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## ENG 318: Advanced Fiction Writing

Fall 2022-Block 3



This block we will be delving deep into short-form fiction writing. This workshop will be generative (you will be producing on a regular basis, both in and out of class) as well as reflective (you will be studying published writing and essays on craft to apply what you observe). We will also focus on what it means to build and participate in a writing community by hosting writers, attending creative events on campus, writing book reviews, honing constructive workshopping skills, and planning a reading. This course is an advanced workshop, so hours of independent work are required each day for your writing to progress; plan to spend at least 40 hours a week working, including time both in and out of class.

### Several assumptions guide this course:

- Focusing on short forms – such as flash fiction and short fiction – strengthens your craft in these art forms as well as in long-form fiction.
- There is no secret to becoming a fabulous writer. But studying craft, developing a writing practice, and experimenting all deepen your abilities as a writer.
- Careful reading makes for careful writing. Your work improves when you expose yourself to a wide range of writers and when you understand the traditions you are contributing to, departing from, or bringing together in a new way.
- We are a community of writers who learn from one another. Responding to others' writing will improve your own by helping you apply an editor's eye.
- The traditional workshop format is not always the most effective. We will draw on multiple workshop methods from *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop* by Felicia Rose Chavez and *Craft in the Real World* by Matthew Salesses.
- Part of being a writer is participating in the larger writing community; we'll have several assignments and activities geared toward having each of you involved in the creative community of our class, on our campus, and beyond.

## Educational priorities and course outcomes:

In our study of a range of texts, our exploration of the process of writing and the writing life, and our collaboration as a class and on campus, this course will support the college's educational priorities in the areas of *knowledge, reasoning, communication, intercultural literacy, citizenship, and vocation*. This course also fulfills the Fine Arts and Writing Intensive requirements for Ingenuity. You will leave this course with: many short fiction drafts, including several that you have revised; knowledge about contemporary short and flash fiction; multiple approaches to the writing process and creative revision; insights about fiction writing from a variety of writers – your classmates, your professor, and visiting writers; and a deeper understanding of the writing life, including writing book reviews and submitting to journals for publication.

## **Required Texts:** Bring relevant readings to class.

Kathy Fish, *Wild Life*

Alice LaPlante, *The Making of a Story*

Sofia Samatar, *Tender*

Ed. Jesmyn Ward, *The Best American Short Stories 2021*

Readings on Moodle, designated as (M)

Your work and your classmates' work!

## **Schedule:**

- We will meet from 12:30-3 p.m. daily except when noted below. Please note the 6:30 p.m. virtual reading on Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>; if you cannot attend due to an unresolvable conflict, you should discuss that with me during week 1 so we can plan a substitute experience.
- Readings should be completed before the times they are listed for discussion.

## **WEEK ONE**

M 10/24 Introductions

**Class meets at 1:00**

T 10/25 Details

10-11 Writers Salon

12:30-3 O'Connor, "The Nature and Aim of Fiction" (M)

LaPlante, Chapter Three, "Details, Details" (107-130)

Hansen, "Nebraska" (in LaPlante, 147-151)

Bring to class: Exercise 1 *or* 2 (in LaPlante 127-130)

W 10/26 Showing and Telling

LaPlante, Chapter Five, "Why you Need to Show *and* Tell" (204-245)

Kochai, "Playing Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain" (in Ward, 64-71 and 258)

Osunde, "Good Boy" (in Ward, 116-127 and 260-262)

Bring to class: Exercise 1 *or* 2 (in LaPlante 224-227)

Th 10/27 Compression

10-11 Writers Salon

12:30-3 Fish, *Animal Kingdom* section (3-31) and *Humans in the Wild* section (35-65)

Samatar, "How I Met the Ghoul" (69-72)  
*Drop-in office hours: 3-4*

**F 10/28 Kathy Fish class visit**

Fish, *The Knowing (Hu)man* section (69-109) and craft essay (M)  
Bring to class: *Wild Life*, question assignment, "breathless" draft

Creative Event: Freewrite Friday

**Sunday 10/30 DUE by noon to Moodle for feedback:** "breathless" flash fiction revised draft with cover sheet

**WEEK TWO**

M 10/31 Structure

LaPlante, Chapter Four (152-167)  
Samatar, "Walkdog" (21-31) and "Tender" (115-124)  
Sigurs, "A Way with Bea" (in Ward, 175-182 and 265)  
Bell, chapter on "Signs of Life" (M)

Creative event: SLAB Murder Mystery Night

T 11/1 Embracing Mystery and Drafting with Abandon: Approaches inspired by National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo)

10-11 Writers Salon

12:30-3 LaPlante, Chapter Two (57-69)  
Anne Lamott, "Shitty First Drafts" (in LaPlante, 574-578)  
Group 1

Creative event: virtual NaNoWriMo kick-off

W 11/2 Openings and Unfoldings

LaPlante, Chapter Eleven (465-506) and Chapter Nine (375-390)  
Samatar, "Honey Bear" (56-68) and "How to Get Back to the Forest" (95-110)  
Murray, "Paradise" (in Ward, 101-115 and 260)  
Bring to class: Exercise 1 or 2 (in LaPlante 388-390) OR Exercise 1, 2, or 3 (in LaPlante 475-478)  
Group 2

Th 11/3 Materials

10-11 Writers Salon  
12:30-3 Samatar, "Cities of Emerald, Deserts of Gold" (142-146), "An Account of the Land of Witches" (147-166); "Meet Me in Iram" (167-177)  
Interview in *The Offing* and NPR book review (M)  
Group 3

F 11/4 Defamiliarization

Baxter, "On Defamiliarization" (M)  
Means, "Clementine, Carmelita, Dog" (in Ward, 86-100 and 259-260)  
Hobson, "Escape from the Dysphesiatic People" (in Ward, 53-63 and 258-259)

Washington, "Palaver" (in Ward, 215-226 and 266-267)  
Group 4  
*Drop-in office hours: 11-12:15*

Creative Event: Freewrite Friday

**Sunday, 11/6 DUE to Moodle by noon: group work reflection and annotations**

### **WEEK THREE**

M 11/7 Workshop Prep  
Workshop readings (M)

T 11/8 *Election day!* (Voting information on Moodle)  
**9-11** Workshop  
**1-3** Workshop

W 11/9  
**9-11** Workshop  
**1-3** Workshop

Th 11/10 **Sofia Samatar class visit**

**9-11** Samatar, "Selkie Stories are for Losers" (1-9), "Ogres of East Africa" (10-20), "The Closest Thing to Animals" (188-205)  
Bring to class: *Tender*, question assignment

**1-3** Workshop if needed; Literary Citizenship  
Discussion of book reviews and submitting your work; Preview of Workshop Process  
Book Review article and link to Kirkus Reviews (M); Workshop Method Readings (M)  
Bring to class: draft of book review

**Required Creative Event: 6:30 Sofia Samatar Reading (featuring Cornell students)**

F 11/11 Approaches to Revision  
10-11 Writers Salon  
12:30-3 LaPlante, Chapter Thirteen (542-574)  
Salesses (M)  
Bring to class: One revision exercise (in Laplante 553-556), based on workshop piece  
**DUE to Moodle by 5 p.m.: post-workshop reflection**  
*Drop-in office hours: 11:30-12:15 and 3-4*

Creative Event: Freewrite Friday  
Saturday 11/12 Creative Event: Slamovision in Iowa City

### **WEEK FOUR**

M 11/14 Work day and Conferences  
10-11 Writers Salon

T 11/15

Class Reading and course wrap-up  
Conferences

W 11/16

10-11 Writers Salon

**DUE to Moodle by 3:00: Final submission (with contributor's notes and submission materials)**

### **Assignments:**

Details about assignments will be provided in class and on Moodle. We will use a grading contract system this block: individual writing assignments will not be graded to encourage creative risks and focus on process. Specific instructions about the grading contract are posted on Moodle, and we will review the details in class.

Your assignments will include:

- Writing prompts as homework and in class as well as writing on your own daily (*communication, fine arts, writing intensive*)
- “Breathless” flash fiction revision you will turn in for feedback (*communication, fine arts, writing intensive*)
- Independent project – based on a writing prompt or your own idea – which will be workshopped by the class and revised for the end of the block (*communication, fine arts, writing intensive*)
- Contributor’s note and submission materials as practice for representing and submitting your work to journals (*communication, knowledge, vocation*)
- Written reflections on your work (*communication, reasoning, fine arts, writing intensive*)
- Small group-led discussion and writing prompt based on a specific technique and set of readings, with annotations of readings (*knowledge, reasoning, intercultural literacy, citizenship*)
- Literary citizenship activities including contributions to class and workshop (*knowledge, communication, reasoning, intercultural literacy, citizenship*), book reviews posted publicly (*communication, reasoning, intercultural literacy, citizenship, vocation, writing intensive*), attendance at creative events (*citizenship, vocation*), planning and participating in our class reading (*communication, citizenship, vocation, fine arts*)

**Course Policies:** Read these carefully; you will be held responsible for all policies.

**What you can or can’t write:** This course will be driven in many ways by what you, the writers, produce, and I am not your censor. While I will give you almost full freedom in your short fiction, I also expect your commitment to inventive creation and avoidance of any short-cuts such as clichés of language, structure, or plot. You should not be relying on pre-determined characters or plots; in other words, your story should be your own creation. In addition, because we will not be studying children’s or young-adult literature, you will not be writing pieces for children or young adults in this particular course. We will read literary fiction in this course and will approach our writing as literary writers; that designation sets no bounds on content but does set an expectation for attention to language and depth of character. Writers should not shy away from difficult material, but you should be thoughtful and intentional about how you deal with difficult topics in your work – and please talk with me about any

concerns. Finally, while your independent project may develop from a draft begun before the block starts, you should not workshop a story you haven't actively worked on since the block began.

**Keeping in touch:** Email is considered an official mode of communication at Cornell; you are expected to check your email at least once a day and to be attentive to any email you receive about our course. If you are having any problems with the course, I strongly encourage you to come talk to me. Not responding to emails or missing scheduled appointments with me will affect your grade. Please make use of drop-in office hours.

**Accommodations:** Cornell College is committed to providing equal educational opportunities to all students. Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see [cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml](http://cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml). Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the disabilities services coordinator as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. Ideally, this meeting would take place well before the start of classes.

Please talk with me about expected accommodations in the first three days so we can ensure what you need is in place for the block. In addition, I intend for all course materials to be fully accessible; if you encounter any problems with a document, please alert me.

**Academic Honesty:** Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is his or her work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in *The Catalogue*, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

If you have any questions about your use of others' work this term, see me about citation guidelines and proper use of sources. Our librarians and the Writing Studio staff are also wonderful resources for questions about the use of sources.

**The Public Health Context for our Class and Attendance Policy:** After living within a pandemic since March 2020, some of you may feel that what is best for you is for things to be as normal as possible. Some of you may feel that a veneer of "normalcy" feels wrong -- not what you need at all. Many of us probably go back and forth between these two feelings at different times. In planning this course, I have been guided by the following principles:

First, we will proceed with this course in a way that protects all of us and especially the most vulnerable among us. What this means:

- *Attendance:* All in-person class sessions are required and important. That said, I am not instituting an attendance policy this block. While each of you matters to this course -- and we miss you if you are not in class -- I do not want you to feel pressure to come to class if you are experiencing possible Covid symptoms. Please keep in touch with me via email about any

health concerns, and we will work together to keep you caught up. If you are too sick to keep up with the class, we will discuss all of the options. *Please make the most of each day you are in class to put yourself in a strong position should illness arise. And please DO NOT use this policy (or lack of policy) to skip class without a health concern -- that won't serve you, your writing, or our class community.*

- *Responsible action if you experience any symptoms:* If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, do not attend class. First, test yourself or contact Director of Student Health Services Lynn O'Brien at [lobrien@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:lobrien@cornellcollege.edu) to arrange a test at the Health Center and second, please notify me. If you need to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19, or if you become unable to attend class for any other health reason, email me so we can have a virtual conversation about class. If I am experiencing symptoms or must quarantine/isolate during the block, I will communicate as soon as possible via email about shifting portions of the course online. Please check your email regularly to ensure you are up-to-date about any adjustments. (Remember that tests taken too early after exposure may result in a false negative; multiple tests may be necessary.)
- *Responsible action if you test positive:* If you test positive for Covid during the block, need to quarantine, or need to isolate, you need to inform me directly; the Health Center cannot inform me on your behalf. If someone in the class tests positive, all close contacts in the classroom will be contacted by the health center.
- *Stay informed:* More information about current campus procedures is available here: <https://www.cornellcollege.edu/response/campus-protocols.shtml>
- *Shared spaces:* We are a full class in a closed classroom. **Masks will be worn in our classroom.** If the health situation worsens on campus, we may make use of Zoom sessions. I also require masks in my office; if you would prefer a Zoom meeting during office hours, please don't hesitate to ask.<sup>1</sup>
- *Your input:* If the way class proceeds does not feel as safe as it could be, please contact me so we can talk about adjustments.

Second, we will approach our work as something that should nurture and sustain us as much as it challenges us.

My hope is that immersing yourself in your own self-directed creative work, with freedom to write about topics that are important to you, will sustain you through the work of the block. Our contract grading system allows for transparency and planning for the level of commitment you are able to achieve. The design of this course also removes the pressure of churning out your "best" at all times and instead rewards commitment, labor, and reflection -- all traits that are essential to developing as a writer. Writing, as many of you know, can take you on a rollercoaster of emotions. My hope for you is

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<sup>1</sup> Appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities will be incorporated into our mask policy and may include the use of microphones or clear face coverings. If you have a health condition that prevents you from wearing a mask, you may wear a face shield if you have documentation from your medical provider on file; you can also make an appointment at the student health center to be approved for a face shield.

that you surprise yourself this block and leave with some pieces you want to continue working on in the future and share.

A list of support resources can be found on our Moodle page. If I can be of help answering questions about these resources or connecting you with a resource, please don't hesitate to reach out. In addition, I count myself among your support systems on campus, whether we have worked together previously or are just getting to know each other. I will be working alongside all of you this block as your fellow pandemic-journeyer and working writer.