

English 204A: Creative Writing (fiction)
3 Credits (Writing Intensive)
T-R 1:00-2:15 (63091)

INSTRUCTOR: Robert Barclay

OFFICE: 'Ākoakoa 236

OFFICE HOURS: M,T,W,Th 8:00 to 11:00, or by appointment

CONTACT: rbarclay@hawaii.edu; 224-3019

EFFECTIVE DATE: Spring 2015

WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT

Windward Community College is committed to excellence in the liberal arts and career development; we support and challenge individuals to develop skills, fulfill their potential, enrich their lives, and become contributing, culturally aware members of our community .

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

English 204A (fiction) introduces students to the basic practices and principles involved in the writing and publication of short stories and novels.

PREREQUISITE: C or higher in ENG 100 or consent of the instructor.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:

- 1. View the world as a writer, with an eye for detail and an ear for dialogue**
- 2. Exercise the imagination as a tool for creation**
- 3. Write short stories or novels**
- 4. Submit writing for publication**
- 5. Gain and deliver useful writing feedback**

DISABILITIES ACCOMODATION STATEMENT

If you have a physical, sensory, health, cognitive, or mental health disability that could limit your ability to fully participate in this class, you are encouraged to contact the Disability Specialist Counselor to discuss reasonable accommodations that will help you succeed in this class. Ann Lemke can be reached at 235-7448, lemke@hawaii.edu, or you may stop by Hale 'Ākoakoa 213 for more information.

COURSE CONTENT

Good fiction at its core is a precise and vivid evocation of meaningful experience (some experiences being very real, others highly fantastic or surreal). Our goal in this course will be to create these meaningful experiences, using our imaginations and an understanding of the basic elements of fiction: conflict, character arc, detail, dialogue, plot, style, and theme. We will begin by studying these elements, seeing how they operate in works of fiction, and then, considering the advice of seasoned writers, we will create original works of fiction that we will share and critique in a standard writing workshop format. Finally, we will attend to the process of publishing fiction, including working with or without a literary agent.

ASSESSMENT TASKS AND GRADING

You must complete ALL assignments to pass this class. No exceptions. Assignments that do not meet minimal proficiency (receiving an F grade) must be redone to receive passing credit.

Two writing conferences with instructor: no points, but mandatory to pass the class

Quizzes on readings: 10%

Paper and presentation on dialogue and description: 10%

Two short stories and copies submitted to Rain Bird: 10% each

One cover letter: 10%

Portfolio, including revised final drafts and Self Analysis: 50%

TEXTBOOKS

Beyond Folly

Gotham Writers Workshop: Writing Fiction

Various Handouts

Attendance Policy

This is not a correspondence course. There are **no excused absences**. Schedule medical appointments outside of class times. You are required to show up and participate. Failure to do so will be reflected in your daily quiz score and result in a lowering of your grade. If, for whatever reason, you think you will miss more than five classes this semester, then this is not the class for you. **There will be no make-up quizzes and no extra credit.** Six absences (amounting to missing three full weeks of the semester) lowers your final grade by 15%. Seven absences lowers it another 15%. **Eight absences (or missing four weeks of the semester) results in an F final grade.** As such, you will be wise to not miss class except for real illnesses or emergencies. **If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to contact your classmates** to find out what you missed, what changes have been made to assignments, and what you need to be prepared for the next class. If it is a day that we are conducting peer reviews of your drafts, you are still responsible to get that done. If life prevents you from regularly attending, then drop the course. If life prevents you from attending after the drop deadline, contact the Dean with proof of a valid excuse (medical emergency, death in the family) and you will receive a late withdrawal without penalty. Valid excuses for late withdrawal do not include employer or child care demands. **Bottom line: you must attend class, arrive on time, and be prepared to contribute. If you don't think you can do that, then please drop the course.**

CONTENT WARNING

Fiction, as does the world it represents, sometimes contains violence, sexuality, profanity, depravity, and other graphic content that might offend you. As such, there will be no restrictions on content in this course. I hope, though, that content won't be that offensive by modern standards, but if you would prefer not to risk exposing yourself to these things in reading, then this is not the class for you.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you do plagiarize, you will be dis-enrolled from the course, receive a failing grade, and the incident will be filed within your permanent academic record.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Each story assignment requires you to turn in three drafts: a rough draft with logline, a final draft and a revised final draft. The rough drafts must be complete drafts, and **final drafts must be typed in MLA format, with one inch margins in 12 point Times New Roman font.** The revised final draft will address and correct all punctuation, grammar, and content issues that I mark on the final draft. Drafts are due on the dates specified. Late drafts lose one letter grade. Drafts more than a week late will lose two letter grades. Additionally, if your paper is late, you need to turn in approximately 20 copies, one for each student in the class. I will copy the stories turned in on time. You must complete at least 16 pages of finished writing in order to pass this class. If the stories you write bring you short of that, then you may need to turn in a pair of stories, rather than just one, on the due date. **Not completing all assignments will result in a failing grade for the entire course.** Do not submit work as email attachments, or send email drafts to me for editing. If you want help with any of your papers, see me during my office hours or make an appointment. I am always happy to help.

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

1) TWO CONFERENCES WITH INSTRUCTOR

For each of the two short stories that you write, you are required to meet with me for a short conference. We will discuss its merits, where it might be improved, and anything else you wish. Outside of these conferences, you are encouraged to meet with me as much as you like.

2) QUIZZES

For each day that we discuss assigned readings, the class will begin with a short easy quiz that will serve as an honesty check on the readings and as a prompt to begin discussions.

3) PAPER AND PRESENTATION ON MONOLOGUE AND DESCRIPTION: DUE FEB. 5.

Monologue (1 page minimum)

In order to help you write with a strong voice, I'm going to ask you to write a monologue. To do so, you need to pay close attention to how people actually speak. Beginning writers often write dialogue that is stiff, formally grammatical (like writing), but this is not the nature of real conversations. The trick is to reproduce speech as authentically as possible, without it calling too much attention to itself. *Amo teach ya how.*

Taking Cataluna's monologues as a model of written speech, write one of your own. You might be able to produce this from your own imagination, but for a prompt I suggest you go someplace where you can overhear an interesting person speaking: maybe in a fast food place, on a bus, at a bar, maybe even at home. When you do, write down what you hear and then use your imagination to create the monologue (**JUST ONE PERSON SPEAKING, not two or more, and do not combine it with narration**). The trick is to listen carefully. How do they pronounce words? What is their syntax? Are there interesting or unique phrases?

Description ½ page minimum

Good description is a balancing act: not enough can make reading an empty, confusing experience, and too much can drive a reader to boredom. The trick is to pick and choose just the right details to describe. The way to do this is to write **THROUGH THE SENSES OF A CHARACTER AND TO THE SENSES OF THE READER**. Recognize how the human eye operates: sometimes perceiving a space or person in large to small detail, and sometimes the other way around. What strikes your eye first, second? What is unique or interesting? What other senses are stimulated. Do you really need to say what color the chairs are? How much effort should you put into describing the way the birds shuddered before they took flight from the tree? For this assignment, find someplace visually interesting (actually, with the proper rendering, just about anyplace can be made interesting). Now write down what you see, especially focusing on small, interesting details. For example, the odd tooth marks on the nub of a pencil behind your teacher's ear. Keep in mind that this is not necessarily a "nature" exercise, or simply a visual one. For example: "Outside in the night a truck downshifts to take the hill. Its radio searches for a station, finds a sermon, and then the truck is gone, leaving the smell of exhaust and the sound of dogs fighting somewhere down the road." You might be describing physical or metaphorical details as well. For example: "She took a few steps after the bus she had just missed, and then she just stared at it leaving, as if a man twice her size had just sucker-punched her crippled sister." Write down as much detail as you can, so that later you can type out a nice tight descriptive paragraph, something you might imagine on the first page of a story like the examples given in class. Avoid adjectives and adverbs as if they will give you a disease: "The beautiful waves splashed glisteningly as they gracefully reached gleaming white beach." UGH.

Presentation:

Writers are often asked to read their work to an audience. As such, many writers suggest writing with this in mind. They believe it makes for stronger writing to be aware of how your words will sound out loud. As such, you will pick one of the above **and read it out loud to the class.**

4) TWO SHORT STORIES: ROUGH DRAFT FOR ONE DUE FEB. 10. FINAL DRAFT DUE FEB. 17. ROUGH DRAFT FOR TWO DUE MAR. 19, FINAL DRAFT DUE Apr 2.

On each of the two specified dates, you must turn in a short story of about 5-7 pages. If your story is not a minimum of five pages, you must write another one to meet the minimum requirement. There are no restrictions on content, but **your story must be written in a controlled, single point of view**. Using what you have learned about imagination and the elements of fiction, write to impress. You will take each short story through three drafts. The first will be a rough draft that you will have peer-reviewed in class, and it must include a logline. This draft, after revision, will lead to a final draft. The final draft will be graded and returned, then you will create a revised final draft, addressing the feedback you received.

Try not to write silly stories set in silly worlds or children's stories with talking animals, etc. Don't write a personal essay, telling us what happened to you one time, but feel free to use personal experience as inspiration—just don't be chained to it. Write a story that an adult might like to read, and try to make it fit this year's Rain Bird theme.

On the due date, turn in two copies of the final draft—one with the rough draft and peer review attached (stapled in that order), and one that is just the final draft with no name on it. In addition, it is mandatory that you turn in a Rain Bird application form, so that your story can be considered for publication. If your paper is late, or you fail to deliver as below, you need to turn in approximately 20 copies, one for each student in the class. Turn in as follows:

(Stapled)	(not stapled)	
Final draft (with name)	Final draft (no name)	Rain Bird Entry Form
Rough Draft		
Peer Review		

Your story will be work-shopped in class, you will receive a review sheet from each classmate, and I will also mark it up for you with suggestions for improvement. Take this work-shopped, feed-backed, marked-up draft and create a revised final draft and place all of the drafts in your portfolio.

5) ONE COVER LETTER TO A PUBLISHER: DUE MAY 5 IN PORTFOLIO

Draft a sample cover letter to a publisher.

6) PORTFOLIO: DUE MAY 5

In a three ring binder, compile every draft of every writing assignment you do this semester. Include at the end a **two-page self-analysis of your writing**, analyzing basic grammar and punctuation and how you perform with regards to the various elements of fiction. Do you have strong plots? Vibrant characters? Vivid descriptions? Meaningful themes? What do you do well? What do you need to work on? Lastly, look at the Student Learning Outcomes for this course. Address each one, one at a time, and explain how well you believe you have you achieved each one. Also, for each one, give yourself a score on a scale of one to ten.

Portfolio Checklist

Checklist (make a copy of this page and check all items included)

Short Paper on Monologue and Description: 2 Pages

Story One: 6 Pages

Revised Final Draft

Final Draft

Rough Draft

Grade Sheet

Story Two: 6 Pages

Revised Final Draft

Final Draft

Rough Draft

Grade Sheet

Letter to Agent or Publisher: 1 page

Self Analysis: 2 Pages

Final Draft

Rough Draft

Peer Review

WORKSHOP POLICY

Most of this semester will be spent discussing each other's writing. You will read up to three stories per class on the workshop days, and you will come prepared to discuss them. Additionally, you will fill out a workshop review sheet for each piece, prior to coming to class that day. **DO NOT FILL THEM OUT IN CLASS.** I will begin each discussion and keep it moving, but for the discussion to work you need to bring your completed workshop review sheet so that you can contribute. And speak up!

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN IN THE WORKSHOP

- 1: The writer is in the room.
- 2: Insulting or mean comments will ruin the dynamic we need to help each other.
- 3: Being overly sensitive to criticism will also ruin the dynamic we need.
- 4: Refrain from commenting when we are discussing one of your pieces.
- 5: If you have issues about your pieces you want addressed, let me know ahead of time.
- 6: This is not a competition.
- 7: Recognize that you and your peers are beginning writers—some work may be very lacking in quality, and very hard to read. No problem. That's what we're here to help each other with.
- 8: Our goal is to help each other.
- 9: Our goal is to help each other.
- 10: The best way to approach saying something negative about a piece is to first find something to praise about it, and then to phrase the negative comment in a way that gets us talking about a way to fix the problem.

Short Story Peer Review

- 1) Is the story written from a controlled, single point of view? If not, help the author rework the story until it is.

- 2) Is the setting detailed and specific enough to draw you into the story? If not, how might the setting become better established? Or is there too much description? What might be taken out?

- 3) A good story moves through specific scenes, complete with vivid details and dialogue. Does the story have specific, detailed scenes, or is it just generally narrated, almost operating like an essay instead of a story? Help the author create better scenes.

- 3) Insure that dialogue is not more than one speaker per paragraph.

- 4) What theme is the story communicating to you, or what theme might be developed?

- 5) Does the protagonist have an arc? How would you describe it? If there is no arc, what could it be?

- 6) Help the author improve his or her logline, and write it here. If you can't possibly improve it, write it as is.

- 7) **Author's comments:** On the back, state five things in five full sentences on how **you, the author**, plan to improve this story.

Story Evaluation Sheet
Subtract 10% if late, and 10% if it's short of five full pages.
(Stories less than four full pages will not be graded)

Proper MLA Format 50%

12 pt. Times New Roman Font

Double Spacing Throughout

One Inch Margins

Headings (name, page #)

Stapled

Assignment Criteria 50%

Story has a single point of view 10%

Dialogue does not exceed one speaker per paragraph 10%

Character (Internal Arc) 5%

Plot (External Arc) 5%

Vivid Details 5%

Peer Review 5%

Good Title 5%

First Draft is a Complete Draft, and Final Draft Shows Strong Improvement 5 %

Quality of Writing (one point off for each of the following)

Run-ons

Comma Splices

Fragments

Spelling Errors

Other Grammatical Errors or Missing or Incorrect Punctuation

Workshop Review Sheet: (Story title)_____

What did you like best about this story in the following areas? Be very specific.

1) Character (internal arc)

2) Description/Setting

3) Dialogue

4) Plot (external arc)

What did you like least about this story? Be very specific.

1) Character (internal arc)

2) Description/Setting

3) Dialogue

4) Plot (external arc)

Write a logline for this story

What would you suggest for improvement?

On the back, write whatever questions come to mind concerning this story—could be something relative to writing in general.