

English 4376: Fiction Workshop
 TuTh 12:30-1:45 | Academic Building 013
 Spring 2022



Instructor : Dr. Rebecca Bernard (she/her/hers)

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Phone: 325-486-6142

Office Location: Academic Building 39C

Office Hours: MW: 1-3; T/R: 11-12; 2-4; or by appointment

(If these times do not work with your schedule, we can schedule an appointment on a day and at time convenient for both of us.)

COURSE GOALS & DESCRIPTION:

Fiction Workshop is designed to further your understanding of craft, to help you continue discovering and honing your voice as a writer, and to challenge your ability to practice new elements/styles of fiction while gaining the ability to articulate and explain your narrative choices. To this end, we will emphasize three practices:

Production: Simply put, the more you write, the stronger your writing will become. Therefore, a large part of this class will focus on producing work. In addition to your two workshop stories, you will write weekly craft explorations that will urge you to experiment with elements of style, craft, and voice. We will also hold a third, sentence-level micro workshop to emphasize the importance of the line.

Discovery: To improve as a writer, it is necessary to read widely and diversely so that you understand more fully the range of what's possible as well as to develop your sense of taste. We will read and discuss a range of contemporary short fiction, and you will often be asked to implement and experiment with the elements of craft and narrative found in these works.

Refinement: Stories live and die at the sentence level, the word level. We will discuss revision and the importance of learning to read your work and the work of others with a critical eye throughout the semester. I believe revision is a deeply personal process, unique to each writer, and we will share and discuss our best practices. At the end of the semester, we will work toward large scale revisions, but each week we will spend time breaking down paragraphs at the sentence level. At the end of the semester, I'll encourage those of you who feel ready to submit a short work to a journal that you admire.

The primary goal for this course is that you will gain an understanding of the ways in which short-fiction writers create art—and that this understanding, along with ample chances to practice, will help you write more effective stories of your own.

REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS:

- There is no textbook for this class.

- Writing journal/notebook & pen/pencil.
- An ASU email account & access to Blackboard
- Course Reader: I will provide you a hardcopy, and any additional readings will be distributed in class and on Canvas

COURSE EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Over the course of the semester you will be graded on the following assignments/tasks:

Item	Percentage of Grade
Short Story 1	10
Short Story 2	10
Micro Story	10
Participation & Online Posts	20
Craft Explorations	10
In-person Reading Response	5
Written Responses to Peer Work	20
Portfolio Revision	15

<i>Course Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	59% and below

Short Stories: For workshop you are expected to turn in two original short stories. Each story should be typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, use Times New Roman or another basic font, size 12 font. Include your name and the title of the story on the first page. Number the pages. Everyone's stories will be due on the same day to ensure the time and concentration to prepare for workshop. Submit each story electronically as a Word file to me via Canvas by the deadline using the format First Name Last Name_ Title of Story. (RebeccaBernard_Pony Days). We will sign up for workshop times toward the beginning of each unit. Stories should be in the range of 750 to 4000 words, though exceptions are permissible with notice.

You are free to use this workshop time to explore your voice and style as a writer. The only restrictions I place are that the work is something you have completed during the time of this semester, and that it is standalone and not part of a longer work. I understand many students have an interest in genre writing, particularly fantasy and science fiction. For the purposes of our course, because we aren't studying the elements of craft unique to genre, I ask that you aim toward the so-called literary realm, but you're welcome to include elements of magical realism, fabulism, the weird and the wacky, in other words, make it your own, but you should be sure to aim for deep characterization, realistic dialogue, genuine emotions, and an attention to language on the sentence level.

Micro Workshop: To emphasize the importance of the sentence-level and to give everyone a chance to practice honing their work word-by-word, we will hold a micro workshop in addition to our regular story workshops. Here, you will workshop a piece of fiction, 250 words or less. Your piece should

aim to be a complete work. I will offer occasional examples of the micro form prior to the due date. The small size of the piece will allow us to focus on how the language is working at the word level. Experimentation encouraged. More details to follow.

Written Responses to Peer Work: The workshop experience is, in many ways, a privileged experience because you have (in our case) 15 individuals carefully reading your work. To this end, I ask that everyone acknowledge both the seriousness and the weight of this work, and to give one another the fair, unrushed and judicious reading that you would like your own work to receive. I ask that you **read each other's works twice**. First, all the way through, and then a second time to make line comments. The idea is that many comments you might make on a first read, will potentially be answered further down the page. See the arc of what the writer is attempting, prior to making any assumptions. You may give the writer a short note, a bulleted list, or detail line notes, the choice is yours. As you make line notes, don't forget to underline or star things you like—encouragement is just as important as critique. Frame everything diplomatically, but directly. **Do not critique one another's grammar**. Constructive criticism is our friend. We will talk more specifically about how to improve on the critiques offered as we approach workshop. Remember, learning to articulate critiques will be useful for your own work as well. You will turn in a copy of the feedback letter to me as well via Blackboard.

Craft Explorations: In addition to the longer workshop stories, I want everyone to have the chance to experiment with shorter flash/micro pieces that will ask you to play with techniques and styles we read in the published stories. These are a chance for you to play and discover, and I encourage you to have fun with these, but also to take them seriously as exercises in honing individual aspects of craft. These will occur weekly during non-workshop weeks. You will have the chance to share these in class as well in mini-workshop groups.

In-Class Participation & Posts: In our course, participation is crucial to both class discussion and workshop. In order to participate effectively you must come to class having carefully read the assigned readings (or workshop stories) and be prepared to share your thoughts, insights, critiques, joys, concerns, and so forth. A good discussion, like a good workshop, isn't dominated by a few voices, but is an egalitarian conversation where everyone's voice matters equally. Respect goes without saying, both of one another's work, but also of the published works we read for class. To aid in our discussions, therefore, and to encourage everyone to read carefully, prior to each non-workshop class, I will ask you to post a brief response on our Canvas discussion board for the day. These will be **150-250-word posts** which cite an element of each story's craft that you found interesting and why. What is this story doing? Something interesting with character? POV? Setting? Language? There aren't wrong answers, but I want you thinking, and I want you reading. Additionally, for each story, I want everyone to underline/highlight a favorite sentence and be prepared to explain why. Alternately, you might underline a *least* favorite sentence, and again, be prepared to tell us why. I will check these posts for participation credit and occasionally respond. We will also experiment with a discussion leader model this semester. More info to follow.

In-Person Reading Response: On March 3rd and 4th, ASU hosts the annual Elmer Kelton Writer's Conference. During this event, there's a key-note speaker (this year poet, Naomi Shihab Nye) and there will be readings from eighteen other contemporary writers. In lieu of class on Thursday, March 3rd, I ask that you attend a reading of your choice. I will give you the schedule ahead of time, and you may attend the reading that best fits your schedule. You will then write a short, creative, or critical

response to any aspect of the reading that you attended. What does it mean to watch contemporary writers share their work? Were you inspired? Your response can take any form.

Final Portfolio

As your final grade in this class, you will submit a portfolio comprised of one of the following:

1. A 500-word reflection on your revision/writing process and what you will take away from this course in terms of the fiction you produced and/or read AND
2. A **substantial** revision of one of your stories this semester OR
3. An expanded version of two or three of your “Macro” or “Micro” exercises (more details on this option forthcoming).

Revision is an integral part of the writing process, which I will explain in greater detail throughout the semester, but I have decided to offer the non-revision option because I also think true revision is an incredibly personal process that does not always work under the pressure of time constraints. Should you choose to revise, (which I do encourage) your revision should take into account both the critiques and workshop discussions of your classmates and my written and verbal comments, though what you ultimately decide to change should stay true to your vision.

GENERAL POLICIES FOR STUDENTS:

Absence & Tardiness Policy: Given the discussion-based focus of our course, attendance is crucial to success. I will keep track of attendance each class and missing more than three classes will begin to impact your grade. There is a clear connection between students attending class and doing well on assignments, so please make it your aim to be present. Life happens, I understand this, so keeping me aware of anything that might get in the way of your attendance or timely completion of assignments will help me help you. Three tardies counts as an absence. Consider attending class as a job, you want to be prepared and on time.

Class Behavior and Etiquette: I expect everyone to be respectful of one another’s work and time. Sharing one’s work is an exercise in trust, and we will act accordingly, both by reading each work carefully and by treating one another with dignity and respect. Defensiveness, close-mindedness, bigotry of any kind, and rudeness will not be tolerated. Listen to one another. We have all had different life experiences and we come from different backgrounds, therefore, even though you might believe your experiences are universal, they are in fact your experiences. We learn by listening critically, and believing other’s stories of their lives. In this class, we value empathy, the ability to understand and value/share the feelings of another.

Makeup/Late Assignment Policy: The main issue with late work is that I don’t want anyone to fall behind, and I want you to be able to participate fully in the class discussions and in-class writing time. Consistent late work will affect your grade. If you’re absent, check Blackboard. I post everything to Blackboard prior to the start of class, so there’s never a reason not to know what took place during a session you missed. Most importantly, I’m a resource for you, so don’t be shy about reaching out if you need more time or if something has come up in your life outside class.

Electronics: Please keep cellphones on silent and laptops closed during class time. This is a class focused around our ability to share ideas and work with one another and electronics will only impede said interaction. If you must, for some reason, have an electronic device, please make special

provisions with me beforehand. If you need to have your cellphone on for emergency purposes, please keep it on vibrate and let me know if there are extenuating circumstances.

Email: Please check your ASU email regularly. This is how I will communicate with you. Please always email me from your school email and not your personal email. This is important for FERPA considerations.. Please also check Blackboard frequently. If you ever miss class, check Blackboard to see what we covered and what you might have missed.

Software: You will submit all homework and writing assignment responses through Blackboard. All assignments must be submitted in Microsoft Word format. You cannot upload links to Google Docs within Blackboard. As an ASU student, you have **free access** to [Office 365](#), which includes MS Word. Visit the Office 365 website and log in with your ASU email and password. You can download the software onto your computer or compose and save writing within the site's cloud-based storage. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to download some reading assignments and other course materials. Likewise, I encourage each of you to get in the habit of using One Drive (through Outlook) or GoogleDocs or DropBox, or any file sharing service so all your materials are available to you anywhere (helpful for our lab work days).

Technical Support: If you are having technical issues with Blackboard, contact technical support one of the following ways: 325-942-2911 or toll free at 1-866-942-2911

Any course content-related questions should be directed toward me.

Office Hours: I want to talk to you about your writing. Please, don't be shy and feel free to make an appointment to discuss your work with me at any point in the semester. If my scheduled hours don't work, please email me and we can set up a time to meet.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Title IX: The University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other types of Sexual Misconduct. Sexual Misconduct is a broad term encompassing all forms of gender-based harassment or discrimination including: sexual assault, sex-based discrimination, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, public indecency, interpersonal violence (domestic violence and/or dating violence), and stalking. As a faculty member, I am a Responsible Employee, meaning I am obligated by law and ASU policy to report any allegations I am notified of to the Office of Title IX Compliance.

Students are encouraged to report any incidents of sexual misconduct directly to ASU's Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator:

Michelle Miller, J.D.
Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator
Mayer Administration Building, Room 210
325-486-6357
michelle.miller@angelo.edu

You may also file a report online 24/7 at www.angelo.edu/incident-form.

If you wish to speak to someone about an incident in confidence, you may contact the University Health Clinic and Counseling Center at 325-942-2173 or the ASU Crisis Helpline at 325-486-6345.

For more information about Title IX in general, you may visit www.angelo.edu/title-ix.

Accommodation Statement: If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class or complete course requirements, contact the Student Affairs Office as soon as possible at 325-942-2047 or studentservices@angelo.edu. It is located in the Houston Harte University Center, Suite 112. To receive any academic accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with Student Affairs. Student Affairs works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission.

Plagiarism Policy: Plagiarism is a type of academic dishonesty. It occurs when writers deliberately use another person's language, ideas, or materials and present them as their own without properly acknowledging the source.

Types of Plagiarism

Plagiarism can include any of the following:

- Failing to quote material taken from another source,
- Failing to cite material taken from another source,
- Submitting writing that was written by another person **or for another class** (even if it was for a 1301 course you took and dropped), and
- Submitting writing that was substantially edited by another person.

Procedures for Handling Plagiarism Cases

If an instructor thinks a student may have plagiarized, they will follow these steps:

- Meet privately with the student to discuss the assignment in question and the evidence of plagiarism,
- Identify the appropriate consequence, and
- File a report with the Office of Student Services.

Possible Consequences

The instructor and the English Department Chair decide the academic consequence to be imposed, depending on the seriousness of the violation. Sanctions include the following:

- Adequately redo or revise the assignment in question,
- Fail the assignment in question,
- Fail the class, or
- Be subject to more severe sanctions imposed by the Dean of Students.

All students suspected of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Services, who maintains a file of past plagiarism cases. The [ASU Student Handbook](#) further elaborates ASU's Academic Integrity policy.

Observances of Religious Holidays: A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within what the instructor deems a reasonable time after the absence.

Writing Center Information: The Writing Center is an academic support service available to all ASU students. Peer tutors help experienced and inexperienced writers with all steps of the writing process: locating an angle, writing a thesis, organizing ideas, developing paragraphs, locating grammar and punctuation errors, documenting sources, etc.; however, tutors ***do not edit or proofread papers***. To learn more about their services, visit the Writing Center's [website](#).

CLASS SCHEDULE
(Subject to change)

(The reading indicated is what is due that day and what we will be discussing in class. Stories are available on Blackboard or copies will be distributed in class)

Week	Day	Topic	Reading Due	Assignments Due
Week 1	Tuesday Jan. 18	Syllabus & Welcome; Goals for the Semester	“Possums Tell All” by Fernando A Flores; “Another Elegy” by Jericho Brown	
	Thursday Jan. 20	Off Screen/On Screen	“Likes” by Sarah Shun-lien Bynum; “Ghosts and Empties” by Lauren Groff	
Week 2	Tuesday Jan. 25	Love Story	“How to Make Love to a Physicist,” by Deesha Philyaw	
	Thursday Jan. 27	The Kids Aren’t All Right	“Fiesta, 1980” by Junot Diaz	
Week 3	Tuesday Feb. 1	Plot Plot Plot	“Rise, Baby, Rise” by George Saunders; “The School” by Donald Barthleme; “Minuet” by Rumaan Alam	
	Thursday Feb. 3	The Funny Bone	“Offsides Constantly” by Camille Bordas	Short Story #1 Due
Week 4	Tuesday Feb. 8	Workshop 1	Student Stories	
	Thursday Feb. 10	Workshop 2	Student Stories	
Week 5	Tuesday Feb. 15	Workshop 3	Student Stories	
	Thursday Feb. 17	Workshop 4	Student Stories	
Week 6	Tuesday Feb. 22	Workshop 5	Student Stories	
	Thursday Feb. 24	It’s History, Baby	“Sisters,” by Kali Fajardo-Anstine; “Nephilim” by L. Annette Binder;	
Week 7	Tuesday March 1	Invention is 99% Teeth, 1% Milk Teeth	“Fighting Words” by Matthew Baker	
	Thursday March 3	WRITER’S CONFERENCE	Attend a Reading!	

Week 8	Tuesday March 8	Field Tripping	“Phylum” by Rita Bullwinkel	
	Thursday March 10	Science Freaky	TBD story by Ted Chiang	
Week 9	Tuesday March 15	SPRING BREAK		
	Thursday March 17	SPRING BREAK		
Week 10	Tuesday March 22	Love Story Part Deux	“Heirlooms” by Bryan Washington	
	Thursday March 24	AWP Conference (in lieu of class, listen to podcast and work with your assigned partner on your slow story)	<i>Invisibilia</i> , “Slow TV”	
Week 11	Tuesday March 29	Multiple POVs	“Victory Lap” by George Saunders	
	Thursday March 31	Micro Workshop 1	Student Stories	
Week 12	Tuesday April 5	Micro Workshop 2	Student Stories	
	Thursday April 7	Micro Workshop 3	Student Stories	
Week 13	Tuesday April 12	How Far We Go	“The Five Wounds” by Kristin Valdez Quade	
	Thursday April 14	Remix Revise Rear	“The Bath” & “A Small, Good Thing” by Raymond Carver	
Week 14	Tuesday April 19	Workshop 1	Student Stories	
	Thursday April 21	Workshop 2	Student Stories	
Week 15	Tuesday April 26	Workshop 3	Student Stories	
	Thursday April 28	Workshop 4	Student Stories	
Week 16	Tuesday May 3	Workshop 5	Student Stories	
	Thursday May 5	Publishing 101		Final Portfolio Due through Canvas on Monday, May 9 th by end of day via Blackboard

*Final Exam (not observed) Scheduled Thursday, May 12th from 8:00AM-10:00AM

