English 2323 Fall 2011
Tuesdays, 5:30-8:15 pm

Creative Writing-Fiction
Instructor: Jack Buentello
Room: MS 2.02.55
Phone: 458-4374
Email: John.Buentello@utsa.edu

Content and Goals:
This course is an opportunity for students to study the art of writing the short story. It is an introductory course which assumes no previous experience. We will discuss the elements of writing fiction. We will analyze stories to understand how they are created. We will do in-class writing exercises to help students develop ideas and practice writing techniques. We will workshop student writing. Students will turn in revisions of their work in a final portfolio.

Requirements:
In-class writing & homework assignments, one short story & revision, one typed critique leader paper; written notes on your classmates’ work-shopped stories, & critique of one literary event.

Required Texts:
Peter Rubie, *The Elements of Storytelling* (Wiley)
Handouts from the Instructor as needed.

*Please consult the UTSA Student Code of Conduct regarding the penalties and policies on plagiarism, scholastic dishonesty, and expected conduct.

Grade Distribution

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<tr>
<th>Class Participation</th>
<th>25%</th>
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<td>(Includes: Attendance, Discussions, Verbal Workshop Critiques)</td>
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<td>Writing Assignments (In class &amp; homework)</td>
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<td>Written critiques on class short stories</td>
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<td>Writing (Final Portfolio) Due 12/13/11 from 5:00-7:30</td>
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<td>Includes: Critique of Literary Event (5%), 1 Short Story (10%), 1 Revision of that story (10%), 2 page Critique Leader notes (5%) All in class writing &amp; homework (5%)</td>
<td>Total 100%</td>
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Your Final Portfolio Should Include:
1 Short Story work-shopped in class (copy with my comments on it)
1 Revision of workshopped story or a new story
All in-class writing & homework
Your written critique as critique leader
A written critique to a literary event

Literary Events
Attend any literary event and turn in a personal response paper: a typed, informal paper (1-2 pages) where the writer discusses his/her opinions of the event.

Literary Readings of Fiction in San Antonio
Readings by writers at Gemini Ink, Twig Bookstore, Barnes & Noble Bookstores.

UTSA Creative Writing Reading Series
(Posted online under the UTSA English Dept. Creative Writing Program)
“A”
Regular attendance; no more than one absence; student is prepared for every class, shows that he/she has read the assignments, participates in every class in a positive and constructive way; student’s writing is virtually free of grammatical and spelling errors, is thoughtful, creative, interesting, and above all, original; student has turned in all required in-class writing and homework on time and student’s revisions are substantial and polished; student demonstrates enthusiasm in class and concern and dedication to the course itself; student is adult and responsive to others’ work and is encouraging and supportive to all other writers; student’s comments show both sensitivity and honesty; student has participated in at least one outside “literary” event and has turned in additional pieces of creative writing for critique.

“B”
Regular attendance; no more than two absences; student is prepared for every class, shows that he/she has read the assignments, participates in every class in a positive and constructive way; student’s writing has few grammatical and spelling errors, is thoughtful, creative, and above all, original; student has turned in all required in-class writing and homework on time and student’s revisions are substantial and polished; student demonstrates enthusiasm in class and concern and dedication to the course itself; student is adult and responsive to others’ work and is encouraging and supportive to all other writers.

“C”
Regular attendance; no more than three absences; student is prepared for every class, shows that he/she has read the assignments, participates in every class in a constructive way; student’s writing, has some grammatical errors, and lacks originality; student has turned in all required in-class writing and homework on time and student’s revisions are adequate; student often demonstrates enthusiasm in class; student is adult and responsive to others’ work and is encouraging and supportive to all other writers.

“D”
No more than three absences; student is usually prepared for class, participation is lacking in quality; student’s writing has frequent grammatical errors, lacks originality; and/or is not turned in on time; student has turned in all required in-class writing and homework and student’s revisions are adequate; however, student fails to show interest in other’s writing or in the class materials.

“F” is any performance less than that of a “D”

Workshop Critique Directions
You will each be a critique leader for one story written by another writer in class. The “Critique Leader” will open and lead the discussion on that short story. He/she should give examples from the story and spend 5-10 minutes talking and 15 minutes leading a class discussion on the story. The critique leader is REQUIRED to turn in a 2 Page (typed, double-spaced) critique of the story. You will not have time to read your entire critique, but you should mention key points. Your critique counts toward your grade.

Weekly Story Critiques
For each story you read every week, you are asked to write critique notes and suggestions. You should write on the stories themselves and include a paragraph at the end explaining your critique of the story. You should use correct terms as appropriate (plot, setting, etc.) and should pay attention to language and how it is used stylistically as well as grammatical usages. Use your skills of critical analysis and analyze how the elements of a story work or do not work in a particular piece of writing. It is not enough to say something is “good” or that you liked it, you need to say why. Come to class prepared to speak about the stories as part of your participation grade.
Syllabus Fall 2011

Week One: August 30  Syllabus, discussion of texts, course, & guidelines.

Week Two  September 6  In-class writing: Writing a story synopsis  
   Rubie: Chapter 1 pg. 1-21, assigned story.

Week Three  September 13  In-class writing: From story ideas to synopsis to story  
   Rubie: Chapter 2, pg. 23-33, assigned story

Week Four  September 20  In-class writing: Creating a character  
   Rubie: Chapter 3, pg. 35-56, assigned story

Week Five  September 27  In-class writing: Characters, action, & dialogue  
   Rubie: Chapter 4, pg. 57-74, assigned story

Week Six  October 4  In-class writing: Viewpoint: whose story is it?  
   Rubie: Chapter 5, pg. 75-94, assigned story  
   Short Story copies due, sign up for workshop

Week Seven  October 11  In-class writing: Story pacing  
   Rubie: Chapter 6, pg. 95-104, assigned story

Week Eight  October 18  In-class writing: Transitions in Time  
   Rubie: Chapter 7, pg. 105-115, 
   Story workshop begins

Week Nine  October 25  In-class writing: Writing Styles  
   Rubie: Chapter 8, pg. 117-130

Week Ten  November 1  In-class writing: Story Structure  
   Rubie: Chapter 9, pg. 131-138

Week Eleven  November 8  In-class writing: Editing your work: the basics  
   Handout: Editing Basics

Week Twelve  November 15  In-class writing: Revising your story  
   Handout: Revising versus Editing

Week Thirteen  November 22  In-class writing: An author biography  
   Handout: Query letters, submitting your story

Week Fourteen  November 29  In-class writing: Queries & Submissions  
   Handout: query letters  
   Flash Fiction Stories Due Next Week

Week Fifteen  December 6  Discuss Portfolios  
   Flash Fiction Stories Due

Week Sixteen  December 13  Finals 5:00-7:30  
   All Portfolios Dues-No Exception
# English 2323: Sign-up for Critiques

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Workshop</th>
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Critique Guidelines

1. On the first read, jot down your immediate reactions to the story: how it made you feel, which characters were compelling, if the ending worked or not, etc. Set these aside for later.

2. Then, re-read the story. This time, try to understand the story from a writer’s point of view. What is the author trying to achieve? What style is the author writing in, and how does that inform the rest of the story. It may help you to relate the story to a “great” writer's work. What does this tell us about what the author might be trying to achieve?

3. Is this realism or surrealism? Does the diction suit the style, the characters, and the ideas?

4. Point of View: What is the point of view? Who is telling this story if anyone? Is this the best point of view for this particular story? --Whose story is it?

5. If there’s dialogue: is it believable? Does it suit the characters? Do you know who is speaking at all times? How does this dialogue advance the story? What is its purpose?

6. Is the description accurate, effective? Does it pull you into the story? Does it affect all your senses?

7. Are there clichés? Can these be replaced with original phrases/metaphors/similes?

8. Are the characters realistic human beings? Are they cardboard characters?

9. Does the style of writing ultimately suit the story? Is the style the best style for this story?

10. Does the ending work? If this is a novel chapter, does it make you want to read more?

11. Does the beginning work? Does it capture your attention and pull you into the story?

12. Is there a place it would be better to begin?

13. Is this story original? Told in an original way? What is unique about it?

14. Overall, what are the weaknesses of this story? How can they be improved?

15. Overall, what are the strengths of this story? What does the author do the best?

As critique leader, you may want to begin with a few of these questions, then open up a discussion, returning to some of your other ideas later. There are many other questions that we will ask as the course progresses; these are a few to get you started. It is most important that you are honest in your critiques, but that doesn’t necessitate abuse. If you’re criticizing the story, try to make a suggestion for how to improve it, or ask the class to help you to do this. Always remember, this is not YOUR story. Try to put yourself in the author’s shoes, and figure out how the author would best achieve his/her goals/story. At the same time, you should think about what it is like to receive the critique you’re getting ready to give; find strengths as well as weaknesses in the story. Finally, when your story is being critiqued, take notes on your own copy as people speak; don’t take it personally, and let a few days pass if necessary before you look at the story for revision.
English 2323: Creative Writing: Fiction

Fall 2010

Name:

Write responses to the following questions on this sheet of paper:

1. What kind of fiction do you want to write?

2. What are your future goals as a writer?