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EM115

Creative Writing/Emphasis on Short Fiction—Fall 1999

Objectives

Enhanced self-expression through short fiction; increased critical abilities regarding technique (ability to recognize good vs bad; how to strengthen the good, how to eliminate or rework the bad); developed appreciation of current creative work.

This class will not teach you how to write genre fiction (ie science fiction, romance, etc.). In other words you will not learn anything that will result in fame, fortune, or notoriety, but you will learn about the process of making literature from the writer's perspective.

Texts

Liza Wieland's *You Can Sleep While I Drive* and Charles Baxter's *Believers*. These writers will be here on campus this semester; I hope that you will read their work carefully, and then take advantage of the opportunity to talk with them and ask questions about the craft and art of writing fiction.

Since this class is a workshop in format, your writing (and your response to others' work) will be the primary texts for the class; you will be responsible for bringing your work so that it can be reproduced and distributed to each member of the class. Subscribing to various literary journals and magazines is strongly recommended.

Paper Format

All work must be typed; initial exercises may be single-spaced so as to fit on one page. Subsequent work should be double-spaced.

Grades

Grades will be based on the following criteria:

- Completion of exercises and first draft projects according to deadline
- Quality of revised projects
- Discussion and analysis of model literature and fellow writers' work

As a group, we will only benefit if every member contributes to discussion and analysis, each member desiring the others' growth as writers and observers.

grade scale
drop date
attendance

Tentative Schedule

- August 16 Introduction to the writing of short fiction: Plot, Character, Point of View, Setting, Image, Tone, Theme
Focus on Characterization
Workshop Guidelines
“Fenstad’s Mother” and “Gryphon”
- August 23 Focus on Point of View
Workshop of Exercise #1
Readings from *You Can Sleep While I Drive*
- August 30 Focus on Plot
Workshop of Exercise #2
Readings from *You Can Sleep While I Drive*
- September 6 *Labor Day Holiday*
- September 13 Focus on Setting
Workshop of Exercise #3
Readings from *You Can Sleep While I Drive*
- September 20 Focus on Image, Language, Unity—Theme
Workshop of Exercise #4
Readings from *You Can Sleep While I Drive*
Opening Story Fragment Due
- (September 23) *Liza Wieland Reading—Reedley College Forum Hall, 7:00 PM*
(September 24) *Liza Wieland Classroom Discussion—RC INC 2, 9:00 AM*
- September 27 Fragment Workshop
Readings from *Believers*
- October 4 Fragment Workshop
Readings from *Believers*
- October 11 Fragment Workshop
Readings from *Believers*
- October 18 Fragment Workshop
Readings from *Believers*

October 25 Fragment Workshop
 Readings from *Believers*
 Complete Story Due

(October 28) *Charles Baxter Reading—Reedley College Forum Hall, 7:00 PM*
(October 29) *Charles Baxter Classroom Discussion—RC INC 2, 9:00 AM*

November 1 Workshop

November 8 Workshop

November 15 Workshop

November 22 Workshop

November 29 Workshop

December 6 Workshop

December 13 *Final Period*
 Story Revisions Due

A Few Elements of Fiction

1. Plot
 - a. Narrative Summary/Exposition
 - b. Dramatic Narrative—the Scene
 - c. Flashback and Foreshadowing
 - d. Conventional Structure—Freytag’s Triangle
 - i. Exposition
 - ii. Conflict—internal vs external
 - iii. Complication
 - iv. Climax
 - v. Resolution/Tragedy
 - e. Predictability vs Inevitability

2. Character
 - a. Appearance
 - b. Behavior
 - c. Dialogue
 - d. Thought
 - e. Expository Information

 - f. Protagonists, Antagonists, Secondary, Stock
 - g. Fixed or Moved—Consistent, within character

3. P.O.V.
 - a. First-person participant
 - b. First-person observer
 - c. Second-person
 - d. Third-person limited
 - e. Third-person omniscient
 - f. Third-person dramatic

4. Devices
 - a. Implication—Showing vs Telling; the concrete detail vs the generalization
 - b. Setting
 - i. Historical Time
 - ii. Geographical Place
 - c. Touchstones or Symbols
 - d. Irony
 - i. Verbal
 - ii. Situational
 - e. Allusion
 - f. The Language of Fiction