

Advanced Creative Writing: Fiction

5/4210

Dr. Margaret E. Mitchell

TLC 2235

Office hours: TTh 11-12, 2-3; W 12-3 and by appointment.

(Wednesday's hours will occasionally be virtual; watch for announcements)

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Course description

This is a class for serious writers who already have some skills under their (figurative) belts. You may choose to focus on short fiction or the first chapters of a novel. You'll consume a steady diet of contemporary fiction and cultivate a habit of writing—and revising. Ultimately, you'll produce a portfolio of polished short fiction and collaborate on the production of an anthology of work from the class.

Course Texts

On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft, Stephen King.

The Writer's Notebook II: Craft Essays from Tin House.

The Best American Short Stories 2018, edited by Roxane Gay and Heidi Pitlor.

The Elements of Style, Strunk and White.

Course learning outcomes

Distinguish the essential qualities of the single genre (poetry, fiction, drama, nonfiction, screenwriting) under intensive, critical study in each section;

Critique peers' creative writing in the genre by applying the workshop method;

Author polished drafts of original work in the genre.

5210: See addendum for graduate work.

Course Assignments

Writing journal. Submit via CourseDen; see guidelines. Purpose: to cultivate your ability to mine your surroundings and experiences for material; to encourage linguistic precision and power.

Graded on a ten-point scale for adherence to assignment and skillfulness. 10%.

Informal Exercises. Both in class and out. Designed to allow you to practice and refine your craft. *Graded on a ten-point scale for adherence to assignment and effectiveness. 10%.*

Presentations and Discussion: "Fiction Matters" presentations will encourage you to explore and articulate the significance of fiction in our cultural moment. Class discussions will be a component of our intense study of the "essential qualities" of fiction. *10%.*

Workshop responses: Will help you cultivate the skill of providing constructive criticism, and articulating what you've learned about the elements of fiction for the benefit of your peers.

Graded on a five-point scale for adherence to guidelines and timeliness. 10%.

Building Blocks: A sequence of preparatory assignments leading up to formal stories. *10%.*

Review Essay: You'll write and present a review of the 2018 *Best American*; I'll provide examples and guidelines. *10%*

Story Drafts. You'll receive detailed feedback on your early drafts, but only the final versions included in your portfolio will be graded. *You'll learn to adapt what you're learning from the stories you read and the daily exercises to fictions of your own.*

Portfolio. *Revisions of all story drafts, along with a brief (500 word minimum) reflection on your writing. Purpose: To develop an appreciation for the art of revision and the ability to look critically at your own work; to begin to see your own work in relation to that of other writers. Graded on a 100 point scale for thoroughness, effectiveness and seriousness of revisions, adherence to guidelines. 40 %.*

Individual assignments will receive numerical grades from which I will calculate percentages and convert them to letter grades according to the following scale:

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: Below 60.

Course schedule

Date	Reading and Activities.	Work Due
<i>Week One</i>		

T Jan 8	Introduction, review of syllabus.	
Th Jan 10	<i>Tin House</i> : Hood. <i>Best American</i> : Anderson's "Cougar"	Exercise: Beginnings.
<i>Week Two</i>		
T Jan 15	<i>Best American</i> : Brinkley's "A Family" and Choi's "The Art of Losing." <i>Tin House</i> : Johnston	Journal entries.
Th Jan 17	<i>Best American</i> : Cline's "Los Angeles."	Building Block #1.
<i>Week Three</i>		
T Jan 22	<i>Best American</i> : Elliot's "Unearth," Evans's "Boys Go to Jupiter"; <i>Tin House</i> : Almond, Barrett.	Journal entries.
Th Jan 24	<i>BA</i> : Ferrell's "A History of China"; <i>TH</i> Doerr.	Building Block #2
<i>Week Four</i>		
T Jan 29	<i>BA</i> : Glaviano's "Come on, Silver," Guajardo's "What Got Into Us," <i>TH</i> Nelson.	Journal entries.
Th Jan 31	<i>BA</i> : <i>Henriquez's</i> "Everything is Far From Here"; <i>TH</i> Braver	Building Block #3
<i>Week Five</i>		
T Feb 5	<i>BA</i> : <i>Iskandrian's</i> "Good With Boys," Johnson's "Control Negro"; <i>TH</i> Bender, Russell.	Journal entries.
Th Feb 7	<i>Mini-workshop</i>	Story Draft #1 (~2500-3000 words)
<i>Week Six</i>		
T Feb 12	<i>BA Lyons's</i> "The Brothers Brujo"	Journal entries. Revision, Story #1.
Th Feb 14	Workshop; <i>BA</i> : Nayeri's "A Big True"	Workshop responses
<i>Week Seven</i>		
T Feb 19	Workshop; <i>BA</i> : Obreht's "Items Awaiting Protective Enclosure"	Journal entries, workshop responses
Th Feb 21	Workshop	Workshop responses
<i>Week Eight</i>		
T Feb 26	Workshop; <i>BA</i> : Rash's "The Baptism," Silverberg's "Suburbia!"	Journal entries, Workshop responses
Th Feb 28	Workshop; <i>BA</i> : Sittenfeld's "The Prairie Wife"	Workshop responses
<i>Week Nine</i>		
T Mar 5	Workshop; <i>BA</i> : Solomon's "Whose Heart I Long to Stop with the Click of a Revolver"	Journal entries, Workshop responses
Th Mar 7	Workshop; <i>BA</i> : Wang's "What a Terrible Thing it Was"	Workshop responses
<i>Week Ten</i>		
T Mar 12	<i>Spring Break</i>	
Th Mar 14	<i>Spring Break</i>	
<i>Wk. Eleven</i>	Review Presentations	Review essay
T Mar 19	Stephen King's <i>On Writing</i>	Journal entries
Th Mar 21	<i>On Writing</i>	

<i>Wk Twelve</i>		
T Mar 26	<i>TH</i> Percy, Nelson	Journal entries
Th Mar 28	No Class—Mitchell at a conference.	Story #2 (~3000 words)
<i>Wk Thirteen</i>		
T Apr 2	Workshop; <i>TH</i> Krusoe	Workshop responses
Th Apr 4	Workshop	Workshop responses
<i>Wk Fourteen</i>		
T Apr 9	Workshop; <i>TH</i> Beha	Workshop responses
Th Apr 11	<i>Workshop. Soniah Kamal: Reading at 7.</i>	Workshop responses
<i>Wk Fifteen</i>		
T Apr 16	Workshop. Eric Smith: Reading at 7.	Workshop responses
Th Apr 18	Fiction Matters Presentations	
<i>Wk Sixteen</i>		
T Apr 23	Anthology production workshop.	
Th Apr 25	<i>Conclusion</i>	
	Final exam period: Reading and celebration	Portfolio.

Support:

- [24/7/365 D2L Help Center](https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu/): [Call 1-855-772-0423]: <https://d2lhelp.view.usg.edu/>
- [Accessibility Services](https://www.westga.edu/accessibility-services/) [Call: 678-839-6428]
- [Center for Academic Success](http://www.westga.edu/cas/) [Call: 678-839-6280]: <http://www.westga.edu/cas/>
- [Center for Disability Services](https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php): <https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php>
- [Common Language](https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php): <https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php>
- [CourseDen D2L Home Page](https://westga.view.usg.edu/): <https://westga.view.usg.edu/>
- [Counseling](mailto:counseling@westga.edu): counseling@westga.edu
- [D2L UWG Online Help](http://uwgonline.westga.edu/students.php) (8 AM – 5 PM) [Call: 678-839-6248 or 1-855-933-8946 or email: online@westga.edu]: <http://uwgonline.westga.edu/students.php>
- [Distance Learning Library Services](https://www.westga.edu/library/resource-sharing.php): <https://www.westga.edu/library/resource-sharing.php>
- [Ingram Library Services](http://www.westga.edu/library/): <http://www.westga.edu/library/>
- [Proctored Exams](http://uwgonline.westga.edu/exams.php#student): <http://uwgonline.westga.edu/exams.php#student>
- [Student Services](http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php): <http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php>
- [University Bookstore](http://www.bookstore.westga.edu/): <http://www.bookstore.westga.edu/>
- [UWG Cares](http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/): <http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/>
- [UWG Statements of Accessibility](https://docs.google.com/document/d/16Ri1XgaXiGx28ooO-zRvYPraV3Aq3F5ZNJYbVDGVnEA/edit?ts=57b4c82d#heading=h.yrqeffvts1f): <https://docs.google.com/document/d/16Ri1XgaXiGx28ooO-zRvYPraV3Aq3F5ZNJYbVDGVnEA/edit?ts=57b4c82d#heading=h.yrqeffvts1f>

Please see the [Common Language for Course Syllabi](#) for official information on UWG’s Academic Integrity Policy.

In general, you can count on me to answer email within a day, and usually sooner. If you email me on a weekend I might be able to respond swiftly, but more likely I'll get back to you Monday morning.

Course Policies

Late work: It's important to stay on top of your work in this class. If you must submit work late, I won't be able to give you full credit for it (unless we've discussed it in advance).

Attendance: Because this is a workshop-based class that relies on everyone's participation, it's crucial that everyone attend. After three absences your grade will suffer. If you miss five classes, we'll meet to discuss your standing in the class; it will become difficult for you to pass at this point.

Electronics: If you choose to use electronic versions of texts (though I recommend conventional texts, if possible), of course you'll need to use an e-reader or laptop in class. I'll trust you not to stray from the work at hand. Otherwise, let's try to keep phones off the table to minimize distractions. In particular, I'll ask you to refrain from texting and to keep your devices silenced.

Lateness: Please do your best to be on time—again, to avoid creating a distraction. If you are late more than twice, it'll begin contribute to your absences.

Civility: Please be respectful. I want to create a setting in which everyone is comfortable expressing their ideas and taking interpretive risks.

Preparation: Please come to class with your reading done, ready to engage thoughtfully with the material.

Office hours: Please come to see me! I am always willing to discuss the reading, your writing, or anything else you have questions about.

Artistic License: The word “creative” guarantees a degree of unpredictability; it promises freedom and variety of expression. We won't necessarily all share the same views or values or interests. This means that you **may**, in the course of the semester—whether in the assigned reading or in the writing of your classmates—encounter language or situations that make you uncomfortable, or even that you find offensive. Remember that you are both a student and an adult. Whatever your personal feelings, it's important to learn to respond to such material on a serious, intellectual level. In order for this class to succeed, everyone must be able to count on that kind of fair reception. If you anticipate having a serious problem with this, you might reconsider whether this is the class for you. (With that said, I should add that there is of course no merit in shock value purely for its own sake. What is important is that you feel free to follow the dictates of your material.)

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:

If you are a student who is disabled as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act and require assistance or support services, please seek assistance through the [Center for Disability](#). UWG also provides [Accessibility Statements for Technology](#) that you may be required to use for this course.

For more information on the Americans with Disabilities Act, UWG Email, Credit Hour, and UWG Honor Code policies as well as information on Academic Tutoring, Student Services, and Technical Requirements, Privacy Policy, and Accessibility Statements, please see the [Common Language for Syllabus](#) document.