

English 311
Fiction Writing
Wed., 6:30-9:30 PM
Spring 2016

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Office Hours: Mon. 1:30-2:30; Tues. 10:30-11:30; Wed.
4-5; Thurs. 12-1; and by appointment.

Course Description and Objectives

English 311, Fiction Writing, will provide (a) an in-depth study of the genre of narrative fiction, and (b) a workshop setting for practice in the writing of fiction, specifically the short story. Students enrolled in this course should be prepared to do a substantial amount of reading, discussing, writing, and rewriting; I really believe that you will not produce work of any significance without engaging fully in *all* of these tasks. In the words of John Gardner, author of *The Art of Fiction*:

[I]n order to achieve mastery [the student writer] must read widely and deeply and must write not just carefully but continually, thoughtfully assessing and reassessing what he [sic] writes, because practice, for the writer as for the concert pianist, is the heart of the matter. Though the literary dabbler may write a fine story now and then, the true writer is one for whom technique has become, as it is for the pianist, second nature. Ordinarily this means university education, with courses in the writing of fiction, and poetry as well. Some important writers have said the opposite--for instance, Ernest Hemingway, who is quoted as having said that the way for a writer to learn his craft is to go away and write. Hemingway, it may help to remember, went away for free "tutorials" to two of the finest teachers then living, Sherwood Anderson and Gertrude Stein. (Vintage 1991, page 9)

You will, then, read, discuss, and write about the art and craft of fiction, as well as a range of fine examples of narrative fiction—drawn from the course's main text, *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft* (9th ed.) by Janet Burroway, Elizabeth Stuckey-French, and Ned Stuckey-French. You will produce a body of fictional exercises and short pieces, as well as two complete short stories (in both preliminary and revised drafts); this material will be presented to, and evaluated by, the instructor in midterm and final portfolios. You will share your work with others in the class and respond to one another's work (in both workshop discussions and written responses) with seriousness and careful attention. And you will prepare required reading responses to assigned short stories and one novel.

Specific course objectives include the following:

- demonstrate **careful reading and analysis** of works of fiction, as well as works addressing the craft of fiction writing
- cultivate, and use, a critically aware **vocabulary of analysis** for fiction
- cultivate a sustained **habit of writing and note-taking** (both the writing of original work, and the writing of responses to published works and work by student peers)
- respond critically and thoughtfully** (in both speaking and writing) to the work of student peers
- demonstrate **growth and improvement in the writing of short fiction** (openings and endings, balance of scene and summary, character development, development and use of setting,

understanding of point of view, handling of narrative time, grammatical and mechanical correctness)

--provide evidence of **substantial revision** of short stories submitted for final evaluation

--**manage and reflect upon the process of writing** short stories, from planning and drafting through workshops/peer review and final revision.

Required Texts

Janet Burroway, Elizabeth Stuckey-French, and Ned Stuckey-French, *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, 9th ed. (Pearson, 2015).

Asali Solomon, *Disgruntled: A Novel* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2015).
Press, 2003.

Plus classmates' work shared for workshop sessions, and additional handouts/links provided by instructor.

Note that course materials will be included in a shared English 104C Google folder

(<https://drive.google.com/a/moravian.edu/folderview?id=0B35hpTfr0RA0Z0xqNfNMN3ZGc00&usp=sharing>) and on the English 311 Blackboard site.

Attendance and Classroom Policies, and a Note on Plagiarism

We will meet once a week for fourteen weeks; that isn't much time when you consider all we hope to accomplish. If you are serious about writing, you will show up **on time**, every time. More than two absences (excused or unexcused) will negatively affect your Participation grade and will automatically lower your final grade. If you are five minutes (or more) late for more than two classes, I will begin to count latenesses as absences. Speak to me if you are having any issues that interfere with your ability to attend class, or to arrive on time.

All phones silenced during class time, please. If you will be using a laptop, tablet, or phone for note-taking during class, please let me know in advance.

I would hope that it goes without saying that any work you submit for this course must be your own; to plagiarize in an upper-level writing course is to convey a shocking disrespect for writers and their work. Refer to the College's policy on academic honesty (available in the Student Handbook) for any needed clarification. The Moravian College Academic Honesty Policy can be found in full here:

<http://www.moravian.edu/studentlife/handbook/academic/academic2.html>

Academic Support Center

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact the Academic Support Center, located in the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling [610-861-1401](tel:610-861-1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Evaluation*

***Note to English Majors:** In preparation for creating an English Major Portfolio in your senior capstone seminar, please save digital and/or hard copies of your work for this class, including drafts with peer and instructor comments.

Midterm Portfolio (40% of final grade)--due Wednesday, March 16:

- A. Exercise writing
- B. Copies of all editor's letters (responses to classmates' workshop drafts)
- C. Short story #1 (including all drafts—with final draft clearly identified)
- D. Self-assessment/explanation of short story #1 revision process (min. 2 typed, double-spaced pages in 12-point type, or roughly 600 words)

Final Portfolio (40% of final grade)--due Wednesday, April 27:

- A. Exercise writing
- B. Copies of all editor's letters (responses to classmates' workshop drafts)
- C. Short story #2 (including all drafts—with final draft clearly identified)
- D. Self-assessment/explanation of short story #2 revision process (min. 2 typed, double-spaced pages in 12-point type, or roughly 600 words)

Reading Responses (minimum of 5 for weeks 2-7; minimum of 5 for weeks 8-13): 15% of final grade

Participation (5% of final grade)

***Refer to separate handout for notes on short story formatting and length.

Schedule

Week 1 (1/20)

- Introductions, discussion of syllabus, shared documents/workshop plans, etc.
- Reeves Library Groenfeldt Collection area (lower level) for History-as-Source exercise work with Moravian Women's College archival material

Week 2 (1/27)

- Self-as-Source exercise
- Discussion of assigned reading (Burroway, chs. 1-2, plus Dybek, "We Didn't" [43] and Pearlman, "Binocular Vision" [62]); reading response due
- Sharing and discussion of History-as-Source exercise writing
- Scheduling of workshop sessions (Feb. 10, 17, 24, and March 2)

Week 3 (2/3)

- Discussion of assigned reading (Burroway, ch. 8, plus Saunders, "Victory Lap" [293] and Tallent, "No One's a Mystery" [306]); reading response due
- Sharing and discussion of Self-as-Source exercise writing
- Distribution and introduction of Week 4 workshop stories

Week 4 (2/10)

*This week: Recommended attendance at screening of *Baseball in the Time of Cholera* and Mario Joseph talk: 7 PM, Prosser Auditorium

- Discussion of assigned reading (Burroway, ch. 3, plus Diaz, "Fiesta, 1980" [83], Packer, "Every Tongue Shall Confess" [94], and Danticat, "Children of the Sea" [handout or available at <http://mrscastor.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Children-of-the-Sea-1.pdf>]); reading response due
- Workshop session (3-4 stories)
- Editor's Letters due to workshop writers (plus copy to JH)
- Distribution and introduction of Week 5 workshop stories

Week 5 (2/17)

- Discussion of assigned reading (Burroway, ch. 4, plus Wolff, "Bullet in the Brain" [138] and Cisneros, "Eleven" [152]); reading response due
- Workshop session (3-4 stories)
- Editor's Letters due to workshop writers (plus copy to JH)
- Distribution and introduction of Week 6 workshop stories

Week 6 (2/24)

- Discussion of assigned reading (Burroway, ch. 7, plus Williams, "Escapes" [251] and O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must Converge" [262]); reading response due
- Workshop session (3-4 stories)
- Editor's Letters due to workshop writers (plus copy to JH)
- Distribution and introduction of Week 7 workshop stories

Week 7 (3/3)

- Discussion of assigned reading (Burroway, ch.9, through page 333); reading response due
- Workshop session (2-3 stories)
- Editor's Letters due to workshop writers (plus copy to JH)

SPRING BREAK

Week 8 (3/17)

- Portfolio I due
- Discussion of assigned reading (Asali Solomon, *Disgruntled*); reading response due; also bring a favorite fairy tale or myth (link or hard copy)
- Mapping/Settings and Reappropriation exercises
- Scheduling of workshop sessions (March 30 and April 6, 13, and 20)

Week 9 (3/24)

*This week: Required attendance at reading/talk by Asali Solomon (Tuesday, March 22, 4:15 PM, room TBD); see me if you are an evening student with a full-time job that will prevent your attendance.

- Discussion of assigned reading (Burroway, ch. 5, plus Russell, "St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves" [172], Walker, "The Flowers" [185], and Welty, "A Visit of Charity" [186]); reading response due
- Sharing and discussion of Mapping/Settings and Reappropriation exercise writing
- Distribution and introduction of Week 10 workshop stories

Week 10 (3/30)

- Discussion of assigned reading (Burroway, ch. 6, plus Moore, "You're Ugly, Too" [207], Alexie, "The Fun House" [224], Voskuil, "Currents" [227]); reading response due
- Workshop session (3-4 stories)
- Editor's Letters due to workshop writers (plus copy to JH)
- Distribution and introduction of Week 11 workshop stories

Week 11 (4/6)

- Discussion of assigned reading (handouts/links provided by JH); reading response due
- Workshop session (3-4 stories)
- Editor's Letters due to workshop writers (plus copy to JH)
- Distribution and introduction of Week 12 workshop stories

Week 12 (4/13)

- Discussion of assigned reading (handouts/links provided by JH); reading response due
- Workshop session (3-4 stories)
- Editor's Letters due to workshop writers (plus copy to JH)
- Distribution and introduction of Week 13 workshop stories

Week 13 (4/20)

- Discussion of assigned reading (handouts/links provided by JH; reread Burroway ch. 9 through p. 327, plus pp. 333-338); reading response due
- Workshop session (2-3 stories)
- Editor's Letters due to workshop writers (plus copy to JH)

Week 14 (4/27)

- Portfolio II due
- Class reading
- Course evaluations