

"Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't." ~ Mark Twain

English 254 (FA310)

Creative Writing: Fiction

Fall 2009: 09/3/2009 – 12/10/2009

Thursdays: 6:00 p.m. – 8:55 p.m.

Room: S-040

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COURSE OVERVIEW:

Prerequisite: READING LEVEL 7 or ENG 113. Focuses on the writing of prose— chiefly short stories. Encourages students to develop their own writing styles. Includes other classroom activities, discussions and writing assignments, required analysis and criticisms of other students' work.

COURSE OUTCOMES & OBJECTIVES:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

OUTCOME: Plan and execute a work of fiction.

Objectives:

- ❖ Employ meaningful detail that distinguishes between showing and telling.
- ❖ Compose details successfully into a coherent story.
- ❖ Create a fictional story out of their own autobiographical experience.
- ❖ Employ "inspirational strategies" to initiate a story.
- ❖ Demonstrate organizational pre-writing methods to plan a story.

OUTCOME: Demonstrate a command of language.

Objectives:

- ❖ Employ figurative language, including metaphor and symbolism, in a story.
- ❖ Exercise basic editing techniques to improve the story.
- ❖ Employ proper dialogue form.
- ❖ Use grammatical English when applicable.

OUTCOME: Analyze and criticize the work of other fiction writers.

Objectives:

- ❖ Judge the effectiveness of other writers' stories.
- ❖ Explain that effectiveness in oral and written comments.
- ❖ Apply those observations to their own work and progress.

COURSE ACTIVITIES:

In this course you will read and respond to essays about and examples of “literary short stories.” Also, you will read and respond to other students’ writings, compose at least three literary short stories of your own, and be expected to fully revise one of them and present it to the class. All of the short stories composed in this course should be based in reality; therefore, “speculative fiction”, i.e., genres commonly referred to as *science fiction*, *fantasy*, and *horror* are not acceptable. As a result, if you cannot resist and thus feel the need to slot in supernatural features (e.g., ghosts, good and evil spirits and things that go bump in the night; not to mention magic, witchcraft, the eerie atmosphere and presence of the uncanny; and anything beyond sensory perception) into your writing, simply put, please, **do not**. Instead, employ real-world settings and believable characters.

Course Writing Projects, Etc.	Percent of Final Grade
Portfolio (your Analysis Papers, at least three Short Stories—one fully revised, which will be orally presented to the class—and your Self Evaluation)	70%
Participation/Homework (weighted together equally)	20
Attendance (see *Note below)	10%

***Note: Two or more absences equals zero percent on the Attendance grade and either dropped through an instructor-initiated drop or may fail the course. Also, regardless of your final grade average, all work (i.e., the Analysis Papers as well as the other Portfolio contents) must be turned in, or you will receive an “F” in the course.**

COURSE POLICIES:**Grades**

I will provide written comments on all of your work, but I will not grade it. You are expected to compose a Self Evaluation based on your Attendance/Participation/Homework and Portfolio, which, at the semester’s end, will include your Analysis Papers, at least three Short Stories, and one fully revised Short Story. **If you would like help determining either your midterm grade or your overall grade in the course at any time, please ask me.**

Manuscript Form

Word process all work intended for reader response. Please follow the MLA manuscript form guidelines. **Please use a common non-script typeface (acceptable fonts: Arial, Courier, or Times New Roman) with a font size of 12.** Also please use two spaces after a period or other sentence-ending punctuation. A word of caution: **BACK-UP your work on an E-storage (or other storage) device!!!** I also suggest e-mailing a copy of your manuscripts (saved in RTF format) to yourself in case you have problems with your E-storage devices on campus.

Analysis Papers and Manuscript Length

The required Analysis Papers—one to two typed, double-spaced pages—will be used to both express your reactions to the assigned readings (e.g., characterization, plot, setting, content, meaning, style, words, usage, etc.) and also stimulate classroom and/or group discussions. As for manuscript lengths, I encourage you to try a shorter “flash fiction” short story—say, around two to four typed, double-spaced pages, and **nothing that exceeds six to eight typed, double-spaced pages.** However, if you want to revise and augment a six to eight page short story into a ten to twelve page short story, I suggest that you only do so for your final short story, which will be presented to the class in Session 14.

Uploading Your Manuscripts to “Educator”

There will be three Workshop Groups. **Each Workshop Group will be required to upload their short stories to “Educator” on their specified days and no later than Monday nights at midnight.** Short stories should be placed in your “Student Folder” (go to “Educator” and then click on “Course Documents”), which I will unlock; you will also be able to access other students’ work there.

Here is exactly what you should do:

First, save your short story in RTF format before you attempt to upload it. Then go to Delta College’s Web site and locate the “Quicklinks” pull-down menu (near the top right-hand corner of the Web site), click on the “Educator” option, and logon. When you see our course (CREATIV WRIT FICTN/ENG 254 FA310 09 FA), click on “Enter course.” Next, click on the green “Course Documents” link, which will allow you to access “Student Folders.” Locate your name and folder, click on it, click the “Upload to this folder” link, and then follow the directions: “File names should contain no non-alphanumeric characters other than periods, spaces and underscores!” Last, use the “Browse” and “Upload File!” options to upload your manuscript.

Attendance and Late Assignments

Regular attendance is essential for successfully completing this course. When you read through the *Tentative Course Schedule*, you will see how this course is built on collaboration among you, your peers, and me. You will most likely learn more if you consistently come to class well prepared, keep up with the readings and writings, and take the initiative for your contributions to class.

If some situation in your work or home life will prevent you from regularly attending this class and completing the work on time, I recommend that you drop the class now and take it when you will be able to successfully complete it. **Note that a student who misses the first two classes of the semester will be automatically dropped from the course. A student who misses two classes in a row without contacting me, or one who misses two or more sessions, will be dropped through an instructor-initiated drop or may fail the course.**

I will take attendance at the beginning of each class session. **Chronic lateness and early departures are disrespectful to me and to your classmates and disrupt the learning environment; therefore, two late arrivals and/or early departures will be counted as one absence in terms of your attendance grade.** There is no such thing as an excused absence; you are simply present or absent (for whatever reason). If you must be absent, you are still responsible for all of the readings and work covered during the class you missed. It is your responsibility to make arrangements—ahead of time, if possible—for missed class work. I am responsible for teaching only those who attend class. If you must be absent when work is due, hand it in early or arrange for someone else to hand it in for you.

Withdraw Deadline

The last day to withdraw with a grade of “W”, to apply for a grade of pass/no credit (P/NC), or to be withdrawn with a grade of “WI” is **Tuesday, November 24**. Please see me if you are having problems with this course. I will be happy to help you individually. Also, please consult with an academic advisor before you withdraw (D102, 686-9330), and if you have or will ever have financial aid, you should also talk to the financial aid office before you drop the course (D101, 686-9080). If you stop coming after this date, you will receive an “F” instead of a “W/WI” at the end of the semester.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism (misrepresenting the work of others as your own) is a serious offense and will possibly result in an “F” for—as well as dismissal from—the course. For

more information about Delta's policies, refer to the "Integrity of Academic Work" section in the "Students' Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct" section of the *Delta College Catalog* or the English Division home page (<http://www.delta.edu/english/plagiarism.html>). If in doubt about plagiarism, please ask me for clarification. Note that I consider the submission of work that you have previously written for another course to be plagiarism.

Student Conduct

As a college student, you are expected to follow various guidelines related to your conduct. To read these guidelines, please refer to the "Students' Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct" section in the *Delta College Catalog*.

Also, because each week you will be required to read and respond to other students' work, please, leave your egos at the door before each class and offer other students' work both **positive feedback** as well as **constructive criticism**. This course is not a competition and should therefore be thought of as a learning environment, like any other academic course. I will not tolerate any **my work is better than yours** personalities in this course. Remember, we, including myself, are here to learn more about fiction writing components and how to better apply them to our fiction writing. If you feel that your fiction writing abilities are far superior to ours and, more importantly, cannot positively and constructively contribute to your peers, this course is probably not for you.

Last, I will not **cancel** the content of your work (e.g., adult themes and adult language). However, consider the fact that other students may be uncomfortable with certain subject matter and language; therefore, please, be considerate and use sound judgment.

RESOURCES FOR WRITERS:

Writing Center Café

"Due to the success of the Writing Center..., it has expanded its operations and moved to A-003 on the Lower West Concourse. There you will find welcoming faces, comfy chairs, computers, and a printer. Whether you need help brainstorming a topic, revising a cover letter for a job application, or **just need one final pair of eyes to look over a piece you've written**, the Writing Center can help. Students, faculty, and staff are welcome, so come early and stay late, and don't forget to bring a snack if you are hungry. See you there..."

Please consult the Writing Center Café's Web site (<http://www.delta.edu/writingcenter.aspx>) for additional information. The Writing Center Café is located in A-003.

Me

I will make every effort to see that this course is meaningful to you and that you understand the possibilities and limitations of the "literary short story" form. I am happy to discuss your writing with you and to answer questions on anything that may be difficult or confusing to you, either during class, after class, or in my office by appointment or during office hours. Do not hesitate to seek help from me at any time during the semester, or to consult with me concerning your performance and your grades in the course.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- ❖ A pen or pencil and highlighter pen
- ❖ A spiral-bound, college-ruled notebook with **perforated pages** to be used for notes and freewritings
- ❖ A three-ring binder and access to a three-hole punch for your Portfolios
- ❖ An E-storage device

REQUIRED TEXT:

Bailey, Tom ed. *On Writing Short Stories*. U of Oxford P, 1999. ISBN: 0195122720

TENTATIVE COURSE ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Note: This assignment schedule provides a general idea of the topics covered in the course. The number, length, and content of sessions may vary and is subject to change.

Session	Activities
1) R 9/3	<p>Introduction to the Course: What is a Sort Story? Why do They Matter to Us? What are the Differences Between a "Literary Short Story," a "Tribal Myth," and a "Religious Parable"?</p> <p>HW due in next class: 1) Read the Forward by Tobias Wolff, the Preface, and the Contributors section pp. xi – xvi; 2) Read Francine Prose's "What Makes a Short Story?" pp. 3 – 12; 3) Read Guy de Maupassant's "The String" pp. 127 – 131; 4) Read/review the document entitled "Point of View: How to Choose a Point of View" (which has been uploaded to "Educator")</p>

2) R 9/10	<p>Workshop Group #1's Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 1 HW due in next class: 1) Read Joyce Carol Oates's "Reading as a Writer" pp. 13 – 27; 2) Read Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Pet Dog" pp. 132 – 144; 3) Read Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" pp. 145 – 148; 4) Read/review the document entitled "Sequence of Tenses" (which has been uploaded to "Educator")</p>
3) R 9/17	<p>Workshop Group #2's Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 2 HW due in next class: 1) Read Tom Bailey's "Character, Plot, Setting and Time, Metaphor, and Voice" pp. 28 – 46; 2) Read either Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing" pp. 149 – 154 or Gabriel García Márquez's "One of These Days" (Márquez's "One of These Days" has been uploaded to "Educator"); 3) Read/review the document entitled "Top 10 Questions for Creating Believable Characters" (which, too, has been uploaded to "Educator")</p>
4) R 9/24	<p>Workshop Group #3's Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 3 HW due in next class: 1) Read Tom Bailey's "Character, Plot, Setting and Time, Metaphor, and Voice" pp. 47 – 56; 2) Read William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" pp. 155 – 162; 3) Read/review the document entitled "Punctuating Dialogue: How to Punctuate Dialogue Correctly" (which has been uploaded to "Educator")</p>
5) R 10/1	<p>Workshop Group #1's Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 4 HW due in next class: 1) Read Tom Bailey's "Character, Plot, Setting and Time, Metaphor, and Voice" pp. 57 – 67; 2) Read John Steinbeck's "The Chrysanthemums" pp. 163 – 170</p>
6) R 10/8	<p>Workshop Group #2's Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 5 HW due in next class: 1) Read Tom Bailey's "Character, Plot, Setting and Time, Metaphor, and Voice" pp. 68 – 72; 2) Read Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge" pp. 171 – 182</p>
7) R 10/15	<p>Workshop Group #3's Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 6 HW due in next class: 1) Read Tom Bailey's "Character, Plot, Setting and Time, Metaphor, and Voice" pp. 73 – 79; 2) Read James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" pp. 183 – 206</p>

8) R 10/22	Workshop Group #1's Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 7 HW due in next class: 1) Read Frank Conroy's "The Writer's Workshop" pp. 80 – 89; 2) Read Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl" pp. 207 – 210
9) R 10/29	Workshop Group #2's Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 8 HW due in next class: 1) Read Andre Dubus's "The Habit of Writing" pp. 90 – 96; 2) Read John Updike's "A & P" pp. 211 – 215
10) R 11/5	Workshop Group #3's Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 9 HW due in next class: 1) Read Robert Coles's "Why Write? Taking on the World" pp. 97 – 111; 2) Read Raymond Carver's "Cathedral" pp. 216 – 226
11) R 11/12	Workshop Group #1's <i>Revised</i> Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 10 HW due in next class: 1) Read C. Michael Curtis's "Publishers and Publishing" pp. 112 – 123; 2) Read Louise Erdrich's "Saint Marie" pp. 227 – 237
12) R 11/19 (Last Day to Drop w/"W" is T 11/24)	Workshop Group #2's <i>Revised</i> Short Stories Due today: HW assigned in session 11 HW due in next class (Session 13): 1) Read Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried" pp. 238 – 250; 2) Read Joyce Carol Oates's "Heat" pp. 251 – 259
R 11/26	Thanksgiving Break – College Closed – No Class HW due in next class: 1) Read Robert Boswell's "The Darkness of Love" pp. 260 – 287; 2) Read Andre Dubus's "A Father's Story" pp. 288 – 303
13) R 12/3	Workshop Group #3's <i>Revised</i> Short Stories Due today: HW assigned over Thanksgiving Break HW due in next class: 1) Read Susan Minot's "Lust" pp. 304 – 310; 2) Read Tobias Wolff's "Bullet in the Brain" pp. 311 – 314
14) R 12/10	Short Story Presentations Due today: Portfolios and Self Evaluations