor Mark Brazaitis

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays (9-9:50 a.m.) and by appointment

Email: Mark.Brazaitis@mail.wvu.edu

Class Hours: TTh 10 a.m.-11:15 a.m.

Class Location: Armstrong Hall 121

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 give you the opportunity to do both.

Requirements: Over the course of the semester, you will read more than a dozen stories and two novels and write three short stories (or novel excerpts). In addition, you will be required to complete a revision of one of the pieces you submit. Finally, you will read and comment on the work of your classmates.

Quizzes: Whenever a 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 stories and novels we read. If you are unable to attend a class and you would like credit for the quiz, you may email me (as an attachment) a 200-word summary of the reading before class.

Texts: *First Love* (Ivan Turgenev); *Bright Lights, Big City* (Jay McInerney); *Her Body and Other Parties* (Carmen Maria Machado), and *Happy Like This* (Ashley Wurzbacher).

Grades: Grades in this class will be based on the following: attendance (10 percent); quizzes (10 percent); written feedback given to fellow students on their stories (10 percent); short stories (60 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 a percentage of the classes you attend. If you attend all classes, that's 100 percent. (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 the "special event" 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 five extra points on one of your stories.

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

Tuesday, January 14 Getting acquainted. What makes a successful story? Writing exercise.

Thursday, January 16 Read: “The Husband Stitch” in *Her Body and Other Parties*. Writing exercise.

Tuesday, January 21 Read: “Ripped” in *Happy Like This*. Writing exercise.

Thursday, January 23 Read: “Inventory” in *Her Body and Other Parties*. Writing exercise.

Tuesday, January 28. Read: *First Love* by Ivan Turgenev **Due**: Your first story or novel excerpt. It should be between 5 and 15 pages. (You will bring in copies for everyone in the class. I will give you a specific number as this date approaches.) Practice workshop.

Thursday, January 30 Workshop

Tuesday, February 4 Workshop

Thursday, February 6 Workshop

Tuesday, February 11. Workshop

Thursday, February 13 Workshop

Tuesday, February 18 Workshop Read: “Fake Mermaid” in *Happy Like This*.

Thursday, February 20 Workshop Read: “Mothers” in *Her Body and Other Parties*.

Tuesday, February 25. Workshop Read: “Happy Like That” in *Happy Like This*.

Thursday, February 27 Workshop Read: “Make Yourself at Home” in *Happy Like This*.

Wednesday, January 28 — Nonfiction writer Crystal Wilkinson will give a reading. Time and place TBA.

Tuesday, March 3 Workshop Read: “The Resident” in *Her Body and Other Parties*.

Thursday, March 5 Read: from the beginning through “A Womb with a View” in *Bright Lights, Big City*

Tuesday, March 10 Read: from “Les Jeux Sont Faits” through “O Couture!” in *Bright Lights, Big City*.

Thursday, March 12 Read: from “Linguine and Sympathy” to the end of *Bright Lights, Big City*. **Due**: your second story (Bring in copies for everyone in the class. I will give you a specific number as this date approaches.)

March 14-March 22 Spring break — enjoy!

Tuesday, March 24 Workshop

Thursday, March 26 Workshop

Tuesday, March 31 Workshop

Thursday, April 2 Workshop

Tuesday, April 7 Workshop

Thursday, April 9 Workshop

Tuesday, April 14 Workshop

Thursday, April 16 Lecture: Writing the short-short story.

Tuesday, April 21 **Due**: Your third story. It should be between 2 and 5 pages. (Bring in copies for everyone in the class. I will give you a specific number as this date approaches.)

Thursday, April 23 Workshop

Tuesday, April 28 Workshop

Thursday, April 30 Workshop

Monday, May 4 **Due**: A revision of one of your stories. Please send it to me as an email attachment (Word or PDF) by the end of the day (11:59 p.m.).

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](#)

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](#).

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](#) where someone is on call 24 hours a day.