

Carleton University  
Department of English  
Summer 2014

**ENGL2903A: Fiction Workshop**

**Schedule: Tuesdays 6:05 pm - 8:55 pm  
May 6 – August 12**

**Location: Please confirm on Carleton Central**

**Prerequisite: Permission of the instructor**

**Instructor: Richard Taylor  
E-mail: [taylorswave@gmail.com](mailto:taylorswave@gmail.com)  
[www.taylorswave.ca](http://www.taylorswave.ca)**

#### **APPLYING TO THE COURSE:**

**Like all the writing workshops in the English Department, to gain entry into the Summer Fiction Workshop, you must submit a portfolio before you get to register.**

Because early registration for the Summer 2014 courses is March 26, I have made changes to the portfolio requirements and deadline. Summer registration period is March 26-May 13, but our first class begins Tuesday May 6, so **you should make an effort to get your portfolio to me as close to the early registration period as possible. Your portfolio should be 5-10 double spaced pages.** It must include a brief biographical sketch and statement on why you want to take the workshop and include any of the following examples from your writing: stories, postcard stories, parts of novels, or creative nonfiction like blogs, magazine pieces, personal essays, memoir or travel writing. You can submit excerpts from longer pieces of work, but describe how the excerpt relates to the longer piece.

**Portfolios should be emailed to me at [taylorswave@gmail.com](mailto:taylorswave@gmail.com). The deadline for submission is the middle of April. Please include a cover page with your name, Carleton student number, Carleton email address and telephone number. Because of the large number of enthusiastic applicants, it's advisable to apply as soon as possible.**

**If you are thinking about taking the Summer Fiction Workshop, please email me beforehand for a chat at [taylorswave@gmail.com](mailto:taylorswave@gmail.com).**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The Fiction Workshop offers instruction in creative writing with an emphasis on short stories, post card stories and novels, although creative nonfiction, such as personal essays, humour, memoir, blogs, literary journalism and travel writing will be briefly discussed. Each participant must be prepared to submit committed work and to further the group's on-going dialogue on the pieces submitted. The early workshops will consist of fun, stimulating writing exercises. Participants are expected to use these prompts for warm up purposes and to hone their skills and to explore new territory. Time will be devoted to learning how to balance inspiration and discipline, finding a personal voice, choosing a subject and developing a sense of structure. There will be group critiques of works-in-progress. Warm summer evenings some class time will be on the banks of the Rideau River.

## **PLEASE TAKE NOTE:**

**The Fiction Workshop will not be directed toward any particular genre or style.** We should be trying to understand something of the complexity and mystery of storytelling and writing, wherever it occurs. I am looking for enthusiastic, committed people in the thrall of books and writing who are interested in developing and honing what talent already exists. Everyone will write and submit work to the group for critiquing by all participants. All kinds of original, imaginative writing are welcome, and freedom of expression for all points of view is zealously maintained. Every week several writers will submit a manuscript (story, chapter) to be workshopped and critiqued for the next class. These manuscripts will be taken home. Each writer will read each manuscript with a pencil or pen in hand and write comments about what makes it work and what might help to make it work better. I'll give you guidelines – **Things to Consider When Critiquing a Piece of Writing**. There is no text required for this workshop, but you will be required to read examples of published material, and read and edit the work of fellow writers. It is the responsibility of each student to pay for and reproduce sufficient copies of your work for each of your classmates and to hand them out the week preceding the workshop. Each manuscript must be typed, double spaced, double sided in ordinary typeface, and must be easily readable.

**You must be willing to come to every class, and to deal with forthright analysis of your work in a select but public forum.** Your text (manuscript) at first will have to speak for you; the discussion, in one form or another will go around the table of workshoppers; you will listen; I will listen; then perhaps sum up and sometimes interject, or occasionally take the discussion in a new direction. The sessions will be lively, resembling at various times an encounter group session or debating society meeting. There will also be quiet moments of communication, humour, revelation and probably as much person to person with the instructor and others in the group as you would wish.

## **EVALUATION:**

**There will be three specific writing assignments: a short postcard story, 500 words or less; a short story, 2,000 words or less; and a group mini novel assignment, 2,000 words or less (in groups of 3 writers each group member will write a short mini novel chapter.)** Each writer will submit these three writing assignments, plus, if you wish, one other 'bonus' piece from the writing prompts and exercises. I may ask some participants to submit specific pieces from their portfolios. All other pieces must be new work generated from the workshop.

There will be no mark for individual pieces. Because this is a creative writing workshop, there will be opportunities for spontaneity and improvisation, but you must be willing to read, write, edit and fully participate. Your final course grade will be based on the following factors:

- 1) (60%) Quality and originality of your writing.**
- 2) (30%) Quality of your oral and written editorial comments on the work of others, and your discussion contribution. The energy, depth and enthusiasm with which you contribute to the collective process.**
- 3) (10%) ATTENDANCE!**

Plagiarism: See the statement on "Instructional Offences" in the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar.

Academic Accommodation: Students with special needs/disabilities, or students who require academic accommodations are invited to contact the Paul Menton Centre, 613-520-6608.

## **FICTION WORKSHOP OUTLINE, SUMMER 2014 (Subject to Improvisational changes)**

"All good writing is swimming underwater and holding your breath." F. Scott Fitzgerald.

### **Week 1 (May 6) Introduction with Australian Byron Bay Maddog Surfboard**

- Fill out Writing Workshop Questionnaire
- ONLY TROUBLE IS INTERESTING
- UNFOLDING AND WITHHOLDING
- CONFLICT, CRISIS, RESOLUTION
- SHOWING VS TELLING SCENE VS SUMMARY
- *Shitty First Drafts* by Anne Lamott
- Absolut Vodka Story Contest Winner: *While We Lay Naked*
- *Conquering Newfoundland: One Macaroon at a Time*
- Using the Five Senses
- Immediate Reality Memory Imagination
- Writing Exercises and Story Prompts

**Week 2 (May 13) Short Short Stories, Postcard Stories, Flash Fiction.**

- Trouble and Desire
- Break long projects into parts
- Voice, Character, Point of View, Dialogue, Setting in the short story *Dark Blue* by Andrew Forbes
- Geist Postcard Story Contest Winners
- Importance of Place (Setting)
- *Miss Teen America* by Andrew Forbes; *The Double Knot* by Mariam Toews
- **POSTCARD FLASH FICTION STORY ASSIGNMENT, 500 WORDS OR LESS**
- *Things to Consider When Critiquing a Piece of Writing*
- (Assign manuscript schedule. We will generally deal with 4 to 6 per evening)

**Week 3 (May 20) The Literary Short Story and Other Stories.**

- *A Short Story* by George Bowering (a dark story broken into component parts)
- *The Second Story: How a promising single episode might find its fullest use in our fiction*, by Ron Carlson
- *Bullet In the Brain* by Tobias Wolf, *Up Late* by Linda Svendsen
- Reading various short stories to see how they are put together and how they work
- **SHORT STORY ASSIGNMENT, 2,000 WORDS OR LESS**
- **Break class into groups of 3 writers for peer editing and 3 Chapter Mini Novel**
- Workshop manuscripts

**Week 4 (May 27) A Plethora of Novels: Romance, Thriller, Sci Fi, Graphic, Satirical, Erotic, Distopian, Chick Lit, Steam Punk, Young Adult, Mystery... (Bestsellers VS Literary Novels: Carl Hiaasen VS Michael Ondaatje)**

- In the Beginning... *Happy Endings* by Margaret Atwood
- Finding the Right Voice, Style, Tone, Mood, Mysterious Tension
- What's at Stake - Something Must be Set in Motion The Reader Wants to Discover
- Opening up Your Narrative; Plot: And Then and then the mysteries began...
- **GROUP MINI NOVEL CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT, 2,000 WORDS OR LESS**
- *Map That Route or Winging it*
- Workshop manuscripts

**Week 5 (June 3) Everyone Needs To Find a Little Poetry in Their Life**

- How to Temporarily Deal With The Grim Reaper
- *Is About* by Allen Ginsberg
- *Letters & Other Worlds* by Michael Ondaatje
- *Radiant Desire* (Shelley, Keats, Byron & Co.)
- *Evolution* by Sherman Alexie
- *Taking Off Emily Dickinson's Clothes* by Billy Collins
- Jesus and Elvis, *In Bermuda* by Michelle Desbarats
- Workshop Manuscripts

### **Week 6 (June 10) Fiction or Creative Nonfiction**

- All memory is fiction – Spalding Gray
- All life once lived is fiction – Norman Levine
- Any story told twice is fiction – Grace Paley
- Some of these stories or incidents are drawn from real life
- Examples of autobiographical fiction
- **Monster in a Box: Writer’s Block, How to organize and revise drafts**
- Revision is the Essence of the writing process
- Redrafting and Editing
- *In Praise of the Humble Comma* by Picco Iyer
- Workshop Manuscripts

### **Week 7 (June 17) All Writers are Travellers**

- *When the Best Minds Wander*
- Map That Route or Winging it
- *The Road to There The Road to Laos*
- *The Sun Also Rises*, travelling and writing with Hemingway
- *On The Road*, and Jack Kerouac’s long, sad, incredible journey to find home
- *The Magus* by John Fowles: writing about a Trip, a Quest or a Journey
- Workshop manuscripts

### **SUMMER BREAK NO CLASS June 18 to July 7: 20 days to write, read & play**

### **Week 8 (July 8) EACH TERM WE HAVE A VISITING WRITER.**

- 2002 Novelist/filmmaker/TV Anchor Kim Brunhuber and his novel, *Kameleon Man*.
- 2003 Award winning memoir, story writer and Humber College mentor Isabel Huggan.
- 2004 Ted Bishop, Governor General’s award travel memoir finalist, *Riding With Rilke: Reflections on Motorcycles and Books*.
- 2005 Students reading excerpts from literary magazine The Feathertale Review.
- 2006 Readings by poet Michelle Desbarats and other published student writers.
- 2007 Filmmaker Korbett Mathews film-in-progress, *The Man Who Crossed The Sahara*, which is about my friend, murdered Ottawa filmmaker Frank Cole.
- 2008 Novelist, poet, Mark Frutkin Trillium award winner for *Fabrizio’s Return*.
- 2009 (Online and Social Media Network Writers)
- 2010 Feathertale Review Magazine editor, writer, reporter, Carleton Journalism graduate, and former Fiction Workshopper, Brett Popplewell
- 2011 Journalist, columnist, writer Peter Zimonjic, *Into the Darkness: An Account of 7/7*
- 2012 Former Fiction Workshop winners of the Carleton Short Story Contest, and winner of the Toronto Star Short story contest read and discuss their award winning stories
- 2013 Former Carleton student and Ottawa writer/editor of Herdmag, Stephanie Vicente.
- 2014 TBA
- Workshop manuscripts

### **Week 9 (July 15) Humour, a Little Levity For Those Dark Nights of the Soul**

- David Sedaris and other funny writers...
- Riff Off or Rip Off
- *Writing Is Easy* by Steve Martin; *I Dated Jane Austen* by T. C. Boyle
- If you want God to have a good laugh, just tell him your future plans - Anne Lamott
- Stress Worry Angst and the Void
- Workshop manuscripts

### **Week 10 (July 22) How to Become a Writer: Read, Write, Push**

- Expose Your Manuscript to Improve it
- How and Where to Get Published
- Working With Editors and Mentors
- Staying Fit For Words
- Workshop manuscripts

### **Week 11 (July 29) Catch Up**

- Workshop manuscripts
- Begin reading 3 Chapter Mini Novels

### **Week 12 (August 5) Reading 3 Chapter Mini Novels**

### **Week 13 (August 12)**

#### FINAL CLASS CELEBRATION PARTY

Workshop final last minute manuscripts

How to continue reading and writing

Live, write and read as though each

Precious day were your very last

Follow your obsessions

Try to have fun

Take chances

Take care

Aloha!

Instructor:

Richard Taylor has been at Carleton since 1995 when he was Carleton Writer-In-Residence. He has lectured in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Literature and since the mid 90s he's taught the Fiction Workshop, and more recently also the Creative Nonfiction Workshop. He has taught writing in Hong Kong, Australia, Tuscany and over 120 workshops in Ottawa. For the last 9 years he has offered a summer writer's retreat, Write by the Lake in Val des Monts Quebec near a waterfall at his beautiful lake house Monet Bay. He has published a collection of short stories, *Tender Only To One* and a novel, *Cartoon Woods*, an Australian travel memoir, *House Inside the Waves: Domesticity, Art and the Surfing Life*, and many feature magazine articles. Hundreds of his writers have published work as a result of taking his workshops. While surfing and open water swimming around the world, he is working on an unusual book about swimming with writers, *Water and Desire*.