The main purpose of this class is to help you define and develop your own unique abilities as a fiction writer. We will discuss diverse examples of fictional works and study different approaches to fiction writing with the emphasis on your own creative work. You should write two short stories and do a variety of in-class and homework writing exercises. You should also master the ability to constructively criticize your peers’ work and to learn from their assessment of your work.

Creative work

The first short story (1000 to 1500 words in length) is going to be the story that you will present in class for critique by other students. I will assign the presentation dates.

The second short story, or a chapter from a novel, or several pieces of flash fiction (1500 to 2000 words in length) is due two weeks before the end of our class.

The homework and in-class assignments will include research, field work, and collaborative work. Some of them will involve movies, paintings and photographs; others, real-life material. You will present some of them in-class.

Reading

The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction, Edited by Michael Martone and Rosellen Brown, 1999 (the blue one!)

Jennifer Egan, The Visit from the Goon Squad

You should email me two comments about each assigned story/essay (anything that struck you as a writer-reader) no later than the night before the class.

I assume that you read a lot on your own. I encourage you to involve books that you read on your own in our discussions.

Critiques

You are required to read and critique every manuscript that is presented in workshop by class members. You must write your overall comments on the work and questions to the writer and send them to me in email prior to class when the work is going to be presented. You must bring hard copies of your critiques to class.

Attendance

Class begins promptly. Please do not enter the classroom once the door is closed. Latecomers should wait in the hallway until the class takes a break, at which time you can join in without interrupting. Don’t miss class: after two absences or late arrivals, we’ll discuss the effect this will have on your final grade and the possibility of your withdrawing from the class. Don’t miss deadlines for manuscripts, critiques, or any other assignment.

Grades

Your final grade will reflect an assessment of all of your written work, especially the progress you make; the quality and frequency of your classroom participation; and your overall effort and investment in sustaining a productive workshop.
I do not give a mid-term grade, but I will let you know how you are doing and what you should do to improve.

**The lesson plan** below is not set in stone. I might change it depending on the progress of the class, and devote more or less time to certain areas of study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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| **September 8** | What is fiction?  
Difference between fiction and nonfiction  
Different critical perspectives  
Introduction |
| **September 15** | Creating of fictional character  
Critical perspective of a fellow writer |
| **September 22** | Plot/types of plot/elements of plot |
| **September 29** | Structure |
| **October 6**   | ***  
Hand in your first story |
| **October 13**  | Description/Focus  
Point of view |
| **October 20**  | Setting |

**Texts:**
- Junot Diaz Oscar Wao (the short story)
- Jennifer Egan First Chapter
- Jennifer Egan Second Chapter
- Anton Chekhov, A Lady with the Dog (handout)
- Movie: Pulp Fiction
- Jennifer Egan (the whole novel)
- Edward P. Jones, Bad Neighbors (handout)
- Jamaica Kincaid, Girl
- Annie Proulx, The Brokeback Mountain
- George Saunders, Pastoralia
- Woody Allen, The Kugelmass Episode (all handouts)
October 27

Individual Scenes

Texts
Edward P. Jones, Marie
Amy Tan, Two Kinds

Field assignment

November 3

Dialog

Texts
Susan Sontag, The Way We Were
James Joyce, The Dead (handout)

Field assignment

November 10

Originality/Experimenting/Truth of Fiction

Texts:
Jorge-Luis Borges, The Library of Babel (handout)
Lydia Davis (handout)
Gertrude Stein (handout)

November 17

Revision

Texts:
Raymond Carver, Beginners
Raymond Carver, What We Talk About When We Talk About Love (the same story edited by Gordon Lish)

December 1

**Hand in your second story
Visual art and fiction

Texts:
Art Spiegelman, Maus
Marjane Satrapi, Persepolis

December 8

Endings

Texts:
Find three memorable endings from the novels or stories
And three that don’t work in your opinion
(email them to me prior to class)

Business of writing