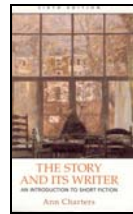


**ENGLISH 5366/5370:**  
**ADVANCED FICTION WRITING/TUTORIAL IN FICTION**  
**TENTATIVE SYLLABUS, SPRING SEMESTER 2003**

**PROFESSOR:** Lex Williford  
**OFFICE:** HUDS 309  
**SECTION:** ENGL 5366.001 Advanced Fiction Writing/ENGL 5370.001 Tutorial in Fiction  
**ROOM:** Hudspeth Hall 213  
**E-MAIL:** [lex@utep.edu](mailto:lex@utep.edu)  
**OFFICE:** 747-8806, 747-5731 (English office).  
**PHONE:**  
**HOME PHONE:** 351-7144 (home), 433-1931 (mobile). I write mornings. Best times to call me at home are around noon and after five pm.  
**OFFICE HOURS:** 12-1 and 3-4:30 TR. Also by appointment.  
**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In addition to writing exercises and critiquing writers' stories, we'll focus on a short history of the modern short story, from its earliest origins in Gogol, Chekhov and Maupassant to a few of its contemporary masters.  
**TEXTS:**

*The Story and Its Writer,*  
Ann Charters, Editor,  
Sixth Edition,  
Paperback,  
ISBN: 0-312-39729-1



**GRADES:** Your grades will be determined by your completion of:

1. Three fifteen-minute fictions a week for the first five weeks of the semester. We may do several in-class exercises, which you can include in the total.
2. At least two oral critiques of another student's story, *each due the week your own story's up on the worksheet, one critique before and one after mid-semester.*
3. Oral discussions of at least two stories in *The Story and Its Writer*. Essentially, you'll lead the discussion of the story you've chosen to critique (listed in the syllabus below), focusing on whatever you'd like to talk about so long as you also discuss some matter of narrative craft along the way. (Many of the story readings will have appended to them discussions by other writers, which you may respond to or not.)
4. Using the fiction coversheet, the "Workshop Symbol Code" and "A Workshop Guide for Creative Writing" at the end of this handout, mark up each workshop story, writing marginal commentary throughout the manuscript and using the abbreviated symbols at the end of this syllabus. Then write a one to two-paragraph critique. For these critiques, please focus on one fictional technique the author has used and cite specific examples from the text. Depending upon what kind of critique the author requests, please do a descriptive and/or prescriptive critical analysis of the story *as written* (not necessarily as you might have written it), discussing its themes, characterization, imagery, etc. (Helpful prescriptions include problems with accident, coincidence, or verisimilitude—when you found a character's actions or dialogue less than credible, for example. Unhelpful prescriptions abound, including nit-picky discussions of typos or suggestions about writing the story you'd write rather than the author.) Cite specific examples from the text to illustrate your points and suggest concrete suggestions for changes.
5. Drafts of at least two *new* stories or novel chapters (or, if you wish, a series of four or five short-short stories), due at the times you sign up for at the beginning of the semester—all to be revised for your end-of-the-semester portfolio.
6. A final portfolio: a standard manila folder (with your name and the class section on the tab) including no fewer than about 30 pages (two revised stories of eight to fifteen pages in length, one story and three or four short-shorts, one long story of no more than thirty to thirty five pages, or two to three novel chapters, for example). Also include a cover-page with a couple of paragraphs describing your revisions for each story/chapter and a self-evaluation of your work for the semester. Assign yourself a grade for your semester's work.

**MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES:**

1. All manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, with standard one-inch margins, and well photocopied on white paper. If you use a computer/printer, make copies in letter-quality. **Number all pages** and (if your word processor has the capability to do so) include a heading on each page with your name and the story title on each page (use the heading of this syllabus as a guide). **Please use a copy of this syllabus's last page as a cover page, and fill it out, describing the kind of critique you'd like.** If you wish to have concrete feedback about problems with your story, or problems you had in writing it, write a series of specific questions on the story coversheet at the end of this handout.
2. Carefully collating and stapling your story, make a copy for each member of the workshop and one copy for me. **Turn in copies of your stories in class the week before they're due.** If you're unable to meet this deadline, follow the instructions on the Workshop Coversheet at the end of this syllabus. Failure to turn the story in by this deadline may result in a lowering of your final grade. If you submit a chapter from a novel-in-progress, make a clear note of that fact on the manuscript and summarize briefly what has come before in the longer manuscript.
3. Carefully revise all worksheet manuscripts, making them free of grammatical errors and typos. Think of the workshop as submitting the manuscript for publication and present your work as professionally as you would submit it to an editor.

<b>SYLLABUS:</b>				
The reading assignments listed reflect the dates they're <i>due</i> , not the dates they were assigned. We may choose to do in-class exercises or other activities instead of discussing assigned stories for particular days, but please read the assigned stories anyway, closely enough so that you can discuss them insightfully.				
<b>CLASS DATE, DEADLINES</b>	<b>VIDEO SCREENINGS</b>	<b>ADDITIONAL READINGS, DISCUSSION</b>	<b>THE STORY AND ITS WRITER STORY REPORTS</b>	<b>WORKSHOP THESE WRITERS' STORIES</b>
<b>WEEK 1</b> Wednesday, January 15	Scheduled for the following Saturdays, 8:00 p.m., in Fox D-071. <sup>1</sup>	<p>Sign up for workshop and report slots. →</p> <p>Discuss this syllabus. Fifteen-Minute Fictions. Writing Exercise.</p>	<p><b>First day of Class: Please sign up twice, once each for a story report.</b></p> <p>A reading of Short-Shorts: ANTON CHEKHOV, "A Blunder," 297, (RELATED COMMENTARY: Richard Ford, "Editor's Note on 'A Blunder,'" 1636); ISAAC BABEL, "My First Goose," 80 (RELATED COMMENTARY: Francine Prose, "The Bones of Muzhiks: Isaac Babel Gets Lost in Translation," 1562); WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS "The Use of Force," 1403; JAMAICA KINCAID, "Girl," 839 (RELATED COMMENTARY: Jamaica Kincaid, "On 'Girl,'" 1518); SANDRA CISNEROS "The House on Mango Street," 330 (RELATED COMMENTARY Marc Zimmerman, "U. S. Latino Literature: History and Development," 1598).</p>	<p><b>First day of Class:</b> <b>Please sign up for two workshop story slots to have your work discussed, one before mid-semester and one after.</b></p> <p>Write and read in-class short-shorts.</p>
<b>WEEK 2</b> Wednesday, January 22	X	<p><i>SW</i>, Appendix I: Storytelling before the Emergence of the Short Story, 1719; A Brief History of the Short Story," 1731.</p>	<p><b>Precursors of the Modern Story</b> NIKOLAI GOGOL, "The Overcoat," 590; RELATED COMMENTARY Vladimir Nabokov, "Gogol's Genius in 'The Overcoat,'" 1543.</p> <p><i>Sign up for stories in slots under readings:</i></p>	<p><b>Workshop story: 1<sup>st</sup> half of class</b></p>

<sup>1</sup> Fox D-071 is in the basement of the Fox Fine Arts, but we'll have to meet and enter at the entrance on the 3rd floor, up the ramp from the parking lots.

			<p>ANTON CHEKHOV, "Angel" ["The Darling"], 289; "The Lady with the Little Dog," 299; RELATED CASEBOOK: "Anton Chekhov, Technique in Writing the Short Story," 1631; Richard Ford, "Why We Like Chekhov," 1632, Vladimir Nabokov, "A Reading of Chekhov's 'The Lady with the Little Dog,'" 1637 Leo Tolstoy, "Chekhov's Intent in 'The Darling' ['Angel'], 1642; Eudora Welty, "Plot and Character in Chekhov's 'The Darling' ['Angel]," 1645.</p>	<u>Workshop story: 2<sup>nd</sup> half of class</u>
<p><b>WEEK 3</b> Wednesday, January 29 (Census Day)</p>			<p>LEO TOLSTOY, "The Death of Ivan Ilych," 1293; RELATED COMMENTARIES: Peter Rudy, "Tolstoy's Revisions in 'The Death of Ivan Ilych,'" 1567.</p>	
			<p>GUY DE MAUPASSANT, "The Necklace," 966. COMMENTARIES: Kate Chopin, "How I Stumbled upon Maupassant," 1474; Guy de Maupassant, "The Writer's Goal," 1533.</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 4</b> Wednesday, February 5 (Last day to select P/F Option: Feb. 7)</p>			<p>GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, "A Simple Heart," 522.</p>	
			<p>HERMAN MELVILLE, "Bartleby, the Scrivener," 977; RELATED COMMENTARIES: J. Hillis Miller, "A Deconstructive Reading of Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener,'" 1537.</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 5</b> Wednesday, February 12</p>	<p>John Huston's Adaptation of James Joyce's "The Dead" Saturday, February 15, 8 pm.</p>		<p>EDGAR ALLAN POE, "The Cask of Amontillado," 1188; "The Tell-Tale Heart," 1206; RELATED CASEBOOK: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Importance of the Single Effect in a Prose Tale"; James W. Gargano, "The Question of Poe's Narrators in 'The Tell-Tale Heart' and 'The Cask of Amontillado'"; David S. Reynolds, Poe's Art of Transformation in "The Cask of Amontillado," 1708.</p>	
			<p><u>Modernism and Realism</u> JAMES JOYCE, "Araby," 762; "The Dead," 766; RELATED COMMENTARIES: Richard Ellmann, "A Biographical Perspective on Joyce's 'The Dead,'" 1487; Frank O'Connor, Style and Form in Joyce's "The Dead," 1554.</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 6</b> Wednesday, February 19</p>			<p>SHERWOOD ANDERSON, "Death in the Woods," 55; "Hands," 64; RELATED COMMENTARY Sherwood Anderson, "Form, Not Plot, in the Short Story," 1453.</p>	

			ERNEST HEMINGWAY, "Hills Like White Elephants," 647.	
<b>WEEK 7</b> Wednesday, February 26 (Graduation application deadline for degree conferral: Feb. 28)	<b>NOTE:</b> We may have to reschedule class this day because of the AWP Conference		F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, "Babylon Revisited," 505.	
			RALPH ELLISON, "Battle Royal," 464; RELATED COMMENTARY: Ralph Ellison, "The Influence of Folklore on 'Battle Royal,'" 1486.	
<b>WEEK 8</b> Wednesday, March 5 (Course Drop Deadline: March 7)			TADEUSZ BOROWSKI, "This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen," 186.	
			KATHERINE MANSFIELD, "Bliss," 932; RELATED COMMENTARIES: Willa Cather, "The Stories of Katherine Mansfield," 1467.	
<b>MID-SEMESTER: SIGN UP FOR ONE STORY TO WORKSHOP BEFORE AND ONE AFTER THESE DATES</b>				
<b>WEEK 9</b> Wednesday, March 12			D. H. LAWRENCE, "Odour of Chrysanthemums," 875; D. H. Lawrence, Draft Passage from "Odour of Chrysanthemums," 1519; Jay Parini, "Lawrence and Steinbeck's 'Chrysanthemums,'" 1560.	
			JOHN STEINBECK, "The Chrysanthemums," 1269.	
<b>WEEK 10</b> Wednesday, March 19	<b>Spring Break</b>			
<b>WEEK 11</b> Wednesday, March 26			FLANNERY O'CONNOR, "Everything That Rises Must Converge," 1117; "Good Country People," 1128; RELATED CASEBOOK: Flannery O'Connor, From "Letters, 1954-55, 1663"; Flannery O'Connor, "Writing Short Stories," 1666; Flannery O'Connor, "A Reasonable Use of the Unreasonable," 1671; V. S. Pritchett, Flannery; Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr., "Flannery O'Connor and Her Readers," 1676; Dorothy Tuck McFarland, "On 'Good Country People,' 1681; Wayne C. Booth, "A Rhetorical Reading of O'Connor's 'Everything That Rises Must Converge,'" 1685.	
			FRANK O'CONNOR, "Guests of the Nation," 1154; RELATED COMMENTARIES: Frank O'Connor, "The Nearest Thing to Lyric Poetry Is the Short Story," 1553.	

<p><b>WEEK 12</b> Wednesday, April 2</p>		<p><b>Magical Realism</b> FRANZ KAFKA, "The Metamorphosis," 803; RELATED COMMENTARIES: Gustav Janouch, "Kafka's View of 'The Metamorphosis,'" 1511; Jane Smiley, "Gregor: My Life as a Bug," 1581; John Updike, "Kafka and 'The Metamorphosis,'" 1588.</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 13</b> Wednesday, April 9</p>		<p>GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," 570.</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 14</b> Wednesday, April 16</p>		<p><b>Contemporary</b> JOHN CHEEVER, "The Swimmer," 279; RELATED COMMENTARY: John Cheever, "Why I Write Short Stories," 1472.</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 15</b> Wednesday, April 23</p>		<p>RAYMOND CARVER, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love," 252; RELATED CASEBOOK: Raymond Carver, "On Writing," 1605; Raymond Carver, "Creative Writing 101," 1610; Raymond Carver, "The Ashtray," 1613; Jim Naughton, "As Raymond Carver Muses, His Stature Grows," 1614; Arthur M. Saltzman, "A Reading of 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Love,'" 1622; A. O. Scott, "Looking for Raymond Carver," 1624.</p>	
<p><b>WEEK 16</b> Wednesday, April 30</p>	<p align="center"><b>LAST DAY OF CLASS.</b> <b>PORTFOLIOS DUE.</b> Final discussion of the story form's evolution and history. Reading of semester's work.</p>		

Name	Phone Number	E-Mail Address
English 5366		
Donna Bronner		
Nancy Erickson		
Ed Knapp		

Mitch Smigiel		
David Smith		
<b>English 5370</b>		
Ed Haas		
Ling Na		
James O'Keeffe		

*A Note on My Workshop Philosophy:*

Only one rule applies to the critique of manuscripts in this class: *Kindness is the only wisdom*. The principal task of this workshop is to create a safe place for writers to be honest and authentic in their discussions and their work. Some writers may be struggling to find the courage to write stories of traumatic events that have occurred to them personally, or to people they know. The last thing we need to do as a class is to make the *discussion* of these stories traumatic, too; doing so may cause writers to withdraw and stop taking risks for fear of making mistakes or being emotionally honest. There are no mistakes in this workshop, only opportunities to see, understand, change and revise.

If a writer has troubles with his or her story, try to find a way to deliver that information in a non-personal, nonjudgmental way, with empathy and compassion and, if possible, without undo sarcasm. (*Irony, sarcasm's* more subtle and sophisticated sister, is, of course, what we're trying to use in our stories to great effect.) One approach is simply to describe how you read the story, what it meant to you, focusing on one or two fictional techniques (*irony* or *sarcasm*, for example) the author has used that have contributed to that effect. Focus on what poet John Ciardi says is most important: not just *what* a story means but *how* it means, specific techniques we've discussed in class which help us as writers make readers fall into the fictional dream.

The more I teach fiction writing, the less faith I have in giving advice, especially the whole notion that a story is something to find problems with and "fix." If the author discovers that she has been misinterpreted in a descriptive analysis, then it follows that she will have to revise. Avoid using such subjective judgments as *good* or *bad* or *I really like/dislike this story*. Each of us reads a story differently, and that's what makes workshop such effective places to discuss our work. Take what you can use and forget the rest. We all have a right to tell our own stories in our own ways, and we all have a right to our own interpretations of others' stories so long as there's evidence from the text to support our views. We may interpret the image of a child's flying saucer toy lying upended in a bathtub as a hint that a story is about alien abduction, but if there's nothing else in the story to support that point then perhaps the story may be about something else, the death of a child, say, or the grief of a father.

We show our work to others to help us when we're too close to it to trust our instincts completely about whether what we've written does what we'd intended, whether what's in our head has gotten onto the page. Workshops should be both honest *and* supportive, writers telling other writers not necessarily what they want to hear but what they might need to hear to make their stories work better, meanwhile helping them through the sometimes painful task of revision: re-seeing their own stories clearly with some dispassionate distance, finding their stories in the process of rewriting them, making the unconscious more conscious. Workshops should also be open, generous, productive and tremendously fun, everyone feeling free to laugh a great deal—and not at others' expense—meanwhile recognizing that criticism must never be equated with cruelty or preoccupations with who's up or down but always with the shared difficulty of the work itself, always balancing a commitment to honesty about the work's effectiveness with mutual respect for those who create it and their individual creative processes and aesthetics.