

English 254, Creative Writing: Fiction  
Fall 2011

**Time and Days:**

Day and Time:

Room:

Instructor: Mr. Vande Zande

Office: S049

Office Phone: (989) 686-9538

e-mail: jcvandez@delta.edu

Office Hours:

**Required Texts:** *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers*, Bernays and Painter,  
3rd Ed.

**Required Materials:** One notebook

**Course Description:**

In this course we will be focused on the craft of writing fiction – short stories specifically. The work in this course will help you improve your understanding of the elements of fiction writing, and should help you become a better creative writer. In the vein of many other writers, Justice Brandeis once said, “There is no good writing, only good rewriting.” And, perhaps in more crude terms, Ernest Hemingway once said, “The first draft of anything is sh\*t.” As a practicing writer myself, I believe in what both of these writers (and many other writers) imply: To write well you must review it and then rewrite it and then review it and rewrite it, etc. Perhaps you’ve already started to learn this from Composition I and II. Maybe you’ve already seen your writing improve through rewriting. I hope so because rewriting will be an essential element of this course. To help you rewrite we will go to workshop with many of our stories. While in workshop, we will hear each other’s stories and provide constructive criticism in an effort to help the writer change the story for the better. The primary activities of the class will be as follows: We will read from *What If?* to develop and practice our understanding of fiction’s elements. We will read from short stories to see how professional writers develop their stories. We will write our own stories. We will share our stories with each other to get feedback. We will rewrite our stories to make them even better. If you seriously love writing and reading, then this will hopefully be the best class you’ve ever had.

## **Objectives:**

When you leave this course with a passing grade, I expect that you will have a new body of knowledge:

1. You will be familiar with the elements of fiction writing.
2. You will know how to study and pay attention to the craft of other writers.
3. You will be comfortable with rewriting.
4. You will be able to critique another writer's work.

## **Disclaimer:**

Because this is an academic course for which you will receive academic credit, I am able to set some boundaries on what we will be writing about. In this class, we will attempt to write serious or literary fiction – fiction that deals with real life and characters in real situations. Our writing will explore the human condition, not try to escape it. We will not be writing stories that could be characterized as science fiction, fantasy or horror. We will not be writing children's lit either, and I highly recommend that you have adult main characters.

If you eventually would like to write in the above genres, this course can still be of benefit to you; the best writers in the above genres still employ many of the elements of literary fiction. If you insist on writing in the above genres, it's in your best interest to drop this course.

## **Grading:**

Story #1: 100 pts

Story #2: 100 pts

Reading Journal: 30 pts

Reading Quizzes: 60 pts (One reading quiz can be made up)

Participation: 20

Total Points: 310

Your grades will be determined by the percentage of the points you earn.

A- to A which is 90% to 94% and above

B- to B+ which is 80% to 89%

C- to C+ which is 70% to 79%

D to D+ which is 63% to 69%

E which is 62% or below.

**Integrity of Academic Work** (From the Delta College Catalog)

## **I. Statement of Values**

The principles of truth and honesty are fundamental to a community of learners. All members of the Delta College Community are expected to honor these principles and are responsible for maintaining the integrity of academic work at the College.

Plagiarism or any misrepresentation of work, unsanctioned collaboration, use of prohibited materials, and participation in any form of dishonesty all constitute violation of this policy.

Violations of this policy will result in the actions and consequences specified within this policy.

## **II. Faculty determine standards of integrity for academic coursework.**

Examples of academic dishonesty that would constitute violations of this policy include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Plagiarism\*
- B. Cheating on tests, quizzes, or any assignments
- C. Fabrication
- D. Aiding and abetting dishonesty
- E. Falsification of records and official documents

\*Plagiarism is defined as, “the false assumption of authorship; the wrongful act of taking the product of another person’s mind and presenting it as one’s own.” As developed by Alexander Lindey in “Plagiarism and Originality” (N.Y.: Harper,1952)

### **Attendance:**

Your English Division instructor will drop you from this course if you miss, for any reason, in excess of 2/15 of your classes for this course. For this particular course this semester (or term) that means in excess of 2 class periods. This is an English Division policy.

### **Writing Center:**

The grades on your stories will be affected by your use of grammar and punctuation. If you have difficulties in these areas, you might consider running your story by a tutor. Beyond grammar and punctuation, they might have some creative advice for you too.

### Schedule of Activities and Events

(I reserve the right to change this syllabus to meet the unique needs of this class)

- Week 1 – Introduction to the course, What is a Short Story?: Character and Conflict: Generating ideas for stories: note cards. Invention and Inspiration: Part 9 from *What If?*
- Week 2 – Looking at the craft of a short story together: “Square.” Beginnings: Part 1 from *What If?*; Perspective, Distance, and Point-of-View: Part 3 from *What If?*
- Week 3 – “Cathedral” (p.306) The rhetoric of story-telling (avoiding exposition where possible). Characterization: Part 2 from *What If?*
- Week 4 – “Gryphon” (p. 287), and Interior Landscape: Part 5 *What If?* [Writing Workshop]
- Week 5 – “Shiloh” (p. 353), Plot: Part 6 from *What If?* and Dialogue: Part 4 from *What If?* [Writing Workshop]
- Week 6 -- “Would You Know It Wasn’t Love” (344), Revision: Part 10 from *What If?* and A Writer’s Tools: Part 8 from *What If?* [Writing Workshop]
- Week 7 – Story generating for story #2 [Writing Workshop]
- Week 8 – “Sheep” (p. 363 ) [Writing Workshop]
- Week 9 – [Writing Workshop]
- Week 10 – **First Story due** “Brownies” (p. 377), The Elements of Style: Part 7 from *What If?*
- Week 11 – Writing Workshops and forms of extra credit
- Week 12 – Writing Workshops
- Week 13 – Writing Workshops
- Week 14– Writing Workshops
- Week 15 – **Second story due**