

Engl 284 B: Beginning Short Story Writing

Meeting Time:

MW 1:30pm - 2:50pm

Location:

Zoom

Office Hours: T/Th 1-2pm

My Email: rfount@uw.edu

Making Sense with Place

In this course, you will develop a writing practice driven by inquiry, imagination, collaboration, taking risks, feedforward, and revision. One of the ways you will develop inquiry-driven writing is by reading and analyzing published short stories, creative nonfiction, and essays about creative writing conventions. You will read a range of writing as inspiration for deciding how to construct your own stories. In addition to writing, you will collaborate with classmates through peer feedforward exercises.

We will focus on creative writing that attempts to make sense with place. For the purposes of this class, place will be defined as physical spaces, realities, groundings, and geographical constructions. These senses of place can be in the now, markers in memory, or be in the aspirational. We will look at various works to discover how making sense with place informs author craft, content, and narrative form. These observations are in hopes of inspiring you to develop your own inquiry into place for generating creative writing.

The course involves a healthy balance of reading, observation, and writing. I ask for an open mind, as this mindset is needed to achieve the goals of taking risks in this course. While my normal teaching practice is to engage the world beyond the classroom by moving around the campus, I have constructed writing prompts and class exercises that allow us to look beyond the Zoom box. I believe that the best writing inspiration happens in inquiry stages while experiencing the world, and I hope you will learn to utilize this philosophy when constructing your own writing.

You will respond to each other's work through writing workshop in the later sessions of the course. You will utilize the process of feedforward in lieu of feedback. Feedforward shifts commenting practice away from negative and offers encouragement toward an author's goals. We want to get away from "this is bad writing" or "this is great writing." Before we enter the workshop, we will agree to classroom norms around providing

comments on classmates' writing, and each author will provide the class with workshop goals when their piece is being workshopped.

I hope this course can be a supportive and generative dive into new ways to view your own writing practice. Honing your creative writing practice is a life-long process, and this course can be a foundation toward numerous avenues for your future writing.

Course Goals

- To develop strategies for reading creative writing to generate writing.
- To reflect on and renew your own writing practice.
- To develop ways to discuss literary texts beyond the narrative through close examinations of story construction and author positionality.
- To understand short story conventions and understand ways that some short stories intentionally subvert these conventions.
- To develop vocabulary and awareness of short story writing conventions in your own work and when reading short stories.

Types of Assignments

- Readings
- Writing Prompt Exercises—One of the main goals of the course is for you to generate work. We will do many in-class exercises and free writes that you may choose to revisit or extend for your short story drafts. While the prompts are ways to begin writing short story drafts, you do not have to use these for your short stories. I suggest starting a Word document to save your in-class writings because you will have to submit them all at the end of the course.
- Reenvision exercises—I will ask you to reenvision a scene in a published short story that we have read for class. I will provide further guidelines, but this is an opportunity to engage the work more deeply and another potential way to generate work.
- Short story—One goal of the course is for you to come away with a final draft of a short story. The later portion of the course will be short story workshop. You will have an opportunity to present a completed short story draft for class feedback and discussion. We will have plenty of preparation before we enter this period. You will have opportunities to turn in two works in progress to discuss in small groups before the workshop period. You can sign up for a workshop period slot here: [sign up for workshop](#)
- Final portfolio—The final portfolio will include a short story final draft and a short reflection on the revision process. I will provide guidelines on this later in the course.

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Washington acknowledges the Coast Salish people of this land, the land which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Duwamish, Suquamish, Tulalip and Muckleshoot nations.

Code of Conduct

We at the English department have a zero-tolerance rule for hate speech. According to the American Bar Association, hate speech is “any speech that offends, threatens, or insults groups, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or other traits.” While this could and does apply to many groups, one of the tenants of this course is that hate speech is a violence, and that these violences do not impact everyone equally. Rather, the force of their impacts is dependent on systems of power. Marginalized communities and people are vulnerable to and impacted by such speech in ways that groups or individuals in power are not. With this in mind, I will specify that I interpret “hate speech” to be any forms of speech that targets already vulnerable people/communities. Racism and xenophobia will not be tolerated in this course, nor will transphobia, homophobia, ableism, classism, or other statements or practices that uphold white supremacy.

Attendance Policy & Participation Conduct

I understand that life happens and that you may need to miss class. Please let me know by email if you will not be able to come to class. Missing class does affect your participation grade if you have not told me ahead of time.

This course has a heavy collaborative emphasis, so participating in class is important. Participation in class means coming to class on time and reading the assigned short stories and essays before class.

Plagiarism

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.

Disability Accommodation

If you have a disability that requires any special course accommodations, please submit the appropriate paperwork to me and I will make the necessary accommodations.

Grading

Your final grade will be based on your participation in class, completion of in-class writing assignments, short story in progress submissions, and your final portfolio.

Grade Breakdown

Class Participation 15 %

Writing Exercises 15 %

Short Story Submission 30 %

Final Portfolio 40 %

COURSE CALENDER

WEEK 1	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES	HOMEWORK
Mon 3/29	Introduction	
Wed 3/31	Craft and Voice	Stephen King <i>On Writing</i> pages 103 - 137 on Canvas Listen to Toni Morrison discuss motivation for writing on Youtube (5 min)
WEEK 2		
Mon 4/5	Showing or Telling?	Is "Show Don't Tell" a Universal Truth or a Colonial Relic?
Wed 4/7	Place as Aspirational In-class Writing Assignment	"Life Model" by Alexander Chee
WEEK 3		
Mon 4/12	The Power of the Short Story	On the Many Different Engines That Power a Short Story
Wed 4/14	Rewriting Exercise	Monstress by Lysley A. Tenorio

WEEK 4		
Mon 4/19	Remembering Place	The Rememberer by Aimee Bender
Wed 4/21	Peer Feedforward Short Story 1 due	Peer Feedforward Guidelines Worksheet on Canvas
WEEK 5		
Mon 4/26	Creative Nonfiction on Place	“Caribou People” by Siku Allooooloo “Biblioclast” by Randa Jarrar
Wed 4/28	Identity and Place	“Cattle Haul” by Jesmyn Ward
WEEK 6		
Mon 5/3	Writing from Place Exercise	“Horror Story” by Carmen Maria Machado
Wed 5/5	Peer Feedforward Short Story 2 due	Revision Essay TBD
WEEK 7		
Mon 5/10	Workshop	
Wed 5/12	Workshop	
WEEK 8		
Mon 5/17	Workshop	
Wed 5/19	Workshop	
WEEK 9		
Mon 5/24	NO CLASS: Memorial Day	
Wed 5/26	Workshop	
WEEK 10		
Mon 5/31	Workshop	
Wed 6/2	Workshop	

Portfolios Due no later than 6/11