Stanford Continuing Studies

Course: Fiction Writing: Building a World in Six Easy Steps (WSP 103)

Instructor: Michael David Lukas

General Expectations: Regular attendance and participation are vital to your success. Habitual tardiness and/or unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade. Being present also means being engaged with the discussions and in-class exercises. Thus, I ask you to please turn off cell phones and keep laptops closed (except during in-class exercises).

Week One:

Introduction to World Building

Kazou Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, pp 3-7

Exercise: Find an example of world building at home

Step One: Rules and Assumptions

Readings: Adam Johnson, *The Orphan Master’s Son*, pp 7-10

Exercise: Revealing a hidden rule or assumption

Step Two: Backstory

Readings: Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, pp 23-29

Exercise: Putting some backstory into it

Step Three: Setting/Place

Readings: Toni Morrison, *Sula*, pp 3-6
Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*, pp 6-12

Exercise: Setting up your world
**Step Four: Character and Dialogue**

Readings:  
Colson Whitehead, *The Intuitionist*, pp 1-9  
Abraham Verghese, *Cutting for Stone*, pp 31-33

Exercise: Day in the life

**Step Five: Beginnings**

Readings:  
Italo Calvino, *The Baron in the Trees*, pp 7-10  
Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*, pp 3-11

Exercise: A whole new world

**Step Six: Plotting**

Reading: Ray Bradbury, “All Summer in a Day”

Exercise: Outlining and coloring in