Intermediate Fiction Workshop – People and Place
CRWRI-UA 816 007
Spring 2018, Mondays 4:55 PM – 7:40 PM
Bldg: 194M, Room 303
Instructor: Nicole Dennis-Benn
Office Hours: Appointment only.
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Course Description:

“Create a world for your characters to move around in; if not you cannot fully conjure them.” – Toni Morrison

Characters are essential to the story; so is setting. Setting provides a world for the story to take place. But more than that, setting reveals a lot about the characters—who they are; their culture and the social circumstances that shape them and affect the decisions they make. Through reading, writing, and discussion, we will explore methods to use the physical environment as a characterization tool, which will undoubtedly make the story richer and more memorable. During this workshop, each student will workshop twice. Following their in-class critiques, students will meet with the instructor for individual conference. We'll discuss at least three (3) selected works to aid our discussions on technique/craft in relation to shaping your story. Excerpts of other books and stories will be listed as we go along to better aid your individual storytelling process. Authors considered may include Toni Morrison, Chimamanda Adichie, Zadie Smith, Jacqueline Woodson, Elizabeth Strout, and NoViolet Bulawayo, to name a few. Secondly, prompts will be given at the beginning of the workshop to get your creative juices flowing.

Each student will have the opportunity to workshop twice, five (5) to ten (10) pages.

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Course Objectives:
At the end of this course, students will:

- Establish setting/place.
- Improve character development.
- Learn to develop structural/preliminary outlines of their own material.

Required Texts:

Recommended Text:
Course Requirements:
Read and Write.

Responsibilities:
You will be responsible for preparing excerpts (5 pages minimum; 10 pages max) for workshops in a timely manner. Excerpts should have: 1) A brief synopsis of the larger work; and 2) Specific questions you would like your classmates and instructor to address at this stage of the work. Keep in mind that specific questions do not prevent people from commenting on other components of the story they deem necessary, but will give a sense of direction and make your critiquing experience more fulfilling.

You are required to read and write detailed critiques for your classmates’ stories each week. Make sure to let your classmate know what is working and why, what they can improve, and any helpful suggestions. Critiques should be typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins, and in 12pt. Times New Roman font. And at least one and a half (1.5) to two (2) pages. You are required to print two (2) copies of your critiques—one for the student(s) you’re critiquing and the other for the instructor. In addition, you will also be responsible for reading the required texts, which will aid in our brief discussions about outline, setting, character development, and plot.

Lateness:
Unforeseen circumstances happen to everyone; this is understood. However, class begins at 4:55 PM. If for any reason you are running extra late or are unable to attend class, please email instructor and the student(s) whose work is scheduled for critique that week. If this occur every week or every other week, your grade will be affected. If you do come to class late, do it as quietly as possible. Class will be in session, and should not be interrupted.

Submitting Stories via Email:
Please email stories for critiquing 1 week before workshop. This should give us time to properly read and critique your work. However, critiques of classmates’ works are expected to be hard copies and handed in to me and the student(s) at the end of the workshop.

Cells/laptops/gadgets: These items are not allowed to make an appearance during workshop. Using them is an interruption, a distraction. Please turn off all ringers/tones, etc before class begins, and place all gadgets in a pocket or a bag. If you are expecting an important phone call, please exit the room quietly and away from the classroom door. DO NOT open a laptop (unless if instructor is given a valid note of disability that requires technology). DO NOT answer your cell phone or reply to a text message in class. If you do, you will be asked to leave.

January 22 – Introduction. In-class diagnostic essay: “I come from a place where…” In two paragraphs or more, describe your hometown, taking into consideration culture and descriptions that give reader a sense of place.
*Begin reading Jumping Monkey Hill by Chimamanda Adichie and Drinking Coffee Elsewhere by ZZ Packer – Short Story Link. Come prepared to discuss. Purchase books.

**January 29** – Elements of Setting and Characterization. Discuss story.

*Read: Children of the Sea (Danticat) and The American Embassy (Adichie). Come prepared to discuss.*

**February 5** - Elements of Setting and Characterization. In-class critiques.

*Read Nineteen Thirty-Seven (Danticat) and A Private Experience (Adichie). Come prepared to discuss.*

**February 12** - NO CLASS. Read On Monday of Last Week (Adichie) and Seeing Things Simply (Danticat). In what ways are these apparently dissimilar worlds alike? Consider your story as you begin to establish culture. What might your characters observe about a place or individual that’s outside their cultural norm? *Come prepared to discuss and share.*

**February 19** – NO CLASS.

*Read: Between the Pool and the Gardenias (Danticat) and That Thing Around Your Neck (Adichie). Come prepared to discuss. (Keep in mind, we’ll be discussing multiple stories).*

**February 26** – Elements of Setting and Characterization. In-class critiques.

*Read: Caroline’s Wedding (Danticat) and The Arrangers of Marriage (Adichie). Come prepared to discuss.*

**March 5** – Characterization and Characterization. In-class critiques.

*Begin reading We Need New Names*

**March 12** – NO CLASS

**March 19** – Characterization and Characterization. In-class critiques.

**March 26** – Voice/POV. In-class critiques.

**April 2** – Voice/POV. In-class critiques.

*Begin reading Another Brooklyn*

**April 9** - Voice/POV. In-class critiques.

**April 16** – Plot. *In-class critiques.*

**April 23** – Plot. *In-class critiques.*

**April 30** – Plot. In-class critiques.

**May 7** - Last day of classes.