Course Title: Leave Out the Boring Parts: Crafting Stories People Want to Read
Course Code: FICT 58 W
Instructor: Rachel Smith

Course Summary:
Weeks 1-4 of this course will focus on short story and craft readings (a tentative schedule is listed below), and short writing assignments. In weeks 5-10 we will workshop student stories and supplementary readings may be assigned. This is an online course. For more information about the Online Writing Program, visit continuingstudies.stanford.

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. Credit is given at 70% completion of requirements.
• Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  o Written work, as assigned by the instructor, will determine a student’s grade.
  o If you choose to receive a grade for this course, it will be calculated as follows. More than two absences from video meetings will affect your grade.
    30% Completion of a short story for workshop (up to 3,000 words)
    20% Response letters to your peers’ workshop stories
    20% Completion of writing exercises
    30% Participation

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.

Required Texts and Materials:
• The Modern Library Writer’s Workshop: A Guide to the Craft of Fiction
  by Stephen Koch
• A notebook that you dedicate to this course

Recommended Texts:
• Recommended craft texts:

Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
365 Lasuen St., Stanford, CA 94305
continuingstudies@stanford.edu
650-725-2650
- How Fiction Works, James Wood
- The Half-Known World, Robert Boswell
- The Writing Life, Annie Dillard (this one is—quite brilliantly—more narrative and lyrical)

- Recommended further reading in the short story:
  - A good anthology such as The New Granta Book of the American Short Story, ed. Richard Ford or The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction, eds: Lex Williford and Michael Martone
  - Annual anthologies, particularly The Best American Short Stories and The PEN/O. Henry Prize Stories
  - Story collections of any writer you especially connect with while taking this course

**Participation & Workshop:**
Although this course takes place online, we’ll be engaging in “discussion” throughout the quarter, and responding to one another’s work. The quality of our collective experience depends on your engagement. This is true for our examination of published stories as well as the writing workshop. You’ll get the most out of this class if you read all the stories carefully and read them twice—especially the workshop manuscripts. Workshop happens like this: After the first class you will sign up for a workshop date (this will be sometime during weeks 5-10). Your workshop story will be due exactly one week before that date. Each student will compose a short letter to you, giving shape and language to his or her reactions to your manuscript. You, in turn, will write short responses to your peers’ manuscripts, offering both encouragement and an honest accounting of your experience reading the work. Students often find that in writing these letters they deepen their own instincts and develop their critical vocabulary in ways that are invaluable to their own writing practice. In the workshop, which will take place through discussion forum and in our video meeting, we'll offer specific praise for aspects of the manuscript that we admire and we’ll also try to identify the story’s gaps, its confusions and dead spots, and its highest potential.

**Tentative Weekly Outline:**

**Week One**
“images that keep deepening and deepening”
“Paper Lantern,” Stewart Dybek (PC)
“The Nature and Aim of Fiction,” Flannery O’Connor

**Week Two**
“Oh, death! It’s so exciting!”
“Emergency,” Denis Johnson (PC)
“Bullet in the Brain,” Tobias Wolff (PC)
“Detail,” James Wood
“Image” exercise due for peer feedback (1-2 pages)

Week Three
“It was all there as soon as I began to work”
“Dance of the Happy Shades,” Alice Munro
“Shaping the Story,” Stephen Koch
“Irrelevance” exercise due for instructor feedback (1-2 pages)

Week Four
“I had to at least make it sound good”
“The Ant of the Self,” ZZ Packer
“Inventing Your Style,” Stephen Koch
Post first page of workshop story for peer critique

Week Five
Workshop 1

Week Six
Workshop 2

Week Seven
Workshop 3

Week Eight
Workshop 4

Week Nine
Workshop 5

Week Ten
Workshop 6