Course Title: A Doorway into a Dream: Beginnings in Fiction  
Course Code: WSP 69  
Instructor: Michael David Lukas

Due to its short format, this workshop may not be taken for Credit or a Letter Grade.

Tentative Readings:

Excerpt from *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Jennifer Egan

Excerpt from *Sula*, Toni Morrison

Excerpt from *Black Swan Green*, David Mitchell

Excerpt from *On Beauty*, Zadie Smith

Excerpt from *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie

The beginning of a short story or novel is a doorway between two worlds, the portal through which we are able to enter the “vivid and continuous dream” of fiction that John Gardner talks about in On Becoming a Novelist. It’s where you hook your reader, set the action in motion, introduce your characters, and set out the rules of your work. You can spend hours and hours working on a beginning—polishing, revising, trying to get it just right, then crumpling it up and starting over again—and for good reason. A good beginning is a fuse that burns through the entire work, while a lackluster one can sink the entire ship. In this course, we will examine a number of successful fiction beginnings—including the work of authors like Jennifer Egan, Toni Morrison, David Mitchell, Zadie Smith, and Salman Rushdie—picking them apart and discussing what makes them tick. We will then put these lessons to work through a series of writing exercises and mini-workshops. By the end of the course, students will have a better understanding of what makes a good beginning as well as a number of their own beginnings on which to build.