This course provides students interested in writing fiction an opportunity to explore (and practice) various forms of fiction in a workshop environment. The main objective of the course is to help students develop their individual styles and voices and to make them aware of the various techniques available to them. We will examine every aspect of the craft of traditional fiction writing: plot, structure, point of view, narrative voice, dialogue, building of individual scenes, etc as well as the new techniques of the digital age. Students will present their own fiction, respond to the writings of others, and pose questions about literature, editing, and publishing. Students will be required to write either a short story, or a chapter from a novel, or several pieces of flash fiction. The reading assignments will include selections from old and contemporary authors.

Course Objectives

The students will study existing methods for fiction writing, and learn how to apply them to their creative work.

Creative Work

The assignment (short story ---1500 to 2500 words in length) is going to be the piece that you will present in class for critique by other students. Be daring! It’s okay if the story is imperfect.

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

Required Texts

Junot Diaz, Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

Jennifer Egan, Visit from the Goon Squad
(I will also introduce some short stories and other novels to get the students familiar with them and encourage them to read them later.)

**Reading discussions**

You should email me two comments about each assigned piece (anything that struck you as a writer-reader) no later than the night before the class. The comments should be from the point of view of a fellow writer.

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 should write your questions/comments to the writer and send them to me in an email prior to class when the work is going to be presented.

**Grades**

Your final grade will be based on 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.

**Academic integrity**

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating.

**Week 1**

**January 27th**

**What is fiction? Different critical perspectives/Perspective of a fellow writer**
Week 2. Creating fictional characters
February 3rd

Texts: Junot Diaz, Part 1

Week 3/4. Plot/elements of plot/plot devices
February 10-17th

Texts: Junot Diaz, Parts 2-3
Movies: Separation, Pulp Fiction

Week 5-6. Structure
February 24-March 2

Texts: Visit from the Goon Squad Visit, Part 1, Part 2

Movies: Memento (for March 10th)

Week 7

March 9

Individual Scenes/narrative passages/pacing/dialog
Texts: Various short stories

Movie: Fargo

Week 8-14 March 24-May 4th

Student presentations