

SE 07

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Topic: Course Overview (1 of 1), Read 185 times**Conf:** SYLLABUS**From:** Chris McKinney cmckinne@chaminade.edu**Date:** Thursday, June 24, 1999 01:50 AM

Spring 2000: Online

English 302: Creative Writing (Fiction)

English 402: Advanced Fiction Writing

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EN 302 90

EN 402 90

TEXT:

1) Burroway, Janet. WRITING FICTION: A GUIDE TO NARRATIVE CRAFT

These, above all, are writing courses. Everything that we do this semester will revolve around the nurturing of your creative skills. However, writing is not the only thing that we'll be doing. Because there is more to writing than simply putting ink on paper, we will spend much time reading and responding. The reasons are both simple and necessary: Since you will be composing short stories, you will need to have read short stories (can you build a house without ever seeing a house before?) We will also spend time workshopping student stories (reading and responding to your works) because we are here to help each other. So basically throughout this course, students are expected to be three things: writers, readers, and critics. All three are essential to the writing process.

WRITING (for both 302 and 402 students):

You need to submit TWENTY PAGES of fiction to pass this course. This is firm. How and when you present your fiction, however, allows for some flexibility. First off, I don't really care how many stories it takes for you to get to twenty pages. You can write anywhere from ten two page stories to one twenty page story. You can write two ten page stories, three seven page stories, or four five page stories. It doesn't matter, as long as I get twenty pages of WELL-EDITED fiction. Also, there is only one deadline for your writing. All fiction must be posted publicly in this class by June 4, or you will not pass the course. This is firm. You have two months.

I do, however, emphatically encourage all of you to post stories before this date. I want to work with your stories with the class as soon as possible. So if you're writing shorter stories, and feel ready to present them to the class, do not hesitate. The sooner we get brave volunteers, the sooner we will be learning how to get better. Try not to be too self-conscious or timid about your work. EVERY story can get better.

FOR 402 STUDENTS: At the end of the term, you are expected to present me, on the day of the final exam, with one terrific, well-edited re-write of a story that was posted on the board earlier in the semester. I will need a hard copy of this piece, which must be at least seven pages long. This re-write will constitute a third of your grade. I repeat, this is for 402 students only.

READING (for both 302 and 402 students):

It is imperative that you spend time reading the book. WRITING FICTION contains a mixture of fiction writing theory and modern short stories. This book is very important. It is instructional. It discusses certain things that every short story should DO and HAVE. Remember, without things like setting, characters, point-of-view, plot, conflict, symbolism, and theme, fiction is nothing. Portraying these things well is what breathes life into a story. So read both the theory and the fiction. Although there will be no quizzes on the readings, there will be one final exam at the end of the semester. This test will have short answer questions based on the following readings:

1. Whatever Works: The Writing Process
2. The Tower and the Net: Story Form and Structure
3. Seeing is Believing: Showing and Telling
4. Book People: Characterization, Part 1
5. The Flesh Made Word, Characterization, Part 2
6. Long Ago and Far Away: Fictional Place and Time
7. Call Me Ishmael: Point-of-View, Part 1
8. Assorted Liars: Point-of-View, Part 2
9. Is and Is Not: Comparison
10. I Gotta Use Words When I Talk To You: Theme
11. Play It Again, Sam: Revision

12. My lectures on the ELEMENTS OF FICTION.

Don't stress out. The test will have about thirty questions which will be simple to answer if you retain the reading. YES, 402 STUDENTS ARE ALSO REQUIRED TO TAKE THE FINAL EXAM.

CRITIQUING: (for both 302 and 402 students)

The final major component of this course is critiquing your fellow students' writings. As I mentioned before, each of you will have to post twenty pages of your fiction by June 4 (post under STUDENT SHORT STORIES conference). Also, as I mentioned before, I encourage you guys to get started as soon as possible. I want to see stories posted throughout the semester, not only on June 4. Seriously, I'll think better of your work ethic the sooner stories get in, and of course, me thinking better of your work ethic will have a positive effect on your grade. Also, this isn't really a "cramming" type of course. If you leave everything undone until the last minute, it will reflect in your work. So get started!

Now, when you finish a story and feel ready to post it, put it on display in the STUDENT SHORT STORIES conference. At that time, everyone, including me, will read the story and reply back with out comments. **REPLIES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED WITHIN A WEEK OF THE POST DATE.** In other words, you have a week to reply to student short stories. I'll be keeping track of that.

So now how to reply... This is the format I want you to use:

NAME OF AUTHOR

TITLE OF STORY

NAME OF CRITIC

- 1) What is the setting like in this story? Can you visualize place, time, and culture?
- 2) Who is the main character in this story? Do you find the main character believable? Is there something about the character that reminds you of someone you know or yourself? At the same time, does the character have unique qualities? If so, what are they?
- 3) What point-of-view is the story being told from? First person, second, or third? Could the story be told more effectively from a different point of view?
- 4) Is there conflict in the story? What is it? Is it external conflict, internal conflict, or both?
- 5) Does the writer use symbolism? If so, identify the symbols.
- 6) What are some of the story's themes?
- 7) Do you have any suggestions on how the story could be better?

These seven questions must be answered for each student story posted by 302 students. 402 STUDENTS CAN, BUT DO NOT HAVE TO USE THIS FORM OF RESPONSE. 402 students may respond in what form they see fit, but all 402 students are still required to respond to all student stories. Remember, encouragement and politeness is good, however, criticism is often more useful for a writer who is interested in making their story better. Don't be afraid to criticize. If you do not criticize or voice your concerns, your use to the writer is minimal.

For writers: When you read the criticisms, be thick-skinned about them. Try hard to not take offense. Some of the greatest writers in the world were criticized harshly at one time or another. Part of what made them great is that they still kept on writing. Besides, when you revise your story, it's completely up to you which pieces of advice you want to address. **YOU ARE THE ARTIST.** Ultimately it is you who decides what you want to have in your piece.

So there's the course overview in a rather large nutshell. You write, you read, you critique. Twenty pages, one final exam, and a critique on each student story. Pretty simple, right? Contact me if you have any questions, move on for more information on grading, course schedule, and plagiarism.

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Topic: Grading (1 of 1), Read 123 times

Conf: SYLLABUS

From: Chris McKinney cmckinne@chaminade.edu

Date: Thursday, June 24, 1999 01:52 AM

GRADING FOR ENGLISH 302:

As mentioned in the Course Overview, there are three elements of this course: WRITING, READING, AND CRITIQUING. All three constitute a certain percentage of your grade:

WRITING: Your twenty pages of fiction determine SIXTY PERCENT of your grade. Now, I'm not really expecting you guys to turn in fiction reminiscent of geniuses like, say, Flannery O'Connor or Ernest Hemingway, but I do expect it to be obvious that you put hard work into your writing. You'd be surprised how easy this is to determine. If you work hard and I get twenty pages that reflect that, you'll get an "A" for this portion of your grade. If twenty pages aren't posted by June 4, you will fail the course.

READING: Your reading grade will be based solely on your final exam. If you do the reading earnestly, you'll find the exam quite simple. This test will be worth TWENTY PERCENT of your grade.

Sample question: What are the two ways of treating time in fiction? (Chapter 6)

Expect about thirty of these short answer questions on your final (info. on exam scheduling to come).

CRITIQUING: The final TWENTY PERCENT of your grade will be based on the replies you give to student stories in the STUDENT SHORT STORIES conference. I will be looking at your answers to the SEVEN QUESTIONS (see Course Overview for questions) that you will post for the class. Just make sure you read student stories carefully and answer the questions analytically and completely and you'll have no problems. Also remember that you have a week to reply.

Traditionally, in creative writing courses, students usually receive an "A" or an "F" for the semester. There are rarely in-between grades (B,C,D). You either do the work, or you don't. I love to give A's and I hate to give F's. So just make sure that you get everything done. If you do, your grade will take care of itself.

GRADING FOR ENGLISH 402:

402 students will be expected to do everything that a 302 student has to do (the writing of 20 pages, the reading of the book, the final exam, and the critiquing of fellow student stories) in the same manner. However, 402 students must also give me a hard copy of a revised short story (of at least seven pages) on the day of the final exam. This revised draft will count for a third of the semester grade. Here is the percentage breakdown:

33% revised draft of a story
33% twenty pages of fiction
16.5% student short story critiques
16.5% final exam

Because you 402 students have already taken 302, I want you to spend more time than usual on the revision process. The futile effort of seeking perfection while knowing that you will never find it is something that every writer has to learn to do (for more immediate help, see Chapter 11 in the text).

In the next posting under SYLLABUS, Course Schedule, you'll see at what pace you should be moving at through these next ten weeks. Try to follow it. It will be to your benefit. If you have any questions, do not hesitate in replying.

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Topic: Course Schedule (1 of 1), Read 134 times
Conf: SYLLABUS
From: Chris McKinney cmckinne@chaminade.edu
Date: Thursday, June 24, 1999 01:52 AM

Course Schedule for English 302 and 402:

Week One:

- Familiarize yourself with WebBoard. Read everything I've posted so far. Introduce yourself under WELCOME, understand the course requirements, and asks questions if don't understand something.
- Attend the mandatory meeting on campus on Saturday, April 8 at 1 PM. **YOU MUST BE PRESENT.**
- Read Chapter 1.

Week Two:

- Read Chapter 2

Week Three:

- Read Chapter 3
- Start writing your own short story.

Week Four:

- Read Chapter 4
- Continue working on your own story.

Week Five:

- Read Chapter 5
- Now would be a good time to post some fiction on the board. Submit a story.

Week Six:

- Read Chapter 6
- Make sure you're working on, submitting, or responding to fiction.

Week Seven:

- Read Chapter 7 and 8

Week Eight:

- Read Chapter 9

Week Nine:

- Read Chapter 10
- Submit, work, and reply.

Week Ten:

- Read Chapter 11. D-Day is June 4. **ALL FICTION MUST BE POSTED.**
- Spend the week replying to stories posted. Remember, the more of you there are who wait until the last minute to post stories, the harder this week will be for all of us.

Week Eleven, FINALS WEEK:

- Final Exam, June 10 (specific place and time not yet known).

Ultimately, as a fiction writer, you make your own schedule, but I recommend trying to stick to this one. Good Luck.

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