Course Title: Fiction Writing: Elements of the Short Story  
Course Code: FICT 69  
Instructor: Chris Drangle

Course Summary:

Each week of this course will comprise a craft lecture, required reading from an acclaimed short story writer, a few brief online discussion questions, and a short writing exercise. In Week 4, students will submit an original short scene (2-3 pages) to be workshopped in small group format. In Week 9, students will submit a full-length short story (10-15 pages) to be workshopped in another small group. At the end of the course, students will submit a short reflection letter (1-2 pages) discussing the process that took them from the blank page to The End. Since the workshop schedule will necessarily depend on enrollment figures, the tentative weekly outline at the end of this syllabus may be adjusted for time or content.

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.

Grade Options and Requirements:

- No Grade Requested (NGR)  
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.

- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)  
  - Students must participate in at least 80% of weekly discussions and/or Zoom sessions.

- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)  
  - Students must participate in weekly discussions, complete two pieces of written work (a short scene of 2-3 pages and a full story of 10-15 pages), provide written feedback on their colleagues’ scenes and stories, and write a short reflection letter.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.

Tentative Zoom Schedule*:

We’ll hold a weekly Zoom session (live video chat) each week. Date and time TBD, but I will do my best to make the timing as accessible as possible. Note that video sessions are recorded and can be watched later.

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions  
365 Lasuen St., Stanford, CA 94305  
continuingstudies@stanford.edu  
650-725-2650
Tentative Weekly Outline:

Week 1: **Welcome!**
- Exercise: First Lines

Week 2: **Character**
- Reading: Frank O’Connor, “The Man of the World”; Kirstin V. Quade, “Mojave Rats”

Week 3: **Plot**
- Reading: Margaret Atwood, “Happy Endings”; George Saunders interview
- Exercise: Freytag’s Pyramid Scheme

Week 4: **Point-of-View**
- Reading: Adam Price, “D-League”
- Exercise: The Motivational Continuum
- Writing: original short scene due

Week 5: **Setting**
- Reading: Ron Hansen, “Wickedness”; student short story excerpts
- Exercise: I Can’t Make It Better, But I Can Make It Colder
- Writing: comments on short scenes

Week 6: **Dialogue**
- Reading: Denis Johnson, “Steady Hands at Seattle General”; Lonergan excerpt
- Exercise: What We Talk About When We Talk About Whatever

Week 7: **Dramatization**
- Reading: Patricia Highsmith, excerpt; Vladimir Nabokov, “Signs and Symbols”
- Exercise: The Hills Are Alive (And They’re Getting Emotional)

Week 8: **Literature vs. Genre**
- Reading: George Saunders, “Escape from Spiderhead”
- Exercise: Cliché Buster

Week 9: **Workshopping and Revising**
- Reading: Stephen Koch, “Working and Reworking”
- Exercise: Golden Rulebook Entry
- Writing: original full-length short story due

Week 10: [Thanksgiving – no class]

Week 11: **Submitting and Publishing**
- Reading: student stories
- Writing: feedback letters

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