

REEDLEY COLLEGE
INTRODUCTION TO FICTION WRITING
SPRING 2000
COURSE DESCRIPTION

Instructor: Gary 
 Office: A1 Office Hours: M,T,W,F 9:00-10:00 AM and TH 10:00-11:00 AM
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Materials:


- Ron Hansen's *Nebraska*, required.
- Jerome Stern's *Making Shapely Fiction*, required.
- Philip Levine's *What Work Is*, optional.
- Photocopied materials I will make available throughout the semester.

Purpose: to introduce you to fiction writing fundamentals such as characterization, point of view, setting, plot, conflict, and rising action. To learn how to write good fiction, you will study good fiction, complete writing exercises, write short stories and workshop these short stories in class. In this course we will focus on literary, character-based fiction written for a literate, adult audience. Genre fiction such as science fiction, romance, fantasy, and children's fiction will not be covered in this course. Some examples of literary authors: Flannery O'Connor, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, John Updike, and John Irving.

Transferable Skills: critical thinking; drafting and revising long pieces in terms of clear organization and effective style; researching and documenting sources.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's ideas and/or words. Plagiarism involves everything from buying or borrowing an essay to improper documentation. Penalties for plagiarism may include expulsion from this class and from the college.

Important Dates

- Last day to drop a semester-length course and not have it appear on transcript: Friday, January 28.
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Policies and Procedures

Workshop Participation and Attendance: Your participation is vital to your success and the success of the class. This is a workshop setting—every person has a responsibility to contribute. Don't let your peers down! Read assigned pieces carefully at least twice and come prepared to contribute at least two strong points of discussion in class each day. Avoid blending into the background. If you are saying nothing I will call on you and expect you to say something. Three or more unexcused absences will result in an F for the course. If you come to class after roll is taken, then you will be counted tardy. Each tardy counts as one half of one absence. Note: Any work missed due to an absence may not be made up (with the exception of in-class assignments missed due to illness or university business. In these situations, an official department or doctor's note is required, and the test must be made up within the next week.).

Discussion Starters: You will be responsible for starting workshop discussion on certain days. The amount of thoughtfulness you give your peers' short stories should be consistent throughout the semester; yet on these starter days, you have the added responsibility setting the tone for the rest of the discussion. Prepare notes. You are expected to talk for at least five minutes.

Pop Reading Quizzes: Keep up with the reading!

Journal Writing: I encourage you to keep a journal. The archetypal journal, or diary, is hidden in a secret place, or has a little lock on it to keep other people out of the intimate, private thoughts of the writer. This is personal writing and will only be shared with peers if you're willing to share it. This is experimentation—you trying out new techniques in fiction without

the pressure of having an audience to please. Write in your journal diligently, for the ideas and techniques you explore in it may very well develop into full-fledged short stories.

Short Writings: I will assign prompts designed to help you understand fiction writing techniques. You may explore them in your journal, but ultimately type them out, date them, staple them and bring them to the next class for possible sharing. Like your journal writing, this writing may develop into full-length short stories. Save them on disk, and keep hard copies. These writings, paper-clipped together, will be due at the end of the semester. They will be graded on effort and thoroughness alone.

Short Stories: The average short story is fifteen pages double-spaced, but short stories can run anywhere from nine to thirty-nine pages or more. In this class, you should shoot for at least eleven pages, and no more than twenty. In order to pass this class, you must complete at least two short stories and one major revision. Your short stories are due on their due dates, no exceptions.

Short Story Format:

1. Type your stories on one side of 8.5"x11" sheets of paper.
2. In the upper left corner of the first page, single-spaced, type this information: your name, the class name, my name, the class meeting times and days, and the date the story is to be workshopped.
3. One third of the way down the page, centered, type your title.
4. Triple or quadruple space, then begin your text. Make sure the body of your text is all double-spaced. Make sure you mark paragraphs in the traditional manner—by indenting each five spaces. Do not place gaps between paragraphs.
5. Your last name and page number should appear in the header on the right side of each page, including the first page.
6. Because your story will be photocopied, use a paper clip instead of a staple. Do not bring a story without a paper clip.

Mid-Term Essay on an Author: For this assignment you will study short stories by a single author and write an essay focusing on technique or style.

Final Revision of One Short Story: Use my comments and the comments you received in workshop to write a major revision of one of your short stories.

Conferences: I encourage you to see me regularly in my office during my scheduled office hours listed above. If these hours don't work for you, schedule an appointment with me. I'll be happy to see you at another time.

Grades

Participation.....	10%
Discussion Starters.....	5%
Reading Quizzes.....	5%
Short Writings (due together at end of semester).....	10%
Short Story 1.....	20%
Short Story 2.....	20%
Mid-Term Essay on an Author.....	10%
Final Revision of One Story.....	20%

Course Schedule by Week

Jan 10: Short story packet; writing suggestions from Stern's *Making Shapely Fiction*.

Jan 17: Short story packet; *MSF*.

Jan 24: Short story packet; *MSF*.

Jan 31: Short story packet; *MSF*.

Feb 7: Workshop.

Feb 14: Workshop; the Poetry of Philip Levine.

- Feb 17 Thursday: poet Philip Levine, 7:00 PM, Forum Hall.

Feb 21: LINCOLN AND WASHINGTON DAYS.

- Feb 18-21 Friday-Monday: no school.

Feb 28: Workshop

March 6: Workshop; * **Mid-Term Essay on an Author due.**

March 13: Workshop; the stories of Charlotte Blake Alston.

- March 16 Thursday: story teller Charlotte Blake Alston, 7:00 PM, Forum Hall.

March 20: Workshop.

March 27: Workshop.

April 3: Workshop.

April 10: Workshop; the stories of Ron Hansen.

- April 13 Thursday: author Ron Hansen, 7:00 PM, Forum Hall.

April 17: EASTER BREAK

- April 17-21 Monday-Friday, no school.

April 24: Revision Workshop.

May 1: Revision Workshop.

May 8: * **Final Revision due.** * **Short Writings due.**

May 15: Final Examination Week

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