Preliminary Syllabus for OWC Novel III
Instructor: Val Brelinski

In this course, we will read two craft books, *Writing 21st Century Fiction* by Donald Maass and *Novel Voices* edited by Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais. We will directly explore the advice and exercises from both books and apply them to our own novels. Writing assignments will focus on helping students with page production while reading discussions and exercises will explore specific craft topics. We will workshop sections of each student’s novel, and we will close out the course with a discussion of revision, as well as constructing plans for the final stage of drafting in preparation for the one-on-one tutorial.

**GRADING:**
Breakdown is as follows:
- 50% workshop excerpts
- 50% participation (weekly responses to published and peer work)

**BRIEF SYLLABUS:**
Week 1: Introductions and High Impact Novels / Bausch & Baxter
Week 2: The Death of Genre / Brown & Dubus
Week 3: The Inner Journey / Dybek & Ford / Workshop
Week 4: The Outer Journey / Gaines & Gass / Workshop
Week 5: Standout Characters / Gautreax & Hustvedt / Workshop
Week 6: The Three Levels of Story / Jin & Johnson / Workshop
Week 7: Beautifully Written / Martin & McCracken / Workshop
Week 8: The 21st Century Novelist / Nelson / Workshop
Week 9: The Elements of Awe / Patchett / Workshop
Week 10: Revision and Moving Forward / Thon / Workshop

**OUR WEEKLY SCHEDULE:**
MONDAY: I will send out an email to the class introducing the week and directing you to the new Forum threads, including your Discussion Points about the week's readings and your weekly writing exercises.

WEDNESDAY: You should post your weekly writing assignment by Wednesday at 5pm (Pacific Time), although you may do so as early as you are ready.

THURSDAY: I will hold weekly office hours in the chat room on Thursdays (exact time to be determined). You're not required to come to office hours every week, and feel free to drop in for shorter periods of time within that hour. However, I do suggest you come to office hours at least once before posting your novel excerpt and once after you have received your feedback.

THURSDAY-FRIDAY: By Friday at 5pm, please post your workshop responses and answers to the weekly discussion questions. But again, I encourage you to join in these "conversations" throughout the week. Every Friday, I will post the Discussion Board topics for the following week for those who like to work over the weekend.
WORKSHOP RULES AND REQUIREMENTS:
For the short assignments of your group members, please use the following as a guide: give one positive assessment (something you like and why), give one comment on something you think is not working as well as it could (and why), one question about something that confused you or was unclear, and one suggestion for revision. You're shooting for a short to medium sized paragraph. Feel free to give more feedback than the above asks for.

For the workshop excerpts, please make your comments more detailed than on the short assignments. It is always a good idea to lead with praise. We are only human, and we are more likely to accept criticism once we have been assured that there were at least some positive aspects to our piece. Do not impose your own taste on the chapter you are reading. Think about whether or not the excerpt is working on its own terms. Here is the structure I recommend for your workshop comments: 1) Write a brief summary in which you explain what you think the chapter is trying to say. 2) Write a paragraph on the things you like most about the chapter. You might also mention particular sentences/phrases/words you liked. 3) Write a paragraph on the things you feel could be improved in revision. Focus on both large level concerns and small issues, as well. 4) Ask any lingering questions you had when you finished the excerpt.

GUIDELINES FOR READING DISCUSSIONS:
Good writers are good readers. Each week you will have a few discussion points related to the background reading. Again, I will monitor and moderate the discussion, but this is a place for you to discuss and even politely debate ideas of literature with your peers. Hopefully, the reading will feed into your own work. It may inspire you, but even if you dislike it (this may be inevitable—tastes differ!), it will be good to know why you want to take a different path. For Discussion you are expected, at the minimum, to address the questions posted each week and respond to at least one of your classmate’s postings (this could be a question, a different take on their reading, or even a further exploration about what they have said).