“A story always involves, in a dramatic way, the mystery of personality.”
- Flannery O’Connor

Below is a very broad overview of what we will cover during the next ten weeks. Each week we will focus on a certain craft point – building characters, establishing voice and authority, writing dialogue, etc – while also doing a lot of fun exercises. After the first couple weeks, you will start writing your own story. It could be one you've had in mind for a while, or one that has been generated by one of the exercises. Each week we will read a story or two from either Dubliners, or The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories, or one that you can access online. We will also read selections from Flannery O’Connor’s Mystery & Manners, which is a must for any serious fiction writer. Along the way we will have lively, ongoing discussions about the stories we're reading and trying to write.

**Week 1**
October 1 *Course Introduction: Epiphany*
- Discuss: Frank O’Connor’s “Guests of the Nation” (provided by instructor) and James Joyce’s “Araby”
- Getting to know each other: What do you want to write about? Who are your favorite writers? What are your favorite short stories?
- Title Excercise

**Week 2**
October 8 *The Mystery of Personality*
- Exercise: “Titles” and “An unsolved mystery is a thorn in the heart.”

**Week 3**
October 15 *Character*
- Discuss: Flannery O’Connor’s essay “Writing Short Stories” and Richard Ford’s “Rock Springs” and Joyce’s “Eveline”
- Writing Exercise: The Dossier
Week 4

October 22 Keeping Tension on the Page and the importance of Desire
- Bring a story with a great beginning. Why does it make you want to keep reading?
- Discuss Alice Munro’s “Corrie” and Robert Stone’s “Helping”
- Writing Exercise: “Opening Lines” and “What do you want most in life?”

Week 5

October 29 Voice and Point of View:
- Discuss Charles Portis’ “I Don’t Talk Service No More” and Jayne Anne Phillips’ “Home”
- Writing Exercise: “Resignation Letter” and “Late Night Phone Call.”

Week 6

November 5 Setting and Mood
- Discuss Stuart Dybek’s “Chopin in Winter”
- Writing Exercise: The exact dimensions of hell

Week 7

November 12 Dialogue
- Discuss Dorothy Parker’s “Here We Are” and Sam Lipsyte’s “The Dungeon Master.”
- Writing Exercise: Subtext in dialogue

Week 8

November 26 Texture and Language
- Discuss Tim O’Brien’s “The Things They Carried” and Ron Hansen’s “Wickedness”
- Writing Exercise: “Junk Drawer”

Week 9

December 3 Breaking the Rules
- Discuss Tobias Wolff’s “Bullet in the Brain”
- Writing Exercise: “Left Turn”

Week 10

December 10 What’s Next?
- Discuss Joyce’s “The Dead”
- Writing Exercise: Revision