

Carleton University Department of English

WINTER 2020

ENGL 3903A: INTERMEDIATE FICTION WORKSHOP

Tuesday, 11:35-2:25/ A204 Loeb

Professor Nadia Bozak

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Course Description:

The objective of this intermediate fiction-writing workshop is to further 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 solid foundation in the fundamentals of fiction writing (such as character development, setting, point of view), upon which this workshop will build.

They will also have a sincere interest in writing fiction and a willingness to learn from their fellow writers, the instructor, and works of exemplary fiction assigned by the instructor.

While the focus is on writing short literary fiction—short stories, novel chapters— other formats and genres will be considered as well.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will emerge from this workshop with two revised, polished fiction manuscripts. They will also attend and review a literary reading event (on campus or in Ottawa), thus gaining an appreciation for literature as it is read out loud by the author and learn what authors have to say about the process of writing.

The majority of each class will be spent critiquing and discussing each other's short fiction manuscripts, thus developing skills in self-editing, reading as writers, and offering constructive feedback with diplomacy and tact. Students will also read works of exemplary contemporary fiction, developing skills in close reading as a means to learn from the success of a variety of published works. Students will also prepare a short presentation on an assigned topic and participate in class discussions.

Note well: The success of this class and your development as a writer depends upon attending the sessions regularly, contributing to discussions, and fully engaging with in-class exercises and

workshops. You must, therefore, be ready to circulate your creative work among your peers and have it openly discussed in class. 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 weekly readings will be available digitally on Ares through the MacOdrum Library.

Evaluation:

- 1) **40%:** Quality and originality of TWO short fiction manuscripts submitted **a)** for workshops and **b)** to the instructor in a revised form within two-weeks of being workshopped. One manuscript will be 1000 words or less; the other will be 2500 words maximum. You may choose to write these in any order you choose.

Effort, creativity, effective writing, proper grammar, and formatting are taken into consideration when grading. As revision/re-writing is the foundation of creative writing, a 10% portion of the above mark includes submitting 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.

NB: “Formal” means written in full sentences, properly paragraphed, with thoughts organized and presented in prose that is clear, thoughtful, and proofread. You will properly cite any sources you refer to.

- 2) **20%:** Quality of editorial comments given to the work of others.

This includes in-class comments offered to your fellow classmates about their manuscripts as well as comments written on the manuscripts.

Each week students will read and comment upon three or four manuscripts posted on CU Learn. Students can either print and return the entire annotated manuscript to the respective writers, or can prepare a 5-sentence summary of comments to be given to the writer. These comments will be turned in with revised manuscripts.

Because of the size of this workshop, the class will be divided in half so that oral commentary can alternate weekly between these two groups. (Members of Group A will be expected to comment upon manuscripts in Week 2; Group B will comment upon manuscripts in Week 3, etc).

- 3) **30 %** Participation/ Reading Responses

Participation is based on: attendance, the quality and frequency of students' contributions to discussions (including critiques, discussions about readings), and preparedness. Students must come to class having a) read the assigned readings and b) prepared to speak about the manuscripts up for critique. Note that I take attendance at each session. Missing more than three workshops with explanation will seriously affect your grade.

Students will submit TEN 200-word responses to the assigned readings. The response will include general impressions, as well as references to specific devices, word choices, sentences that resonate with you. The responses may be informal (hand-written, "diary" form). The responses will compose 10% of the participation grade.

4) **10%: Mini-Seminar Presentation**

This presentation should be no more than **ten minutes** in length (not including question-and-answer), put together with the aim to generate class discussion about an assigned topic from weekly readings. The ability to succinctly organize your points and make good use of examples from the assigned readings will be graded.

Addressing the presentation topics will generally require a degree of basic, internet-based research. Please cite your sources using MLA format.

Include two relevant questions for the class to discuss and which focus on the assigned reading (i.e. the questions should directly engage with the assigned text).

The presentation and questions will be **formally** written up (two pages) and handed in to the instructor on the same day. Always include a works cited list. For information on "formal" write-ups, see the reflection statement guidelines above.

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

Thus, over the course of the term you will:

- Prepare and revise two fiction manuscripts and write a brief revision summary thereof
- Read/comment upon three or four manuscripts weekly
- Prepare a short mini-seminar presentation, including questions and formal write-up
- Keep up with all assigned readings, demonstrated by handing in ten 200-word reading responses
- Participate in class discussions

There are no tests or exams. You can expect to devote six hours per week to this course. This includes reading manuscripts, assigned texts, and working on your own stories.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Classroom Conduct:

Please be kind and respectful when making and receiving constructive feedback.

If you plan to circulate a piece of writing that you think may be sensitive in some regard, please speak to me about it first, and well in advance, before sending it to me to post.

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 form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct 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 failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to:

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Weekly Course Schedule—Winter 2020

Week 1: Introduction/ Keep it Simple: Raymond Carver

Jan. 7

- In-class writing exercises
- *Sign up for presentations and manuscript submission dates*
- Reading due: Spencer Holst, “Brilliant Silence” and Raymond Carver, “Popular Mechanics” and “Shall We Dance?”

- *First submissions by 3 or 4 participants are due; copies of these manuscripts will be posted on CU Learn to critiqued in class during Week 2*

Week 2: Palm-of-the-Hand Stories
14

Jan.

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - A) Yasunari Kawabata short bio. What are palm-of-the-hand stories? Discuss the origins and impact of Yasunari's short-form fiction on literature outside of Japan.
 - B) Discuss your impressions of the stories. How does he manage to convey a complete story in such a short space?
- Reading due: "Photograph" and "The Man Who Did Not Smile"

Week 3: Sensory Detail
21

Jan.

- Workshop Manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - C) Toni Morrison, short bio. What does it mean to "write with the senses and how does Morrison use sensory detail in *The Bluest Eye*?
- Reading due: Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (excerpts)

Week 4: "We"
28

Jan.

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - D) Rhonda Douglas, short bio. Discuss setting and language in "Nous and René Lévesque" and how the two interact within the story.
 - E) Discuss point of view in "Nous and René Lévesque," the purpose of it, and the effect on the reader.
- Reading due: Rhonda Douglas, "Nous and René Lévesque"

Week 5: Prose Poetry
Feb. 4

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - F) Carloyn Forché short bio. What is prose poetry? Discuss why Caroline Forché calls her "The Colonel" a "documentary poem"?

- **G)** Robert Hass short bio. What is “A Story about the Body?” Story or poem? Both?
- Reading due: Carolyn Forché, “The Colonel”; Robert Hass, “A Story About the Body”

Week 6: Characterization

Feb. 11

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - H)** Lucia Berlin bio. What is characterization? How does Berlin use it in “Manual for Cleaning Women.”
 - I)** How does Lucia Berlin use characterization in “My Jockey”?
- Reading due: Lucia Berlin “Manual for Cleaning Women” and “My Jockey”

Reading Week: February 17-21, University Closed

Week 7: Punctuation

Feb. 25

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - J)** Jamaica Kincaid short bio. Discuss punctuation in “Girl.” How does it contribute to the experience of reading the story?
- Reading due: Jamaica Kincaid, “Girl”

Week 8: “You”

Mar. 3

- Workshop Manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - K)** Short bio of Lorrie Moore. What is second person point of view? Why would a writer choose it?
 - L)** Discuss point of view in Lorrie Moore’s “How to Become a Writer.”
- Reading due: Lorrie Moore: “How to Become a Writer”

Week 9: Hybrid Ventures: Fairytales

Mar. 10

- Workshop Manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - M)** What is a fairytale? Is “Books and Roses” a fairytale or a short story? Is there a distinction?
 - N)** Helen Oyeyemi short bio. Discuss structure or form in “Books and Roses.”
- Reading due: Helen Oyeyemi, “Books and Roses”

Week 10: Auto-Fiction and Writing Real Life**Mar. 17**

- Workshop Manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - O)** Short bio of Jackie Kay. How does “Big Milk” correspond to her own biography?
 - P)** What is auto-fiction? What kind of criticism does it receive and why?
- Reading due: Jackie Kay, “Big Milk”

Week 11: Vignettes/ Children’s POV**Mar. 24**

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - Q)** Sandra Cisneros bio. What is a vignette? Why would a writer choose this form?
 - R)** How does Cisneros build a child’s POV in the assigned stories?
- Reading due: *House on Mango Street* (selections)

Week 12: Dialogue**Mar. 31**

- Workshop Manuscripts
- Presentation:
 - S)** What are some conventional tips around writing effective dialogue? How does “It’s Not so Much” adhere to or challenge these conventions and why?
 - T)** Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm short bio. Discuss the way dreams are written in “It’s Not So Much”

Week 13:**Apr. 7**

- Workshop Manuscripts, if needed
- Presentations, if needed

Academic Accommodation

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

Pregnancy obligation

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/contact/form-pregnancy-accommodation/>

Religious obligation

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/discrimination-harassment/religious-spiritual-observances/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the Paul Menton Centre Website: carleton.ca/pmc

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/sexual-violence-prevention-survivor-support/>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor 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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>