UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

English 2323 (001): Introduction to Creative Writing: Fiction

Spring 2011 (Monday 5:30-8:15 p.m  HSS 3.04.28)

Professor: Dr. Laura Davenport

Office Hours: immediately before and after class and by appointment

Email: Laura.Davenport@utsa.edu

Course Descriptions: This course provides students opportunity to study the art of writing fiction. Students will read stories and novels by a variety of modern and contemporary authors and will use this study to inform their own creative productions. By the end of the course, students should have a basic understanding of fiction as a genre and should have substantial experience writing and critically analyzing fiction. This course presumes intensive reading is crucial to developing quality writing, therefore we will spend much of our class time discussing assigned reading. Students will be expected to produce at least one analytical essay intended to deepen and clarify their understanding of a specific author’s work. The majority of the class time, however, will be devoted to student writing, including regular in-class writing assignments and workshops of student writing. All students will be expected to discuss and write comments on their peers’ stories. Furthermore, all students will be expected to turn in substantial revisions of their stories as a final project.

Texts and Materials:

Brown, Rebecca: Excerpts from a Family Medical Dictionary (University of Wisconsin Press)
Comyns, Barbara: Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead (Dorothy, a PublishingProject)
Hunt, Laird: Ray of the Star (Coffee House Press)
Miles, Eileen: Cool for You (Soft Skull Press)
Peet, Christian Big American Trip (Shearsman Press)
Redonnet Marie: Forever Valley (Bison Books)
Saterstrom, Selah: The Pink Institution (Coffee House Press)

Other readings provided by instructor as assigned
Notebook/paper for in-class writing exercises
Dictionary and Thesaurus
Access to computer w. internet and printer
Vast quantities of paper and printer ink/toner

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Students are expected to attend every class. Assignments will often be made in class, and it is your responsibility to find out what is expected of you. Being absent in no way excuses being unprepared for the following class. In-class writing assignments cannot be “made up.” More than three (3) unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. More than two (2) unexcused absences excludes the possibility of earning an A in this course. Only absences documented with a physician’s note or from
some other worthy source will be “excused.” In all cases, the professor will have the final say as to whether an absence will be excused.

Religious Holidays: Students unable to attend classes on particular days because of sincerely held religious beliefs shall, without penalty, be excused from such classes and be given meaningful opportunity to make up examinations, graded activities or assignments provided the instructor is notified of their needs within the first two weeks of the term.

Flu Season: Please do not come to class if you are sick. According to the CDC, most people recover from the flu (including H1N1) in about a week. This means that if you get the flu, you will most likely not miss more than one class. And if you do need to miss more than one class, remember that a doctor’s note can function to excuses absences and that as a UTSA student you pay a health fee every semester which covers general clinic use at University Health Services.

Late Papers: Late assignments will be marked down one letter grade for every period they are late. If a student is absent the day an assignment is due, his/her work will be marked down two letter grades. (In other words, do not skip class to finish an assignment or simply to save on embarrassment.)

Plagiarism and Collusion: The University of Texas at San Antonio defines “scholastic dishonesty” as including but not limited to, “cheating on a test or other class work, plagiarism (the appropriation of another’s work in one’s own written work offered for credit), and collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing course work offered for credit.) Should a student be accused of academic dishonesty, the faculty member may initiate disciplinary proceedings.” The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed., provides a detailed discussion of “Forms of Plagiarism” and “Other Issues,” including the impropriety of submitting the same paper to more than one instructor or in more than one class by the same instructor.

Classroom Conduct: The following is taken from the Provost’s statement on “Civility in the Classroom”: “Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. To assure all students have the opportunity to gain from time spent in class, students are prohibited from engaging in any form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result, minimally, in a request to leave class.”

In order to maintain a workshop environment that fosters mutual respect, please do not:

1. Use cell phones in class: All cell phones must be on silent before you enter the class. Under no circumstances should you check phone messages or read/reply to text messages during class. Should you forget to silence your phone and it rings, do not answer it in class. If it is an emergency and you must answer, please do so and take your belongings with you. Otherwise, silence the phone with as little fuss as possible.
2. Come to class tardy or leave early: If you have a legitimate reason for being late or leaving early, let me know in advance so we can make arrangements.
3. Chat during lecture or class discussion
4. Talk out of turn or attempt to dominate the conversation
5. Pass notes
6. Read the newspaper, magazine, or other irrelevant material during class
7. Sleep
8. Use your laptop
9. Use your iPod or other electronic devices
10. Shuffle, zip or unzip backpacks, shuffle papers, slam notebooks, or otherwise make the sort of racket associated with preparing to leave the classroom before class is dismissed.
11. Eat or drink anything smelly.
12. In any way unnecessarily distract fellow students from their purpose for being in class.

Program Policy
Regarding Student Writing And Behavior in Creative Writing Courses:

Writing instructors may, at their sole discretion, refuse to workshop or comment on any student work they deem patently offensive or outside their professional purview. Instructors should make every effort to communicate their standards so students know what is likely to be considered acceptable. If the instructor determines that a student’s submission is unacceptable, they should inform the student and give him or her an opportunity to submit an alternative work.

If an instructor believes a student’s writing or personal manner suggest they are emotionally unstable and may pose a risk to themselves or others, the instructor may insist the student see a professional counselor (through the university counseling center) as a condition for continued participation in the workshop. If the student’s behavior violates the Student Code of Conduct, the instructor may file a referral with Student Judicial Affairs. Faculty may also, at their discretion, report concerns about student behavior to the UTSA police. In all cases, instructors should register their concerns with the Department Chair.

Relevant Web Contacts/Resources:
Counseling Services http://www.utsa.edu/counsel/index.htm
Student Judicial Affairs http://www.utsa.edu/OSJA/index.cfm
Student Code of Conduct http://www.utsa.edu/infoguide/appendices/b.cfm
UTSA Police Department http://www.utsa.edu/utsapd/

Grade Distribution: Semester Grades will be based on performance in the following areas with approximate percentage breakdown as follows:

20 % Participation This class is student-centered and student-driven, which means you as students are responsible for determining much of its form and content. Your input, your intellectual curiosity, your imagination and enthusiasm shall go a long way toward determining how “useful,” “meaningful,” and “interesting” this course is for you and your peers. Therefore, your participation is mandatory. Students are expected to come to every class prepared, to turn in assigned drafts and critiques on time, and to contribute positively to discussions. Participation grades will be based upon students’ attentiveness in class, ability to formulate and answer intelligent questions, and willingness to interact productively in class discussions. “Discussion Leader” assignments are also included in this category.

20% Process Assignments/ In-Class Writing: These assignments are designed to help students fully engage in specific phases of the writing process and include: Writing Exercises, Peer Critiques/Responses, Reading Reaction Papers, etc.

15% Response Papers: You are required to compose a 1.5-2 page response to each of the assigned texts. These papers are due the day we discuss the text in question.

10% Literary Event Responses (2x) Due 3/7 and 4/11 Attend at least two literary events somewhere in San Antonio and write a formal critique/reaction (2-3 pages). These responses need
to be more than just a summary. I want to know what you thought of the reading, what you admired, found disconcerting about the reading and why. Your paper should be an actual analysis of the event /reading and needs to be supported with evidence and reasons. Where possible, draw connections between your experience at this reading and the discussions we have had in class about fiction. Be certain you specify who you heard read, where you heard them, the date and any other relevant information. You should orient your response around the poems/stories read—refer to them by title and quote significant lines—whenever possible. Be detailed.

10% Analytical Essay (4-5 pgs) Due by 5/2 For this assignment choose one of the texts to analyze in detail.

25% Stories/ Story Revisions/ Final Portfolio (Due 5/2 at 5 p.m.) Individual stories are not graded per se. If they’re turned in on time, and they fulfill the assignment, they earn full credit. However, the late paper policy does apply to stories turned in for the workshop. Your final portfolio should include revised copies of ALL the stories written for this class. Your revisions should show changes from the original drafts and demonstrate how well you applied the input you were given during workshop. I will be looking to see that you made “big changes” and that you were able to re-conceptualize the stories and take risks.

Paper Format: All essays/response papers must be written in 12 pt. TNR font, double spaced, 1” margins. Adhere to all MLA guidelines for paper formatting and documentation.

Grading Criteria: Grading determination will take into consideration both the timely completion of course requirements and the quality of critical work presented. Because an A requires work above and beyond basic course requirements, additional readings/ response papers, stories, or critical work may be turned in at any time. Be aware that your course grade is heavily dependent on class discussion, your contribution to workshops, and other activities which cannot be made up. **More than 2 absences will result in a failing grade.**

**A** Regular attendance; no more than 1 unexcused absence; student is prepared for every class, shows that s/he has read the assignments, participates in every class in a positive and constructive manner; 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 an 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 turned in additional piece of creative writing or critical work.

**B** Regular attendance; no more than 1 unexcused absence; student is prepared for every class, shows that s/he has read the assignments, participates in every class in a positive 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 an adult and responsive to others’ work and is encouraging and supportive to all other writers.

**C** Regular attendance; no more than 2 unexcused absences; student is prepared for every class, shows that s/he has read the assignments, participates in every class in a constructive way student’s writing has some grammatical errors, lacks originality and/or is somewhat superficial in its engagement of the material; 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** Regular attendance; no more than 2 unexcused absences; student is usually prepared for every class, participation is lacking in quality; student’s writing has frequent grammatical errors, lacks originality is superficial in its engagement of the material and/or is not turned in on time; student has turned in all required in-class writing and homework on time and student’s revisions are adequate; however, student fails to show interest in other’s writing or in the class materials.

**F** Any performance less than that of a D

**Disclaimer:** As professor, I reserve the right to amend or revise this syllabus in any manner I deem beneficial for the class. If you have concerns about the course, the instructor, or other students, you are invited to express your concerns in a proactive manner to me. I am open to suggestions at any point in the semester about modifying the course to best suit the students’ need an interests.
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