

Carleton University Department of English

WINTER 2017

ENGL 3903A: INTERMEDIATE FICTION WORKSHOP

Prerequisite(s): a 2000-level creative writing workshop or permission of the course instructor

Tuesday, 2:35-5:25/ Southam 409

Professor Nadia Bozak

Office Hours: Dunton Tower 1918; Tuesday 1-2 or by appointment

Email: nadia.bozak@carleton.ca

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 fiction.

The majority of each class will be spent critiquing and discussing each others' 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 each and every session, 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 and/or distributed in class.

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 chose to write these in any order you choose.

Effort, creativity, effective writing, proper grammar, and formatting are taken into consideration when grading. As the labour of revision/re-writing is the foundation of 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.

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 10-page manuscripts posted on CU Learn. Students can either print and return the entire annotated manuscript to their respective writers, or can prepare a 5-sentence summary of comments to be given to the writer.

3) **20 %** Participation/ Reading Responses

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 assigned readings and b) prepared to speak about the manuscripts up for critique.

Each week students will submit a 200-word response 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). Each response is worth 2%.

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

This presentation should be **7 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/ stories poems will be graded.

Include 2 relevant questions for the class to discuss.

The presentation and questions will be **formally** written up (2 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.

5) **10%:** Literary Event Review

Each of you will attend a literary reading this winter/spring here in Ottawa and write a review of it (two-three double-spaced pages, approximately five hundred words).

I will post specific times and dates of possible events for you to attend.

You may begin your review by introducing the time, date, location, name of the reader(s). Please don't spend too much time on this component (one or two sentences is sufficient). You can then comment on such things as the content of the reading, the reading style, the experience of listening to authors speak about their writing, what you learned from the experience. As with all assignments in this course, this review will be typed in Times New Roman 12-point font, and double spaced.

Your review is due TWO WEEKS after the event. No reviews will be accepted after the end of classes.

Attendance:

Students who miss more than four classes without documentation of a medical or personal situation will automatically have his/her grade reduced by a full letter grade. Provide such documentation to the instructor as soon as possible.

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
- Review a literary event here in Ottawa
- 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 6-8 hours per week to this course.

Weekly Course Schedule—Winter 2017**Week 1: Introduction/ Keep it Simple: Raymond Carver****Jan. 10**

- In-class writing exercises
- ***Sign up for presentations and manuscript submission dates***
- Reading due: Francine Prose, “Reading Like a Writer”; Raymond Carver “Fires” and “Shall We Dance?”
- ***First submissions by 3 or 4 participants are due; copies of manuscripts will be posted on CU Learn to critiqued in class during Week 2***

Week 2: Flash Fiction**Jan. 17**

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - A)** What is flash fiction?
 - B)** Spencer Holst bio. Discuss narrative voice and its use in “Brilliant Silence.”
- Reading due: “Brilliant Silence” Spencer Holst

Week 3: Sensory Detail

Jan. 24

- Workshop Manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - C)** Toni Morrison, short bio. What does it mean to “write with the senses”?
 - D)** How does Morrison use sensory detail to build her protagonist’s POV?
- Reading due: Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (excerpts)

Week 4: Prose and Poetry

Jan. 31

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - E)** Michael Ondaatje bio. What is prose? What is poetry? How do they differ and overlap?
 - F)** Discuss whether/how the story is obscured or enhanced by its poetic/ musical aspects.
- Reading due: Michael Ondaatje, *Coming Through Slaughter* (1-15)

Week 5: Prose Poetry #2

Feb. 7

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - G)** Carloyn Forché short bio. How is “The Colonel” a “documentary poem”?
 - H)** Robert Hass short bio. What is “A Story About the Body?” Story or poem? Both?
- Reading due: Carloyn Forché, “The Colonel”; Robert Hass, “A Story About the Body”

Week 6: Characterization

Feb. 14

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - I)** Lucia Berlin bio. Discuss voice in the assigned stories.
 - J)** What is characterization? How does Berlin use it in the assigned stories?'
- Reading due: Lucia Berlin “Manual for Cleaning Women”; “My Jockey”

Reading Week: February 20-24, University Closed

Week 7: Punctuation**Feb. 28**

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - K)** Jamaica Kincaid short bio. Who is “girl”?
 - L)** Discuss punctuation in “Girl.” How does it contribute to the experience of reading the story?

Week 8: Point of View**Mar. 7**

- Workshop Manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - M)** Short bio of Lorrie Moore. What is point of view?
 - N)** Discuss point of view in Lorrie Moore’s “How to Become a Writer”
- Reading due: Lorrie Moore: “How to Become a Writer”

Week 9: Fairytales**Mar. 14**

- Workshop Manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - O)** What is a fairytale? Is “Books and Roses” a fairytale or a short story?
 - P)** Helen Oyeyemi short bio. Discuss point of view in “Books and Roses.”
- Reading due: Helen Oyeyemi, “Books and Roses”

Week 10: Withholding Information**Mar. 21**

- Workshop Manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - Q)** Short bio of Toni Morrison. What is “voice” in fiction and how is it used here?
 - R)** How does Morrison represent race in “Recitatif” and why? Discuss the title “Recitatif”
- Reading due: Toni Morrison, “Recitatif”

Week 11: Vignettes/ Children’s POV**Mar. 28**

- Workshop manuscripts
- Presentations:
 - S)** Sandra Cisneros bio. What is a vignette?
 - T)** How does Cisneros build a child’s POV in the assigned stories?

- Reading due: *House on Mango Street* (selections)

Week 12:

Apr. 4

- Workshop Manuscripts
 - Presentation:
 - U)** What is allusion? Intertextuality? How are they present in Díaz?
 - V)** Junot Díaz short bio. Discuss characterization in “Nilda.”
 - Potluck and Treats 😊
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REQUEST FOR 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: 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](#).

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](#).

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 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*). **Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.** After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website (www.carleton.ca/pmc) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*).

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional 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, which 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 a final grade of “F” for the course