Introduction

Fiction writing entails the mastery of three interrelated skills: foundational techniques, literary imagination and a vision. These comprise the poetics of the writer. This class will help students identify and emphasize those aspects of technique that are foundational to their practice as writers. In addition, it will review major forms of fiction writing: the short story, the novella and the novel.

This class will be organized in three blocks. In the first part, we will review basic fiction writing techniques by reading relevant texts and producing texts whose main goal is to address and cement such techniques. In the second part of the class we will read significant examples of several forms of fiction. We will read each one as an opportunity to discuss technique, but we will also read them for their meaning and their implied poetics. In the third part of the class we will workshop fiction pieces written by students to put in practice what we have learned.

Students are expected to read and write throughout the semester, and are expected to organize their time to complete assignments that will require them to write from one page (∼300 words) to five pages (∼1,500 words) per week, and read from 50 to 200 pages per week. The final project will consist of a portfolio that will include: a glossary of fictional techniques, writing exercises and a completed piece of fiction.
Course Goals

- Provide students with the fundamental tools to write fiction
- Show students the possible forms used in fiction
- Help them develop a habit of reading as a writer
- Give students a chance to reexamine their practice as writers

Required Texts

The following texts are required to complete the class assignments and to participate in our discussions. Make sure that you have access to the required texts.

Nonfiction
- Stephen King: On Writing (Scribner ISBN 0-684-85352-3)
- Short excerpts from other books will be provided via Blackboard a week before they are required.

Fiction
- Orhan Pamuk: A Strangeness in My Mind (Knopf ISBN 978-0307700292)

Communication Channels

Most of the interaction in this class will happen in our weekly meetings. Nevertheless, when you have questions about the class, the readings or the assignments, consider the following options:

- Office hours: Wednesdays 3:00 – 5:00 PM @ educ 906. This is the best option. If these hours conflict with other classes, contact me.
- Email: jdepierola@utep.edu I reply to emails once a day, starting at 5 PM, and in the order in which they were received. If you send an email after 5 PM, I will reply to it the following day.
- If everything else fails, and you need to reach me, call the Creative Writing Department at (915)747-5713 during business hours.

“A novel is in its broadest definition a personal impression of life; that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression.”

—Henry James
“For any writer, the ability to look at a sentence and see what’s superfluous, what can be altered, revised, expanded, and, especially, cut, is essential.”
—Francine Prose

Guidelines

• Students are expected to follow basic email etiquette for an academic setting.
• Students are expected to read each week’s selection in advance. Students should secure access to the books listed under “Required Texts.” The other readings listed under “Program” will be available via Blackboard.
• Students are expected to understand the purpose of the master scene which will be the basis for the creative response (see “Assignments”).
• Students are expected to attend every class, and arrive on time. IMPORTANT: Students cannot miss more than 3 classes, unless there are provable impediments, and these merit special consideration.
• Assignments should be turned in as a PDF file to my email address jdepierola@utep.edu by Tuesday 6:00 PM (the day before class). Name your assignment using the following convention: Week99--LastName. For instance, if your last name is James, your assignment for Week 3 should be named: Week03--James.
• IMPORTANT: Assignments that do not follow this naming convention will not be accepted.
• Assignments should be formatted in letter sized paper, with 1 inch margins and in 12 point Georgia, Palatino or Garamond. Assignments longer than two pages should have the following header: Last name / Assignment / Page number. Example: James / Book Review / 9.
• Your fiction piece should be formatted using the guidelines above, with the exception of the right margin, which should be: 2.5″.
• Students are expected to read the novellas and novels under consideration ahead of time.

Assignments

• CREATIVE RESPONSE: Due the weeks when we discuss texts on fiction technique (see “Program”), this is a two page (≈600 words) creative response in which you rewrite the master scene focusing on the aspect of technique of the week. Some of these will be revised and commented in class.
• ANALYSIS: Due the weeks when we read fiction (see “Program”), this is a two page (≈600 words) analysis of one of the fiction texts for the week with an in-depth discussion of technique or form. Well chosen examples are a must.
• PRESENTATION: Due from Week 2 to Week 13. This is a 20 minute professional presentation on fictional piece, focusing on form and technique. Students are encouraged to use additional materials and visual aids as needed.
• EDITORIAL REVIEW: Due on each workshop day, this is an assessment of a classmate’s submission. Guidelines will be provided.
• FICTION PIECE: Submitted in THREE stages: DRAFT 1 (Week 10), DRAFT 2 (Week 12) and MANUSCRIPT (Week 15). This fiction piece should be at least 10 pages long (≈3,000 words). The fiction piece could be a new project, or a new section of a work in progress, but in either case, it must be new material.
• PORTFOLIO: This is the final project for the class. It consists of three parts: 1. GLOSSARY: at least ten narrative techniques explained with examples (≈1,500 words); 2. PREFACE: a short discussion of your editing process as you went from DRAFT 1 to DRAFT 2, and then to MANUSCRIPT (≈1,200 words); and 3. The final draft of the fiction piece, as close as possible for submission.
## Program

### Week 1—Jan 20: The Word
- **GARDNER:** “Diction” (101–103)
- **PROSE:** “Two: Words” • **KING:** “Toolbox: 1” • **OLIVER:** “Sound” • **IN CLASS**

### Week 2—Jan 27: The Sentence
- **PROSE:** “Three: Sentences” • **GARDNER:** “Sentence Variety” (103–109) • **FISH:** “Four” to “Seven” • **SENTECE**

### Week 3—Feb 3: The Paragraph
- **PROSE:** “Four: Paragraphs” • **KING:** “Toolbox: 4” • **PARAGRAPH**

### Week 4—Feb 10: Point of View
- **PROSE:** “Five: Narration” • **GARDNER:** “Point of View” • **VARGAS LLLOSA:** “Narrator and Narrative Space” • **POINT OF VIEW**
- **BLACKBOARD—DISCUSSION BOARD**

### Week 5—Feb 17: The Character
- **STANISLAVSKY:** “8. Faith and a Sense of Truth,” “9. Emotion Memory,” & “12. Inner Motive Forces” • **PROSE:** “Five: Character” • **CHARACTER SKETCH**

### Week 6—Feb 24: The Structure
- **GARDNER:** “7. Plotting” • **MULLAN:** “6. Structure” • **GARDNER:** “Delay” • **LODGE:** “3. Suspense” • **SUSPENSE**

### Week 7—Mar 2: The Dialogue
- **PROSE:** “Seven: Dialogue” • **MULLAN:** “5. Voices” • **DIALOGUE**
- **SPRING BREAK: March 7 to 11**

### Week 8—Mar 16: Short Forms
- **CORTAZAR:** “Por escrito gallina una” • **MONTERROSO:** “The Dinosaur” • **CHOPIN:** “The Story of an Hour” • **BARTHELEME:** “The School” • **NABOKOV:** “Symbols and Signs” • **ATWOOD:** “Happy Endings” • **ANALYSIS**
- **BLACKBOARD—DISCUSSION BOARD**

### Week 9—Mar 23: Short Story
- **HEMINGWAY:** “The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber” • **MUNRO:** “To Reach Japan” • **JAMES:** “The Real Thing” • **KAFA:** “A Hunger Artist” • **ANALYSIS**

### Week 10—Mar 30: Novella
- **BOLAÑO:** Distant Star • **OATES:** Rape: A Love Story • **ANALYSIS** • **FICTION PIECE: MANUSCRIPT**

### Week 11—Apr 6: Draft 1
- **WORKSHOP** • **EDITORIAL REVIEW**

### Week 12—Apr 13: Experiments
- **ONDAATJE:** Coming Through Slaughter • **SEBALD:** The Rings of Saturn • **ANALYSIS** • **FICTION PIECE: DRAFT 2**
- **BLACKBOARD—DISCUSSION BOARD**

### Week 13—Apr 20: Draft 2
- **WORKSHOP** • **EDITORIAL REVIEW**

### Week 14—Apr 27: Novel
- **PAMUK:** A Strangeness in My Mind • **LEYWYCKA:** A Short History of Tracers in Ukrainian • **ANALYSIS** • **FICTION PIECE: MANUSCRIPT**

### Week 15—May 4: Manuscript
- **WORKSHOP** • **EDITORIAL REVIEW** • **PORTFOLIO DUE: MAY 6**

### Grading Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative Responses</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation &amp; Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### University Policy Statements

#### Plagiarism & Academic Dishonesty Statement
Cheating is unethical and not acceptable. Plagiarism is using information or original wording in a paper without giving credit to the source of that information or wording, and it is also not acceptable. Do not submit work under your name that you did not do yourself. You may not submit work for this class that you did for another class. If you are found to be cheating or plagiarizing, you will be subject to disciplinary action, per UTEP catalog policy. Refer to [http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.html](http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.html) for further information.

#### Accessibility Statement
I will make every reasonable accommodation for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please, e-mail me during the first two weeks or make an appointment to discuss any special needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services in the East Union Building, Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes. The Center for Accommodations and Support Services can also be reached in the following ways:

- Phone: (915)747-5148
- Voice of TTY: (915)747-7712
- Fax: (915)747-8712
- Email: cass@utep.edu

---

"A short-story writer should be brave. It’s a sad fact to acknowledge, but that’s the way it is.”