

ENGL 3510-002 – Writing Fiction
TuTh 12:25PM - 1:45PM
Spring 2025
GC 2575

Instructor: Jacob Yordy

Office Hours: Monday, 1:45-2:45PM (LNCO 3870), other availability by appointment/Zoom

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Course Description:

Writing Fiction is a mid-level fiction writing (and reading) workshop course in which you'll write and critique original short stories. You'll also read (and watch a couple) established writers across fictional forms in order to learn and discuss craft, and how fictions work, move us, and why/how they are significant.

More than anything else, we'll seek to address the agentic capacity of fiction: what is it? What does it do? Why do we like, use, and encounter fictions the way we do? How do things which are fictitious make actual changes in the real world?

Course Outcomes and Objectives

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Learn fundamental terminology and concepts of fiction
- Analyze a variety of fictions with a critical eye towards their agentic capacities
- Experiment with various technical elements of fiction with weekly writing exercises
- Hone advanced writing critique through peer workshops
- Write at least two complete fiction stories/excerpts to be discussed in a rigorous workshop format, as well as one incomplete fiction or fiction-adjacent thing in a more inquisitive/exploratory workshop

Course Expectations

Students will be expected to:

- Be here (present for class)
- Be nice (balance critiques with an iteration of future drafts in mind)
- Be good (participate in reading, reading discussions, writing, and workshopping, all in good faith)
- Be interested (engage critically, honestly, and inquisitively with course materials)

Course Policies:

No late workshop work

(we don't want to waste our comrades' time)

No AI stuff

(trust that I know what it is and is not, not permissible here fr)

No electronics except when specifically invoked/permitted

(no texting, no emailing, no vine-ing)

Required Texts:

There are no required texts that you must buy. Instead, you'll be reading (mostly)

stories I provide via Canvas. You will need access to a printer to print off peer work (with your written in-line comments on said work), as well as your response letters to peer work.

Grading:

Participation: 30%
(included therein)

- Critique, texts for class & colleagues' work
- Contribution to discussion, texts for class & colleagues' work
- Active engagement in class material
- Preparation for class: printed comments and letters on peer stories, notes for discussion on stories, not being on your phone/tablet/laptop/watch, bringing writing notebook/computer for in-class writing
- Attendance

Workshop: 15%

Writing Logs: 10%

Individual Conference: 5%

Literary Term Presentation: 5%

Comments and Questions (for discussion): 10%

Final Portfolio: 25%

Grading Scale:

A 94-100

A- 90-94

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62

E <60

University Policies

Classroom Civility Statement: The stories we read may cover controversial topics in the class. It is essential that we maintain a safe and constructive classroom environment, where students with a variety of different perspectives can feel comfortable sharing their ideas and reasons for those ideas. Please make sure to be respectful as a speaker, and a listener, a critiquer, and a writer. Give classmates the benefit of the doubt, especially if they are saying something with which you do not agree, and if a reading is open to different interpretations, choose the most positive. Feel free to ask for clarifications, reasons, unstated assumptions, and evidence. While regarding texts we read for class, you may be incisive, when interpreting and discussing comrades' work, be constructive.

Keep in mind that we may encounter things that make us somewhat uncomfortable in stories — as much may be a part of, or one of, the many functions of art. If you wish to provide trigger warnings for your stories, feel free to do so.

Cheating/Plagiarism: Students are responsible for knowing and understanding the University's Code of Conduct as it pertains to plagiarism: <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html>. In short, when you draw upon any source (class notes, an article, a website, a textbook, etc.), you must cite that source whether you are quoting from it directly or only paraphrasing it. The basic idea here is that you can draw on someone else's idea(s), but you cannot spin someone else's idea(s) as your own. Any assignment with evidence of plagiarism will be assigned a zero, and the student's action will be reported to the Dean.

Keep in mind that self-plagiarism is still plagiarism — work must be significantly modified if turned in for a previous class, writing or otherwise.

Disability Services: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability and Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, 801.581.5020 (V/TDD). CDA will work with you and the professor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the CDA.

University Safety Statement: The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

Addressing Sexual Misconduct: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

Wellness Statement: Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at www.wellness.utah.edu or 801-581-7776.

Resource Centers: If you are a student veteran, the U of Utah has a Veterans Support Center located in Room 161 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. Please visit their website for more information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events and links to outside

resources: <http://veteranscenter.utah.edu/>. Please also let me know if you need any additional support in this class for any reason.

If you are an English language learner, please be aware of several resources on campus that will support you with your language and writing development. These resources include: the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu/>); the Writing Program (<http://writing-program.utah.edu/>); the English Language Institute (<http://continue.utah.edu/eli/>). Please let us know if there is any additional support you would like to discuss for this class.

Inclement Weather:

Classes are rarely canceled beyond University-mandated closings. In extreme cases, however, I may cancel class. In these cases, you'll be notified by email before class.

Preliminary Course Schedule

Readings are to be done before/by the date that they occur on syllabus. We have a reading due before class every day; comments and questions must be prepared for the reading discussed that day.

Assignments appear on the day that they are due; workshop stories are due exactly one week before they are to be discussed.

Week 1: Introduction, Workshop Sign Up, In-Class Writing, Fiction Definitions/Presentation

Week 2: Ancient Fictions and Funky Stuff

Week 3: Historical (Fictional?) Documents

Week 4: Fictions Which Surprise Us

Week 5: We Examine Fictional Genres, in a Brief and Ill-Fitting Way, Workshop 1

Week 6: Those Which Would Be, or Are, American Classics, Workshop 1

Week 7: Real Fictions That Actually Happened, Bechdel Test, Workshop 1

Week 8: Fictions That Smell Like the Familiar — It's (Only Ever) Onions and Garlic in Butter

Week 9: On the Importance of Excellent (or Apropos) Language, Language/Words presentation, Workshop 2

Week 10: Fictions of Consumption, Workshop 2

Week 11: Boring Fictions (and Why/How Are They Boring), Workshop 2

Week 11: Aboutness in Six Ways: What *Whats* is This Fiction About?

Week 12: What is this? BC it's *Like* a fiction... ; Workshop 3

Week 13: A Counternarrative, Workshop 3

Week 14: Fictions With Stresses, Workshop 3

Week 15: :(Wrap-up Week, Discussion: What do Fictions do, How, and Why?, readings TBD

Final Portfolios are Due Tuesday, April 29