WRIGHT STATE
UNIVERSITY

ENGLISH 3830: INTRODUCTION TO FICTION WRITING

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 3830 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 If you have an out-of-date home computer, make use of the computer labs on campus.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 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.

TEXTBOOKS

Olsen, Lance. *Architectures of Possibility: After Innovative Writing.* Bowie: Guide Dog Books, 2011.

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

GRADING SCALE

Course grades will be based on a points system in which major assignments (e.g., short fiction) are generally worth 100 and minor assignments (e.g., discussions and responses) are worth 25. As I grade your work, **Pilot** tallies the points so that you may gauge your performance in the course at any time during the semester. At the end of the semester, 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 on **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**. 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 computer 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.

STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER

The Student Success Center offers FREE services to help students meet their full potential. Students can find tutoring in any subject, study buddies, one-on-one technology workshops, feedback on writing assignments, and general academic skills coaching. Location: **182 Andrews**. Phone: **419.586.0362**. Web: **www.wright.edu/lake/ssc**.

Students who use the Student Success Center for help on their writing assignments will be given 10 extra credit points for each visit. Go to the website to make an appointment.

CLASS CALENDAR

For all assigned selections in *Architectures of Possibility* (AOP), it is expected that you will read the author interviews that accompany each chapter. Additionally, I have only assigned a small portion of stories from *Flash Fiction* (FF), but you are encouraged to read the entire text.

Module	Schedule
1	AOP: Chp. 1 – Possibility Spaces
	AOP: Chp. 2 – Eat Your Elders
	AOP: Chp. 3 – The Mcdonaldization of the Literary Marketplace
	FF: Introduction
	DISCUSSION: Russell Edson, "Dinner Time"*
2	**DUE:** Fiction #1
	AOP: Chp. 4 – Workshop Model(s)
	AOP: Chp. 5 – The Garbage Disposal Imagination
	AOP: Chp. 6 – Beginnings
	DISCUSSION: Francine Prose, "Pumpkins"*
3	**DUE:** Fiction #2
	AOP: Chp. 7 – Narrativity
	AOP: Chp. 8 – Settings
	AOP: Chp. 9 – Characters: Flat/Round
	DISCUSSION: Margaret Atwood, "Bread"*
4	**DUE:** Fiction #3
	AOP: Chp. 10 – Characters: The Metaphysics of the Pronominal Hoax

AOP: Chp. 11 – Temporality
AOP: Chp. 12 – Point of View
DISCUSSION: D. Harlan Wilson, "The Storyteller"†

5   **DUE:** Fiction #4
AOP: Chp. 13 – Word Worlds
AOP: Chp. 14 – Endings
AOP: Chp. 15 – Materiality & Immateriality: One
DISCUSSION: The Café Irreal

6   **DUE:** Fiction #5
AOP: Chp. 16 – Materiality & Immateriality: Two
AOP: Chp. 17 – Re-Visions
AOP: Chp. 18 – Publishing Pragmatics
DISCUSSION: Brian Keene, *The Rising*†

7   **DUE:** Journal

* Denotes stories that appear in *Flash Fiction*.
† Denotes stories available on **Pilot**.