



READING AND WRITING FICTION

LEX WILLIFORD



"The writer's job is to keep the concreteness behind the abstractions visible and alive."

—ADRIENNE RICH

SEMESTER: Fall 2022

PROFESSOR: Lex Williford (he/his/él)

SECTION/CRN: CRW 3371-001, CRN 25110

WHEN AND WHERE: TR 3-4:20 pm, Aug 23, 2022-Dec 01, 2022, College of Business Admin 330.

OFFICE HOURS: Noon-2 Thursdays, and by appointment.

E-MAIL: lex@utep.edu

PHONE: 915) 433-1931 (Mobile). Please, no calls weeknights or weekends; you *can* text me at those times, but I may not respond till the next day.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Catalogue:

Intensive study, reading and practice in the various forms and approaches of fiction writing, including workshop discussion and individual student manuscripts. Prerequisite: CRW 3362 with a grade of "C" or better.

This course will focus on the fundamentals of Narrative Craft: The Writing Process, Showing and Telling, Characterization, Fictional Place and Time, Story Structure, Point of View and Revision. Students will write at least one short-short story a week for five sessions as a heuristic exercise and at least two short stories or novel chapters for their final portfolios, ideally between twenty and thirty pages maximum. Students may include revised short-short flash exercises with the portfolio, too.

TEXT: *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, by Janet Burroway, Elizabeth Stuckey-French, Ned Stuckey-French, University of Chicago Press; First edition (April 1, 2019); ISBN-10: 022661669X; ISBN-13: 978-0226616698.

Many thanks to Janet Burroway and the late, great Ned Stuckey-French, whom I had lunch with at an AWP Writers' Conference in 2016: "Your book's too expensive," I told them, and they said, "We'll look into it." And they did: They took their book to another press, and a book that had been as high as \$100 new in paperback is now \$14, almost the same price it was when I used it thirty years ago, the same price it cost *last year* just to *rent* the same book. Clearly this book is a labor of love which these wonderful writers and professors were willing to lose money on so students like you could afford it. Earlier editions' main cost was for permissions—stories by famous authors that cost far too much, so now I'll be sharing those stories with you via Dropbox links. *Please note: All stories for this class are for EDUCATION USE ONLY.*



**PLAGIARISM:
DON'T EVEN
THINK ABOUT
IT.**

Writing Fiction is a terrific book to keep for your writer's library—basic no-nonsense craft advice for beginning and advanced writers. And now, if you like the book and find it helpful, you don't have to sell it back because it was too expensive in the first place. It's an excellent practical guide you can return to many times.

“According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, *plagiarism* is defined as “The act of using another person's words or ideas without giving credit to that person: the act of plagiarizing something.” It can be taking quotes from someone else without giving the writer or writers proper credit, or it can be taking data or research and presenting it as your own. In any case, it is a very serious writing violation and can have severe repercussions for anyone who commits plagiarism, including even expulsion from a college or university: (https://www.utep.edu/extendeduniversity/cid/_Files/docs/faculty-resources/student-orientation/Plagiarism.pdf).

Please use the latest edition of the *MLA Handbook* (<https://www.mla.org/Publications/Bookstore/Nonseries/MLA-Handbook-Eighth-Edition>) or the online MLA Style Center (https://style.mla.org/?_ga=2.83015254.1377732130.1609625226-560435547.1609625226) to double-check your citations and sources cited or MLA bibliographical format.

- The following are direct quotations from syllabi statements cited in “Example Classroom Inclusion Strategies”:
<http://docs.asee.org/public/LGBTQ/Classroom%20Inclusion%20Strategies.pdf>

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

“I consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, abilities—and other visible and non-visible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.”

SAFE ZONE STATEMENT

“I am available to listen and support you in a safe and confidential manner . . . I can help you connect with resources on campus to address problems you may face that interfere with your academic and social success on campus as it relates to issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity. My goal is to help you be successful and to maintain a safe and equitable campus.”

GENDER-NEUTRAL AND NON-GENDERED PRONOUNS

“I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.”

**MUTUAL
RESPECT,
DIVERSITY,
INCLUSION,
SELF-IDENTITY
AND PRONOUNS
USAGE
STATEMENTS**

If you openly self-identify by a name not listed in UTEP's records or by your own distinctive choice of gender-neutral or non-gendered pronouns (e.g., the singular *they/ them/their* or *ze/zir/zirs*, etc.). you may help educate your classmates and me in the evolving conventions now recommended to ensure that all students' diverse identities are treated with respect. These suggestions are optional, of course.

**CREATIVE
WRITING
PROGRAM
CITIZENSHIP**

One of the advantages of our creative writing program is that students have the chance to meet distinguished writers during readings, Q & As, workshops, etc., so I encourage you to go to *at least two readings* this semester (or participate in Zoom readings during COVID).

GRADES:

| ASSIGNMENTS | |
|--|----|
| To submit all graded assignments (except for Class Participation), please navigate to the left Blackboard menu item labeled, <i>Upload Your Graded Writing Assignments Here Only</i> , and choose the correct weekly assignment listed in the SUMMARY OF BLACKBOARD DEADLINES box below. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One 1-2 page critical analysis of a story we'll discuss in <i>Writing Fiction</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled for students to sign up for throughout the semester—including an oral presentation of your critical analyses in class. • <i>Please don't e-mail me this assignment or give me a hard copy in class. Upload the assignment to the appropriate assignment in Blackboard. Please turn your papers in no later than two weeks after you present them to class.</i> • Before you write your critical analysis, be sure to read my guide to writing critical analysis at the end of this syllabus. Writers will practice both creative and critical writing to discuss technique with specific textual examples and original and insightful interpretations. • Because our class is large, more than one student may choose the same story to discuss, then write and present each critical analysis individually in class. | 5% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five <i>Revised</i> 2-3 pp. 15-Minute Fiction Exercises/Flash Fiction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of these exercises may begin as in-class heuristic exercises, based upon prompts I may give in class, for workshop discussion in the first five weeks, intended primarily to help you generate new material. • After we read and discuss the exercises you submit to the weekly Blackboard Upload Workshop Discussion Boards, you'll revise and turn them in for a grade at least two weeks later to the left Blackboard menu, <i>Upload Your Graded Writing Assignments Here Only</i>. As long as you upload your revised exercises in the first six weeks of class, you'll receive an automatic 100 for each—an excellent way to give your final grade a little bump. | 5% |

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|--|------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Participation Grade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adobe Acrobat comments count: <i>I'll ask that each of you keep a regular weekly tally of the numbers of comments you've made for each workshop and to record the total number in your Final Portfolio Cover Sheet at the end of the semester. You may also give me a count of your weekly Adobe Acrobat comments.</i> • In-class Participation: <i>I'll ask that you show up to class on time and tp contribute to the in-class course discussions as much as possible.</i> | 10% |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Portfolio: <i>Your choice of a combination of well-crafted short-shorts / flash fiction, short stories and /or novel chapters we've workshoped in class, a minimum of 25 pages or so—craft and quality, not quantity, being the most important criteria.</i> | 80% |

**DEADLINES FOR
BLACKBOARD
GRADED
DOCUMENTS
ONLY**

| UPLOAD TO BLACKBOARD THESE GRADED ASSIGNMENTS (BB left menu: <i>Upload Your Graded Writing Assignments Here Only</i>): | DUE BY MIDNIGHT THE SUNDAY AFTER WEEK: | DATE DUE: |
|---|---|---|
| • In-Class Exercise Final Revision 1 | 3 | September 11 |
| • In-Class Exercise Final Revision 2 | 4 | September 18 |
| • In-Class Exercise Final Revision 3 | 5 | September 25 |
| • In-Class Exercise Final Revision 4 | 6 | October 2 |
| • In-Class Exercise Final Revision 5 | 7 | October 9 |
| • Short Critical Analysis (2-3 pp. max.) | Midnight Sunday, two weekends after you present your analysis in class. Final deadline no later than Sunday Week 13 | See assigned story weekly discussion sign ups below. Due no later than midnight Sunday two weekends after you present your analysis to class. |
| • Final Portfolio | 16 | December 2 |

**SUMMARY OF
WORKSHOP
DEADLINES**

| IN BLACKBOARD'S LEFT MENU OR ON THE HOME PAGE, <i>upload your weekly workshop documents to <u>Upload Workshop Documents to the Upload Discussion Board Here Only</u> and follow the instructions. Be sure to upload to the correct weekly link the Friday before the week of your scheduled workshops.</i> | FRIDAY OF WEEK(S) | DUE NO LATER THAN THE MIDNIGHT |
|--|-------------------|---|
| • Exercise 1 for Week 2 Group Workshop | 1 | August 26 |
| • Exercise 2 for Week 3 Group Workshop | 2 | September 2 |
| • Exercise 3 for Week 4 Group Workshop | 3 | September 9 |
| • Exercise 4 for Week 5 Group Workshop | 4 | September 16 |
| • Exercise 5 for Week 6 Group Workshop | 5 | September 28 |
| • Individually Scheduled Workshops (The first week of class, sign up for two workshop slots, one before and one after mid-semester or Spring Break.) | 7-16 | Refer to signups in the daily schedule below after I've revised it during the first week. |

**ADOBE ACROBAT
WEEKLY SHARED
COMMENTS
DEADLINES:**

If you haven't downloaded and installed the latest version of the *free* Adobe Acrobat Reader, please download and install it now from <http://get.adobe.com/reader>. (The most recent version of Adobe Acrobat Reader works best, so please update or upgrade the previous version.)

Shared Reviews in Adobe Acrobat Reader allow students to share their comments through the Adobe Creative Cloud, making it possible for students to make comments, publish them online and read other students' comments, constantly syncing everyone's comments in the the cloud. Adobe also makes line-by-line editing, correction and commenting available to every student. I often make line edits with my iPad Pro, to help you learn a few editing techniques, but I send my hand-written comments only to the students whose workshops occur that week.

Please note: If you have a workshop and want to have a copy of other students' comments on your workshop documents, after we've discussed them, please download the files directly from Adobe. Documents are available to view on your computer, tablet and even your smart phone, but you must download them if you want to keep a copy of comments on your own work.

Here are the steps we'll follow for workshops using Adobe Acrobat Reader:

- After your write your workshop documents—in Word or Rich Text Format—please export them to Adobe Acrobat format if possible and copy them to the appropriate weekly Blackboard Workshops Upload Discussion Board Links [*Ungraded Writing Assignments only*]. I'll download all the submitted documents for each week's scheduled workshops, combine them all into a single Acrobat document, enable the document for comments and e-mail a link to the document in Adobe's Document Cloud usually on Saturday or Sunday to every student enough time to make their comments on Tuesdays.

- **Notes on Workshop Comments in Adobe Acrobat:**
 - Please use *only the margins* for your comments.
 - Please use the **Sticky Note tool for comments**, and *avoid using the Call-Out/Text Box tool*, which tends to cover up the document so it's difficult for others to read, move or delete the text box.
 - **Avoid editing too much since others will not be able to edit the same passages, too.**
 - **Acrobat allows you to comment not only on Windows or Mac computers but also on your smartphones or tablets, usually through your web browser, though you may open the documents directly in Adobe Reader DC on your computers.**
 - Adobe can be glitchy, so I can't guarantee that I can make everyone's—or even my—comments appear in workshop discussions.
 - I'll probably make my comments with my Apple Pencil on my iPad Pro. If you have trouble reading my handwriting, ask me to clarify.
- If you have questions, ask in class or click on this a direct link to an updated YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/29rwOm-9D2E>. You may also view this same short presentation on Blackboard.

IMPORTANT:

For workshops, I'd rather receive *unfinished* work than *late* work.

Please don't wait until the last minute to meet your workshop deadlines. If you're unable to complete a story, flash fiction or novel chapters, turn in what you've written so far. *If you must miss class the week your stories and/or chapters are up for discussion, please let me know immediately so we can arrange to workshop other students' work.* Our schedule will be tight and you'll need to keep track of deadlines throughout the semester.

Please write concrete, helpful comments for your fellow writers, based upon technique rather than vague, subjective judgments. If you write, "Cool, dude," or "I like/don't like this idea/scene/treatment/story," you're not helping other students. If you find a problem with a story, please offer a *specific, helpful* suggestion or two to get the writer on track. You'd want the same for your work.

It's okay to say you like something; you just need to say *why*, as concretely as you can, recognizing that saying, *This does/doesn't work* should also include *for me*. It's probably best not to say you don't like something in any case—that's a subjective comment that often doesn't help and ends up creating conflict, something we want on the page and not in class. Focus on mostly craft, authenticity, credibility and technique. One of the most important things you can tell a writer is this: "I don't believe this character/line of dialogue/action/scene." Just be sure to say why or why not—especially how to make what's inauthentic or unbelievable work a bit better for you.

| WEEKLY SCHEDULE AND DEADLINES | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| FRIDAY-SUNDAY | • Complete your comments on workshop documents for workshops in the <i>upcoming</i> week. |
| TUESDAY & THURSDAY | • Workshop documents. |

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|-----------------|---|
| THURSDAY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please upload all drafts of your workshop documents to the appropriate weekly Blackboard Workshop Upload links no later than midnight Friday the week before they're scheduled for workshop. • Please upload all final drafts of graded assignments (revised exercises and critical analyses) to Blackboard no later than midnight Sunday at the designated deadlines throughout the semester listed above. |
| FRIDAY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Saturday (or Sunday) morning, I'll e-mail everyone links to a shared PDF document enabled for comments for discussion on for classes in the upcoming week. If you've not turned in your workshop documents by the deadline, we won't workshop your exercises or stories. Please make all your comments on the documents before our Monday workshop if possible. I'll set comments deadlines about a week ahead to give you plenty of time to make comments. Throughout the semester please keep a running tally of how many comments you make each week for the "Final Portfolio Cover Sheet," included with the Final Portfolio at the end of the semester. |

| WEEKLY SCHEDULE | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| WEEK Date | <p>Please finish the listed readings by Tuesday of each week. We'll begin workshops on Tuesdays, so please make comments on as many of the stories up for workshop as you can before Tuesday's class; you may add more comments on Thursday's workshop. Please look at least two or three weeks ahead to meet important deadlines, listed in the syllabus. I may forget to tell you what you need to do for the following week in class, so when in doubt refer to this syllabus.</p> |
| WEEK 1 August 23 & 25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please refer to the Summary of Workshop Deadlines and Summary of Graded Blackboard Deadlines on p. 3 of this syllabus for the deadlines for workshop exercises and exercise revisions for the first six weeks of class. • • Each week for the first six weeks, I'll download all these exercises, combine, convert and enable them for Adobe Acrobat comments and e-mail a link from the Adobe Cloud to everyone in class for their comments. • may ask you to read your exercise aloud in class or, if you're shy, I'll read them for you. • I'll ask that students read each others' short pieces and leave a short comment (a paragraph or two) at the end of each to help the writer develop, edit and revise their short-short stories. • Instructions for Exercises for Workshop Discussions the next six weeks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In fifteen minutes, write <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a short-short story (flash fiction) based upon prompts I give in class. • a piece of flash based upon the Writing Prompts at the end of each chapter of <i>Writing Fiction</i>: pp. 20-21, 42-43, 73-74, 99-100, 122-23, 151-52, 178-79, 200, 222-23. Review <i>all</i> these exercises at the beginning of the semester to find those that you find <i>most compelling and appropriate for your own distinctive writing</i>. Remember: I'm interested in <i>what you want to write</i>, what burns most brightly in your belly. • a piece of flash inspired by our fiction readings, |

WEEK 1
August 23 & 25

- a piece of flash based upon new stories or novel chapters you'd like to begin as part of projects you're working on, or
- a dramatic scene you'd like to write as part of projects you're working on.
- Spend two hours revising this short piece.
- Upload the exercise to Week#: Exercise# *no later than Friday midnight the week before* workshops. After workshop, please revise this piece and upload it by the posted deadline to the correct week number listed in the Blackboard folder, *Upload Revised Exercises Here*.
- When you upload the exercise for a grade, you'll receive a 100 for effort. That's 5% of your grade for five exercises you've written and rewritten to get you started on new stories.
- These exercises are heuristic—prompts designed to help students generate new material meant to give you the incentive to take risks as you discover and explore new stories and story ideas. (If you discover something new and exciting to write about, terrific. If you don't, you've not risked more than a few hours of your time and can move on to new stories or story ideas.)
- Please note: These and other workshop assignments do *not* appear in the Grading Center and will not count as a part of your grade, except as Graded Assignments when you revise, rewrite and upload assignments for a grade.
- *If you don't turn in stories to workshop by the deadlines designated in the syllabus, we'll not discuss your work in class.*
- If you can't finish your work by the deadlines, send your work, *unfinished*, for workshop and we'll discuss as much as we can, and if you're stuck we might help you become unstuck.
- Please note that all submissions uploaded to Blackboard, graded or ungraded, are checked for plagiarism using SafeAssign.

AGENDA: INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASS

- **Sign Ups:**
- As you pass around a syllabus signup page in class please fill in the slots described in 1-3 below:
 1. Please sign up for *one* critical analysis of a story slot below, listed under the highlighted stories throughout the syllabus. (Because of class size, some signups will show *two* people writing and presenting critical analyses of the same stories.)
 2. Please sign up for *two* workshop slots below, one before Spring Break, and after.
 3. Please fill in the missing student contact information after the syllabus schedule. If you prefer a nicknames or shorter name, please let us know. If you want to keep *any* of this information confidential, no problem. Just leave the slots blank.

In Week 1, I'll fill in these slots as written, then make them available with those revisions

- **This Syllabus, Class Assignments**
 - Please review in your free time:
 - My Short Presentation on Using Adobe Acrobat Commenting Tools:
 - Home Page (Start Here)

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|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">WEEK 1 August 23 & 25</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This syllabus • Surf through the links on several pages to become oriented the class's main menus. |
| | <p>READ FOR WEEK 2</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please read <i>Writing Fiction (WF)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preface, xi • WF: 1. Whatever Works: The Writing Process, 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get Started <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping a Journal • Freewriting and Freedrafting • Keep Going <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompts • The Computer • The Critic: A Caution • Choosing a Subject • Reading as a Writer • A Word about Theme • Also please download and read for class discussion the essay in Week 2 hyperlinked below: <i>Right-click on the title (or copy and paste the link) to download the essay to your computer from Dropbox:</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Shitty First Drafts," Ann Lamott: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.dropbox.com/s/ef6b6wjcvt6do5f/Chapter%201%20Lamott%20Shitty%20First%20Drafts.pdf?dl=0 | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">WEEK 2 August 30 & September 1</p> | <p>WEEKLY EXERCISE BLACK BOARD UPLOAD LINK</p> |
| | <p>In Blackboard's left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY to the Upload Workshop Discussion Board.</u> • Then click on the <i>correct</i> weekly folder to upload workshop documents <i>no later than midnight the Friday before they're workshopped.</i> • Saturday or Sunday mornings, Adobe Acrobat will e-mail a link to the documents I've compiled for written and oral comments the following week. • PLEASE DON'T MAKE COMMENTS ON THE DISCUSSION BOARD BUT IN THE ADOBE ACROBAT LINKS I E-MAIL TO YOU. |
| | <p>AGENDA</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Mind and Sequencing Mind • Discovering Stories: Creating and Revising Maps of Stories as You Write: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E. L. Doctorow: "Writing is like driving at night in the fog. You can only see as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way." (http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/12584.E_L_Doctorow) • Mind Maps: Discovering structure as you write rather than relying on rigid outlines. • Freewriting and Clustering: Gabriel Rico's <i>Writing the Natural Way</i>. |

WEEK 2
August 30
&
September 1

- **Writing as Gift (not a commodity):**
 - Lewis Hyde's *The Gift*: Gift and commodity cultures.
 - The muse's gift, which we keep moving forward. It's not a gift if we hold on to it.
 - We can't take credit for it, and when we do—when we write too much from the ego—the muse may abandon us.
 - When asked, "Why do you write every day?" Cynthia Ozick said, "But what if the angel came and I wasn't there?"
- **Negative Capability: How Well Do You Live with Uncertainty and Ambiguity?**
 - John Keats ("Ode on a Grecian Urn"):
 - "When a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negative_capability#Keats: The poet.27s turn of phrase](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negative_capability#Keats:_The_poet.27s_turn_of_phrase))
 - Roberto Unger:
 - "The denial of whatever in our contexts delivers us over to a fixed scheme of division and hierarchy and to an enforced choice between routine and rebellion. It is thus through negative capability that we can further empower ourselves against social and institutional constraints, and loosen the bonds that entrap us in a certain social station." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negative_capability
- **The Ability to Live with Uncertainty:**
 - The writer must not just be able to live with uncertainty but also to thrive on it, especially when it comes to issues of:
 - Generating and Sequencing Mind:
 - Composition and Structure:
 - Linear composition/Linear Stories.
 - Nonlinear composition/Linear Stories.
 - Linear composition/Nonlinear Stories.
 - Can you answer the question, "I'm a ____ composer/writer of ____ stories"?
- **The Reader's Brain:**
 - The reader won't read unless the outcome is uncertain; in fact, a reader will put a book down if the outcome is predictable. Stay one step ahead of the reader.
 - Janet Burroway: "Only trouble is interesting."
 - How does fiction work in the readers' brain?
 - A "neural confusion about the literal versus the metaphorical gives symbols enormous power, including the power to make peace." (<https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/14/this-is-your-brain-on-metaphors/>) And war.
 - The Amateur and the Professional Writer:
 - The "amateur" writer:
 - Writes for private and therapeutic reasons.
 - Writes to feel emotion.
 - How do I unburden myself of this obsession, emotion?
 - *There's nothing wrong with any of this, of course.*
 - The "professional" writer:
 - Makes writing public—through publication—by practicing a rigorous craft until it satisfies editors, agents, magazines, etc.

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| <p>WEEK 2 August 30 & September 1</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes to <i>earn</i> emotion in the reader. • How do I earn the reader’s emotion—that spontaneous feeling when I wrote a first draft? That’s where craft begins. • The Importance of Play and Work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children naturally tell stories. Stories are what their play is all about. The critical boss/parental voice: No, you can’t do that. That’s not good enough • Play and make a big mess (“Write a shitty first draft,” writes Ann Lamott); then clean up your room. • What kinds of stories do you prefer to read and write? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write what you know? Do you prefer writing what you <i>don’t</i> know? • Do you come from an oral story-telling tradition? • Who told the stories in your families? Have those stories stuck with you? • Were your family good story tellers? Why? • Recount a family story passed down through the generations. |
| <p>WEEK 3 September 6 & 8</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">READ FOR WEEK 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please read <i>WF</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>WF</i>: 2. Seeing is Believing: Showing and Telling, 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant Detail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing About Emotion • Filtering • The Active Voice • Prose Rhythm • Mechanics • Also please download and read for class discussion the hyperlinked stories in the critical analysis sign ups for next week. If you signed up for a story next week, pre a critical analysis and be prepared to start our class discussion. <p style="text-align: center;">AGENDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Chapter 2. • Read and workshop exercises. • Quotations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A writer is a person upon whom nothing is lost.” —Henry James • Poetry isn’t about emotion. It’s about [creating or recreating] the <i>experience</i> of emotion. —John Ciardi • Clichés <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t bore me with the details. • The devil’s in the details. • “God’s in the details.” —Ludwig Mies van der Rohe • Writing with abstractions makes it less likely make readers <i>feel or experience</i> those abstractions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I feel like . . .” |

WEEK 3
September 6 & 8

- What's an abstraction?
- What's a value judgment adjective (*the dreaded VJA*)?
- What's an adverb? A VJA with an "ly" ending.
- What's a concrete image?
- What's a metaphor and simile?
 - Vehicle (image) and Tenor (abstraction).
 - Why do fiction writers use metaphors?
 - Because they're better than value judgments and abstractions,
 - Because they "earn" the audience's emotions.
 - Recreating (or inventing) events to recreate (create) emotion.
- **The rule "Show. Don't tell" is misleading:**
 - It should probably be instead: "Show *and* Tell." (Scene and summary.)
 - What are significant and insignificant details? Clichéd details? Static details? Dramatic details?
- **What's the difference between showing and telling?**
 - Adverbs and value judgment adjectives.
 - "Is" verbs and value-judgment adjectives.
 - Details as "proofs."
- **Stories are made up of two basic kinds of narrative:**
 - Dramatic Summary.
 - Dramatic Scene.
 - Both are difficult to write, but if you have strong, significant details and a strong voice, you can get away with just about anything.
- A few writers' tools we'll talk about in the next four weeks:
 - Appealing to the five senses (or three if you're writing a play script or screenplay).
 - Using vividly rendered details to stand for an entire scene and to reflect, subtly, the emotions of the story.
 - John Gardner: The "vivid and continuous dream."
 - Anton Chekhov: "If you want to get the sense of a moonlit night . . ."
 - Using vivid, meaningful images to carry the meaning and emotions of a story or poem.
 - Recurring images, image clusters, meaningful repetition of images.
- Strong significant details make us forget we're sitting down and reading a book. We even forget who we are because we become someone else as we're drawn into the story. Strong details make for the highest form of virtual reality, especially when we can delve into the thoughts of characters—something not even computers can do.
- **A writer knows the names of things:**
 - Not a tree but a sycamore or mimosa or magnolia or palo verde.
 - Not a dog but a German Shepherd or a Dachshund or Chihuahua.
 - Not a car but an '54 Chevy Bellaire or a '76 Chrysler Cordoba or a 2012 Audi Q5 or a Subaru Brat with a fist-sized hole in the muffler.
 - Not ice cream but Ben and Jerry's Cherry Garcia or Wal-Mart's generic vanilla.

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| WEEK 3 September 6 & 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a beer but an Old Mil or a Shocktop with a slice of orange or a Guinness Stout. • And so on. • Some writers refuse to use product names, or they use them to satirize our consumer culture (<i>American Psycho</i>). • General or Generic ≠ Universal. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with the individual or a stereotype that you undercut and round out as soon as you can: A Broadway singer who's a member of the NRA, etc. • Choose the most specific rather than the most general or generic word or thing, a vivid image that might work on both a literal and figurative level—factually and emotionally, psychologically and thematically true. |
| | Chapter 2 WF Stories to Discuss (Sign up for critical analysis slots below.) Click on the title (or copy and paste the link) to download each story from Dropbox. |
| | "The Things They Carried," by Tim O'Brien https://www.dropbox.com/s/46fgvmt6qfv8s7r/Chapter%20%20Showing%20and%20Telling%20Things%20They%20Carried%20OBrien.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 1: Genesis |
| | "Without Inspection," by Edwidge Danticat https://www.dropbox.com/s/bfxqvqgfhq37p5/Chapter%20%20Without%20Inspection%20Danticat.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 2: Elizabeth C. |
| | READ FOR WEEK 4 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please read WF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WF: 8. Is and Is Not: Comparison, 180 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metaphor and Simile <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of Metaphor and Simile • Dead Metaphors • Metaphoric Faults to Avoid • Allegory • Symbol • The Objective Correlative • Also please download and read for class discussion the hyperlinked stories in Week 4 below. If you signed up for a story next week, prepare a critical analysis and be prepared to start our class discussion. |
| | WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS UPLOAD DISCUSSION BOARD: WEEKLY EXERCISE UPLOAD LINK |
| | <p>In Blackboard's left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY to the Upload Discussion Board. • Click on the the correct link for next week to upload <i>no later than midnight this coming Friday</i>. • During the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week. |

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| WEEK 4 September 13 & 15 | AGENDA |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Chapter 8; then workshop exercises. |
| | Chapter # WF Stories to Discuss (<i>Sign up for critical analysis slots below.</i>) Click on the title (or copy and paste the link) to download each story from Dropbox. |
| | <u>"Signs and Symbols,"</u> Vladimir Nabokov https://www.dropbox.com/s/m84gf4suht5nu9a/Chapter%208%20Is%20and%20Is%20Not%20Signs%20and%20Symbols%20Nabokov.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 4: Sebastian |
| | <u>"Eyes of a Blue Dog,"</u> Gabriel García Márquez https://www.dropbox.com/s/xdhj8b4kbql38z3/Chapter%208%20Is%20and%20Is%20Not%20Eyes%20of%20Blue%20Dog%20Marquez.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 5: Alexandra |
| | READ FOR WEEK 5 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please read Chapter 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WF: 3. Building Character: Characterization, Part I, 44 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Direct Methods of Character Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary, Indirect, and Direct • Dialogue as Action • Text and Subtext • "No" Dialogue • Pacing. • Economy in Dialogue • Format and Style • Vernacular • Appearance • Action • Thought • Also please download and read for class discussion the hyperlinked stories in Week 5 below. • If you signed up for a story next week, prepare a critical analysis and be prepared to start our class discussion. |
| | WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS UPLOAD DISCUSSION BOARD: WEEKLY EXERCISE UPLOAD LINK |
| In Blackboard's left menu, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY to the Upload Discussion Board. • Click on the the correct link for next week to upload no later than midnight this coming Friday. • Over the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week. | |

WEEK 5
September 20 & 22

AGENDA

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| WEEK 5 September 20 & 22 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Chapter 3 and stories; then workshop exercises. |
| | <p>Chapter # WF Stories to Discuss (Sign up for critical analysis slots below.) Click on the title (or copy and paste the link) to download each story from Dropbox.</p> |
| | <p><u>"Bullet in the Brain," Tobias Wolff</u> https://www.dropbox.com/s/yd03xesro42liai/Chapter%203%20Building%20Character%20I%20Bullet%20in%20the%20Brain%20Wolff.pdf?dl=0</p> |
| | <p>Critical Analysis 6: Juan</p> |
| | <p><u>"Tandolf the Great," Richard Bausch</u> https://www.dropbox.com/s/5afbmkvzg853snc/Chapter%203%20Tandolfo%20the%20Great%20Baush.pdf?dl=0</p> |
| | <p>Critical Analysis 7: Jocelyn</p> |
| | <p>READ FOR WEEK 6</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please read WF, Chapter 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Flesh Made Word: Characterization, Part II, 75 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Direct Methods of Character Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appearance • Action • Thought • The Indirect Methods of Character Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorial Interpretation • Interpretation by Another Character • Conflict Between Methods of Presentation • The Universal Paradox • Credibility • Purpose • Complexity • Change • Reinventing Character • Creating a Group or Crowd • The Character Journal • Also please download and read for class discussion the hyperlinked stories in Week 6 below. • If you signed up for a story next week, prepare a critical analysis and be prepared to start our class discussion. |
| | <p>BLACKBOARD WEEKLY EXERCISE DEADLINES (WEEKS 2-6)</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please refer to the Summary of Workshop Deadlines and Summary of Blackboard Deadlines on p. 2-3 of this syllabus for the deadlines for exercises to workshop and revise for a grade. • Next week we'll begin individual workshops from signups the first day of class. • If you're scheduled to workshop next week, please upload 1-3 short-shorts, a short story and/or novel chapter (8-10 pages or so) to the designated weekly folder <i>no later than midnight Friday the week before you scheduled signups for workshop</i> • <i>Over the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week.</i> |

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| WEEK 6 September 27 & 29 | AGENDA |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Chapter 4 and stories, then workshop. |
| | <u>"Girls at War,"</u> Chinua Achebe https://www.dropbox.com/s/pwfieyr83z6auy/Chapter%204%20Building%20Character%20II%20Girls%20at%20War%20Achebe.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 8: Brianne |
| | <u>"St. Marie,"</u> Louise Erdrich https://www.dropbox.com/s/qcszi6lqfvx27oc/Chapter%204%20Building%20Character%20II%20Saint%20Marie%20Erdrich.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 9: Sylvia |
| | Student Story Workshops Begin Next Week (Sign up for workshops slot below.) Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board Link |
| | READ FOR WEEK 7 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please read Chapter 5. • WF: 5. Long Ago and Far Away, Fictional Setting, 101 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmosphere: Place, Time and Mood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmony and Conflict between Character and Place • Symbolic Place • Some Aspects of Narrative Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary and Scene • White Space • Flashback • Slow Motion • Also please download and read for class discussion the hyperlinked stories in Week 7 below. • If you signed up for a story next week, prepare a critical analysis and be prepared to start our class discussion. |
| | WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS UPLOAD DISCUSSION BOARD: WEEKLY INDIVIDUALLY SCHEDULED WORKSHOPS UPLOAD LINK |
| In Blackboard's left menu, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload your weekly workshop documents <i>ONLY</i> to the Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board. • Click on the the correct folder for next week to upload no later than midnight this coming Friday. • Over the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week. | |
| WEEK 7 October 4 & 6 | AGENDA |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Chapter 5 and stories, then workshop. |
| | Chapter 7 WF Stories to Discuss (Sign up for critical analysis slots below.) Click on the title (or copy and paste the link) to download each story from Dropbox. |

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| WEEK 7 October 4 & 6 | <u>"You're Ugly, Too," Lorrie Moore</u> https://www.dropbox.com/s/effzxdc5nc5xee6/Chapter%205%20You%27re%20Ugly%20Too%20Moore.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 10: Maria |
| | <u>"Interpreter of Maladies," Jhumpa Lahiri</u> https://www.dropbox.com/s/5iqw92jsutkyeut/Chapter%205%20Long%20Ago%20and%20Far%20Away%20Interpreter%20of%20Maladies%20Lahiri.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 11: Reilly |
| | Student Story Workshop (Sign up for workshop slot below.) Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board Link |
| | Workshop 1 |
| | Juan |
| | Workshop 2 |
| | Sebastian |
| | Workshop 3 |
| | Jocelyn |
| | Workshop 4 |
| | Giselle |
| | READ WEEK 8 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please read Chapter 6. • WF: 6. The Tower and the Net: Story Form, Plot, and Structure, 124 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict, Crisis, and Resolution • The Arc of the Story • Patterns of Power • Connection and Disconnection • Story Form as an Inverted Check Mark • Story and Plot • The Short Story and the Novel • Types of Fiction |
| WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS UPLOAD DISCUSSION BOARD: WEEKLY INDIVIDUALLY SCHEDULED WORKSHOPS UPLOAD LINK | |
| <p>In Blackboard's left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY to the Weekly Blackboard Discussion Board. • Be sure to click on the the correct Weekly Blackboard Discussion Board link for next week to upload no later than midnight this coming Friday. • Over the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week. | |

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| WEEK 8 October 11 & 13 | AGENDA |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Chapter 6 and stories, then workshop. |
| | <i>Chapter 6 WF Stories to Discuss (Sign up for critical analysis slots below.) Click on the title (or copy and paste the link) to download each story from Dropbox.</i> |
| | <u>"How Far She Went," Mary Hood</u> https://www.dropbox.com/s/tjkj7o14beffxk3/Chapter%206%20Tower%20and%20Net%20How%20Far%20She%20Went%20Hood.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 11: Gabriela |
| | <u>"Silver Water," Amy Bloom</u> https://www.dropbox.com/s/pc92eta38q4w4cg/Chapter%206%20Long%20Ago%20and%20Far%20Away%20Silver%20Water%20Bloom.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 12: Jordyn |
| | Student Story Workshop (Sign up for workshop slot below.) Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board Link |
| | Workshop 5 |
| | Jonathan |
| | Workshop 6 |
| | Alexandra |
| | Workshop 7 |
| | Reilly |
| | Workshop 8 |
| | Jordyn |
| | Workshop 8 |
| | Juan |
| | READ FOR WEEK 10 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>WF</i>, Chapter 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WF 8. Call Me Ishmael: Point of View, 153 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who Speaks? • Third Person • Omniscience • Limited Omniscience • The Objective Author • Second Person • First Person • To Whom? • The Reader • Another Character • The Self |

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| <p>WEEK 8 October 11 & 13</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interior Monologue • Stream of Consciousness • In What Form? • At What Distance? • Consistency: A Final Caution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also please download and read for class discussion the hyperlinked stories in Week 10 below. • If you signed up for a story next week, prepare a critical analysis and be prepared to start our class discussion. |
| | <p>WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS UPLOAD DISCUSSION BOARD: WEEKLY INDIVIDUALLY SCHEDULED WORKSHOPS UPLOAD LINK</p> |
| | <p>In Blackboard’s left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Click here to upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY.</i> • <i>Click on the the correct weekly link for next week to upload no later than midnight this coming Friday.</i> • <i>Over the weekend, I’ll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week.</i> |
| <p>WEEK 9 October 18 & 20</p> | <p>AGENDA</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Chapter 7 and stories, then workshop. |
| | <p>Chapter 7 WF Stories to Discuss (<i>Sign up for critical analysis slots below.</i>) <i>Click on the title (or copy and paste the link) to download each story from Dropbox.</i></p> |
| | <p><u>“Victory Lap.”</u> George Saunders https://www.dropbox.com/s/onkt40fhmsbmlks/Chapter%207%20Call%20Me%20Ishmael%20Victory%20Lap%20Saunders.pdf?dl=0</p> |
| | <p>Critical Analysis 13: Adela</p> |
| | <p><u>“Jealous Husband Returns in Form of Parrot.”</u> Robert Olen Butler https://www.dropbox.com/s/z6cxa7s66c7kmypl/Chapter%207%20Call%20Me%20Ishmael%20Jealous%20Husband%20Parrot%20Butler.pdf?dl=0</p> |
| | <p>Critical Analysis 14: Brianna</p> |
| | <p>Student Story Workshop (<i>Sign up for workshop slot below.</i>) <i>Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board Link</i></p> |
| | <p>Workshop 9</p> |
| | <p>Gabriela</p> |
| | <p>Workshop 10</p> |
| | <p>Brianne</p> |
| <p>Workshop 11</p> | |
| <p>Elizabeth</p> | |
| <p>Workshop 12</p> | |

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| WEEK 9 October 18 & 20 | Felix |
| | READ FOR WEEK 11 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read WF, Chapter 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play It Again, Sam: Revision: Revision and Theme, 201 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worry it and Walk Away • Criticism and the Story Workshop • Revision Questions • Theme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking the Big Question: What Have I Written? • How Fictional Elements Contribute to Theme • A Revision Narrative • A Last Word • Also please download and read for class discussion the hyperlinked story in Week 11 below. • If you signed up for a story next week, prepare a critical analysis and be prepared to start our class discussion. |
| | WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS UPLOAD DISCUSSION BOARD: WEEKLY INDIVIDUALLY SCHEDULED WORKSHOPS UPLOAD LINK |
| | <p>In Blackboard's left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Click here to upload your workshop documents ONLY to the appropriate Blackboard Weekly Upload Link.</i> • Click on the the correct link for next week to upload no later than midnight this coming Friday. • Over the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week. |
| WEEK 10 October 25 & 27 | AGENDA |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Chapter 9 and story, then workshop. |
| | Chapter 10 WF Stories to Discuss (Sign up for critical analysis slots below.) <i>Click on the title (or copy and paste the link) to download each story from Dropbox.</i> |
| | "The Library of Babel," Jorge Luis Borges https://www.dropbox.com/s/tnz5rk11rb3bn31/Chapter%209%20Play%20It%20Again%20Library%20Babel%20Borges.pdf?dl=0 |
| | Critical Analysis 15: Felix & Jonathan |
| | Student Story Workshop (Sign up for workshop slot below.) Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board Link |
| | Workshop 13 |
| | Adela |
| | Workshop 14 |
| | Maria |

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| WEEK 10 October 25 & 27 | Workshop 15 |
| | Brianna |
| | Workshop 16 |
| | Alexandra |
| | Workshop 17 |
| | Genesis |
| | WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS UPLOAD DISCUSSION BOARD: WEEKLY INDIVIDUALLY SCHEDULED WORKSHOPS UPLOAD LINK |
| <p>In Blackboard's left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY for next week to the appropriate Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board no later than midnight this coming Friday.</i> • <i>If you signed up for a story next week, prepare a critical analysis and be prepared to start our class discussion.</i> | |
| WEEK 11 November 1 & 3 | AGENDA |
| | • Workshop |
| | Student Story Workshop (Sign up for workshop slots below.) Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board Link |
| | Workshop 18 |
| | Julian |
| | Workshop 19 |
| | Sebastian |
| | Workshop 20 |
| | Jonathan |
| | Workshop 21 |
| | Jocelyn |
| | Workshop 22 |
| | WEEKLY BLACKBOARD UPLOAD DISCUSSION INDIVIDUALLY SCHEDULED WORKSHOPS UPLOAD LINK |
| <p>In Blackboard's left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Click here to upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY to the Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board.</i> • <i>Click on the the correct link for next week to upload no later than midnight this coming Friday.</i> • <i>Over the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week.</i> | |

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| WEEK 12 November 8 & 10 | AGENDA |
| | <p>In Blackboard's left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Click here to upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY to the Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board.</i> • <i>Click on the the correct link for next week to upload no later than midnight this coming Friday.</i> • <i>Over the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop |
| | Student Story Workshops (<i>Sign up for workshop slots below.</i>) <i>Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board Link</i> |
| | Workshop 23 |
| | Brianne |
| | Workshop 24 |
| | Giselle |
| | Workshop 25 |
| | Sylvia |
| | Workshop 26 |
| Adela | |
| WEEK 13 November 15 & 17 | WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS UPLOAD DISCUSSION BOARD: WEEKLY INDIVIDUALLY SCHEDULED WORKSHOPS UPLOAD LINK |
| | <p>In Blackboard's left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Click here to upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY to the Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board.</i> • <i>Click on the the correct link for next week to upload no later than midnight this coming Friday.</i> • <i>Over the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week.</i> |
| | AGENDA |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop |
| | Student Story Workshop (<i>Sign up for workshop slots below.</i>) <i>Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board Upload Link</i> |
| | Workshop 28 |
| | Gabriela |
| | Workshop 29 |
| | Jocelyn |
| | Workshop 30 |

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| <p>WEEK 13 November 15 & 17</p> | <p>Brianna</p> |
| | <p>Workshop 31</p> |
| | <p>Elizabeth</p> |
| | <p>WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS UPLOAD DISCUSSION BOARD: WEEKLY INDIVIDUALLY SCHEDULED WORKSHOPS UPLOAD LINK</p> |
| | <p>In Blackboard's left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Click here to upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY to the Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board.</i> • <i>Click on the the correct link for next week to upload no later than midnight this coming Friday.</i> • <i>Over the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week.</i> |
| <p>WEEK 14 Tuesday November 22</p> | <p>AGENDA</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop |
| | <p>Student Story Workshops (<i>Sign up for workshop slots below.</i>) <i>Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board Link</i></p> |
| | <p>Workshop 32</p> |
| | <p>Genesis</p> |
| | <p>Workshop 33</p> |
| | <p>Reilly</p> |
| | <p>Workshop 34</p> |
| | <p>Felix</p> |
| | <p>Workshop 35</p> |
| | <p>WORKSHOP DOCUMENTS UPLOAD DISCUSSION BOARD: WEEKLY INDIVIDUALLY SCHEDULED WORKSHOPS UPLOAD LINK</p> |
| <p>In Blackboard's left menu,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Click here to upload your weekly workshop documents ONLY to the Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board.</i> • <i>Click on the the correct link for next week to upload no later than midnight this coming Friday.</i> • <i>Over the weekend, I'll send out your documents via Adobe Acrobat for comments next week.</i> | |
| <p>WEEK 14 THURSDAY November 24</p> | <p>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY No Classes</p> |

| AGENDA | |
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| WEEK 15 November 29 & December 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last Class Week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing Supplements to Get You Started: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Few Sample Literary Magazines • Publishing Supplements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lex's Litmag Addresses • Lex's Submission Tracker • Lex's Sample Submission Letter • Lex's Student Submission Template • Workshop |
| | Student Story Workshops (<i>Sign up for workshop slots below.</i>) <i>Weekly Blackboard Upload Discussion Board Link.</i> |
| | Workshop 36 |
| | Sylvia |
| | Workshop 37 |
| | Julian |
| | Workshop 38 |
| MIDNIGHT FRIDAY | FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE |

| NAME | PHONE NUMBER | E-MAIL ADDRESS |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--|
| Ávila, Felix | (915) 820-2470 | fravila@miners.utep.edu |
| Ávila, Maria | (915) 315-9601 | mavila22@miners.utep.edu |
| Cardoso, Giselle | (915) 204-9051 | gxcardoso@miners.utep.edu |
| Cervantes, Julian | (915) 603-7678 | jmcervantes3@miners.utep.edu |
| Elizabeth, Cervantes-Guzman | (915) 955-1451 | ecervantes8@miners.utep.edu |
| Emiliano, Genesis | (915) 319-7789 | |
| Estrada, Alexandra | | |
| Harris, Jonathan | (915) 449-2706 | jaharris2@miners.utep.edu |
| Juárez, Brianna | (915) 875-4344 | bajuarez2@miners.utep.edu |
| Medrano, Jordyn | (915) 218-4259 | jordynmedrano@yahoo.com |

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Muñoz, Sylvia | (915) 727-2704 | semunoz@miners.utep.edu |
| Navarro, Juan | (915) 704-8771 | jcnavarro@miners.utep.edu |
| Ramirez Gutierrez, Jocelyn | +52 656 776 886 | jyramirezgu@miners.utep.edu |
| Reyes-Huizar, Gabriela | (915) 300-8926 | gmreyeshuiz@utep.edu |
| Robins, Reilly | (915) 222-0345 | rcrobins2@miners.utep.edu |
| Rucobo, Sebastian | (915) 251-0513 | sfrucobo@miners.utep.edu |
| Sias, Adela | (915) 269-7324 | avsias@miners.utep.edu |
| Williams, Brianne | (915) 265-1475 | bjwilliams2@miners.utep.edu |
| | | |

A Note on My Workshop Philosophy:

Only one rule applies to the critique of manuscripts in this class: *Kindness is the only wisdom*. The principal task of this workshop is to create a safe place for writers to be honest and authentic in their discussions and their work. Some writers may be struggling to find the courage to write stories of traumatic events that have occurred to them personally, or to people they know. The last thing we need to do as a class is to make the discussion of these stories traumatic, too; doing so may cause writers to withdraw and stop taking risks for fear of making mistakes or being emotionally honest. There are no mistakes in this workshop, only opportunities to see, understand, change and revise—with an acknowledgement that sometimes we need to revise ourselves before we can revise our stories.

If a writer has troubles with his or her story, try to find a way to deliver that information in a non-personal, non-judgmental way, with empathy and compassion and, if possible, without undo sarcasm. (Irony, sarcasm's more subtle and sophisticated sister, is, of course, what we're trying to use in our stories to great effect.) One approach is simply to describe how you read a story, what it meant to you, focusing on one or two fictional techniques (irony or sarcasm, for example) the author has used that have contributed to that effect. Focus on what the late, great poet and translator John Ciardi said is most important: not just *what* a story means but *how* it means, specific techniques we've discussed in class which help us as writers make readers fall into the fictional dream and awaken from it with new insights.

The more I teach writing workshops, the less faith I have in giving advice, especially the whole notion that a story is something to find problems with and "fix." If the author discovers that she has been misinterpreted in a descriptive analysis, then it follows that she will have to revise. But if a student feels bullied by anyone, including the teacher, whose prescriptive critiques advise her to write her story in a certain way other than she intends, a story she doesn't want to write, she has the right to ignore such comments and to focus only on those that she finds most helpful, those that help her most to fulfill her own distinctive voice and vision.

Please avoid using such subjective judgments as *good* or *bad* or *I really like/dislike this story*. Each of us reads a story differently, and that's what makes workshop such effective places to discuss our work. Take what you can use and forget the rest. We all have a right to tell our own stories in our own ways, and we all have a right to our own interpretations of others' stories so long as there's sufficient evidence from the text to support our

views. We may interpret the image of a child's flying saucer toy lying upended in a bathtub as a hint that a story is about alien abduction, but if there's nothing else in the story to support that point then perhaps the story may be about something else, the death of a child, say, or the grief of a mother.

We show our work to others to help us when we're too close to it to trust our instincts completely about whether what we've written does what we'd intended, whether what's in our head has gotten onto the page. Workshops should be both honest and supportive, writers telling other writers not necessarily what they want to hear but what they might need to hear to make their stories clearer and more significant, meanwhile helping them through the sometimes painful task of revision: re-seeing their own stories clearly with some—but not too much—dispassionate distance, finding their stories in the process of rewriting them, making the unconscious more conscious. Workshops should also be open, generous, productive and tremendously fun, everyone feeling free to laugh a great deal—and not at others' expense—meanwhile recognizing that criticism must never be equated with cruelty or preoccupations with who's up or down but always with the shared difficulty of the work itself, always balancing a commitment to honesty about the work's effectiveness with mutual respect for those who create it and their individual creative processes and aesthetics.

A Note on How I Determine Grades:

Many students have asked me to describe how I come up with grades. If I had my choice, I wouldn't assign a grade to creative work at all, but because we don't operate on a pass/fail basis, I have to assign grades and try to be as fair-minded and objective as I can be. While it's difficult to quantify how I decide grades for creative writing—the differences between quantitative and qualitative measures essentially being immeasurable—I've been writing and grading creative writing for over thirty years and I know that a *C* tends to cover averages (as much as we all dislike being called *average*) and anything above that shows a writer who's beginning to take her work seriously. Please use this rubric as a (tongue-in-cheek) guideline only, and remember: I *always* grade on leaps in a student's writing, from wherever she is from the first day of class till the last, always doing my best to give her the benefit of a doubt, and the only averages I consider are those that add up to the 100% column tally in Blackboard at the end of the semester.

Please note that I've written the following rubrics and instructions primarily with undergraduate writers in mind, but I certainly don't want to insult anyone's intelligence—neither undergraduate nor graduate students. That said, perhaps reading ahead will make clear how to write a bit better, both creatively and critically, for writers, young and old, at many different stages of their writing careers.

| A Grading Rubric for Fiction Writing | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| A | |
| 1. | The writer moves beyond character type and stereotype, showing a growing mastery of deep characterization: the character's motivations are clear, subtle yet surprising, showing a strong insight into the mystery of human motive and behavior. |
| 2. | The writer has a growing mastery of showing <i>and</i> telling, integrating sharp, surprising details into summarized sections with a strong understanding of how and when to write dramatic scenes, trusting readers to be smart enough to <i>get it</i> on their own. |
| 3. | The writer has a gift for dramatic or comic writing, moving the reader deeply, making the reader laugh out loud, or both. |
| 4. | The writer has a growing mastery of significant detail—detail that shows <i>and</i> tells—using little or no static description, making quick strokes of surprising detail in as few words as possible, showing a distinctive view of the world and uncanny insight into individual characters and places. |
| 5. | The writer has a strong, distinctive voice, not a voice that just imitates a favorite writer. Yes, imitation is often what we do, but when we appropriate voice, story ideas, etc. from other writers, in a sense we aren't listening to or trusting our own unique stories and voices. |

6. The writer writes from within character, not imitations of plot he's seen on TV or movies, understanding that genuine plot reversals are about changes within characters.
7. The writer has strong, distinctive narrative authority, not just because she has confidence (many of the best writers have little or no confidence at all) but because she has worked hard to make her work readable, interesting, even beautiful, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph.
8. The writer uses few if any grammatical or sentence errors, and when she uses them—fragments for effect, for example—she does so consciously as a part of her craft, often for dramatic effect.
9. The writer has a strong grasp of narrative conventions, how to write paragraphs, dialogue and so on with correct indentation and punctuation.
10. The writer has few or no misspelled words, especially commonly misspelled words like *yeah*, *all right*, and so on.
11. The writer uses no unnecessary adverbs—value judgment adjectives with an “ly” ending—realizing that they almost always tell rather than show.
12. The writer uses few if any wordy “is” verbs, especially the passive voice, using instead strong, active verbs that make for vigorous sentences that move the reader through the story without hiccups that awaken us from the fictional dream.
13. The writer uses no clichés, in sentence or character situation.
14. The writer knows how to write a strong balance of simple and complex sentences for effect, avoiding run-on sentences, fused sentences and comma splices.
15. The writer knows how to use apostrophes for contractions and possessive adjectives and doesn't overcorrect (the contraction *it's* for the possessive *its*; *their* or *there* for *they're*, and so on).
16. The writer writes with a strong ear for spoken language, recognizing that dialogue is poetry and isn't necessarily the way people actually speak, using syntax rather than phonetic spellings or misspellings to capture dialect, trusting that even the most uneducated speaker can speak with great elegance and insight, even if that speaker is poor and inarticulate.
17. The writer uses few if any value judgments, generalizations or abstractions, unless they're so insightful and surprising that we have to stop reading for a few moments, smiling or frowning, to understand their depth and complexity.
18. The writer uses strong, surprising figurative language (metaphors and similes) appropriate for her voice, her story, her character and the world her character lives in, helping to make her writing vivid and utterly unique.
19. Rather than simply relying on her innate and unique gifts, the writer has a passion for craft and rewriting, obsessed with making her story as close to right as possible without being a stodgy, self-punishing perfectionist.
20. Not writing to *impress* but to *express*—overwriting or overstating, using flowery language, Latinate or multisyllabic words from the thesaurus—the writer uses plain English, inventing her own distinctive and subtle lyricism, understating when others might rely on melodrama and florid, purple prose.

B

Includes at least 10 of the elements listed above.

C or lower

1. The writer mostly tells rather than shows through value judgments, generalizations, abstractions and clichés, forgetting that writing is not simply about ideas and emotions but about *surprise* and reproducing *the experience of* ideas and emotions by creating what John Gardner calls a “vivid and continuous dream.”

2. When the writer does write scenes, he tends to write about undramatic situations, his characters tend to use exposition through dialogue, or they simply natter on about the weather or the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.
3. The writer mostly dwells on the superficial or the obvious or writes in prose so convoluted and abstract that no one—not even the writer himself—knows what he’s talking about.
4. The writer wants to write about a universal character in a universal place, but because he doesn’t write about unique individuals, he’s really just writing stereotypes.
5. The writer may have a strong sense of story and character, but he consistently misspells words and creates numerous grammatical and sentence errors, not realizing that the rules of grammar are an important part of his craft, helping in readability and clarity of expression, and that when he writes without proofreading he’s calling more attention to himself than to his story.
6. The writer thinks that grammar should be creative, too, man, and he thinks he should be able to punctuate sentences and spell words as he wishes, feeling that craft and rewriting are for sissies, resenting *the man* for inhibiting his creativity, dude.
7. The writer spends little or no time proofreading, expecting his girlfriend or wife to do it for him, writing his story the night before workshop while he’s drunk or stoned, his iPod blaring Metallica through his earphones, the TV blasting in the background.
8. The writer tends to write from clichéd plots, and when he can’t decide on how to end his story he decides to kill off his main character through suicide, a bus accident, a giant explosion or some coincidence having to do with frogs falling from the sky.
9. The writer doesn’t read much and never has and shouldn’t have to, man, and would rather watch *Survivor: Tasmania* or Donald Trump or get to level ten on Grand Theft Auto IV.
10. The writer’s idea of conflict is car chases, light sabers, ninjas kicking ass and zombies eating their mamas.
11. The writer’s idea of sentiment is written in doggerel on the inside of a Hallmark card.
12. He-Man loses best buddy or girlfriend and his secret crystal talisman and all his automatic weapons; he gets his buddy, girlfriend, talisman and Uzis back, then kills the bad guy and saves the girl *and* the world.
13. Girl (or boy) gets boy (or girl); girl (or boy) loses boy (or girl); girl (or boy) gets boy (or girl) back, and they kiss and marry under the periwinkles.

Writing Critical Analysis Papers

Manuscript Guidelines:

Your short critical analysis papers should be:

1. Double-spaced.
2. One and one-half pages long, no more than two (or three if you just can’t help yourself). This paper length suggests you should focus on one single point of craft, technique, characterization or theme, writing directly and concisely and not getting off topic. Make your point, cite an example and explain it; then move on to the next. Don’t digress, unless the digression is important. The more you focus, the better
3. Written in the “literary” present tense, as if the events are occurring now. (“Colonel Fitts kisses Lester Burnham” not “Colonel Fitts kissed Lester Burnham.”)
4. Based upon your own original observations about a specific writing technique as it applies to a specific story of your own choosing (recurring images, metaphors, a specific point of character analysis and so on).
5. Not based upon other sources you’ve read. (This isn’t a research paper, and you shouldn’t rely on outside sources. I’m interested only in your own original observations about the story you’ve chosen to write about.)

6. Given a focused and specific title: "Set Ups and Pay Offs for Colonel Frank Fitts' Homosexual Homophobia in American Beauty" (Please don't put quotation marks around your own title.)
7. 7. Paginated.

Before I define critical analysis and describe a few approaches to writing your Critical Analyses essay, let me be clear up front.

What I'd Prefer That You *Not* Write:

Plot Summaries, which

- a. Simply tell us what happens in an essay or story. (Colonel Frank Fitts, a violent homophobe, kisses Lester Burnham. Then . . .)
- b. Tend to follow the plotline of the story: This happens; then this happens.
- c. Assume that we don't know the story. (You can assume that we not only know the story but know it well, having read it many times closely.)

2. Critical Evaluations, which

- a. Tell us whether you believe the story is good and why, like a review.
- b. Often follow this logical syllogism:
 - Major Premise (a limited and supportable generalization): Many good films have this element.
 - Minor Premise (an application of a specific instance): This film has this element.
 - Logical Conclusion: Therefore, this film is good (or not good).
- c. Example:
 - Major Premise: Many good dramatic films are both surprising and inevitable, preparing us for surprising moments with subtle but well-conceived set ups and payoffs.
 - a. Example one: Chinatown.
 - b. Example two: Mystic River
 - c. Example three: Unforgiven
 - Minor Premise: *American Beauty* is both surprising and inevitable, preparing us for Colonel Fitts' kiss with subtle but well-conceived set ups that show he hates homosexuals because he hates himself.
 - d. Example one: Jim and Jim
 - e. Example two: Ricky and Lester's pot deal.
 - f. Example three: Colonel Fitts' beating up his son when Ricky lies and tells his father he's gay when he's not.

Logical Conclusion: Therefore, *American Beauty* is a good movie.

I've described plot summaries and critical evaluations at some length here because I don't want you to fall into the trap of summarizing the story or telling us whether you like or dislike the story. While I believe using critical analysis in writing workshops is a great way to begin, writing critical analyses is different from workshops. Descriptive writing workshops tend toward critical analysis, and prescriptive workshops toward critical evaluation and, at times, personal response: Here's how the author used this particular writing technique and this is how well it worked (for me).

Instead, I'd like for you to write an original critical analysis about a well-focused and specific technique the writer uses in a story.

A Few Assumptions You Can Make about Your Readers

When you write your critical analysis papers, please assume that

1. Whoever's reading your paper is already familiar with the story and wants to find out something new about it that we may not have considered.
2. That we don't want to be told the story again. We've read the story a dozen times and know it as well as you do.
3. That we're less interested in whether you like or dislike the story than in whether you can discuss specific writing techniques the story writer has used to make her story effective.

I'm often surprised that students—yes, even graduate students—don't know what critical analysis is or how to approach a critical analysis paper. It's enough to say here that story telling and critical analysis are completely different writing skills but that the ability to use critical analysis can improve the study of story writing.

Critical Analyses: A Few Definitions

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word *critical* as:

1. Inclined to judge severely and find fault.
2. Characterized by careful, exact judgment: a critical reading.
3. Of, relating to, or characteristic of critics or criticism.

These different connotations of the word *critical* may contribute to students' misunderstandings about how to approach critical analysis in a paper such as this. For this paper, I suggest that you ignore definitions one and three and focus on definition two:

“Characterized by careful, exact judgment: a critical reading.”

In other words, you don't have to be critical in the sense that you have to find fault with the story or have to play movie critic. To put it another way: You're not workshopping the story; you're analyzing how it was written by focusing on a particular writing technique.

According to the 4th Edition of the *American Heritage Dictionary*, analysis is the

1. The separation of an intellectual or material whole into its constituent parts for individual study.
2. The study of such constituent parts and their interrelationships in making up a whole.

Writing fiction is about combining complex parts into a satisfying, organic whole, making the whole enterprise look easy and making us want to read and reread a story again and again—so we can analyze it and ask, How'd she do that?

Writing about fiction is about identifying those complex parts and discussing one or two or three of them in a focused, intelligent way.

Here's a straightforward way to approach your critical analysis papers:

Writing the Critical Analysis Paper

1. Write a clear, concise, well-focused and original thesis statement about one specific writing technique a writer has used in a story of your own choosing—preferably a story you admire:

Alan Ball, the Academy Award winning screenwriter for *American Beauty* (directed by Sam Mendez, 1999), uses subtle but well-conceived set ups to pay off the kiss Colonel Frank Fitts, a violent homophobe, gives to Lester Burnham at the of Act III, making that climactic moment and Lester's murder both surprising and inevitable.

The specific writing techniques—the “constituent parts”—described here are set ups and pay offs, and the purpose of the paper is to show evidence of how the screenwriter uses these techniques. The best way to show such evidence is to

2. Cite and enumerate specific textual examples from the primary text (the fiction, creative nonfiction or poetry itself) and/or appeals to authority (what the writer, other writers or critics have written about the fiction, creative nonfiction or poetry), carefully citing quoted materials correctly according to MLA Style.
 - If you're not sure how to cite quotations, buy a copy of the *MLA Handbook* here: <https://www.mla.org/Publications/Bookstore/Nonseries/MLA-Handbook-Eighth-Edition>. If you're a graduate student and don't already have the most recent edition, now's the time to buy it.
 - Or you can go to the MLA Style Center here: <https://style.mla.org>.

Examples of paraphrased textual examples (without direct quotations):

The first set up [EXAMPLE 1] occurs early in Act I, when Fitts' gay neighbors, Jim and Jim, appear at his front door with the housewarming gifts of flowers and pasta from Falacci's (*American Beauty* shooting script, 21). Colonel Fitts doesn't yet realize that Jim and Jim are a gay couple, but as he shuts the door in their faces he rolls his eyes, suggesting that he thinks something's not quite right: Jim and Jim are just a little too friendly, friendlier than real men ought to be.

The second set up [EXAMPLE 2] occurs when Fitts see Lester jogging with Jim and Jim (62) and begins to believe that Lester must be gay, too—all part of a misunderstanding that works to set up the larger misunderstanding that his son Ricky and Lester are lovers later in the third act.

And so on. For each example, don't just slap quotations into your paper. Remember that we're more interested in *your interpretation* of scenes, techniques, characters, etc. and their importance to your thesis statement than the quotes themselves, so explain how each example is important. (Also be sure to use quotation marks for direct dialogue and carefully explain where we are in the story, which page number, what the characters' names are, and so on. Be sure to put the page number in parentheses at ends of paraphrased or quoted sentences.)

3. Finally, in your conclusion, concisely but specifically explain the deeper implications of the techniques you've described as they relate to your thesis statement and what they may suggest: It's not enough simply to surprise a reader—killing off a main character at the end in an unexpected car accident, for example—but that surprise also must feel inevitable. If a set up is too obvious, the pay-offs in the film become predictable, but if they're subtle, like the steady progression of set ups showing Colonel Fitts' irrational and violent homophobia, we're surprised at first but then look back through the script (or watch the film again) and realize: *That kiss is the only thing that could have happened*. As Hamlet says of King Claudius, Colonel Fitts “doth protest too much” about “those fucking fags”; his pathological and violent hatred of homosexuals reflects a deeper self-hatred, and just as Colonel Fitts kisses Lester Burnham, we realize the colonel is a gay man in a terrible kind of denial; worse, he's a homophobic homosexual. Such violent homophobia, we come to discover, may be far more common and unsettling, even terrifying, than we may have ever thought.

Final Suggestions

In your critical analysis, it's probably best to focus on one specific and original point about writing technique you wish to make about a story you've read, supplying at least two or three well-explained examples from the story itself to support your thesis.

If you wish, you may focus on the significance of a recurring image, a particular point of characterization, a reversal in character or audience expectation, interesting uses of or shifts in point of view and so on. We'll talk about the many other possibilities in class.

Critical thinking and writing rely not just on citing specific examples supporting your generalizations but also your well-supported interpretations. We may live in "post fact," "post evidence" era, but that "fact" illustrates just how important a college education is and just how many of us need to learn how to think clearly and how to write critical analysis that holds up to legitimate skepticism and scrutiny.

What's most important is for you to make some kind of original statement about a writing technique used in the story, and what you learned by close reading and analysis, supplying concrete textual examples from the story whenever possible to support your observations. The more examples you give, the more you explain those examples' significance, the better. The more you write about what interests you, has given you an insight into your own writing, the less a chore writing these analyses might be.

Why are these analyses supposed to be so short? To paraphrase Pascal, it takes more time to write a short essay than a long one. Paradoxically, the more coherent and easy to read your essay is, the more work—and craft—you've probably put into it.

A Grading Rubric for Critical And Research Papers

A

1. Shows surprising and original insight into a story and/or a writer's technique.
2. Goes beneath the surface of a story's theme, characterization, structure and so on, pointing out something significant that may not be immediately obvious, showing that you're not just familiar with the story but have given it a close reading.
3. Makes clear, focused, insightful statements of thesis.
4. Has a clear organizational scheme suggested by the original thesis statement.
5. Cites specific textual examples from the story and explains how they're relevant to the paper's original thesis statement.

6. Supplies clear transitions from paragraph to paragraph, sentence to sentence.
7. Is readable, concisely written, direct and clear, free of gobbledygook (and bullshit), grammatical and punctuation errors and other problems.
8. Organizes logically, by topic, not chronologically.

B

Includes at least three of the elements listed in A above.

C or lower

1. Doesn't have an original, surprising or clear statement of thesis.
 2. Doesn't cite examples or explain them in a coherent way.
 3. Dwells on the obvious, making broad generalizations that anyone could agree with.
 4. Skims the surface of a story without really considering writing technique at all.
5. Gives just a personal response about a story 's themes or characters, written at the last minute or in a general or impressionistic way.
 6. Summarizes the plot. This happens; then this happens.
 7. Evaluates the story:
 - I like (or don't like) this story because . . .
 - This is a great (or a lousy) story because . . .

A Final Note:

Yes, this may be the longest syllabus you've ever read, but I've written this specific, in-depth syllabus so that I can be as clear as possible about my expectations, the course requirements, etc., and so that you can work on making your own writing clearer, more in-depth and specific.

If you've read this syllabus this far—and haven't just skipped to the last page—you've already come a long way in this class and should, I hope, have a much better idea about what to expect as we begin.