

Writing Workshop
Online, Summer 2009, Session 2

DRAFT, May 11, 2009

English 129a-2dl (Online)
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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 Preparation

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

- 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:** Post your prose/poetry every week on LATTE (<http://latte.brandeis.edu/>). There will be 4 "Wednesday Pieces," weeks 1-4 (minimum 1,500 words). NB: These pieces should be the "chapters" or continuous sections of your "Final Project," i.e., you are not writing a separate short story for each week. The Final Project, then, is a compilation and, crucially, the Revision of your Wednesday Pieces. (You will have done some of this

Revision on a regular basis, but after you've written your final installment, you should revisit the entire work.)

For those writing poetry: *Generally*, for each Wednesday, you should write three short poems (*approx.* 20 ll), or two middle-length poems (40 ll), or one long poem (several pp.). The Final Project will be your revised Collection of poems. You might want to consider writing some poems that hang together, either by thematic or structural elements.

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

4.) Final Project: Your Final Short Story, Creative Nonfiction Piece, or Portfolio of Poems. This is the culmination of your Wednesday Pieces and continued revision.

5.) 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 1

Your Name Wk 3 Tuesday Exercise 5

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%

Exercises: 20%

Wednesday Pieces: 20%

Friday Feedback: 20%

Final Project, 6250 words min. (25 pp.) DUE: Wednesday, Week 5: 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, 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 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.