

SUNY CORTLAND ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
PWR 212: WRITING FICTION

Credit Hours: 3
Semester/Year: Spring 2006
Meeting Time: MWF 11:30-12:20
Room: OM G-17

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REQUIRED TEXTS

Gardner. *The Art of Fiction*.
Denman and Shoup. *Story Matters*.

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION

In a workshop environment, students practice writing skills with an emphasis on the short story. Prerequisite: ENG200 or ENG202. (3 cr. hr.)

Writing Intensive Requirement

This is a WI course. You will be doing much more than 15 pages of writing; you will have opportunities for revision; and you will receive instruction in writing techniques.

ADDITIONAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

The term "fiction" connotes a broad range of genres from short stories and novels to stage plays, movie scripts, and video games. Narrative is also considered a key element in non-fiction and more commercial professional writing genres such as instructional design, technical writing, and copy writing.

This course focuses on the short story as a starting point for understanding narrative structures. While the short story has genre-specific elements, it is also a useful way to investigate narrative more generally. The short story is also an important starting point for aspiring authors. By publishing short stories, writers make a name for themselves in literary circles and gain the attention of agents and editors. Having a strong sample story is also important for gaining entrance to an MFA program.

GRADING

Flash Fiction	10%
Short Stories	50%
Workshop Participation	30%
Publication Review	5%
Reflection	5%

FLASH FICTION

An emerging genre of fiction that is generally less than 500 words in length (and often far shorter than that!). We will read some examples and try our hand.

SHORT STORIES

You will write two stories for this course. Short stories vary greatly in length. Some are 1500-2000 words long; others approach the length of a novella (50-60 pages). I expect that you will write 5,000–7,000 words (around 15-25 pages) for as a total for both stories. Thus, you might write one five-page and one twelve-page story or two twelve-page stories. Writing a shorter story is not always easier.

WORKSHOP PARTICIPATION

Though learning to write better fiction is the primary goal of the course, becoming a productive workshop participant is a close second. Almost all creative writing courses function in a workshop mode: that is, everyone reads everyone else's stories, and then everyone gets together and provides feedback. Becoming a strong workshop participant will make you a welcome member of any writing community, including advanced writing courses here and in graduate school. In addition, the idea is that the skills you develop workshopping other writers' works will ultimately help you in revising your own writing. As a workshop participant in this course, you will be expected to provide written feedback, occasionally lead our discussions, and be generally active in our conversations. (See my discussions of the Workshop below.)

PUBLICATION REVIEW

Of course the whole idea is for you to get published at some point. In order to do that, you need to be familiar with the various publications where you might submit your work. You will do a brief review of one such publication and make a brief presentation about it to the class.

REFLECTION

Part of becoming a good writer is sometimes giving some thought to where you have been and where you are going. At the end of the semester, you will write a brief reflection on how you think you're writing has changed.

THE WORKSHOP

The primary mode of the creative writing classroom is the workshop. Many of you have had some experience "workshopping" your writing, perhaps in your CPN courses. The creative writing workshop is similar but different from this. In our workshop, we will occasionally work in small groups, but our typical activity will be a class-wide workshop. This means we will sit as an entire class and discuss a particular student's story. You will each have both of your stories and your flash fiction workshopped by the entire class.

This means that you will have *significant* responsibilities as a workshop participant. You will be responsible for reading everybody else's work and coming to class prepared to discuss the day's material. You will receive three written critiques from your classmates on your stories. This means that you will write nine critiques. You will be in charge of opening our discussion of another student's work three times during the semester.

Likely that all seems very confusing. Don't worry. I will create a detailed schedule.

In order for everyone to have adequate time to read material and prepare for class, as a writer you are responsible for making your work available to other students. You will distribute your work the *week before* your story is to be discussed. *You must make copies of your story for every member of the class.* There are a variety of ways that this can be accomplished, which we will discuss in class.

POLICIES

1. Late paper policy:

You must inform me prior to the due date of a given assignment (e.g. during the class before, in my office hours, leaving a message on my phone or email) that your assignment will be late. At that time, you will give me a revised due date, which will be FINAL. I will not accept your assignment after this revised due date and you will receive a zero on that portion of your grade. Generally I will give you an extra week without question. If you propose a revised due date more than one week beyond the original, I will expect some detailed rationale.

2. Attendance Policy

The college attendance policy in the *College Handbook* states "Penalties for excessive absences ... shall not exceed one-third of a letter grade per class hour of absence" (53). You are allowed three absences without penalty. Each following absence will reduce your final grade one-quarter of a letter.

3. Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism, the act of claiming another's writing as your own, is a serious form of academic dishonesty. Students found guilty of plagiarism may expect to face the consequences described in the *College Handbook*.

4. Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services located in B-40 Van Hoesen Hall or call (607) 753-2066 for an appointment. Information regarding your disability will be treated in a confidential manner. Because many accommodations require early planning, requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I: Writing Fiction—Theory & Practice

1:23	First Day
1:25	Denman & Shoup Chapters 1 & 2
1:27	Gardner Chapters 1 & 2
1:30	Gardner Chapters 3 & 4
2:1	Denman & Shoup Chapter 3
2:3	Gardner Chapter 5; Flash Fiction Due
2:6-2:8	Flash Fiction Workshops
2:13	Gardner Chapter 6
2:15	Denman & Shoup Chapters 4 & 5
2:17	Gardner Chapter 7

Part II: Fiction Workshop Round I

2:20-3:10	Workshop of your first story
2:24-2:26	<i>Raquette Lake Writers' Retreat Weekend</i>
3:13-3:17	SPRING BREAK

Part III: Analysis of Craft

3:20-3:31	Discussion of Readings TBA
3:24	Revision of First Short Story Due

We will discuss six authors from the Denman/Shoup collection (one per class). Your task is to read as many of these as you can prior to this time. We will then decide as a class which six authors to discuss.

Part IV: Fiction Workshop Round II

4:3-4:28	Workshop of your second story
4:19	SCHOLAR'S DAY—Class Cancelled
5:1-5:5	Publication Presentations
5:8	Reflections & Revisions of Second Short Story Due