COURSE OVERVIEW

COURSE GOALS

This class begins with an agreement – perhaps our first and final agreement about fiction -- that every writer is first and always a reader. With this covenant in mind, the spirit of this course is devoted as much to reading as it is to writing, whether we are reading published stories from the course anthology or reading works-in-progress by other students. The objective is for each workshop member to develop a vigorous relationship to the elements of fictional craft – often referred to as the writer's tools - while exploring strategies for identifying his/her own most promising materials in two, longer stories.

Familiarity with the elements of craft – plot, characterization, voice, setting, point-of-view, etc. -- does not imply that we will ultimately agree or even feel a need to agree about what constitutes a successful story. Rather, this information will provide students with a common language for discussing how different types of stories are made and how their own stories-in-progress might better achieve their intentions.

Finally, it is essential to remember our purpose: this is a creative writing workshop, not an editorial board or publishing house where market values or other unfixed dynamics result in publication. There are no correct or incorrect answers in this writing workshop, or ironclad rules to memorize and abide by. Success, instead, will be the measure of how hard you work. Success will mean that you’ve invested yourself in becoming a more knowledgeable writer than you were when you entered this class -- whether you are a first-time writer or experienced writer -- whatever the outcome on the page, be it an unsettled work-in-progress or a polished piece of prose. Success will mean that you treat every person in the workshop and approach every piece of writing with seriousness, respect, thoughtfulness, and a commitment to being constructive.

- Explore the creative process through writing
- Examine individual goals as a writer
- Expand and refine vocabulary and style resources
- Become familiar with the conventions of craft
- Learn about varied techniques of fiction
- Learn how to constructively critique and be critiqued
- Develop skills for revising language, plot, and ideas
CLASS STRUCTURE

Each class will address one or more elements of fictional craft, using assigned published stories as examples. Some of these stories will be assigned from the one required anthology that you can purchase at the NYU Bookstore. Other stories may be assigned and will be posted on NYU Classes and/or distributed in class.

Early in the semester, some time will be spent writing and reading aloud in-class exercises. These exercises are intended to help you jump-start your stories. After this, the lion’s share of each meeting will be devoted to student work, with each student presenting a longer sample of their work (as opposed to an exercise) for close discussion by the entire class on two occasions during the semester. Active, thoughtful, and serious participation is fundamental to your learning process and to the success of these discussions, and will represent a significant component of your final grade. This does not mean that you must speak at great length; rather, you should comment on specific aspects of your classmates’ stories in order to help them to identify what you believe are their strengths as well as specific opportunities for further development.

WRITING

Exercises

These are assigned in response to discussions in class about master stories and elements of craft. You will work on some of these exercises in class and some of them at home.

Workshop Manuscripts

Each student will on two occasions present longer, original manuscripts in class for workshop discussion. You are free to write about any topic that you please, however bear in mind that this course does not cover topics that are singularly relevant to writers of such important forms of fiction as fantasy, science fiction, or graphic novels.

You will hand out copies of your story in class the week before your story is to be discussed so that each of us has ample time to read your manuscript and write a critique. Dates and details about each student’s individual schedule appear on your Writing Contract.

Your manuscript should run somewhere between 8-12 pages, doubled-spaced, 12-point font. Manuscripts must be proof read and corrected before distribution. Discussions about manuscripts that contain recurrent grammar and punctuation errors are sidelined by grumbling about mechanics rather than focusing on the story being told. Spell Check and Grammar Check highlight many errors, but there is no better method for finding errors than reading your own work aloud.
If your story is much longer than 12 pages, ask yourself if you have included more than you need, if you are unnecessarily repeating material, or if you have gone off topic. If your manuscript is much shorter than eight pages, ask yourself if your story is fully developed, if there is more to add that would enrich the story that you are looking to tell, or if you have spent enough time working on it.

There is no magic number of pages that constitute a short story – or a novel, for that matter. I do, however, want you to experience the authority of a fully developed story. While many published short stories run longer than 12 pages, I want you experience the short story as an art of condensation as opposed to the novelistic world of elaboration. On a practical note, it is difficult to give due diligence to the workshop stories by others, as well devote ample writing time to your own stories, when reading long manuscripts in a workshop of this size.

**Workshop Story Critiques**

When you are reading the work of your classmates, do so with pen in hand and make succinct and legible notes on the manuscript. Also write a brief, narrative response to the work – a paragraph will suffice – in which you focus on some specific aspect of the story with respect to the manner in which it is crafted. While all authors need, appreciate, and deserve complements about things that are working well, be sure to use these critiques as an opportunity to identify what you believe is the point of the story, as well as the way in which the author might enrich the story through the further employment of an element of craft. For example: Is the dialogue moving the forward story, or is it merely filler? Is it possible to distinguish one character from another, or should the author further develop attributes of characterization. Be as specific as you can.

Workshop story critiques should be posted on the class website by 9:00 pm on Sunday nights.

**READING**

Most of the assigned master stories are contained in the required *The Art of The Short Story* (Gioia and Gwynn, editors). This inexpensive paperback anthology, the only required text for the class, is available at the NYU Bookstore and through on-line bookstores. Bring your anthology to class every week so that you can refer to the stories during craft discussions, as well as during workshop critiques.

Other materials will be posted on NYU Classes or distributed in class.
GRADERS

Nuts & Bolts

Earning an excellent grade in this class is simply a matter of working very hard and being respectful of every person and every piece of writing that we discuss.

You will do well if you write with serious intention (even when writing humorously); hand in all of your writing assignments on time; closely read all of the assigned stories; write useful and respectful critiques; are an active, purposeful, and constructive contributor to class discussions; and have at least a very good if not perfect attendance record.

As pointed out earlier, a writing workshop is not a publishing house. The goal is to learn about story writing by writing stories. In fact, you can earn an excellent grade even if your two workshop manuscripts are stories-in-progress, not finely polished pieces.

-- Writing exercises, manuscripts, and revisions 50%
-- Class participation 30%
-- Attendance and comportment 20%

(Here is a link to a grade calculator http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~immer/gradecalc.html)

Comportment

A writing workshop is predicated on each individual’s commitment to collaborative learning. This might sound like an oxymoron: the highly individualized act of writing fiction conjoined with a collaborative setting. Yet, it is a fact. A writing workshop is a place of learning. This means that you enter the room every Monday night with a commitment to being respectful, involved, and constructive.

Attendance

We only meet 14 times in class this semester, which does not afford much wiggle space. If you have to miss a class due to illness or an emergency, let me know by email. You will still be responsible for all assigned work, including returning annotated workshop stories to your classmates, along with the narrative commentary that you also email to me. Unfortunately, your grade may be penalized by a full point (A drops to B, B drops to C) if you miss more than two of classes. If you already anticipate needing to miss two classes this semester, you should register for another course.

Be on time to class. If you arrive late, wait outside in the hallway rather than opening the door and letting yourself in. Really. Do not wander off because you will be invited into
the room when we reach a natural break in the action, much in the way that theatergoers who arrive late are ushered to their seats between scenes. The nature of the workshop environment makes it disruptive for latecomers to get themselves settled.

Two late arrivals to class or late returns from break equal one absence. Speak to me if you have another class that right before ours meets and you have to get to our classing building from some distant NYU location. We will see if there’s a way to work it out.

Breaks

A 10 minutes break is scheduled at some point during class. Speak to me if circumstances necessitate your needing a regularly scheduled 2nd break, which I am glad to accommodate when I learn of it. A 10-minute break does not give you a lot of time to leave the building in search of something to eat or drink, so try to bring everything with you.

Cell Phones, Laptops + Other Electronics

Regrettably, this bears repeating: Turn off your cell phones, laptops, and other electronics before class. If you must be available to receive an emergency call, let me know in advance so that we can anticipate your leaving the room. Text messaging, web surfing, etc. during class are unacceptable and will be treated as an absence as well as a crime against humanity.
SYLLABUS

• Reading requirements: Read twenty-five (25) assigned master stories.
Read twenty-eight (28) workshop stories by other students.

• Writing requirements: Complete two (2) different short stories (approx. 10-12 pages each).
Write three (3) different drafts of each story.
Write twenty-eight (28) workshop story critiques (approx. 1/2 page)

• Optional readings: Stories and essays will be posted on line in response to workshop discussions.

• Optional writing: Prompts will be suggested each week in response to workshop discussions.

Weekly Schedule
(subject to change)

Class #1 9/8 Beginnings

“All anybody who has survived his childhood has enough information about life to last him the rest of his days.”
— Flannery O’Connor, Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose

• Overview and introductions
• In-class writing exercises

Class #2 9/15 Plot: Aristotle’s Poetics and Freytag’s Triangle

• Reading Assignment “Hands” by Sherwood Anderson
“The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas” by Ursula LeGuin
“How I Met My Husband” by Alice Munro

• Writing Exercise Name exercise: Creating Characters

Class #3 9/22 Exposition, Backstory and Flashbacks

• Reading Assignment “Sonny’s Blues” by James Baldwin
“Paul’s Case” by Willa Cather

• Workshop 3 Student Readers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
<th>Workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| #4       | 9/29   | Characterization           | “Cathedral” by Raymond Carver  
“A Good Man Is Hard To Find” by Flannery O’Connor                                  | 3 Students Readers |
| #5       | 10/6   | Point-Of-View: It’s Not Always First Person | ”The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson  
“A Rose For Emily” by William Faulkner (first person plural)  
“Happy Endings” by Margaret Atwood (second person) | 3 Student Readers |
| 10/13    |        | NO CLASSES SCHEDULED AT NYU |                                                                                   |          |
| #6       | 10/20  | Setting                    | “A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez  
“Dead Man’s Path” by Chinua Achebe  
“To Build A Fire” by Jack London                                                   | 3 Student Readers |
| #7       | 10/27  | Theme                      | “Gimpel The Fool” by Isaac Bashevis Singer  
“The Swimmer” by John Cheever  
“Patriotism” by Yukio Mishima                                                      | 3 Student Readers |
| #8       | 11/3   | Epiphanies                 | “Araby” by James Joyce  
“A Good Man Is Hard To Find” by Flannery O’Connor  
“A Party Down At The Square” by Ralph Ellison                                      | 3 Student Readers |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>11/10</td>
<td>Denouements: Open and Closed</td>
<td>“The Dead” by James Joyce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Student Readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>11/17</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>“A Clean Well Lighted Place” by Ernest Hemingway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Sweat” by Zora Neale Hurston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Student Readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>11/24</td>
<td>Metaphors and Similes</td>
<td>“The Overcoat” by N. Gogol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The Storm” by Kate Chopin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Student Readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#12</td>
<td>12/1</td>
<td>Metaphors and Similes: The Inimitable Gregor Samsa</td>
<td>“The Metamorphosis” by Franz Kafka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Student Readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13</td>
<td>12/8</td>
<td>To Be Determined (student request week)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Student Readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14</td>
<td>12/10</td>
<td>To Be Determined (student request week)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dates on which you hand in drafts of your original stories.
(This does not refer to exercises, which are assigned in class.)
Annotated manuscripts will be returned to you the following week.

GROUP A
Mary Hodge, Julia Lewis, Samuel Thornton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story #1</th>
<th>Story #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/15 Distribute to entire class</td>
<td>10/27 Distribute to entire class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/29 Hand into Carol only</td>
<td>11/10 Hand into Carol only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/13 Hand into Carol only</td>
<td>11/24 Hand into Carol only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________
**WRITING CONTRACT**  
**READING & WRITING THE SHORT STORY**  
**FALL 2014---CAROL ZOREF**

Dates on which you hand in drafts of your original stories.  
(This does not refer to exercises, which are assigned in class.)  
Annotated manuscripts will be returned to you the following week.

**GROUP B**  
Elena Ambrosino, Ray Larsen, Orli Julia Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story #1</th>
<th>Story #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/22 Distribute manuscript to entire class</td>
<td>11/3 Distribute to entire class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/6 Hand into Carol only</td>
<td>11/17 Hand into Carol only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20 Hand into Carol only</td>
<td>12/1 Hand into Carol only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature_________________________ Date____________________________

---

**WRITING CONTRACT**  
**READING & WRITING THE SHORT STORY**  
**FALL 2014---CAROL ZOREF**

Dates on which you hand in drafts of your original stories.  
(This does not refer to exercises, which are assigned in class.)  
Annotated manuscripts will be returned to you the following week.

**GROUP B**  
Elena Ambrosino, Ray Larsen, Orli Julia Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story #1</th>
<th>Story #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/22 Distribute manuscript to entire class</td>
<td>11/3 Distribute to entire class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/6 Hand into Carol only</td>
<td>11/17 Hand into Carol only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20 Hand into Carol only</td>
<td>12/1 Hand into Carol only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature_________________________ Date____________________________
**WRITING CONTRACT**  
READING & WRITING THE SHORT STORY  
FALL 2014---CAROL ZOREF

Dates on which you hand in drafts of your original stories.  
(This does not refer to exercises, which are assigned in class.)  
Annotated manuscripts will be returned to you the following week.

**GROUP C**  
Claudia Buccino, Roshani Moorjani, Anya Tchoupakov

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story #1</th>
<th>Story #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>9/29</strong> Distribute to entire class</td>
<td><strong>11/10</strong> Distribute to entire class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10/13</strong> Email to Carol</td>
<td><strong>11/24</strong> Hand into Carol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10/27</strong> Hand into Carol</td>
<td><strong>12/8</strong> Hand into Carol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signature__________________________**  
**Date_______________________**
Writing Contract
Reading & Writing the Short Story
FALL 2014---Carol Zoref

Dates on which you hand in drafts of your original stories.
(This does not refer to exercises, which are assigned in class.)
Annotated manuscripts will be returned to you the following week.

GROUP D
Cameron Mattis, Emma Delafield Turner, Caroline Porter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story #1</th>
<th>Story #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/22</td>
<td>11/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand into Carol</td>
<td>Hand into Carol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/6</td>
<td>11/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribute to entire class</td>
<td>Distribute to entire class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/27</td>
<td>12/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand into Carol</td>
<td>Hand into Carol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature ___________________________________ Date ________________________
DATES ON WHICH YOU HAND IN DRAFTS OF YOUR ORIGINAL STORIES.
(This does not refer to exercises, which are assigned in class.)
Annotated manuscripts will be returned to you the following week.

GROUP E
Jake Henry Nevins, Courtney Keziarian, Seamus McGuigan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story #1</th>
<th>Story #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/22 Hand into Carol</td>
<td>10/27 Hand into Carol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/6 Hand into Carol</td>
<td>11/10 Hand into Carol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20 Distribute to entire class</td>
<td>11/24 Distribute to entire class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature___________________________ Date______________________________