

Writing Workshop

Online, Summer 2008, Session 2

English 129a-2dl (Online)

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Brandeis University

Texts

Fiction books are for fiction writers and Poetry books are for poets.
Some are for all members.

Craft:

(Fiction) *Building Fiction: How to Develop Plot and Structure*. Jesse Lee Kercheval.
University of Wisconsin Press (3/24/03). ISBN: 0299187241

(Fiction) *Bird By Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Anne Lamott.
Anchor. ISBN: 0385480016

(Poetry) *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry*.
Kim Addonizio & Dorianne Laux. Norton. ISBN: 0393316548

(for all writers) *Room to Write*. Bonni Goldberg. Tarcher (1996). ISBN-10:
0874778255 ISBN-13: 978-0874778250. (\$12.95/10.36)

Short Stories (for all prose writers):

Interpreter of Maladies. Jhumpa Lahiri. Mariner Books. ISBN: 039592720X

Where I'm Calling From: Selected Stories. Raymond Carver. Vintage, 1989.
ISBN-10: 0679722319. ISBN-13: 978-0679722311. \$15.95/10.85.

The Things They Carried. Tim O'Brien. Penguin. ISBN: 0 14 014773 X

Poetry (for poets):

Sailing Alone Around the Room: New and Selected Poems. Billy Collins. Random
House. ISBN: 0375755195.

We will read Additional Poems online, via web links, etc.

Memoir: only for students with an interest in this genre (not ordered through bookstore):

Eat, Pray, Love. Elizabeth Gilbert. Penguin.

See <http://www.elizabethgilbert.com/index.htm>

Additional Texts, Only for Graduate Students Seeking Graduate Credit:

Making Shapely Fiction. Jerome Stern. Norton, 2000. \$15.95/10.85.

Sudden Fiction International. Eds. R. Shapard & J. Thomas. Norton.

ISBN: 0 393 30613 5

Course Objective:

Upon satisfactory completion of this workshop, fiction writers and poets will be able to write with a heightened understanding of form, metaphor, voice, style, sound (the “music of what happens”), humor, and ritual. From our workshop sessions and our readings of master works of fiction and poetry, students will finally come to believe that in writing, as in many things, “less is more.”

Fiction writers will write persuasive dialogue, build believable characters the reader will care about, and create settings that reflect the conflict in a scene. They will also draw on the “unresolved conflict” between characters.

Poets will create sonorous, vivid poetry making good use of imagery, repetition, rhythm, revision, and additional elements of poetry listed below under “The Poet’s Craft.”

Members of the workshop should plan on submitting their work to a magazine or literary journal. We will discuss submission strategies. *The Poet’s Companion* discusses how to submit your work for publication.

Coursework and Preparation

Portfolio: This includes all of your fiction and/or poetry along with the assigned exercises. The portfolio will include the following:

1.) Monday Exercises: 9 Exercises (2 due each Monday, Weeks 1-4; 1 due Week 5, from *Building Fiction* or *The Poet's Companion*).

3.) Tuesday Pieces: Post your prose/poetry every Tuesday on LATTE (<http://latte.brandeis.edu/>). There will be 4 "Tuesday Pieces," weeks 1-4 (minimum 1,500 words). If you are writing poetry, we will discuss how much poetry you should write for each Tuesday.

2.) "Reading Like a Writer Essays" [RLW] (Wednesday): Short Essays on the Readings: Post, for each Wednesday, a short discussion (250 words minimum) on some structural or stylistic point from the readings. Weeks 1-4.

4.) Friday Feedback (FB): Post Feedback/Critiques on each other's Wednesday Pieces by Friday.

5.) Weekend Revisions: Each Weekend, by Sunday 5 PM, post your Revisions of your Wednesday Piece, after taking into consideration our Feedback and your reading.

6.) Final Project: Your Final Short Story, Creative Nonfiction Piece, or Portfolio of Poems. This is the culmination of your Monday Pieces and Friday Revisions.

7.) Portfolio: At the end of the session, post all of your writing in one MS Word document.

LABEL AND NUMBER THE ENTRIES: Your Name.Wk 3.Monday/RLW 2/Exs/Thurs FB/Friday Rev/etc..

When giving FB, label as follows: Your Name.Wk 2.FB for Name of Colleague.

Online Workshop Participation: Regular involvement in the workshop. This includes your contribution to the development of others' work as well as the presentation of your own work. Since this is an online course, we will establish rules of engagement, such as the nature and amount of criticism you give each other's work.

Final Grade Determination:

Workshop Participation (giving, as well as receiving, constructive criticism; attendance): 20%

Monday Pieces and Wednesday Exercises: 20%

Tuesday RLW Essays: 10%

Thursday Feedback: 20%

Friday Revisions: 10%

Final Project, 5000 words min. (20 pp.): 20%. DUE: Tuesday, Week 5

Graduate Student Requirements: Thursday Pieces will run 2,000 words minimum.

Graduate students will lead some small group work.

Final Project 7500 + words (approx. 30 pp.), accompanied by a short essay on narrative strategies employed.

Please Note: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in a class, please see me immediately.

TOPICAL OUTLINE

Fiction

Read all of *Building Fiction: How to Develop Plot and Structure*. Exercises from *Building Fiction* should be 500 words minimum.

THE ELEMENTS OF STRUCTURE

Do the exercises from this book if you are writing Fiction:

Week 1:

Chapter 1: Sources for Fiction page 5

Chapter 2: Openings in Fiction 12

Week 2:

Chapter 3: Third-Person Point of View 22

Chapter 4: First- and Second-Person Points of View 44

Week 3:

Chapter 5: Constructing Characters 62

Chapter 6: Conflict in Fiction 82

Week 4:

Chapter 7: Continuing Conflict 95

Chapter 8: Endings in Fiction 111

Week 5:

Chapter 9: Revision (due Mon of Wk 5) 130

As time allows:

FORMS AND STRUCTURES (as time allows):

Chapter 11: Short Shorts, Novellas, Novels-in-Stories 160

Poetry

The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry

If you write poetry, do two exercises per week from section 2, The Poet's Craft:

Week 1:

ch 1. Images (choose one exercise)

ch 2. Simile and Metaphor (choose one exercise)

Week 2:

ch 3. The Music of the Line

ch 4. Voice and Style

Week 3:

ch 5. Stop Making Sense: Dreams and Experiments

ch 6. Meter, Rhyme, and Form

Week 4:

ch 7. Repetition, Rhythm, and Blues

ch 8. More Repetition: Villanelle, Pantoum, Sestina

Week 5:

ch 9. A Grammatical Excursion

ch 10. The Energy of Revision

Also, read the other two sections of the book:

I. Subjects for Writing and III. The Writing Life

We will choose together readings from the following books. We may base some assignments on these texts:

Craft:

Bird By Bird Anne Lamott.

Making Shapely Fiction. Jerome Stern.

Room to Write. Bonni Goldberg.

Short Stories:

Interpreter of Maladies. Jhumpa Lahiri.

The Things They Carried. Tim O'Brien.

Where I'm Calling From: Selected Stories. Raymond Carver.

Poetry:

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Eat, Pray, Love. Elizabeth Gilbert.