

CREATIVE WRITING COM 351

Anglo American University

Instructor: Holly Tavel

“Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”
—Samuel Beckett

OFFICE HOURS:
TBA

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

- six short (2-5 pp.) writing exercises
- one longer piece (7-10 pp), comprising an expanded class exercise, polished and revised
- three two-page personal response papers for stories of your choosing
- a two page fiction manifesto
- a journal comprising daily thoughts, inspirations, observations, overheard conversations, found text, articles, flyers, sketches, drawings, jottings, etc.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

is very important, and will reflect considerably upon your final grade. This means contributing actively to the class discussion, as well as participating in all in-class activities. Of course, in order to do so, it goes without saying that you must be physically present. More than two unexcused absences will result in failure.

A FEW WORDS ON FORMATTING.

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- 1 inch margins
- 11 or 12 pt. Type, either Times New Roman, Helvetica, or Arial
- Double spaced (22 or 24 pts)
- Paragraphs should be set flush left, and ragged --not justified.
- Pages should be stapled or paper-clipped.

READINGS:

(selections from the following books will be available on the course website)
Martone, Michael, ed. *The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction: 50 North American Stories Since 1970*
Hemon, Aleksandar, ed. *The Best European Fiction 2010* (Dalkey Archive Press).

Additionally, there is a required course pack which may be purchased from the bookstore.

DISCUSSION / ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE).

Week ONE: Class Intro/Q&A

READ: George Saunders, "The Perfect Gerbil: Reading Donald Barthelme's 'The School'"; "Thank you, Esther Forbes;" Donald Barthelme, "The School"

WRITE: a personal manifesto.

Week TWO: Where do stories come from? Discovering voice.

READ: Denis Johnson, "Car Crash while Hitchhiking" "Beverley Home"; Steven Millhauser, "A Game of Clue". Sherwood Anderson, "Hands"

WRITE: Three Points of View exercise

Week THREE Narrative voice. Point of View cont'd. Using language effectively.

READ: Shelley Jackson, "Cancer" Stephen Dixon, "Game";

WRITE: A Legend for Fountains. Continuation of Joseph Cornell in-class writing exercise.

In-class screening: Joseph Cornell: "A Legend for Fountains".

Week FOUR: Making language work cont'd.

READ: Vladimir Nabokov, "Spring in Fialta"; "Cloud, Castle, Lake"; Donald Barthelme, "At the End of the Mechanical Age"; Mary Gaitskill, "Tiny, Smiling Daddy".

WRITE: One-sentence descriptions.

Week FIVE: Scene and Time; Pacing. What to leave in? What to leave out?

READ: Wells Tower, "Everything Ravaged, Everything Burned"; Julian, Gough, Christine Montalbetti.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: Day Before/Day After.

Week SIX: Creating Tension; the ambivalent story; the unreliable narrator

Week SEVEN: The absurd, the mundane, the surreal: colliding realities

READ: John Barth, Richard Brautigan, George Saunders, "Sea Oak";

WRITE: no written assignment this week

Week EIGHT: Considering Genre; fragmented narratives; metafiction

READ: Third Policeman Pt. II, Raymond Federman, "Twilight of the Bums"; David Foster Wallace, "Good Old Neon".

WRITE: Story as list, index, codex; organizing principle

In-class Screening/writing: Peter Greenaway's *The Falls*

Sign up for individual meetings / Mid-term journals due

Week NINE: Utilizing Tropes: the case for "genre fiction". Parody and satire.

READ: Jonathan Lethem, Carter Scholz, Michael Chabon, Shelley Jackson, Philip K. Dick.

Week TEN: Genre: Magic realism and the Fantastic

READ: Italo Calvino, Jorge Luis Borges, Georges Perec, Steven Millhauser, Kelly Link.

WRITE: Myth exercise

Week ELEVEN:

Form: Breaking Boundaries

READ: Raymond Federman, excerpts, *Double or Nothing*; Milorad Pavic, excerpts, *Dictionary of the Khazars*.

In-Class: found/appropriated text exercise

Individual meetings. First drafts of final pieces due.

Week TWELVE: Flash Fiction and Prose Poetry

READ: Russell Edson, Hugo Ball, Robert Walser, Lisa Robertson, Jamaica Kincaid, H.C. Artmann.

In-Class: Short-short stories

Week THIRTEEN:

Final pieces workshopped group A

Week FOURTEEN:

Final pieces work-shopped group B

Journals due.

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