

ENGLISH 241: GRADUATE WORKSHOP IN FICTION WRITING JOHN ENGELL John.Engell@sjsu.edu
FALL 2013 CLARK 129 T 16:00-18:45 Office Hours: T 14:00-15:30 and by apt. 924-4499

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In English 241 you will write and workshop two pieces of your fiction. You will also comment orally and in writing on the fiction written by your classmates, give one “formal” oral presentation with written handout related to setting in fiction, and read and respond in writing to published works of fiction. The total length of your two completed works of fiction must be at least 25 pages, neither under 10 pages. This is a PORTFOLIO workshop. By semester’s end your Portfolio will include two complete works of fiction—either two stories or one story and one chapter from a novel. The Portfolio should include not only the final draft of each of these two pieces of fiction but also the earlier draft of each that we workshoped in class. The Portfolio may also include additional drafts of each work of fiction.

In addition, your Portfolio will contain the following:

- workshop comment sheets prepared by class members on each of your two pieces of fiction;
- the handout you prepared for your required class presentation;
- your written responses to assigned readings.

A repeated (but not excessively dominant) theme of the class will be the relationship of setting to other elements of fiction—plot, character, style, tone, description, narration, dialogue, etc.

COURSE GOAL & STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

The course goal is very simple and very demanding—to make each of you a better writer of fiction. You should dedicated every minute you spend in the workshop and every minute you spend doing assignments for the workshop to this goal. The Learning Objective is, of course, the same as the goal. You will reach your goals and objectives by writing and constantly revising your fiction, by assisting your workshop mates in revising their fiction, and by critically reading and responding to the assigned works of published fiction. When doing all of these things, you will focus on issues of WRITING CRAFT.

REQUIRED READING:

Armistead Maupin. TALES OF THE CITY. Harper Perennial, 2007.

Peter Maravelis, ed. SAN FRANCISCO NOIR. Akashic Books, 2005.

Gennifer Choldenko. AL CAPONE DOES MY SHIRTS. Puffin, 2004.

Fae Myenne Ng. BONE. Hyperion, 2008.

Andrew Sean Greer. THE STORY OF A MARRIAGE. Picador, 2009.

NOTE: The bookstore was unable to purchase copies of BONE. Some are available on-line from Amazon and elsewhere. We will use BONE as a text only if you are able to purchase it.

GRADING:

Your grade will be based on the quality of your Portfolio. Your two pieces of original fiction will constitute 80% of your grade (40% each). The other elements of your Portfolio will constitute 20% of your grade. Portfolios and all previous workshop assignments must be completed on time.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

The instructor will not tolerate instances of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism (representing the work of others as your own) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are required to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. You must receive my approval to use any work done in this workshop in any other workshop or class. (And, of course, you must receive the approval of the instructor of that workshop or class, as well.) See Academic Integrity Policy S07-2.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment to see me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the Accessible Education Center (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec>.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The atmosphere of the workshop should be always collegial. But each writer should expect to receive comments from both me and fellow students that suggest weaknesses in the drafts being workshoped. Our purpose is to help each other become better writers, not through questioning the subject of any given piece of fiction, but rather through improving its craft.

COURSE CALENDAR:

NOTE: All workshop meetings are 16:00-18:45 in Clark 129. If for any reason you must miss a workshop meeting, you must let me know beforehand by email or by phone. Full attendance in this kind of class is essential.

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| Sept. 3 | Greetings. The Syllabus and requirements. Lengthy discussion. |
| Sept. 10 | Discussion of elements of fiction and setting. Reading: Maupin. TALES OF THE CITY |
| Sept. 17 | Further discussion of elements of fiction; Reading: TALES OF THE CITY |
| Sept. 24 | Begin workshoping first round of fiction; Reading: TALES OF THE CITY. |
| Oct. 1 | Continue workshoping first round of fiction; Reading: Selected stories (TBA) from Maravelis, ed. SAN FRANCISCO NOIR |
| Oct. 8 | Continue workshoping first round of fiction; Reading: Selected stories (TBA) from SAN FRANCISCO NOIR |
| Oct. 15 | Complete workshoping first round of fiction; Reading: Choldenko. AL CAPONE DOES MY SHIRTS |
| Oct. 22 | Oral Presentations on Place; Reading: AL CAPONE DOES MY SHIRTS |
| Oct. 29 | Begin workshoping second round of fiction; Reading: Ng. BONE (if available) |
| Nov. 5 | Continue workshoping second round of fiction; Reading: BONE. (if available) |
| Nov. 12 | Continue workshoping second round of fiction; Reading: BONE. (if available) |
| Nov. 19 | Complete workshoping second round of fiction; Reading: Greer. TALES OF A MARRIAGE |
| Nov. 26 | Discussion of student fiction, of Portfolios, of all aspects of the workshop.
Reading: Greer. TALES OF A MARRIAGE |
| Dec. 3 | Each student Reading a favorite passage (1-2 pages) written for this workshop.
Discussion: what works and why in relation to craft |
| Dec. 10 | PORTFOLIOS due: absolute deadline. I will accept Portfolios beginning on 3 December but must have each of them by the beginning of the workshop on 10 December.
CELEBRATION. |