

ENL 301: Writing Fiction - The Short Story

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Office Hours: MWF by appointment in Briggs 229

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Prerequisite: ENL 205 or permission of instructor

COURSE TEXTS

Bellow, Saul. *Seize the Day*. Penguin.

Lee, Andrea. *Interesting Women*. Knopf

These are available in paperback so don't worry. Make sure you buy both ASAP from your favorite bookshop, on-line or off.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Writers face the difficult task of translating their idiosyncratic interests into objects accessible to others. The craft of

fiction embodies this difficult relationship between our private vision and the public world where it hopes to achieve

an effect. Good writing articulates the gap between the private vision and the public, and ENL 301 addresses that

difficulty through the writing of genre fiction, in the form of the short story.

Genre fiction imposes stringent technical demands on writers. These constraints focus writers on the craft of fiction.

By planning and writing a complete short novel, students in ENL 301 will master skills essential to any fiction project.

Among such skills are writing dialogue, planning plots, developing characters, charting sub-plots, describing genres, and editing.

GENERAL ISSUES

The usual threats apply: miss class and you'll fail; miss deadlines and you'll fail; write carelessly and you'll fail. Sloppy

spelling, bizarre grammar, un-readable sentence structures, and idiosyncratic formatting are not acceptable. If you are

a loner genius, I can do nothing for you; writing is intrinsically social, and this class emphasizes that side of the process.

ATTENDANCE

Genuine learning takes place within a community, a community of writers dedicated to sharing their knowledge and

skills. Those who turn their back on us by skipping class will fail not only ENL 301, but will fail their responsibility to the

academic community. Late-comers must see the instructor at the end of the class in order to be considered present.

The nasty secret of successful writing is that it requires a fierce self-discipline that includes meeting deadlines, writing

daily, and endless revision. I use attendance as an indicator of such self-discipline.

EACH ABSENCE REDUCES YOUR GRADE

MANUSCRIPT FORMAT

Papers must be typed double-spaced with one-inch margins all around. Do not use erasable paper; it smears and doesn't allow comments to be written onto the margins. Number the pages and put your name on each page. Students are to keep all papers in a folder. The folder will be collected at the end of the term. **STUDENTS MUST MAKE A PHOTOCOPY OF ANY MATERIAL SUBMITTED TO ME**

ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: Failure to complete any one of the assignments below will cause you to fail. The assignments form part of the process-model of creativity that underlies the structure of the class.

Autobiographical Obituary: 15%

To help you be adventurous and comfortable with your own mortality, write an obituary for yourself, imagined fifty

years from now. I suggest that you check either The Washington Post, The New York Times or The Economist for good

examples. As with all assignments, this one must be typed.

The Planning Materials and First Draft: 30%

Producing a good short story requires careful management of plot, characters, time, and a huge range of other technical detail.

You'll use a process that includes:

1. a context statement
2. a character chart
3. a character dynamic
4. a scene sequence
5. first draft of short story (25 pages minimum single spaced)

Final Draft of Short Story (due December 6): 45%

Participation and Good Cheer: 10%

GRADING

If you do all of the assignments, you will receive at least a "C"; grades above "C" are based on my judgment of your work's professionalism. This professionalism includes your willingness to revise, to help others, to write nuanced fiction, and your work ethic. I urge you to speak with others about my ability to nurture writers and my simultaneous intolerance for laziness. You must schedule a review session with me prior to the midterm; portfolios are due the Friday before our final exam.

No drama. No excuses.