

Writing Workshop

English 129a.1
Hybrid section
Room:
E-mail: coroniti@brandeis.edu

Prof. Joseph Coroniti
Summer Session 1: 2009
Brandeis University

REQUIRED TEXTS:

for prose writers only:

Now Write!: Fiction Writing Exercises from Today's Best Writers and Teachers.
Sherry Ellis. Paperback: 288 pp. Tarcher (2006)
ISBN-10: 1585425222. ISBN-13: 978-1585425228. \$13.95/9.86

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

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.

for poets only:

The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry.
Kim Addonizio & Dorianne Laux. Norton. ISBN: 0393316548.
\$15.95/10.85

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

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

for Fiction Writers only:

Bird By Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life. Anne Lamott.
Anchor. ISBN: 0385480016. ISBN-13: 978-0385480017. \$14.95/10.17

On Writing. Stephen King. Pocket (2002)
ISBN-10: 0743455967. ISBN-13: 978-0743455961. \$7.99

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:

On Becoming a Novelist. John Gardner. Norton, 1999.

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

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 out-of-class preparation

Portfolio: This includes all of your fiction and/or poetry along with the assigned exercises.

1.) Monday and Tuesday Exercises: 8 Exercises (2 due each week, Weeks 1-4; from *Now Write!* or *The Poet's Companion*.)

2.) Wednesday Pieces: Bring in copies of your prose/poetry every Wednesday for each member of the workshop. We will then "workshop" your work on Wednesday and, if needed, online. There will be 4 "Wednesday Pieces," weeks

1-4 (minimum 1,500 words). Also, please Post Online. If you are writing poetry, we will discuss how much poetry you should write for each Wednesday.

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

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

PLEASE LABEL AND NUMBER THE ENTRIES, for example:

Your Name Wk 2 Wednesday Piece

Your Name Wk 3 Exercise 6

Workshop Participation/Attendance: Regular involvement in the workshop. This includes your contribution to the development of others' work as well as the presentation of your own work.

This is a Workshop, not a "normal" university course. In order to work together you have to be here. If you do miss a class, you must complete your critiques of other writers' work and post them online.

Final Grade Determination:

Workshop Participation (giving, as well as receiving, constructive criticism; attendance): 40%

Exercises: 20%

Wednesday Pieces: 20%

Final Project, 6250 words min. (25 pp.) DUE: Wednesday, July 1st: 20%

Graduate Student Requirements: Wednesday 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

Exercises from *Now Write: Fiction Writing Exercises* should be 500 words minimum. Exercises will be determined on a weekly basis.

Poetry

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

If you write poetry, choose two exercises per week from this section:

The Poet's Craft:

Week 1:

Images
Simile and Metaphor

Week 2:

The Music of the Line
Voice and Style

Week 3:

Stop Making Sense: Dreams and Experiments
Meter, Rhyme, and Form

Week 4:

Repetition, Rhythm, and Blues
More Repetition: Villanelle, Pantoum, Sestina

Week 5:

A Grammatical Excursion
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 readings from the following. We may base some assignments on these texts:

Prose:

Craft

Making Shapely Fiction. Jerome Stern.

Short Stories

Interpreter of Maladies. Jhumpa Lahiri.

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

Poetry:

Sailing Alone Around the Room: New and Selected Poems. Billy Collins.