Chaminade University

EN 302 / 402, Fiction Writing

Fall Day Semester, 2009

Instructor: James Kraus, PhD, Professor of English

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Course Description

This course in fiction writing examines the techniques of the contemporary short story and provides practice in writing short fictional prose. The course provides opportunity for students to explore their motives for writing and to "try on" a variety of fictional genre, including mystery writing, historical fiction, science fiction, literary fiction, creative nonfiction, prose poetry and young adult fiction. Participants in the course post online "journals" in which they respond to a sequence of "prompts" by recording short sketches and observations.

Although considerable background reading is required from the course texts -- Michael Petracca's *The Graceful Lie* **and an anthology of "short short" stories,** *Sudden Fiction,* **the online activities themselves are generally focused on student writing.**

Periodically throughout the course, brief writing projects, called "story starts," are discussed in online forums. In addition, two finished stories and a critical essay are required by the end of the term.

The objectives of this course cover the general scope of fiction writing from the point of view of the author. By the end of the course the student should:

- **Demonstrate knowledge of how plot, character and setting relate to one another in the development of a fictional story**
- **Have an increased awareness of the major fictional genre**
- **Demonstrate knowledge of key terminology associated with the writing of fiction**

This course fulfills the following English Program learning objectives:

- **a proficiency in writing through an analytical literary research paper.**
- **a proficiency in creative writing through an original production of poetry, fiction, or non-fiction.**
- **the ability to define various literary critical approaches and apply them to given texts.**

Pre-requisites

Because it a University General Education requirement, EN 102 and COM 101 are pre-requisites to this course.

Technology Requirements

Because this course is being taught in a completely online environment, access to a computer and the Internet are required. A functioning Chaminade University email account is also required. The course uses the Moodle, open-source course management platform. Students are emailed instructions for setting up accounts on this platform. The url for the course is:

http://www.crteacher.com/course/view.php?id=1232

Texts

This course requires the purchase of three texts:

- **Michael Petracca, *The Graceful Lie: A Method for Making Fiction* (Link to Amazon.com)**
- **Shapard, *Sudden Fiction* (Link to Amazon.com)**
- *MLA Handbook*, **7th Edition**
  - **Purchase via the MLA website http://www.mlahandbook.org**
  - **Price -- $27 -- includes shipping.**
  - **But more importantly, it includes immediate access to the entire text and other supporting materials via the website.**
- Other texts are available free via the course website.
- Library research is a normal activity for all university classes. Chaminade's Sullivan Family Library (http://www.chaminade.edu/library) should be used as the starting place for course-related research.

Assessment and Grading

Participation

Students are required to participate in all individual and interactive course activities. In order to insure timely completion of the course, students must check email and log in to the course website regularly. Consistent participation in the course is the most fundamental course requirement and is therefore a pre-requisite to success. Students who do not participate for two consecutive weeks may be dropped from the course by the instructor.

Needless to say, students are responsible for corresponding via email with the instructor regarding any obstacles to participation. Each week, several assignments -- including journal and forum postings as well as quizzes -- are due. Timely engagement and completion of all assignments is essential to successful completion of the course.

Stories and Analytical Essay

Two stories of 1000 - 2000 words each (a total of 3000 words for both) and an analytical essay of 1200 words are due during the term. In general, written work is evaluated with regard to organization, clarity, correctness, conciseness, and creativity.

Quizzes and Miscellaneous Assignments

Online quizzes, journals and forum postings are due throughout the term. They are intended to pace the student through the course's required readings and to provide a useful index of the student's comprehension of course content. Quizzes are administered via WebCT. Submission of quizzes is required; they are automatically graded and should be seen as preparation for the objective section

of the final exam, as described below. Miscellaneous assignments may from time to time be added to the course study guide.

Final Exam

A key element in all online classes at Chaminade is a proctored (i.e. face-to-face) final exam. The final exam consists of two sections. The first section is made up of short answer and/or multiple-choice questions similar to those on the quizzes. The second section consists of one or more essay questions. Review questions for the essay section are distributed during the week prior to the exam. Both sections of the exam are "closed book."

Self-assessment and Final Grade

The final grade in the course is determined by weighting the course requirements as follows:

Participation (approximately 20%)
Stories and Essay (approximately 40%)
Quizzes and Miscellaneous Assignments (approximately 20%)
Final Exam (approximately 20%)

The final grade for the course is also determined in part by the student's self-assessment and grade estimate, which is submitted after taking the final exam.

Other Guidelines for Success

- **Use Chaminade email address**
- **Put course name and your last name in subject line**
- **Keep to the course schedule**
- **Contact instructor immediately if you encounter problems -- technical or otherwise**
- **Stay engaged with and respond to other students' postings; remember that online courses are online learning communities.**
- **Be patient and read the comments of others thoroughly before entering your remarks.**
- **Be positive and constructive in group discussions.**
- **Respond in a thoughtful and timely manner**
- **Face-to-face meetings or phone conferences are available. These may be initiated by either student or instructor. Use email to set up an appointment.**

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

All material submitted in fulfillment of course requirements must be written by the registered student during the term.

Work written for other courses is unacceptable in this one. Limited exceptions may be considered if approved by the instructor early in the term.

As a normal part of the academic process, students are expected to consult sources outside the required reading of the course. They are also responsible for clearly presenting their of their sources via in-text documentation and a works cited listing at the end of the paper. Statements of "common knowledge" are generally exempt from this scholarly requirement. Use of standard MLA research and documentation practices is required. Consult the MLA Handbook (http://www.mlahandbook.org) for specifics.

Plagiarism is defined as the presentation of someone else's ideas as your own. Plagiarism in this course will result in a grade of "0" for the assignment and possible failure for the course.

The Chaminade General Catalog states the following with regard to plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the offering of work of another as one's own. Plagiarism is a serious offense and may include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Complete or partial copying directly from a published or unpublished source without proper acknowledgment to the author. Minor changes in wording or syntax are not sufficient to avoid charges of plagiarism. Proper acknowledgment of the source of a text is always mandatory.

2. Paraphrasing the work of another without proper author acknowledgment.

3. Submitting as one's own original work (however freely given or purchased) the original exam, research paper, manuscript, report, computer file, or other assignment that has been prepared by another individual.

In this course, if the instructor suspects plagiarism, the burden of proof of the originality of the writing lies with the student. Evidence of originality would include copies of early drafts of the writing, research and interview notes, as well as the ability to discuss the themes of the writing with the instructor. Students should consider their instructor's vigilance in such matters a normal part of the academic process and should be prepared to present evidence of originality if requested. In this course, maintaining a research journal is critical in this regard. Additionally, students are strongly advised to save files of early drafts of essays, along with outlines, research notes and other supporting documentation, as the instructor may at any time require that they be presented.

With regard to the use of tutors, editors, proofreaders, writing coaches, writing groups and other writers' support interfaces, the following policy applies. The use of writing tutors provided through Chaminade University is particularly encouraged; however, the instructor requires that prior notice be given and a full account the tutorial sessions be provided via email to the instructor, including the name and contact information for the tutor, the date, time and duration of the session and a brief summary of the results of the session. Use of non-Chaminade tutoring, editorial, or proofreading services is prohibited unless given prior approval from the instructor. Because this is a writing course designed to nurture, assess and certify the skill level of the individual student, all work submitted must be the original composition of the registered student.

Also students should be sure to read "[Plagiarism and Academic Integrity](#)" for a more detailed discussion of this topic.

Outline of Course Topics and Important Dates

Journal and forum postings are due weekly.

- **Week 1: The muse, suspending disbelief, freewriting, using journal prompts**
- **Week 2: "Organic" vs "structural" approaches; the role of fictional "rules"**
  - **Story Start 1 due Friday, September 4**
- **Week 3: Plot components: opening, exposition, crises, resolution, theme**
- **Week 4: Characters, dialog, the narrator, point-of-view**
  - **Quiz 1 due Friday, September 18**
- **Week 5: Setting, narrative description, imagery, figurative language**
  - **Story 1 due, Friday, September 25**
- **Week 6: Revision, continuity, grammar and mechanics**
  - **Story Start 2 due, Friday, October 2**

- **Week 7: Rules of fiction writing, fictional genre, prose poetry**
- **Week 8: Research, creative non-fiction, new journalism**
  - **Quiz 2 due Friday October 16**
- **Week 9: Young adult fiction: tone and diction**
- **Week 10: Mystery fiction: crime and forensics**
- **Week 11: Historical fiction: research, fact-checking, real and imaged characters**
- **Week 12: Science fiction, titles, foreshadowing, where to begin the story, verisimilitude**
  - **Story Start 3 due, Monday, November 9**
- **Week 13: Literary fiction, postmodernism, screenplays**
- **Week 14: Review: rules of fictional writing, elements of story**
- **Week 15: Review: role of research, fictional genre**
  - **Story 2 due, Monday, November 30**
  - **Final Exam, Monday, December 7, 3 p.m.**