**University of New England**

**Spring 2020**

**Fiction Writing Workshop**

**Mondays 5:30-8:20 \* Decary 318**

“Fiction is experimentation; when it ceases to be that, it ceases to be fiction.”

―John Cheever

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*The Meaning of Night* by [René Magritte, 1927](https://en.wahooart.com/@@/8XYU6E-Rene-Magritte-The-meaning-of-night)

**course number:** WRT 312 **credit hours:** 3

**prerequisites:**  WRT 111-Topics in Creative Writing or permission from instructor.

**instructor:** Mr. Jesse Miller

**office hours:**  Mondays and Wednesday 1-3:00 pm; Thursdays 2-3 pm.

**location:** Marcil 106

**email: jmiller.une@gmail.com** or [j**miller12@une.edu**](mailto:jmiller12@une.edu)

**phone:**  **207-602-2871**

**course site:** <https://miller-wrt312.uneportfolio.org/>

**texts:** *Gotham Writers' Workshop-Writing Fiction: The Practical Guide,* editor Alexander Steele. (“Gotham”)

**course description:**

Fiction Writing is an advanced writing course focused on reading and writing short stories. Studying and writing the short story helps one learn the elements that combine to create a fictional world and focus on using language in effective ways. In this workshop-based course, students become familiar with the terms used in discussing the craft of fiction and learn to recognize what makes good fiction successful. Fiction Writing Workshop connects writing theory to good writing practice through peer critique, conferencing, and the methodology of the writer’s workshop. Students will read and write literary fiction. Literary fiction may use elements of genres such as science fiction, fantasy, horror, or romance, but it does not fit easily into these or other genres. This course fulfills an elective for both the English major and minor, an elective for the Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities major, and a discipline-specific writing requirement for the Writing minor. Prerequisite: WRT 111 or permission of the instructor. 3.000 Credit hours

**course objectives:** In this course students will study the major theoretical aspects of literary fiction and apply widely practiced techniques of fiction craft. Students will read and discuss a selection of celebrated short stories to better understand the short story form, and guide them during the process of producing two complete short stories drafts. Students will further practice the life of the writer by working with their peers to give and receive critical feedback on their work in progress for revision; ultimately after counsel with the instructor, students will fully revise one of their short stories from the semester.

**advanced studies and fiction writing workshop:** This course meets an Advanced Studies requirement for CAS and WCHP students. Advanced Studies courses give students the opportunity to study an area or areas outside of their major more deeply. Students in Fiction Writing Workshop learn to recognize a range of relevant theoretical perspectives on elements of literary fiction such as plot, character development, setting, dialogue, and genre. The workshop model is organized around critical analysis of published work and the giving and receiving of constructive feedback of student work in progress. Students participate actively and authentically in a workshop setting to discuss craft choices, raise questions about the development of current work, and offer essential feedback that conforms to the methods established writers use to better their writing.

By engaging in a workshop during the semester, students practice the essential methodology needed to recognize successful fiction. In this way, the workshop model helps to surface a writer’s choices and allows students to apply techniques of successful literary fiction to their own work. In these many ways, Fiction Writing Workshop fits with the established Advanced Studies (ADV) framework laid out in the UNE Core Handbook.

**learning outcomes:** Upon completing this Fiction Writing Workshop, students will be able to:

      Recognize a range of relevant theoretical perspectives (major craft components) essential to literary fiction such as plot, character development, setting, dialogue, and genre (ADV).

      Apply major components of literary fiction craft during active and authentic writing workshops and class discussions to connect writing theory to good writing practice (ADV).

      Read and analyze student short story drafts and published short stories as creative models to make visible the writer’s craft choices behind the creative product (ADV).

      Offer constructive criticism to work in progress by utilizing methods employed by serious writers.

  Practice substantive revision as an integral part of the writing process.

**course activities:**

During the semester, you will do writing exercises to stimulate the writing process and to practice different elements of craft. You will compose four two-page writing exercises. They will not be revised once they are turned in, and will be given a grade. These writing exercises will likely help you to produce the two complete short story drafts. The short stories should be work begun this semester, not previously; this is so they may reflect the approaches and ideas, as well as the fiction itself, we will be discussing during the semester. The short story drafts will be revised, again and again. A grade will not be given to the rough drafts of the stories, but only to the final revision of one of them. (Note: if early drafts of these stories are incomplete or turned in late, the final grade of the revised story may reflect that. *An ending in the first draft is necessary.)*

**course requirements:**

All major written assignments must be typed (handwritten work **will not** be accepted). Work should also be proofread for spelling, capitalization, punctuation and usage. Print quality must be clear and legible. Please assign page numbers.

**a note on workshopping:**

For workshopped stories, you will make marginal comments on each story, as well as a longer response narrative (consider this a feedback letter). The feedback copy will be given to the writer after workshop discussion.

A writing workshop is an opportunity to have an “instant audience,” a group of writers who are sensitive to your struggles as a writer and committed to helping you improve your work. The workshop requires a give-and-take relationship. You will both submit your work for review by your classmates, and review your classmates’ work. You will need to give and receive criticism thorough constructive feedback. Remember, too, that you are writing for a “public” audience (rather than just for yourself or someone you know very well), and you should make appropriate choices based on this in your writing. In other words, do not submit writing that you cannot bear to have critiqued by an outside audience.

More specific workshop requirements will be discussed.

**additional details:** We will read short stories from some contemporary masters of the genre, chapters on the craft of fiction from the “Gotham” textbook, and one another’s stories and writing exercises. One of the main aims in class and conference is to connect writing theory to good writing practice. You will write four two-page writing exercises and two complete story drafts. Both of your complete story drafts will be workshopped by the entire class. One of those stories will be revised after discussion with me in individual conference, and turned in by finals week. I will strongly encourage you to present your work (in some form) at CAS Undergraduate Research Symposium in the Spring 2020.

**attendance and tardiness policy:**

Attendance and active participation are necessary to succeed in this course. This is a process-oriented class requiring significant amounts of in-class writing, group work, and discussion. Because we only meet one time per week, missing once class is significant and a possible barrier to your success. Ultimately, you are allowed one (1) absence in this class without question or penalty. Obviously serious complications can arise, and I am quite sympathetic to student concerns, however, it is highly unlikely you will pass this class if you miss more than 2 classes.

Class will begin at the appropriate time. Perpetual tardiness is not acceptable. Students arriving to class after the scheduled start time will be considered late. Two (2) late arrivals will be equal to one (1) absence.

**disruption policy:** If you must bring your cell phone to class, please set it to vibrate or **SHUT IT OFF**. Please **KEEP YOUR PHONE OUT OF SIGHT**. Disruptions to the class will not be tolerated. Please do not make or receive phone calls or text during class. Also, be courteous and respectful to the class when coming and going. **PLEASE** do not start packing up your materials until class has ended.

External discussions and chatting will not be permitted. I will eliminate unwanted talking by first addressing the problem with you. The second step could be to change your seat. Lastly, if the issue keeps up, you will leave my classroom. I reserve the right to assign seating arrangements at *any time* during the semester.

**ePortfolio, journals, and feedback for peers:**

You will (or already) have your own **ePortfolio**. You’ll be capturing and presenting your work over the term on your digital space. If you have questions about ePort, let’s make sure we’re clear during the first class.

We also have course site where the schedule, syllabus, and various resources will appear. Follow the schedule and post your journals in the appropriate spot for credit.

For **journals**: you will be writing roughly 20 or so journal entries that should be roughly 200-400 words each. These entries must be posted before class on our course site. The purpose of the journal generally is to spend time away from the classroom thinking about the questions I’ve posed, and then to bring in your thoughts for the class to discuss. These are very much writings for public consumption within ***this*** classroom and I will likely draw on your responses to share with the class from time to time. Journal work, which is really GROWTH WORK, is done on time for full credit (FULL) or not at all (ZERO).

For published stories, your comments may focus on one particular aspect such as character, setting, sentence structure, plot, point of view, etc.

For chapter readings in the textbook, summarize the main ideas and comment on one or two points which interest you.

For workshopped stories, you will make marginal comments on each story (hard copy), as well as a summary comment on our course site before class. The hard copy will be given to the writer after workshop discussion. This is vital **feedback** for your peers.

Journal entries will not be accepted late.

Word to the wise (that’s you!): The semester is a semi-plastic thing: cancellations, illness, holidays, life-changing epiphanies, etc. I will sometimes assign new entries “on the fly”—it’s your responsibility to pay attention in class for any alterations. I will update the course site after class to reflect any changes.

**schedule of course activities (general):**

* The 4 writing exercises will be due each consecutive week of class after week 2 **(Weeks 3-6).**
* Short story drafts are due March 7 (#1) and March 30 (#2). Once we draft the first, we’ll start a draft of the second. We’ll assign numbers (1-15) during our first class to see when we’ll workshop each story. See “Schedule” below for when each number is up. **(Weeks 5-12).**
* Final short story revision is due by the Monday of **Finals Week.**

**Grade breakdown:**

Four grade writing exercises:……..…………...…………………………….. 5% each, **20%** total

Two short story drafts and final story revision, including all drafts:………..……..……**30%**

Class preparedness and participation (in-class activities, including workshopping):…...**25%**

ePortfolio and Journals:……………………………………………………..…………...**25%**

**Due Dates:** Major assignments must be turned in on time. Late work will not be accepted for full credit. Each day (including weekends) that a major assignment is late will result in a half-letter grade reduction. It is not possible to receive credit for work 5 days have passed the original due date. Because of the amount of computer accessibility, personal computer problems will not be accepted as an excuse for late work.

**College of Arts and Sciences Grading Schema**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A | 93.0-100% |
| A- | 90.0-92.9% |
| B+ | 87.0-89.9% |
| B | 83.0-86.9% |
| B- | 80.0-82.9% |
| C+ | 77.0-79.9% |
| C | 73.0-76.9% |
| C- | 70.0-72.9% |
| D | 60.0-69.9% |
| F | <60% |

**Academic Integrity**

The UNE Student Handbook states:

The University of New England values academic integrity in all aspects of the educational experience. Academic dishonesty in any form undermines this standard and devalues the original contributions of others. It is the responsibility of all members of the university community to actively uphold the integrity of the academy; failure to act, for any reason, is not acceptable.

Charges of academic dishonesty will be reviewed by the Dean of the appropriate College and, if upheld, will result at minimum in a failing grade on the assignment and a maximum of dismissal from the University of New England (UNE Student Handbook, 2018, p. 54).

The UNE Student Handbook also includes samples of Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. Cheating, copying, or the offering or receiving of unauthorized assistance or information including but not limited to
   1. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
   2. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the faculty in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments, including but not limited to calculators, handheld computers, smart phones, or any other electronic devices or applications of any kind whatsoever; and/or
   3. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic materials belonging to a member of the University faculty or staff.
2. Fabrication or falsification of data, results, or sources for papers, reports, or examinations, either oral or written.
3. Actions that destroy or alter the work of another student.
4. Multiple submissions of the same paper or report for assignments in more than one course without permission of each instructor.
5. Plagiarism: the appropriation of records, research, materials, ideas, or the language of other persons or writers and the submission of them as one's own including but not limited to:
   1. the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and/or
   2. the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person, company, online purveyor, or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or any other academic materials (UNE Student Handbook, 2018, p.28).

The College of Arts and Sciences policy on reviewing alleged acts of academic dishonesty can be found at: <http://www.une.edu/cas-1>

**Midterm Academic Progress Reports**

The University of New England is committed to the academic success of its students.  At the midterm of each semester, instructors will report the performance of each student as SATISFACTORY (S) or UNSATISFACTORY (U).  Instructors will announce when these midterm academic progress reports will be available for viewing via U-online.  This early alert system gives all students important information about progress in their courses. Students who receive an UNSATISFACTORY midterm report should take immediate action by speaking with their instructor to discuss suggestions for improvement such as utilizing the services of academic advising, the Student Academic Success Center, Counseling Services, and Residential Education.

**Student Academic Success Center (SASC)**

The Student Academic Success Center offers a range of free services to support your academic achievement, including tutoring, writing support, test-prep and studying strategies, learning style consultations, and many online resources. To make an appointment for tutoring, writing support, or a learning specialist consultation, go to [une.tutortrac.com](file:///\\netapp\groups\CASDean\Syllabus\une.tutortrac.com) or visit the SASC. To access our online resources, including links, guides, and video tutorials, visit <https://une1.sharepoint.com/sites/SASC>.

**Students with Disabilities**

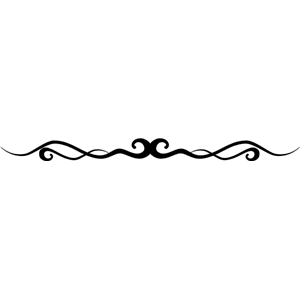
The University of New England is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and will make reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with the professor at the beginning of the semester. Registration with the Student Access Center is required before accommodation requests can be granted. Visit <https://www.une.edu/student-access-center> for more information.

**final note:**

By remaining in this class, you are agreeing to the terms of this course policy. If you have any questions or concerns about the course/course policies at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to working with each of you!

*Schedule*

*Please note, weather destroys planning, so the following is a tentative schedge. We may need to be creative over the term if weather events steal our class time.*



**WEEK 1:** Monday, January 20

Martin Luther King Holiday — No classes on campus

Assignment: Read *Gotham Writers’ Workshop Writing Fiction* Chapter 1 and “Cathedral,” p. 271.

**Journal # 1**: Write an entry noting points that interested you in the chapter.

**Journal # 2:** Write an entry focusing on an aspect of the story “Cathedral.”

**WEEK 2:** Monday, January 27

Syllabus and introductions

“Cathedral” discussion and in-class writing (story starts)

*Assign workshop order*

**WEEK 3:** Monday, February 3

Chapter 2. **Journal # 3** on Chap. 2, and first writing exercise due (writing exercise: three one-page story beginnings).

“Whose Heart I Long to Stop with the Click of a Revolver”by Rivers Solomon **Journal # 4**.

Chapter 3 and **Journal # 5**

**WEEK 4:** Monday, February 10

Chapter 4, **Journal # 6**, and second writing exercise due.

“Emergency” by Denis Johnson **Journal # 7**.

Chapter 5 and **Journal # 8**.

**WEEK 5:** Monday, February 17

Chapter 6, **Journal # 9**, and third writing exercise due.

“Where I’m Calling From” by Raymond Carver. **Journal # 10**.<<Cougar

Chapter 7 and **Journal # 11**.

**WEEK 6:** Monday, February 24

Chapter 8, **Journal #12**, and fourth writing exercise due (writing exercise: three one-page story beginnings).

“Cat Person” by [Kristen Roupenian](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/11/cat-person), and **Journal #13**. Bring draft of story to work on. In-class writing.

Workshop procedure discussion.

**WEEK 7:** Monday, March 2—No class

**First complete story due**. Email me by class time. Look for copies of stories to-be-workshopped in my mailbox on Tuesday afternoon.

**WEEK 8:** Monday, March 9

Workshop four stories. **Journal** (**#14**) comments posted for all stories, and marginal notes to be returned to the author after our discussion.

More work with flash fiction (if time)

***Spring break, no class—March 16-20***

**WEEK 9:** Monday, March 23

Workshop four stories. **Journal** (**#15**) comments posted for all stories, and marginal notes to be returned to the author after our discussion.

More work with flash fiction (if time)

**WEEK 10:** Monday, March 30

Workshop three stories. **Journal** (**#16**) comments posted for all stories, and marginal notes to be returned to the author after our discussion.

“The Girl on the Plane” by Mary Gaitskill **Journal 17**.

Chapter 9 and **Journal 18.**

**Second complete story due**.

**WEEK 11:** Monday, April 6

Workshop four stories. **Journal** (**#19**) comments posted for all stories, and marginal notes to be returned to the author after our discussion.

Read Chapter 10 and **Journal** **20**

**WEEK 12:** Monday, April 13

Workshop four stories. **Journal** (**#21**) comments posted for all stories, and marginal notes to be returned to the author after our discussion.

Sign up for conferences.

**WEEK 13:** Monday, April 20

Workshop three stories. **Journal** (**#22**) comments posted for all stories, and marginal notes to be returned to the author after our discussion.

“Early bird” conferences

Sign up for conferences.

**WEEK 14:** Monday, April 27

Read Chapter 11. **Journal** (**#23**).

Final words

Conferences

Tuesday, May 5: Final revision of story due in my office by noon.

