

Carleton University  
Fall 2015  
Department of English

**ENGL 2903A: FICTION WORKSHOP**

**\*\* (By permission of instructor based on a portfolio; see below)**

**Tuesdays 11:35-2:25**  
**Location: PA 240 (Please verify on Carleton Central)**

**Instructor: Professor Nadia Bozak**

**Office/Hours: Dunton Tower 1918, Tuesdays 2:30-3:30**

**Email: [nadia.bozak@carleton.ca](mailto:nadia.bozak@carleton.ca)**

***\*\*This course has a limited enrollment. Students are admitted by permission of the instructor based on the quality of a fiction portfolio submitted in accordance with the following guidelines:***

**Portfolio Submission Guidelines:**

1. Please submit a fiction portfolio containing no more than 10-12 pages (double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font) of your best, most polished fiction. This may include (but is not limited to) excerpts from novels, short stories, dramatic monologues, etc. If you are in doubt about what is permissible, please contact me to inquire.
2. Please include a title (if any) and a brief note on the work (or works) which states the genre (short story, novel excerpt, etc.) and/or any contextualizing information (particularly if it is an excerpt). This latter information should not be more than a few lines. For example, "This excerpt is from a short story I wrote last year about a woman, Rena, who is learning how to drive as an adult. We pick up the action mid-way as Rena's teenage daughter is trying to teach her mom how to parallel park."
3. Please include a brief biographical statement (about 150 words) which includes: information about your academic self (course of study, level, future academic ambitions if any); any previous experience in a writing/ creative writing course or any publications (fiction, poetry, non-fiction); what you hope to gain from this workshop.

4. Include a title page with your name, Carleton student ID and Carleton email address.
5. **Alternate course selection:** You should register in an alternate course while awaiting a decision on your creative writing portfolio submission. If you are accepted into the workshop, you can then drop the alternate course.

You do not need experience in a creative writing course to take this course.

NOTE WELL: send only your best work. Anything less might diminish rather than enhance your portfolio. If you have less than ten pages, send what you do have and an explanatory note.

Please e-mail your portfolio to [nadia.bozak@carleton.ca](mailto:nadia.bozak@carleton.ca)

### Course Description

The objective of this introductory fiction-writing workshop is to develop students' creative writing skills and, attendant to that, their reading and editorial skills as well. Students in this workshop are expected to have a sincere interest in writing fiction and a willingness to learn the fundamental elements of the craft (such as plot, character, perspective, style, and setting). While the focus is on writing short fiction—short stories, novel chapters— other formats will be considered as well.

The majority of each class will be spent critiquing and discussing each others' short fiction manuscripts. However, over the term students will also prepare a short presentation on an assigned topic, participate in targeted in-class writing exercises, and as a class perform close readings of short stories by Anton Chekhov, Sandra Cisneros, Flannery O'Connor, Alice Munro, Raymond Carver, Chimimanda Ngozi Adichie, and William Faulkner. Previous experience in a creative writing course is not required.

**Note well:** The success of this class and your development as a writer depends upon attending each and every session, contributing to discussions, and fully engaging with in-class exercises and workshops (critiques). You must, therefore, be ready to circulate your creative work among your peers and have it openly discussed in class. Such workshoping is premised on give-and-take: as well as receiving and perhaps integrating the comments of others into your writing, you will offer your peers constructive, thoughtful and forthright critiques as well.

**Required Text (available at Haven Books; 43 Seneca at Sunnyside; 613-730-9888)**

Jack Hodgins, *A Passion for Narrative: A Guide for Writing Fiction, Third Edition* (McClelland and Stewart, 2001). This is a chatty, accessible guide, filled with excellent examples and writing exercises which will serve you well in years to come.

**Additional Required Readings (available on short-term loan in the library)**

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, "The Thing Around Your Neck." *The Thing Around Your Neck*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009. 115-127

Carver, Raymond. "Popular Mechanics" *What We Talk about When We Talk About Love*. London: The Harvil Press, 1996. 67-74.

Chekhov, Anton. "Lady with the Dog." *The Lady with the Dog and Other Stories*. Trans. Constance Garnet. New York: The Ecco Press, 1972. 1-28.

Cisneros, Sandra. "A Rice Sandwich"; "Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark." *The House on Mango Street*. Houston: Atre Publico, 1988. 43-45; 56-57.

Faulkner, William. "Barn Burning." *Collected Stories of William Faulker*. New York: Vintage International, 1995. 3-25.

Gallant, Mavis. "Irina." *From the Fifteenth District*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979. 289-313.

Munro, Alice. "What is Real?" *Making It New: Contemporary Canadian Stories*. Ed. John Metcalfe. Toronto: Methuen, 1982. 331-334.

--- "Ottawa Valley." *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson 1974. 227-246.

O'Connor, Flannery. "A Good Man is Hard to Find." *A Good Man is Hard to Find and Other Stories*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955. 9-29.

--- "Writing Short Stories." *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*. New York: Farrar, Giroux & Strauss, 1984. 83-106

**Evaluation:**

- 1) **40%**: Quality and originality of TWO short fiction manuscripts (10 pages **maximum** each) submitted **a)** for workshops and **b)** to the instructor in a revised form within two-weeks of being workshopped.  
Effort and creativity are taken into consideration when grading.

As the labour of revision/re-writing is the foundation of all creative writing, a 10% portion of the above mark includes submitting (to the instructor) a draft of your work revised in accordance with (or contrary to) the comments received in workshop.

This revised manuscript will include a separate **FORMAL** summary (2 pages) reflecting upon why or why not you have integrated comments received in the workshop and what it was like to experience the workshop process.

\*See the “Further Guidelines” sheet with more details on formatting your manuscript and writing this summary.

2) **15%:** Quality of editorial comments given to the work of others.

Each week students will read and comment upon manuscripts submitted by fellow class members. These manuscripts will be returned to their respective writers, marked with respectful editorial commentary and a 2-3 sentence summary. Please note that I also read the comments. The above grade also includes in-class comments offered to your fellow classmates about their manuscripts.

\*See the “Further Guidelines” sheet for more details on editorial comments.

3) **15%:** Presentation

This presentation should be **10-12 minutes** in length, put together with the aim to generate class discussion about an assigned topic and/or a story from weekly readings. The ability to succinctly organize your points and make good use of examples from the textbook and/or assigned story will be graded.

The presentation and questions will be formally written up (2 pages) and handed in to the instructor on the same day. Always include an MLA works cited list.

A full list of presentations topics and schedule will be decided in Week One.

See the “Further Guidelines” sheet for more details on the presentation.

4) **20%** Participation

Participation is based on: attendance, the quality and frequency of students’ contributions to discussions (including critiques, discussions about readings, and writing exercises), and preparedness. Students must come to class having a) read the textbook & assigned stories and b) prepared to speak about the manuscripts up for critique.

Also: each week the instructor will give students a “take-home” writing prompt which will be handed-in and/or presented in class and will be considered part of participation. One of these will be a “postcard” story that students will revise over the term and then read at the term-end reading.

5) **10% Passages Contribution**

Once over the course of the term each student will post a review of a local reading/ a book that inspires them to write on the Carleton Creative Writing Concentration website, “Passages.”

A schedule for postings will be decided in Week One.

**Thus, over the course of the term you will:**

- do a short presentation
- prepare and revise two 8-10 page manuscripts and write a brief revision summary thereof
- read/comment upon two or three 8-10 page manuscripts weekly
- keep up with the textbook and assigned stories and speak about these readings in class
- Keep up with weekly prompts
- Post a review on “Passages”

**ATTENDANCE, NOTE WELL:**

Students who miss more than three classes without documented evidence will have their mark reduced by one letter grade (ie “A” is reduced to “B”). Allowances will be made for documented medical situations and academic accommodations (see below).

There are no tests or exams. You can expect to devote a minimum of 6-8 hours per week to this course.

**Weekly Course Schedule—Fall 2015**

**Week 1: Introduction and course mechanics**

**Sept. 8**

- Starting out: finding story ideas
- ***Sign up for presentations, feedback reports, and manuscript submissions***
- In-class writing exercises
- Reading due: Hodgins, 9-21; 24-42 & “Popular Mechanics” by Raymond Carver
- ***First submissions by 3 participants are due by Friday the 11th; copies of manuscripts are to be emailed in order to be critiqued in class during Week 2***

**Week 2: Showing and Telling/ Types of Prose****Sept. 15**

- In-class writing exercises
- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
- Reading: Hodgins, 45-68; Chekhov, "The Lady with the Dog"

**Week 3: Voice and Point of View I****Sept. 22**

- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
- Workshop manuscripts
- Reading due: Hodgins, 182-200; Sandra Cisneros "A Rice Sandwich"; "Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark"; Mavis Gallant "Irina"

**Week 4: Voice and Point of View II****Sept. 29**

- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
- Workshop manuscripts
- Reading due: Hodgins, 182-200; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie "The Thing Around Your Neck"

**Week 5: Building Character / Writing Dialogue****Oct. 6**

- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
- Workshop manuscripts
- Reading due: Hodgins, 100-123; Alice Munro "Ottawa Valley"

**Week 6: Setting****Oct. 13**

- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
- Workshop manuscripts
- Reading due: Hodgins, 71-92; William Faulkner "Barn Burning"

**Week 7: Plot****Oct. 20**

- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
- Workshop manuscripts
- Reading due: Hodgins, 126-144; plus supplementary, handed out in class

-----OCTOBER 27, FALL BREAK, UNIVERSITY CLOSED-----

**Week 8: Structure I****Nov. 3**

- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
- Workshop manuscripts
- Reading due: Hodgins, 152-175; Flannery O'Connor, "Writing Short Stories"

**Week 9: Structure II****Nov. 10**

- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
- Workshop manuscripts
- Reading due: Hodgins, 152-175 (yes, same as Week 8), plus supplementary

**Week 10: Metaphor and Symbol****Nov. 17**

- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
- Workshop manuscripts
- Reading due: Hodgins, 205-225; Flannery O'Connor "A Good Man is Hard to Find"

**Week 11: Revising and Editing****Nov. 24**

- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
- Workshop manuscripts
- Reading due: Hodgins: 234-252, plus supplementary

**Week 12: Fiction and Autobiography****Dec. 1**

- Presentations: See schedule, handed out in week one
  - Workshop manuscripts
  - Reading due: Alice Munro: "What is real?"
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## PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.”

This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course. For more information please go to: <http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity>

## ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the Student Guide

<http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/academic/students/>

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the Student Guide above.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing,



and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation.

If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable).

After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable)