

Fiction Workshop
ENGLISH 206, 306, 406
1:00-2:15pm TTh
Patterson 211
Spring Semester, 2015

Instructor: Gayle Brandeis
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Office: Prim 302

Course description: E.L. Doctorow has said that writing fiction "is like driving a car at night. You never see farther than your own headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way." Writing fiction is such a personal, solitary journey, but I can help shine extra light as you make your way down the road. Every Tuesday, we will workshop student stories; each Thursday, we will discuss a story from our text, as well as related craft issues (character, setting, dialogue, point of view, etc.) We will also do some in class writing during every session to keep our creative juices flowing, our writing muscles flexed. I will share other hand-outs in class and over Moodle throughout the semester, as well. By the end of our time together, I hope you'll have a deeper understanding of what makes a story work and a more intimate relationship with your own voice as a fiction writer.

Text: *The Best American Short Stories 2014*, Jennifer Egan, editor

Grades:

In a workshop setting, attendance is mandatory to be able to develop and maintain a supportive community and sense of trust within the group. Two absences are acceptable (though not desirable); anything beyond that will affect your grade.

Your grade will be determined in equal measure by:

--your original fiction (you will submit one original 5-7 page short story for workshop and one significant revision of that story in your portfolio, along with a short essay exploring your revision choices, and three of your favorite in class writing exercises.) **406 students will write and revise two short stories.**

—your two writing assignments (place and dialogue)

--your participation in class (including discussions, workshop critiques and in-class writing exercises)

—206 students will write one annotation, 306 students will write two annotations and 406 students will write three annotations of stories read in class. Annotations are essentially a short review of the story (1-2 pages), focusing upon what you learned from the story as a writer, and how you plan to apply what you learned to your own work.

Some general guidelines:

--Come to class on time and prepared, and be sure to turn off all cell phones, iPods, etc. Laptops are okay for notes and in class writing, but you may not go online.

--Type all assignments in 12pt Times New Roman (or a comparable standard font) in black ink, double spaced, 1-inch margins, 8 ½ x11” paper, page numbers clearly marked.

--Email your story to me at least 48 hours before your scheduled workshop and I'll post it on Moodle, or bring copies of the story the class session before your workshop time (we will set the schedule the first day of class). I will pass out a separate sheet of workshop guidelines to clarify the process. It is important to me to create a safe, supportive workshop environment, one in which everyone is honest but kind. My greatest hope is that all of you will leave workshop excited to make your work even better.

--Be willing to explore, to push your own boundaries, to dig deep and take creative risks. And don't forget to have fun—writing fiction can be a challenge, but it can also be a blast!

Class Schedule

T 1/20 Introduction to our time together--intentions, expectations, workshop schedule, etc.

Th 1/22 Discuss “You Are a 14-Year-Old Arab Chick Who Just Moved to Texas” by Randa Jarrar (<http://eyeshot.net/jarrar.html>) and related craft issues, write

T 1/27 Workshop, write

Th 1/29 Discuss “God” by Benjamin Nugent (p. 243, plus commentary, p. 335) and related craft issues, write

Cathy Lin Che will be reading her poetry in the library on 1/29 at 6:30pm—fiction writers can learn a lot from poetry; go if you can

T 2/3 Workshop, write

Th 2/5 Discuss “Antarctica” by Lauren Van Der Berg (p. 319, plus commentary, p. 338) and related craft issues, write

F 2/6-S 2/7***Saeed Jones will be giving a reading on 2/6 and a workshop on 2/7—don't miss the chance to learn from this important poet!***

T 2/10 Workshop, write **PLACE EXERCISE DUE**

Th 2/12 Discuss “This is Not a Love Song” by Brendan Mathews (p. 211, plus commentary, p. 334) and related craft issues, write

T 2/17 Workshop, write

Th 2/19 Discuss “Mastiff” by Joyce Carol Oates (p. 254, plus commentary, p. 335) and related

craft issues, write

T 2/24 Workshop, write

Th 2/26 Discuss “The Pura Principle” by Junot Diaz <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/03/22/the-pura-principle> and related craft issues, write **1st annotation due for 206, 306 and 406 students**

T 3/3 Workshop, write

Th 3/5 Discuss “Hover” by Nell Freudenberger (p. 123, plus commentary, p. 331) and related craft issues, write

F 3/6-S 3/7***Short story author Mark Maynard will be giving a reading on Friday and a workshop on Saturday—don’t miss it!***

T 3/10 Workshop, write

Th 3/12 Discuss “Charity” by Charles Baxter (p. 1, plus commentary, p. 327) and related craft issues, write

T 3/17 Spring Break

Th 3/19 Spring Break

T 3/24 Workshop, write

Th 3/26 Discuss “At the Round Earth’s Imagined Corners” by Lauren Groff (p. 161, plus commentary, p. 332) and related craft issues, write **2nd annotation due for 306 and 406 students**

T 3/31 Workshop, write

Th 4/2 Discuss “The Breeze” by Joshua Ferris (p. 107, plus commentary, p. 330) and related craft issues, write

T 4/7 Workshop, write **DIALOGUE EXERCISE DUE**

Th 4/9 Out of Town

T 4/14 Workshop, write

Th 4/16 Discuss “Between Things” by Roxane Gay http://www.pindeldyboz.com/between_things.htm and related craft issues, write

F 4/17-S 4/18 ***Poets Gailmarie Pahmeier & David Lee will be giving a reading Friday and a workshop Saturday—this should be a blast; come if you can.***

T 4/21 Workshop, write

Th 4/23 Discuss “Madame Bovary’s Greyhound” by Karen Russell (p. 289, plus commentary, p. 337) and related craft issues, write **3rd annotation due for 406 students**

T 4/28 Workshop, write

Th 4/30 Out of Town

T 5/5 Workshop, write

Final Saturday, May 9 at 3pm (turn in portfolios, have informal reading)

SCHOOL POLICIES

Sierra Nevada College Mission Statement: Sierra Nevada College graduates will be educated to be scholars of and contributors to a sustainable world. Sierra Nevada College combines the liberal arts and professional preparedness through an interdisciplinary curriculum that emphasizes entrepreneurial thinking and environmental, social, economic and educational sustainability.

Core Themes: Liberal Arts, Professional Preparedness, Entrepreneurial Thinking, Sustainability

Learning Differences: In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students with a documented disability are eligible for support services and accommodations. If a student wishes to request an accommodation, please contact the Director of Academic Support Services, Henry Conover, at (775) 831-1314 x7534, hconover@sierranevada.edu.

The Honor Code: The faculty of SNC believes students must be held to high standards of integrity in all aspects of college life in order to promote the educational mission of the College and to encourage respect for the rights of others. Each student brings to the SNC community unique skills, talents, values and experiences which, when expressed within the community, contribute to the quality of the educational environment and the growth and development of the individual. Students share with members of the faculty, administration and staff the responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment conducive to learning and personal development, where actions are guided by mutual respect, integrity, responsibility and trust. The faculty and students alike must make diligent efforts to ensure high standards are upheld by their colleagues and peers as well as themselves. Therefore faculty and students accept responsibility for maintaining these standards at Sierra Nevada College and are obligated to comply with its regulations and procedures, which they are expected to read and understand.

Consequences of Violating the Student Honor Code: SNC students and faculty share the responsibility for maintaining an environment of academic honesty. Thus, all are responsible for knowing and abiding by the SNC Faculty/Student Honor Code published in the current SNC Catalog. Faculty are responsible for presenting the Honor Code and the consequences of violating it to students at the start of their classes AND for reporting all incidences of academic dishonesty to the Provost. Students are responsible for knowing what constitutes CHEATING, PLAGIARISM and FABRICATION and for refraining from these and other forms of academic dishonesty. Violations of the Honor Code become part of a student's academic record.

1st Offense: Student receives a zero for assignment/exam and counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.

2nd Offense: Student fails course and receives counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.

3rd Offense: Student is expelled.

The SNC Email System: The SNC email system is the official communication vehicle among students, faculty members and administrative staff and is designed to protect the confidentiality of student information as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 Act (FERPA). Students should check their college email accounts daily during the school year.

Students have a right to forward their SNC e-mail to another e-mail account (for example, @hotmail or @gmail). However, confidentiality of student information protected by FERPA cannot be guaranteed for SNC e-mail forwarded to an outside vendor. Having email redirected does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with official communication sent to his or her SNC email account.