



**ENGLISH 303
SHORT STORY WRITING**

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Course Description

English 303 is designed to develop students' skills in writing the short story. This includes extended works (500 – 2,000 words) and shorter pieces (less than 500 words), the latter of which has been referred to as flash fiction, sudden fiction, quicktion, microfiction, nanofiction, short shorts and prose poetry, among other terms. Students will study a range of readings and experiment with the elements of fiction such as narration, point of view, style, characterization, story, plot, setting, figurative language, genre and theme. The course focuses on the processes of reading, writing and editing through the following activities: [1] the study of a diversity of short stories which will be used as models for students' own creative explorations, [2] the study of criticism on fiction writing and authorial techniques and advice, [3] writing exercises designed to develop students' imaginative and stylistic skills, and [4] constructive criticism of fiction in an online workshop setting.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This is an online course with clear deadlines for all assignments; as long as you are attentive to these deadlines, you may work at your own pace. I am available by email and by appointment for personal consultation. Needless to say, accessing and using computer technology on a regular basis is a crucial requirement for the course. If you have an out-of-date home computer, make use of the computer labs on campus.

Course Objectives

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to do the following:

- ✓ Prepare and submit a piece of fiction for professional publication.
- ✓ Respond critically and creatively to a wide variety of short fiction.
- ✓ Assess the aesthetic of a particular genre of fiction.

- ✓ Compare literary works to distinguish differences in style and/or theme.
- ✓ Analyze devices that help construct meanings in literary texts.
- ✓ Actively and effectively edit and revise short stories.
- ✓ Identify the literary conventions and elements of fiction writing.

Texts

Thomas, Denise & James Thomas, eds. *Flash Fiction: 72 Very Short Stories*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992.

Bernays, Anne & Pamela Painter, eds. *What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers*. Third Edition. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2010.

Grading Scale

Grades are based on the following points system:

Assignments	160
Journal	200
Fiction #1	100
Fiction #2	100
Fiction #3	100
Fiction #4	100
Fiction #5	200
 Total Points	 960

As I grade your work, **Pilot** tallies the points so that you may gauge your performance in the course at any time during the quarter. As you can see, your final grade will be largely based upon points received for your fiction writing.

At the end of the quarter, points will be converted to percentages, and percentages will be converted to letter grades. Here is the grading rubric:

90.0-100%	A
80.0-89.9%	B
70.0-79.9%	C
60.0-69.9%	D
0-59.9%	F

Assignments

Throughout the quarter, you will be given a number of assignments, most of which consist of writing exercises. Directions and due dates for all assignments are clearly demarcated in **Pilot** as well as the modules for the course.

Fiction

The fiction you produce in this course will vary in length and genre. You will be asked to model some of your fiction after our readings, mimicking the style, voice, characterization, etc. of other authors; you will also be asked to devise fiction from scratch as well as journal entries and writing prompts. There are FIVE major writing assignments, each of which must be submitted via **Pilot** as MS-Word documents. I will provide constructive criticism and return them to you via **Pilot** with a grade.

Journals

Journals are valuable tools for developing and refining your creative writing and thinking skills. You are required to keep a regular journal in which you address issues and topics posed to you in the modules as well as record ideas of your own. You should form the habit of writing in your journal on a daily basis, if only briefly, detailing your thoughts, observations, dreams, insights, experiences—anything you might draw on for your writing. Completed journals must be submitted at the end of the course via **Pilot**. You may compose your journals by hand, if necessary, but they must be submitted electronically and hence typed out and saved as MS-Word documents.

Unless specified otherwise, each assigned journal topic should be addressed in no less than 250 words. Entries that you produce on your own impetus may vary in length—from, say, 50 to 1,000 words. If self-guided entries are all only a few sentences long, you are not writing enough.

There are a total of 12 entries assigned to you in the modules. You are expected to produce AT LEAST this many entries on your own, rendering a minimum total of 24 entries by the end of the quarter.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when a writer: [1] copies verbatim from an author without quotation or attempts to disguise the act by selective omissions or alterations; [2] paraphrases from an author without naming the source in the text or providing a list of references at the end; [3] turns in a story or essay written by somebody else. As a point of academic integrity, you are required to submit original material of your own creation. Plagiarism of any material is a serious offense and, if established with sufficient evidence, can result in failure of the course or dismissal from the university.

Writing Center

The Lake Campus's writing center is located in room 221 in Dwyer Hall. Contact the director, Dr. Christine Wilson (christine.wilson@wright.edu), to make an appointment.

IMPORTANT NOTE: STUDENTS WHO USE THE WRITING CENTER WILL BE GIVEN 5 EXTRA CREDIT POINTS FOR EACH VISIT.

Class Calendar

Week	Schedule
1	<i>What If?</i> – PART 1: Beginnings <i>What If?</i> – PART 13: Notebooks, Journals & Memory <i>Flash Fiction</i> – Introduction
2	DUE: Fiction #1 <i>What If?</i> – PART 11: Sudden, Flash, Micro & Nano DISCUSSION FORUM: Russell Edson, "Dinner Time" *
3	<i>What If?</i> – PART 7: The Elements of Style DISCUSSION FORUM: Margaret Atwood, "Bread" *
4	DUE: Fiction #2 <i>What If?</i> – PART 8: A Writer's Toolbox <i>What If?</i> – PART 10: Revision: Rewriting Is Writing DISCUSSION FORUM: D. Harlan Wilson, "The Storyteller" †
5	<i>What If?</i> – PART 2: Characterization DISCUSSION FORUM: Charles Baxter, "Gryphon" (in <i>What If?</i>)
6	DUE: Fiction #3 <i>What If?</i> – PART 3: Point of View, Perspective, Distance DISCUSSION FORUM: Francine Prose, "Pumpkins" *
7	<i>What If?</i> – PART 4: Dialogue DISCUSSION FORUM: Ronald Wallace, "Yogurt" *
8	DUE: Fiction #4 <i>What If?</i> – PART 6: Plot DISCUSSION FORUM: Brian Keene, <i>The Rising</i> †
9	<i>What If?</i> – PART 9: Invention & a Bit of Inspiration DISCUSSION FORUM: Diane Williams, "Here's Another Ending"*
10	DUE: Fiction #5

What If? – PART 12: Learning from the Greats

* Denotes stories that appear in *Flash Fiction*.

† Denotes stories available in **Pilot**.