

The Elements of Story (CRWRI-UA.815)

Instructor

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Office Location

TBD

Office Hours

By appointment

Course Overview

In this course, I hope to teach you the core elements of story and the myriad ways good fiction employs them. I want to provide you the tools, motivation, and confidence to tell your own stories in a creative, authentic, and original way. To help with that, I've assigned a collection of diverse, contrasting, oftentimes bizarre works of fiction and poetry so you can see for yourself the deep well of narrative possibility! Readings include an anthology of dog poems, a novel whose central character is a bridge, and a genre-fiction crime/comedy thriller. We'll spend half our time discussing these, and the other half discussing your fiction and that of your peers!

Optional Texts***

Donald Barthelme, *The Collected Stories*

Edward P. Jones, *Lost in the City*

James Wright, *Above the River*

Osamu Dazai, *No Longer Human*

Derek Walcott, *The Poetry of Derek Walcott*

Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*

Walter Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress*

Tao Lin, *Leave Society*

Sam Pink, *The Ice Cream Man And Other Stories*

Dino Buzzati, *The Tartar Steppe*

Dog Poems (New Directions)

Charles Willeford, *Miami Blues*

Thomas Bernhard, *Wittgenstein's Nephew*

Zadie Smith, *Grand Union*

John Gardner, *On Becoming a Novelist*

Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*

Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio*

***We'll be reading excerpts of the optional texts. Feel free to buy the books, but know that I'll provide PDF documents to you via email!

Tentative Weekly Overview

Class	Subject	Assignment
01/24	Introductions - Course Overview - Short Exercises	None
01/26	The Basics	<i>The Metamorphosis and Other Stories</i> , Kafka; Selected Stories
01/31	Story is Character Pt. 1 (Workshop Group A)	<i>Paris Stories</i> , Mavis Gallant; Selected Stories
02/02	Story is Character Pt. 2	<i>Lost in the City</i> , Edward P. Jones; Selected Stories
02/07	What Is The Point If We Can't Have Fun? Pt. 1 (Workshop Group B)	<i>The Complete Stories</i> , Donald Barthelme; Essay by David Graeber
02/09	What Is The Point If We Can't Have Fun? Pt. 2	<i>Dog Poems</i> ; Selected Poems
02/14	Voice Pt. 1 (Group C Workshop)	<i>Wittgenstein's Nephew</i> , Thomas Bernhard; Excerpts
02/16	Voice Pt. 2	<i>Grand Union</i> , Zadie Smith; Selected Stories
02/21	Dialogue Pt. 1 (Group A Workshop)	<i>The Ice Cream Man & Other Stories</i> , Sam Pink
02/23	Dialogue Pt. 2	<i>The Ice Cream Man & Other Stories</i> ; Selected Stories
02/28	Plot Pt. I (Group B Workshop)	<i>Miami Blues</i> , Charles Willeford; Excerpts
03/02	Plot Pt. II	<i>Devil In A Blue Dress</i> , Walter Mosley; Excerpts
03/07	Prose/Poetry I (Group C Workshop)	<i>Above The River</i> , James Wright; Excerpts from <i>A Poetry Handbook</i> , Mary Oliver; Selected Sections
03/09	Prose/Poetry II	<i>The Poetry of Derek Walcott</i> ; Selected Poems
03/14 – 03/16	SPRING BREAK	None

Class	Subject	Assignment
03/21	The Novel: Form & Structure Pt. 1 (Group A Workshop)	<i>On Becoming a Novelist</i> , John Gardner; Selected Chapters
03/23	The Novel: Form & Structure Pt. 2	<i>The Anatomy of Story</i> , John Truby
03/28	The Novel: Form & Structure Pt. 3 (Group B Workshop)	TBD
03/30	The Novel: Form & Structure Pt. 4	TBD
04/04	Writing The Weird Pt. 1 (Group C Workshop)	<i>The Tartar Steppe</i> , Dino Buzzati; Excerpts
04/06	Writing The Weird Pt. 2	<i>The Complete Stories</i> , Leonora Carrington; Selected Stories
04/11	Setting & Place Pt. 1 (Group A Workshop)	<i>The Bridge on the Drina</i> , Ivo Andric; Excerpts
04/13	Setting & Place Pt. 2	<i>Winesburg, Ohio</i> , Sherwood Anderson
04/18	Autofiction Pt. 1 (Group B) Workshop	<i>Leave Society</i> , Tao Lin; Excerpts
04/20	Autofiction Pt. 2	<i>No Longer Human</i> , Osamu Dazai; Selected Essays and Excerpts
04/25	Joy Pt. 1 (Group C)	<i>The Complete Stories</i> , S.J. Perelman, plus some Etgar Keret & George Saunders
04/27	Joy Pt. 2	Selected Standup Comedy Specials
05/03	On Endings Pt. 1 (Group A Workshop)	TBD
05/05	On Endings Pt. 2	TBD
Grading		
Participation	20%	
Attendance	20%	

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Reading Responses	10%
Workshop	40% (quality of submissions & quality of feedback)
Final Project	10%

Participation

When everyone's participating, the classroom experience becomes infinitely more rewarding. I define participation not only as talking, but also listening. Just be mentally present and invested and all will be well.

Attendance

Try not to be late. If you are going to be late, please email me to let me know. Things come up. Frequent lateness may negatively impact your attendance grade.

Reading Responses

These are due every **Sunday evening** by **8:00 pm** before our Monday lectures. This means you need to have Monday's reading assignments done by Sunday night before 8:00 pm. The reading responses should be around 500 words, and they should attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What is one thing you appreciated or did not appreciate about the text?
2. Why did you appreciate/not appreciate that one thing?
3. What craft element did the author employ successfully (please cite specific chapters/scenes/passages)
4. What were 1-2 of your favorite sentences or passages, and why?

Workshop

You will submit original works of fiction or poetry two or three times throughout the semester, schedules permitting. **You cannot submit the same piece twice.** Fiction or poetry, the choice is yours. Your submission must be somewhere no less than five and no more than twenty pages of material (even you, poets), Times New Roman, double-spaced, and 12pt Font. **Submissions are due Wednesdays before midnight.** Responses to submissions are due before the workshop session. **You must CC me on your feedback emails** to your peers. We will discuss this more in class.

Plagiarism

Please don't. I'm obligated to report it. Snitching is abysmal. The risk towers over the reward!

Final Project

You will submit all your pieces in a single volume. Feel free to submit more, if you have them. These final projects must be the result of substantial revision based on your peer feedback, my feedback, and lessons learned over the course of the semester. Additionally, you will submit a page summary about the changes you made, why you made them, and how they improved your fiction/poetry. You don't have to bind them in some elaborate manner, but they must look presentable and professional.

NYU Disability Disclosure Statement

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

NYU's Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10003-6675

Telephone: 212-998-4980 Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114 Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>

Student Wellness Policy

The Wellness Exchange's private hotline (212-443-9999) puts students, staff, and faculty in touch with a qualified professional. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The NYU Health Center, located at 726 Broadway (3rd and 4th floors), offers virtual services as well as walk-ins. Anxiety and depression may accompany the discipline of creative writing. You do not have to work through mental health issues alone. If you do feel you need someone to talk to at any point in the semester, please feel safe to reach out to me and I can guide you to the NYU Wellness Center.