Course Title: Short Story Intensive: Taking Our Stories to the Next Level
Course Code: FICT 200 W
Spring 2016
Instructor: Matthew Iribarne

Grading:
For those of you who are taking this course for a grade, the breakdown is as follows. Please note that you can change your grading status at any point before the final class meeting (Friday of the last week of class) by contacting the Stanford Continuing Studies Department.

Writing Exercises (Weeks 1-3): 20 %  
Full-length workshop piece (Weeks 4-8): 30 %  
Revision (Week 9): 20%  
Forum/Workshop Participation: 30%

Weekly Writing Assignments:
Each week, there will be several short (500 words or less) writing exercises based in some way upon the week's topic. You will be asked to take on one of these writing exercises, with the hope that it might guide you more deeply into your material. Please keep in mind these exercises are not meant to generate finished work (i.e., a complete story), but should be used as explorations and beginning points, as well as reentry points for pre-existing material. It’s my hope that these exercises will prompt you to go further, and that you might well continue with the work after you have started it. In addition, these exercises could well end up being one of the pieces you submit for the workshop, something that begs expansion and that you feel excited about. What’s important is that you feel inspired by the work, that you take on these exercises and they end up pushing you toward surprising places.
Your responses to the exercises will be posted in the forum by Thursday afternoon, so your classmates will have the opportunity to read and offer comments on them (I’ll post feedback as well). Although your comments on these exercises won’t necessarily be as in-depth as your comments on the full-length pieces we’ll be workshopping, it’s critical that we all become comfortable with reading and discussing one another’s work, and I'll be giving explicit instructions on what you should be looking for each week.

Assigned Texts:

*Deepening Fiction: A Practical Guide for Intermediate and Advanced Writers* by Sarah Stone and Ron Nyren

*The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction*, edited by Lex Williford and Michael Martone

Details for Weekly Reading Assignments:
Each week we’ll be reading a story from the assigned text and/or Canvas page. For the first three weeks we’ll be reading stories that will be posted on Canvas, and from thereon from the assigned text. Questions relating to the text will be posted each week, and you will be expected to answer these questions.

The Workshop:
Beginning in the third week of instruction, we shall begin workshopping one another’s work. Over the course of the term the entire class will read and offer in-depth, detailed comments on these pieces. The material you present for workshop can be a pre-existing story that you want to continue working on, or a new piece inspired by the writing exercises we will be doing in class; it’s entirely up to you.

Responses and suggestion in the workshop will be aimed at helping the author explore her/his work and getting aid in getting a manuscript to the NEXT step of development. Revision will be seen as an ongoing process of exploration. We will discuss stories always remembering to look at the larger intent of the work, pointing to elements of craft and how the writer might best use the tools discussed in the readings, where it is we can see the piece heading. The work will be examined for the balance of craft that makes it a successful portrayal of the author’s vision inside that particular world, how this draft could be developed to the next point in the creative process.

What’s most important, that we feel safe in exploring those areas that open up these areas in our own creative development, and we will establish guidelines in helping us achieve such a goal. This class is indeed all about pushing ourselves further as writers, and in order to do as much of this type of work, we’ll be sure to create an environment that makes this possible. In the next-to-last week of instruction you will also be asked to submit a revision of the story that was workshopped in class, to be placed in the forum. This work will not be expected to be finished. But it will be expected that it reflect consideration of commentary and suggestion that have come up in workshop discussion, with some evidence of the story evolving. We will all have a chance to look at this work and comment upon it.

Chat:
Near the end of each week, I will host an hour-long “chat” session via ZOOM. This session is an online “office hour” of sorts, but in a group context. Attendance is optional, and the session will be recorded if you can’t make it. This is where I’ll address your issues of craft and process, talk about these readings covered, and how we might apply them to our own material. We’ll discuss the exercises, questions that might have come up for you this past week as related to the readings and your own work, and continue the conversations regarding student work posted in the forum. As well, we will continue our discussions of the workshopped student pieces. My greatest hope is that we all
can nurture one another’s work here, gently push each other further. As well, that we can simulate the traditional classroom environment, all of us contributing to the conversation and coming up with answers and inspiration in a true dialogue that inspires.

**Your Weekly Responsibilities:**
Log onto Canvas, and read through the entire “Schedule” page. This page included my “lecture” for the week, as well as assignments, supplemental readings and links, and other reminders.

Read the assigned stories and stories in the text, and post your responses to the discussion section in the forum.

**Weeks 1-3:** Respond to ONE of the Writing Exercises, post your response in the forum, and read/comment on peer responses.

**Weeks 4-8:** Provide in-depth (roughly a page) of comments for each full-length workshop piece submitted in the forum, checking back later in the week to continue your involvement in the conversation.

One (full-length) short story *(2,000-5,000 words)*.

In-depth (roughly a page) of comments by all students, for each workshop story.

**Week 9:** Revision of the story that was put up for workshop.

Revision *(2,000-5,000 words)*. Commentary by all students, for each revised story.

**Week 10:** Participate in an hour-long “chat” session via ZOOM, hosted by me (optional).

**What I’ll Be Doing:**
Sending out a weekly email containing general class information and the upcoming reading and writing assignments.

Setting up the forums and moderating the discussion within. I will generally check in at least once every weekday, although I don’t generally post on weekends.

Reading and commenting on all student work in a positive and helpful manner, keeping in mind the goals of this class, to push ourselves toward deepening our fiction and taking it to the next level. For short exercises, my responses will be a couple of paragraphs long, with perhaps a few lines of technical advice. For the full-length pieces, I’ll provide a page or so of comments, to push you further into your work and help you continue with it.
Hosting the weekly online “chat” sessions.

**Weekly Preliminary Syllabus:**

**Week 1: Go for Broke (3/28-4/1)**
Developing and Complicating Characters, *Deepening Fiction*, pp. 1-16, pp. 18-27

*Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* by ZZ Packer

*Silver Water* by Amy Bloom

Character Exercise

**Week 2: How to Tell (4/4-4/8)**

*Winners on the Pass Lane* by Dagoberto Gilb

*Gooseberries* by Anton Chekhov

Point of View Exercise

**Week 3: A Little Bit About Voice, a Little Bit About Plot (4/11-4/15)**
The Uses of First and Second Person, *Deepening Fiction*, pp. 52-62, pp. 64-66

*Nilda* by Junot Diaz

Plot, Narrative Drive, *Deepening Fiction*, pp. 71-81

*Father* by John L’Heureux

Plot Exercise

**Week 4: Time After Time (4/18-4/22)**
Workshop Begins!
Time in Fiction, *Deepening Fiction*, pp. 94-102, pp. 104-109, pp.110-111

*Friends* by Lucia Berlin

Time Exercise

**Week 5: So That’s What My Story Is About (4/25-4/29)**

Workshop Continues!

Discovering the Story’s Subject: *Deepening Fiction*, pp. 113-129, pp. 131-132

*A Wagner Matinee* by Willa Cather

Discovery Writing Assignment

**Week 6: Setting and Detail (5/2-5/6):**

Workshop Continues!

Macrosetting, Microsetting, and Detail, *Deepening Fiction*, pp. 135-140, pp. 142-145, pp. 147-150

*A Temporary Matter* by Jhumpa Lahiri

Detail Exercise

**Week 7: RE/Search! Imagination! (5/9-5/13):**

Workshop Continues!


*Orientation* by Daniel Orozco

Context Exercise

**Week Eight: You Talkin’ to Me? (5/16-5/20):**

Workshop Continues!
Style and Dialogue, *Deepening Fiction*, pp. 170-179, pp. 181-192

*A Conversation with My Father* by Grace Paley

Style and Dialogue Exercise

**Week Nine: Revise, Revise, Revise (Drat!) (5/23-5/27):**

Revision: Beginnings, Middles, and Endings, *Deepening Fiction*, pp. 193-215

*Pilgrims* by Julie Orringer

Revision Exercise

All revisions due!

**Week Ten: You Made It, Some New Discoveries, Some New Friends, Your Fiction Deepened Realized! (5/30-6/3):**


Final exercise to keep us going, whereto from here!