

**Course Title: Who's Telling Your Story: A Study in Point of View**

**Course Code: EGL 25 W**

**Instructor: Lauren Kate**

### **Course Overview:**

This course will be a deep dive into Point of View. We will study the fundamental elements of story (plot, character, setting, world building, etc.) via the lens of POV, discovering together how what makes a story “work” changes from one writer to the next. We will read *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald to examine its famous auxiliary first person POV, and a selection from James Moffet’s anthology *Point of View* to see a breadth of possibilities. We’ll have two exciting guest speakers join us to share their experiences and expertise. Beginning in Week 3, two students will submit a short story or novel excerpt (500-5000 words) to be workshopped in our Zoom sessions (see below for more information on workshops).

We will read carefully and respond constructively to our peers’ writing. Thoughtful examination of others’ work is always a beneficial exercise to hone our own writing; we learn new things about our stories via our contributions to other writers’ work. We will give great consideration to ideas for revision (a personal passion of mine), so that by the end of the course you will know where you’d like to take your short story or novel excerpt next.

### **Student Expectations:**

- Completion of reading assignments and participation in discussions
- One short story or novel excerpt submitted for workshop (500-5000 words)
- Weeks 1-2: Three to four (total) writing exercises, approximately 500 words each
- Weeks 3-10, weekly engagement with your fellow students’ writing (written, during zoom sessions, or both)

### **Grade Options and Requirements:**

Students have these grading options for this course:

- **No Grade Requested (NGR)**
  - No work is required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided. (Not suitable for those requiring proof of attendance/completion.)

- **Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)**
  - Score will be determined by student participation. Credit is given at 70% completion of requirements.
- **Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)**
  - Letter grades will be assigned according to these general standards: A=Excellent (90-100%), B=Good (80-89%), C=Satisfactory (70-79%), D=Minimal Pass (60-69%).
  - Written work will largely determine a student's grade.
  - If you choose to receive a grade for this course, it will be calculated as follows.

30% Completion of a short story or novel excerpt for workshop (8-18 double-spaced pages, 12pt Times New Roman)

20% Response letters to your peers' workshop manuscripts

20% Completion of at least three writing exercises throughout the quarter

30% Participation\*

\*Discussion credit will be given to responses that are reflective and thoroughly address the prompt. Posting in the "General Class Comments and Question" thread does not count towards credit.

*\*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 Zoom Schedule\*:**

Thursday afternoons

*\*Please note that the Zoom schedule is subject to change depending on workshop availability*

## **Tentative Weekly Outline:**

### **Week 1: Introduction and Writing Practices**

In the first few weeks of the course, we'll read short stories in a variety of POVs from the Moffet collection. Corresponding discussion questions will help us practice "workshopping" the published fiction before we begin the fun of sharing your own stories and offering manuscript critiques to your peers. This week, our writing exercise will take place in our

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zoom session and you'll have the opportunity to share your writing (up to 500 words) and thoughts on the experience of the exercise.

- "Amahl and the Night Visitor" by Lorrie Moore
- "Come out in the Wilderness" by James Baldwin
- In-class writing exercise

## **Week 2: Which Person: Choosing First, Second, or Third**

This week we'll continue our Moffett reading and turn the focus of our discussion to the all-important choice of which person to write in, and the complexities offered therein. We'll be joined by a guest speaker, a published novelist whose works explore a variety of POVs.

- "Scales" by Louise Erdrich
- "Inez" by Merle Hodge

## **Week 3: What Do They Know: Choosing Omniscient or Limited/Workshops Begin**

This week we'll discuss how both ends of the "knowledge" spectrum operate in POV. Our guest speaker is a book packager (like a think tank for stories), who will share her experience helping writers find the most useful POV for their stories. We'll also make sure that everyone is prepared for next week's workshop and critiquing.

The heart of this class will be the workshops, which begin this week and will stretch through the penultimate week of the course. Workshops require giving and receiving constructive feedback, so please read carefully and be prepared to speak to your peers' stories. We will aim for candor, bravery, respect, and a sense of humor both in writing and critiquing. My goal is to facilitate rather than to dictate the discussion; student participation determines the success of these workshops.

- "The Circuit" by Francisco Jimenez
- "Powerhouse" by Eudora Welty
- Peer Workshops

## **Week 4: Reliability and Likeability/Workshops Continue**

- "A Bundle of Letters" by Henry James
- "My Side of the Matter" by Truman Capote
- Peer workshops

**Week 5: Tracking Interiority/Workshops Continue**

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, chapters 1-2
- Peer Workshops

**Week 6: Considering Character/Workshops**

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, chapters 3-4
- Peer Workshops

**Week 7: To Plot or to Plunge?/Workshops**

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, chapters 5-6
- Peer Workshops

**Week 8: The Balance of Show and Tell/Workshops**

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, chapters 7-end
- Peer Workshops

**Week 9: Distilling Dialogue/Workshops**

- From *Points of View: The Five Forty Eight* by John Cheever
- From *Points of View: Uglypuss* by Margaret Atwood
- Peer Workshops

**Week 10: On Revision**

Our focus during this last week will be revision. We'll do a final writing exercise geared toward revising the story you've workshopped in the class. Your reading for this week will address what to do after the first draft. In our final zoom session, you'll come with ideas for revision of your story and the group will offer feedback on one another's plans. We'll discuss next steps, including how to gain perspective on your own story, how to seek further critiques from writers, and (eventually) how to approach publication.

- Afterward of *Points of View*
- Planning for the future of your story

**Weekly Schedule:**

**MONDAY:** I'll send an email introducing the week and directing you to the new Forum threads, including your Discussion Points about the week's readings and any writing exercises due that week.

**WEDNESDAY:** In pre-workshop weeks, you'll post your weekly writing assignment by Wednesday at 5pm PST.

**THURSDAY:** We'll hold our zoom sessions from 1-2pm PST. I hope you'll join us, though you're not required to come every week and should feel free to drop in for shorter periods of time if needed.

**FRIDAY:** I encourage you to join in our forum conversations throughout the week, but please do post your workshop responses and discussion question answers by Friday at 5pm.

**SUNDAY:** Once workshops begin in Week 3, you will submit your story or novel excerpt by 5pm PST on the Sunday before your Thursday workshop.

**A Final Note:**

Throughout the course, please reach out to me should you need extra time on an assignment, a brief break from the course expectations, etc. I'm happy to work with you to make the course suitable to your needs and time constraints, while also ensuring that all students receive the feedback they signed up for.