

USCDornsife

**Department of
English**

**ENGLISH 303
Introduction To Fiction Writing
FALL 2019
(Section 32653)**

Instructor: Kerry Brian Ingram
Time: 2:00-4:20, Friday
Location: Room 203 THH
Office Hours: M/W 10:00-11:00
Friday 12:00-2:00
(or by appointment)
Office Location: 410 Taper Hall
e-mail: kerrying@usc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 303 is a fiction workshop providing an introduction to the techniques and practices of prose fiction. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to identify the mechanics and principles of fiction and demonstrate the ability to employ established techniques. Emphasis is placed on craft issues such as characterization, point of view, narrative structure, style and voice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students must compose original fiction, read all the stories and instructional materials and comment precisely and logically on the work of classmates.

At the end of the semester, each student will go through the process of choosing stories and preparing a portfolio of fictional narratives for potential publication.

TEXTS: *What If?--Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers, 3rd Edition*
by Anne Bernays/Pam Painter
The Story and Its Writer, Current Edition by Ann Charters

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

In-class participation is crucial in order to succeed in this class. If you are absent, the missed instruction, class exercises, and workshop critiques will almost certainly affect the grade. Moreover, merely being present does not automatically count as participation. Do your reading and come with ideas and questions for discussion. If an emergency does come up, you will be responsible for work assigned during that absence. Consequently, you should arrange to get any missed handouts, homework, or new story materials from me or from another student. The best workshop is an exercise in mutual goodwill and serious discussion of storytelling methods.

Please, **no late stories**. An electronic version of your story must be sent to me before the day of your workshop for distribution to your classmates. *Writers meet deadlines*, and timely submission of stories is crucial so that classmates can provide useful critiques (which is part of *their* grade!). Needless to say, subsequently missing the day you picked for workshop is not an option.

Keep in mind that class starts on time. Excessive tardiness will affect your participation grade.

WRITING IS REWRITING. Your grade will be determined in large part on the stories you complete based on the many writing exercises we explore in class and at home. The first workshop story must come from the in-class exercises. Once you determine which beginnings are most important to you, your job is to NOT STOP until you have rendered your best version of that story. **Among the five works for your portfolio (two of which will be workshopped), you will choose one for official submission to a journal or contest.**

Conferences. Periodically, at least once during the semester, I will arrange an individual conference with each student to address questions and interests concerning craft or ideas about completing your projects.

Laptops and iPads can be used during in-class compositions IF the assignment is to be completed at home and IF the exercise does not require my written interaction during class.

Grading Breakdown

- 1) Participation/Completion of in-class writing exercises/Weekly quizzes or responses to readings: **250 points**
- 2) Typed comments on stories of classmates; one copy for me, one for the author.
Minimum: one page, double spaced: **250 points**
- 3) Submission of **three complete** story drafts you have decided **not** to submit for workshop, based on exercises in class: **250 points**
- 4) Revisions of **two finished** stories following the workshops: **250 points**

SEQUENCE OF ASSIGNMENTS

(This course outline, with the exception of the story due dates, is tentative. Additional reading and/or substitutions will be the rule, based on your stylistic choices and your individual needs. Use the outline to organize study plans, but check in with me in every class, and stay up-to-date. Any changes to this schedule will be announced at the beginning and at the end of the appropriate classes).

8/30 Introduction. Syllabus.

In-class: Biographical Questions

First In-class Narrative: Person/Place/Song (23/Bernays)

Reading Assignments: “The Elements of Fiction” (1667/Charters, Appendix One)

“Hands” by Sherwood Anderson (26/Charters)

“Wants” by Grace Paley (281/Bernays) + “Samuel”
(1667/Charters, Appendix One)

“A&P” by John Updike (1290/Charters)

Find a Photograph (and email it to me)

9/06 Exercise: Found Photograph Narratives

Second In-class Narrative: “Imaginary Identities”

Reading assignment: “The Sock” by Lydia Davis (Handout)

“The Lesson” by Toni Cade Bambara (Charters)

Raymond Carver stories (Charters)

9/13 So, What Happened?—Beginning/Middle/End

Setting and Physical Description

“The Discuss Thrower” by Richard Selzer (Handout)

“On The Road” by Langston Hughes (Handout)

“Powder” by Tobias Wolff (Charters)

Third In-class narrative: Start and Finish: 750-word Stories

Homework: **Writer 1, 2 and 3 submit**

9/20 First Person Versus Third Person

In-class: “20/20” by Linda Brewer (273/Bernays)

Reading: “Lawns” by Mona Simpson (Handout)

“A Good Man Is Hard To Find” by O’Connor (Charters)

“Where Is This Voice Coming From?” by Eudora Welty (Handout)

Workshop Critique of Stories 1, 2 and 3 (Stories 4, 5 and 6 due by Monday)

9/27 Critique 750-Word Stories/Rules of The Workshop

Discuss Reading Assignments/Chapters

Exercise: “Changing Your Life” (First Person Narrative)

Exercise: List of Likes and Dislikes

Reading: “Chopin in Winter” by Stuart Dybek (Handout)

Workshop Critique of Stories 4, 5 and 6 (Stories 7, 8 and 9 due by Monday)

10/4. **Workshop Critique of Stories 7, 8 and 9 (Stories 10, 11 and 12 due by Monday)**

10/11 Narrative Distance

What If?--Turning Situation into Characterization and Plot

Three Emotions/Three Paragraphs

Time and Pace (145 Bernays)

Handouts: “Sudden Story” by Robert Coover (Handout)

“A Day’s Wait” by Ernest Hemingway (Handout)

“No One’s a Mystery” by Elizabeth Tallent (Bernays)

Workshop Stories 10, 11 and 12 (Stories 1, 2 and 3 due by Monday)

10/18 FALL BREAK

10/25 **Workshop Stories 1, 2 and 3 (Stories 4, 5 and 6 due by Monday)**
Individual Reading Assignments/TBA

11/1 **Discuss Stories 4, 5 and 6 (Stories 7, 8 and 9 are due by Monday)**

11/08 **Discuss stories 7, 8, and 9 (Stories 10, 11 and 12 are due by Monday)**

11/15 **Discuss stories 10, 11 and 12**

Reading: TBA

11/22 In-class Revisions

Essay: "Writing In The Cold" by Ted Solotoroff

Essay: "The Writing Habit" by David Huddle

Reading Assignment: TBA

THANKSGIVING RECESS 11/27-12/1

12/06 Reading: TBA

How to Submit to Magazines, Contests/Investigate Your Local Resources

In-class Revision (Bernays)

12/13 **(Friday by 4:00) Final Exam = Final Submission of Portfolios:** Two workshopped revisions and three completed story drafts based on in-class exercises. Cover letters with addressed envelopes are also due.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/> Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

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Definition of Excellence in Teaching USC Department of English

All writing is creative, and all civic engagement requires a sophisticated understanding of discourse and interpretation. The USC Department of English is committed to the power of the story, the word, and the image. We analyze and organize complex ideas, evaluate qualitative information, anticipate how real audiences respond to language, and study behaviors of complex characters leading uncertain lives with competing values. We develop critical abilities for a successful life, but our stories tell us why life is worth living.

Excellence in teaching is an active engagement with these commitments, perspectives, and values. A student with a major in **English** should graduate with an appreciation for (1) the relations between representation and the human soul, and (2) the relations between words and ideas. Teachers will encourage this appreciation through their knowledge and conveyance of the subject, the appropriateness of instructional materials, and the quality of their students' responses. We expect our students to:

- understand the major representations in English discourse from earliest beginnings to the current moment; all literatures exist in conversation with earlier literatures;
- organize and interpret evidence;
- feel the experiences of others, both by engaging in literatures and by their own efforts to create new literatures;
- understand how periods, cultural intentions, and literary genres differ;
- grasp the skills and theories of interpretation, and the history of our own discipline;
- see how interpretive interests shift with time and place;
- attend to linguistic details of semantics, phrasing, and structure;
- assume there are reasonable alternative understandings of a text;
- adjudicate differences through reasoned arguments that honestly engage counter-arguments.

Our students will have lives in very different arenas, but all calling for skills in discourse, empathy, civil argument, and civic engagement. We cannot and should not say what those careers will be; we train students for jobs that have not yet been invented.

English Department students with an interdisciplinary major in **Narrative Studies** should expect instruction that inculcates an appreciation for all of the above, and coordinates with definitions of teaching excellence in USC's corresponding departments.

The Department of English adheres to the modalities of instruction published in the "USC Definition of Excellence in Teaching."

Approved September 18, 2018
Undergraduate Studies Committee
Department of English

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE
(Indicate your 1st and 2nd Choices)

1. 9/20 - 10/25

2. 9/24 - 11/1

3. 10/04 - 11/08

4. 10/1- 11/15