**ENGL 284: Beginning Short Story Writing**

**Spring 2020**

Class Times: 1:30 – 2:50 PM

Office Hours: Thursdays, 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Email: dhoutz@uw.edu

Course Website: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1372442>

*“Better to think of writing, of what one does, as an activity, rather than an identity to keep the calling a verb rather than a noun.”*

*-* ***Lorrie Moore***

**Course Description**

Welcome to **English 284, Beginning Short Story Writing**! Over the next ten weeks, we will learn about and engage with various craft elements of the short story. This will include (but is certainly not limited to!) the following:

* Character
* Plot and structure
* Shape/form
* Perspective and point of view
* Interiority
* Dialogue

Our discussions of these elements of short story will be geared towards creating a shared language of craft that our class can use when considering how specific writing strategies are working, both in the assigned readings and our peers’ creative pieces. This class encourages each student to intentionally examine and experiment with the craft elements in their own writing.

We will, therefore, dedicate time in this course to assess and document our own writing processes and our application of craft elements. We will also collaborate with our peers in small and large group workshops.

Each student must dedicate themselves to the practice of reading, writing, collaborative efforts, critical thinking, and self-reflection. In this way, we will work together to identify challenges, build upon strengths, and monitor our writing progress throughout the quarter.

This course will serve as our opportunity to learn about, engage with, and practice the craft elements of the short through **in-class writing activities**, a **craft/revision journal**, and **short experiments,** all of which will lead us to our **workshopping sequence** and a final, revised **manuscript** to be submitted at the end of the quarter.

**Required Course Texts and Materials**

* **Word document/Google doc** (for typed journaling)
* **Course readings** (to be downloaded via Canvas)
* **UW Email Account** and **Regular Internet access** to submit assignments and stay connected through email, Zoom, and the class webpage

**\*** Please speak to me for any accommodations needed!

**Reading List**

All readings are available on Canvas as Word Docs and PDFs. It is your responsibility to download and print copies of the stories for your personal use.

I highly recommend bringing a copy of the text, with your notes, to class for use during discussion.

**Course Overview & Expectations**

Readings and Discussions

In this class, we will be reading many short stories as well as some essays and excerpts on the craft of the short story. While I *don’t* believe that you must be well read in order to be a good writer, I *do* believe it is helpful to consider how certain authors employ voice, characterization, pacing, etc. Therefore, you will be expected to come to class prepared to consider the assigned readings and engage with the discussions during class.

Craft/Revision Journal

*“First forget inspiration. Habit is more dependable. Habit will sustain you whether you’re inspired or not. Habit will help you finish and polish your stories. Inspiration won’t. Habit is persistence in practice.”*

* ***Octavia E. Butler***

While I certainly don’t encourage writers to dismiss inspiration, I agree with Butler about the virtue of habit-building—especially when it comes to writing. To rely on inspiration alone is to use only a single tool from the writers’ toolbox. Routine is incredibly helpful and supportive. It will keep you accountable, it will become a comforting foothold when you’re feeling lost in your writerly journey, and it will help you to define a process that works for you.

As this class is meant to engage you with the craft of the short story, I’d like to spend some of our time focusing on how we, as individuals, approach craft and writing in general. Whatever that habit or routine becomes is up to you, but this class insists on an exploration of your process to help you navigate and form patterns and practices that benefit your writing.

Part of your course grade will therefore be based in a curated collection of entries in a **Craft Journa**l (for the first half of the quarter) and a **Revision Journal** (for the second half of the quarter). I will not expect you to submit your journal entries weekly. However, I will periodically check in and request a sample of your journal entries to ensure that students are committing themselves to this assignment.

Short Experiments

To explore the craft element we have been discussing during a particular week students will submit short experiments. This will be your hands-on practice of specific craft elements. The hope is that, once we begin workshopping, each of you will be prepared to draw from the vocabulary and knowledge on writing built during the first half of the quarter.

Presentations

Students will be assigned to small groups in the beginning of the quarter, and each group will select a specific week they would like to present. The presentations should be centered on the assigned reading for that week, as well as the specific craft element we are discussing. There is flexibility in the formatting and content of the presentations. For instance, some students may want to consider a specific text closely, and analyze how the craft element is working within that particular piece. Other students may want to zoom out and compare how different authors use the craft element (though there must be some discussion on the assigned author as well).

Presentations should last at least 15-20 minutes and include a list of discussion questions for the class to respond to, a visual component, and a writing prompt related to the presentation’s theme that will be assigned to the entire class. More information will be provided about these presentations, particularly now that we have an online class.

Workshop Sequence

# *“…empowers artists and invests responders with real responsibility as audience members.”*

# *James C. Nicola, Artistic Director, New York Theatre Workshop*

The workshop sequence is your opportunity to apply these craft elements to your own work and your peers, and to understand how you, as a writer, engage with the craft of the short story. We will employ a variation of Liz Lerman’s Critical Response Process.

* All members of the class will be required to read the submitted work for that week (I will break you into small groups to keep your reading focused on one or two stories)
* Those responding to the reading will be required to formulate a statement of meaning they believe the text is trying to communicate to the reader
* Those responding to the reading will also be required to write down three questions they would like to ask the writer. These are not yes/no questions, nor do they betray any opinion regarding the piece; these questions will act as neutral jumping off points for discussion. For example: “What kind of texture were you going for when making this cake?” instead of, “Why is this cake so dry?”

Final Manuscript

At the end of the course, you will be submitting a final manuscript of a short story—this may be a piece that you have been revising since the beginning of the revision sequence, or a newer piece for which you have specific revision plans. All final manuscripts must be submitted with an author’s reflective note, in which you discuss the piece, your understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and its trajectory.

**Assessment Breakdown**

**Short Experiments** (15%)

* 2-3-page writing assignments in which you engage with specific craft elements
* These will be assigned weekly for the first half of the quarter

**Presentations** (10%)

* 15-20-minute group presentation, centered on the specific craft element and assigned reading for that week
* Must include discussion questions for the class, a visual aspect, and a writing prompt.
* An overview of the presentation must be sent to me, the instructor, at least two days before the group is assigned to present.

**Workshop** (15%)

* Lead a discussion on one of your classmate’s manuscripts
* Present your manuscript to the workshop
* Participation during workshop (you will lose 10 pts if you miss workshop, unless excused)

**Craft/Revision Journal** (15%)

* Three entries of your journal must be submitted (can be rough and submitted as is) halfway through the quarter.
* Another three entries will be submitted at the end of the quarter, as well as a short reflection on your process.
* The short reflection will be a paragraph in which you review the journal from this quarter and discuss your writing process/routine and its strengths/weaknesses.

**Final Manuscript** (15%)

* This may be a piece that you have been revising since the beginning of the revision sequence
* OR this may be or a newer piece for which you have specific revision plans
* Must be submitted with an author’s reflective note
* The author’s reflective note should discuss the piece, your understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and its trajectory.

**Participation** 30%

* See below for breakdown of the Participation grade

**Participation (30%)**

Attendance: In-Class Participation and Collaboration (10%):

Attendance will be measured by both your presence in class as well as your participation in the class activities and discussions. Includes in-class attendance, group work, and contributing to class discussions on craft and the assigned readings. Throughout the quarter, group work will be collected via Canvas.

Out-of-Class Work: Timeliness and Preparedness (10%):

Includes completing readings and homework before class, submitting assignments on time, coming to class prepared, and turning in assignments on time. This will also include theCanvas module where you post 2-3 questions weekly about the critical readings, exemplary stories, or the art of story-writing. I will review all of these and throw some of them into our discussion so that we may discuss and prompt interesting conversation based on your own questions about the text.

Conferences (10%):

An online conference will be held for each student, in which you will meet with me during the quarter to discuss your assignments and progress. This will be a discussion of your assignments, drafts, and progress. This portion of the participation grade will be determined based on your attendance to both conferences, as well as your preparedness during the conference. Bring your work and a list of questions for me so we can have a productive meeting.

**Policies**

**Attendance**

You are allowed two absences for any unforeseeable reason (emergency, sickness, etc.). However, if you have a third absence or more, your participation grade will be affected negatively because so much of our work in this class depends on consistent and multifaceted participation. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to catch up on class with a classmate and make up missed work, such as readings and homework, in a timely manner.

**Conferences**

You are required to meet with me during the quarter in conferences to discuss your work. This conference will give you the opportunity to get feedback about your papers/projects and to express any concerns, questions, or suggestions you might have about the course or the assignments. Conferences are mandatory and, if missed, will affect your participation grade (as described above under “Participation”). I will provide a sign-up sheet for these conferences and detailed instructions about how to prepare for them.

**Workshop**

When bringing in stories for workshop, I expect every student in this class to be respectful to their peers. This is a professional and positive environment. We will spend time in class the week before the first workshop discussing what this means. While critique is necessary to workshops, it should always be meant to move the piece forward rather than tear it down.

Additionally, no stories will be accepted for workshop if they include any reference to another member of this class. It is a common policy in creative writing groups that no one within the workshop should feel that they are being targeted or singled out within a creative piece.

**Late Work**

Late work will not be given any written feedback. Students submitting late work are welcome to come to office hours to receive oral feedback, but those assignments will receive a “0” and will affect participation grades. Be sure to manage your time wisely and anticipate upcoming deadlines.

If you find yourself having serious difficulty with completing an assignment on time, you should let me know as soon as possible (at least 48 hours in advance of the assignment’s due date). Depending on how legitimate your reasons are, I may be able to give you an extension.

**Canvas**

We will use Canvas for all assignment submissions. If you have not used Canvas before, and have any problems submitting, please email me your questions (my email is at the top of the syllabus). I will explain, in class, how workshop assignments are handled, since it is a bit different from normal Canvas assignments.

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments should be formatted as follows:

12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1.25” margins, double-spaced, Last Name in header, MLA citation/Works Cited page. As always, feel free to ask me as well. ***Note****: If an assignment is at minimum 2 pages, this means 2 COMPLETE pages, not 1 page and the first four lines of the text.*

**Writing Resources**

The **Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC)** offers free, one-to-one, 45-minute tutoring sessions for undergraduate, graduate, and professional writers in all fields at the UW. The tutors will work with you on any writing or research project (as well as personal projects such as applications or personal statements). For more information or to schedule an appointment, please see our website (<https://depts.washington.edu/owrc>), or come visit us in person on the first floor of Odegaard Undergraduate Library.

The**CLUE Writing Center** offers free one-on-one tutoring and workshops, and is open from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., Sunday to Wednesday in Mary Gates Hall, throughout the regular school year (Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters). It's first come, first served — so arrive early and be prepared to wait if necessary! CLUE also offers tutoring on a range of other subjects, including math, science, and so on.

**Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people's thoughts and writing--as long as you cite them. As a matter of policy, any student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be immediately reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review.

**Complaints**

If you have any concerns about the course or your instructor, please see the instructor about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the instructor or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the following Creative Writing Program staff in Padelford: Director David Nikki Crouse. If, after speaking with the Director, you are still not satisfied with the response you receive, you may contact Acting English Department Chair Anis Bawarshi; [bawarshi@uw.edu](mailto:bawarshi@uw.edu), (206) 543-2690.

**Accommodations**

If you need accommodation of any sort, please let me know so that I can work with the UW Disability Resources for Students Office (DRS) to provide what you require. This syllabus is available in large print, as are other class materials. More information about accommodation may be found at <http://www.washington.edu/students/drs/>.

**Religious Accommodations**

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at Faculty Syllabus Guidelines and Resources. Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the Religious Accommodations Request form available at <https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/>.

**Campus Safety**

Preventing violence is everyone's responsibility. If you're concerned, tell someone.

* Always call 911 if you or others may be in danger.
* Call 206-685-SAFE (7233) to report non-urgent threats of violence and for referrals to UW counseling and/or safety resources. TTY or VP callers, please call through your preferred relay service.
* Don't walk alone. Campus safety guards can walk with you on campus after dark. Call Husky NightWalk 206-685-WALK (9255).
* Stay connected in an emergency with UW Alert. Register your mobile number to receive instant notification of campus emergencies via text and voice messaging. Sign up online at [www.washington.edu/alert](http://www.washington.edu/alert).

For more information visit the SafeCampus website at [www.washington.edu/safecampus](http://www.washington.edu/safecampus).

**FIUTS**

Foundation for International Understanding through Students: FIUTS is an example of a campus organization that can bring together your social and academic learning. "FIUTS is an independent non-profit organization which provides cross-cultural leadership and social programming for UW's international and globally minded domestic students. FIUTS is local connections and global community!" FIUTS also offers a free international lunch on the last Wednesday of every month beginning with a lunch on September 28 from 11:30-1:30 in the Kane Hall Walker-Ames room. Consult FIUTS' web site for a detailed calendar of events and links to many resources [http://www.fiuts.washington.edu](http://www.fiuts.washington.edu/).

**Counseling Center**

UW Counseling Center workshops include a wide range of issues including study skills, thinking about coming out, international students and culture shock, and much more. Check out available resources and workshops at: <https://www.washington.edu/counseling/>

**Health and Wellness**

Health & Wellness provides support, advocacy, consultation, and education to the University of Washington campus community. Services are free for UW students, faculty, and staff. You can work with advocates on your behalf or on behalf of someone you know. Programs include Alcohol & Drug Consultation and Education, Suicide Intervention, Sexual Assault, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Harassment Advocacy, and Student Care Program. For more information: <http://depts.washington.edu/livewell/>

**Q Center**

The University of Washington Q Center builds and facilitates queer (gay, lesbian, bisexual, two-spirit, trans, intersex, questioning, same-gender-loving, allies) academic and social community through education, advocacy, and support services to achieve a socially-just campus in which all people are valued. For more information, visit <http://depts.washington.edu/qcenter/>.

**Any Hungry Husky**

The Any Hungry Husky program helps mitigate the social and academic effects of campus food insecurity. By providing students, staff, and faculty with access to shelf-stable, non-perishable goods and community resources at no cost, this initiative aims to lessen the financial burden of purchasing food and supplement nutritional needs. This resource is for everyone in the UW community. Learn more here: <http://www.washington.edu/anyhungryhusky/>