Quarter: Spring 2017  
Course Title: The Gripping Read: Plot and Suspense for Fiction and Nonfiction  
Course Code: EGL 319 W  
Instructor: Seth Harwood

Course Summary:  
Over the next weeks we’ll embark on a journey toward becoming stronger, more dynamic writers by working specifically on evaluating plotting and suspense in fiction and non-fiction. We’ll read writers’ thoughts on plotting, including Stephen King and Stephen Koch. Along the way, I hope to expose you to a range of different writing styles and equip you with the practical tools necessary to keep you writing for years to come.

In many ways, our focus in this class won’t be different from other workshops: we’ll focus on clean, clear writing and keeping readers engaged so the plot can develop naturally, drawing them in.

*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 Students must participate in at least 80% of the online discussions and/or the weekly Zoom sessions.

• Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)  
  o Students must participate in at least 80% of the online discussions and/or the weekly Zoom sessions, complete regular weekly assignments, and submit a longer piece of written work (to be discussed further in class).

*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:**

**Week 1**
- Topics covered: Intros, Getting to know one another, Orientation to Canvas and Zoom
- Story Starts: Beginning in the Middle
- Reading: Conroy: The Writer's Workshop, Scribner anthology story starts

**Week 2**
- Topics covered: Narrative Distance, Point of View and Connecting/Keeping the Reader
- Reading: Two stories and King “Toolbox”

**Week 3**
- Topics covered: Bringing the Heat: Writing Good Action (Verbs)
- Reading: King “What Writing Is” and “On Writing” Sec. 5-8 (163-195)

**Week 4**
- Topics covered: People on the Page: Building Action with Scenes, Dialogue in Scene
- Getting ready to start all-class story/excerpt workshops: Practice, Preferences and Preparation
- Reading: Handout (Elbow) and King “On Writing” Sec. 9-10 (195-208)

**Week 5**
- Topics covered: Who Knows What? - Building Suspense
- Reading: King “On Writing” Sec. 11-12 p 208-227 and student work. Stories at your discretion. (We'll discuss time/priorities)

**Week 6**
- Considering Plot: Outlines – Now or Later?, Three Act Structure, Climax
- Big questions: Do we believe in these? Can we trust them? How can they help us?
- Reading: Koch “Shaping the Story,” Story TBA

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Please contact the Stanford Continuing Studies office with any questions
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Week 7

• Protagonists and Antagonists: Desires—How want drives the what
• Major Dramatic Moment: Real or imagined?
• Reading: Student work, Story from Vintage Collection

Week 8

• Topics covered: Revision – The Real Work or a Necessary Evil?
• Outlines/Scenarios: “Seeing” the work
• Reading: Koch, “Working and Reworking”

Week 9

• Topic Covered: Research: We all need it sometimes. Or do we?
• Reading: Student Workshops

Week 10

• Your Author Career: Where to go from here
• Topics can include story submission, markets, online avenues to fan-building, author platform, etc.
• Reading: Student Workshops and Revision