Course Title: Writing the Short Story  
Course Code: FICT 42 W  
Instructor: Angela Pneuman

Course Summary:

In this course, we'll be reading the stories of established writers to explore the ways fiction operates, focusing on narrative elements like point of view, character, structure and more. We'll also be writing our own short stories and sharing them with the class for feedback in an online workshop setting. Brief weekly writing assignments will foster creativity and jump-start the writing process for longer work.

Each week you'll log on to Canvas for an introduction of the week’s focus (mini “lecture”), a reading assignment, a writing prompt, topics for online discussion and other resources like author interviews and relevant essays. You’ll also have an email from me every Sunday night that opens our discussion and reminds you of our ZOOM online live chat. For those of you new to ZOOM, I will provide detailed instructions during Week 1. I’ll also be taking a poll about the best times to hold our ZOOM meetings. ZOOM attendance is always optional, and we may pick two times and alternate week to week so that as many of you as possible can attend at least five ZOOM sessions.

As you complete your weekly short writing assignments and post them in Canvas, you may expect my feedback within three days. At times I’ll arrange you into response groups, so that you’ll have a chance to read and respond to one or two of your classmates’ assignments, and get a few responses to your own. We’ll all respond to the discussion questions—and each other—as schedules permit. When it’s time to workshop your full-length story in the second half of the class, you’ll post it for the entire class to read and give their feedback. Responses to everyone’s full-length stories in workshop during the second half of the class are crucial to the success of the workshop (mandatory).

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

Grade Options and Requirements:

• No Grade Requested (NGR)  
  o 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)  
  o Score will be determined by student attendance and participation.
• Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)  
  o Written work, as assigned by the instructor, will determine a student’s grade.

If you’d like to take the course for a grade, here’s the evaluation breakdown:

65% Completion of five of the weekly writing assignments and one full-length story  
35% Participation on discussion threads and thoughtful feedback on classmates’ full-length stories
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 Weekly Outline:

The first five weeks of class we'll focus on outside readings, discussion on the elements of fiction, and writing activities that explore these elements and spark the creative process.

The second five weeks will follow the same format, only we'll lower the number of outside readings and assignments so that you can prioritize your workshop submission and responses. Workshops are valuable not only for the direct feedback on individual work, but also for the helpful topics that arise through the story drafts-in-progress; new things for us all to consider while writing our own stories. During this second half, our (optional) weekly reading and writing assignments will also address additional concerns that come up when stories are well underway—revision ideas, endings and beginnings, narrative summary verses dramatic scene, etc. At the end of class, you have the option of turning in a revision of your full-length story for my review.

Week 1: Character—The Who’s Who of Story
Week 2: Point of View and Narrative Voice
Week 3: Setting (Time, Place, Culture)
Week 4: Conflict
Week 5: Dialog
Week 6: Plot and Tension
Week 7: The Writing Life
Week 8: Revision I, Beginnings and Endings
Week 9: Revision II, Opening up a Story
Week 10: Revision III, Letting Go, Giving it Time, Starting Over