

**CAMOSUN COLLEGE - COURSE OUTLINE - WINTER 2009  
ENGLISH 254 (01)**

**CREATIVE WRITING: FICTION 2**

**Instructor:** Christine Kirchner

**Office:** Paul 226

**Phone:** (250) 370-3329

**Email Address:** [kirchner@camosun.bc.ca](mailto:kirchner@camosun.bc.ca)

**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays: 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. or by appointment.

**Class Meets:** Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1:00 p.m. – 2:50 p.m. in Fisher 302.

**Workload:** 4 hrs. in class; 6 hrs. out of class per week; 14 weeks; 3 credits

**Prerequisite:** English 154.

**Pre or Corequisite:** English 160, 164, or 165

**Course Description:** This course offers students a chance to further explore and develop their skills and possible goals in writing prose fiction. English 254 focuses on developing the student's ability to structure stories, create characters, experiment with point of view, develop style and voice, and prepare stories for publication.

**Texts: Required**

Janet Burroway and Elizabeth Stuckey-French (2007) 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*.

English 254 Course Package.

**Recommended**

An 8 ½ X 11 Hilroy notebook, **80 pages**, three-hole punched. It will clip easily into your binder along with your course package, and will serve as your **writing journal**.

A 3-ring binder.

Muriel Harris (2008) 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, *Pearson Hall Reference Guide* or any good reference grammar style manual.

and

Any good collegiate dictionary.

**Learning Outcomes:**

**1. Write** stories that are clear, provocative, and well-crafted.

- Create characters that are credible, convincing, and consistent.
- Write plots that have continuity and consistency.
- Write dialogue that is related to characterization, action, and plot.
- Write compelling description that appeals to all senses.
- Use perspective and point of view effectively.
- Use figures of speech effectively.

**2. Critically analyze** stories by professional writers and peers.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of structure, characterization, plot, point of view, and style in a range of stories.
- Compare a variety of narrative styles and forms, including micro-fiction.
- Conduct appropriate research to give a piece of fiction credibility.
- Examine and evaluate the structure and limitations of different publication media (literary magazines, on-line magazines, anthologies, newspapers, etc.).

**3. Submit** a story submission for publication.

- Identify appropriate magazines and the stories they publish.
- Obtain publication guidelines via print or Internet.
- Write a cover letter and a brief biography.
- Submit a query for a manuscript to a publisher.

**Class Format:**

A typical class consists of a brief lecture, several writing samples (or a complete story) to illustrate a specific writing principle, an-class exercise to try out the principle, and discussion about “what happened.” Some of the classes will be based on a discussion of student work. You will take part in a number of peer critiques.

**Course Package and Text:**

The course package includes information about homework assignments, helpful articles about writing, and stories or samples of fiction that will be used in class to illustrate specific concepts. It is expected you will bring your course package and text to every class in order to facilitate study.

In *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, Janet Burroway and Elizabeth Stuckey-French are writing to a serious and committed audience. This course will be highly dependent upon the text as it includes theory, examples in the form of short stories, and suggestions for practice.

**Evaluation:** each assignment will be preceded by *detailed* instructions:

<b>1. Final Drafts:</b>		
* Story #1 is due on Thurs., Jan. 29		
* Story #2 is due on Thurs., Feb. 12		
* Story #3 is due on Thurs., Feb. 26		
* Story #4 is due on Thurs., Mar. 19		
* Story #5 is due on Tues., Mar. 31		
* Story #6 is due on Thurs., Apr. 9	6 X 5%	= 30%
<b>2. Midterm Portfolio of Short Stories (due on Tues., Mar. 10)</b>		30%
<b>3. Midterm Portfolio of Short Stories (due on Fri., Apr. 17)</b>		30%
<b>4. Participation (class, writing workshops, attendance, etc.--ongoing)</b>		10%
		<hr/>
		100%

Detailed instructions accompany each assignment and are available in your course package. Your work will be graded on how well you have met the specific requirements of each assignment. Basic skills of grammar, spelling, and punctuation must be in place.

**Grading System:**

A+ =	90-100%	B-	=	70-72%
A =	85-89%	C+	=	65-69%
A- =	80-84%	C	=	60-64%
B+ =	77-79%	D	=	50-59%
B =	73-76%	F	=	Below 50%
		I	=	Incomplete

**Students' Responsibilities:**

Everyone learns differently. It is up to you to take an active part in the classes and to make sure you are getting the encouragement, criticism, evaluation, and information that you need. Please do not hesitate to email or phone

me if you have any questions.

2

1. Please keep copies of *drafts* as well as final stories. I will ask to see the *process* of the work, not just the final product. Portfolios include in-class writing, as well as earlier drafts and critiques from your instructor and peers.
2. You should ALWAYS keep a copy of EVERYTHING you hand in for evaluation. Accidents sometimes happen and work may be misplaced.
3. **You must complete all assignments to receive a grade in this course.** Hand work in on time (at the beginning of class on the due date). Late submissions must be negotiated and will be penalized 5% per day, counting weekends, up to a maximum of five (5) weekdays, after which they will not be accepted.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of MLA documentation. Plagiarism is a violation of academic ethics which results in serious penalties; therefore, it is vital to give credit where credit is due. Use research/reference materials to support your ideas, not replace them, and make sure your documentation is accurate. For College policies regarding plagiarism, see Student Conduct Policy, "Academic Misconduct," in the Camosun Student Calendar.
5. Your attendance and participation are required. If you miss too many classes, you will be asked to withdraw from the course. Assignments will not be accepted from students who miss more than 25% of classes (7 classes).

### **Instructor's Responsibilities:**

The instructor will adapt the course appropriately, function as a senior learner, share her own ideas and writing, stimulate and support the learning of others, give every opportunity for success, provide clear instructions and examples for assignments, comment helpfully, return work promptly, and treat students with respect, fairness, and honesty.

### **Format Requirements for Assignments:**

1. All homework must be typed.
2. In the left-hand corner, please include your name, my name (Christine Kirchner), English 254, and the date. In addition, each finished story should have a thoughtful title. (No separate title pages, please.) Centre the title.
3. All assignments should be written in 12 pt. Font and Times New Roman style. Be sure your printer produces type at least as dark as the type on this page. Please double space your work and number your pages.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

\* All readings must be done ahead of class. Please come to class ready to discuss them.

**Tues., Jan. 6**

### **Week One**

Course Introduction

\* Welcome to the class

### **What is Fiction?**

**Thurs., Jan. 8**

### **Why I Write**

**READ:** Chapter 1, "Whatever Works: The Writing Process" pp. 1-15 (*Writing Fiction*).

Joan Didion's essay, "Why I Write" pp. 18-22 (*Writing Fiction*).

\* Freewriting Assignments: images, random elements.

**Your Own Voice**

\* Freewriting Assignment: sounds.

**Tues., Jan. 13**

**Week Two****Kinds of Fiction—Appendix A**

**READ:** “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” by Gabriel García Márquez (course package).  
Appendix A, pp. 413-416 (*Writing Fiction*).

\* Group Assignments: 15 minute assignments

**Story Ideas**

**READ:** “American History” by Judith Ortiz Cofer (course package).

\* Freewriting Assignments: stories in your backyard, stories overheard, world events, paintings

**Thurs., Jan. 15**

**Forward-moving stories**

**READ:** “This Is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona,” by Sherman Alexi, pp. 377-385 (*Writing Fiction*).

**What is Theme?**

**READ:** Chapter 10, “I Gotta Use Words When I Talk to You,” pp. 359-368 (*Writing Fiction*).  
“What Themes May Come” by John Winston Rainey (course package).

**Tues., Jan. 20**

**Week Three**

**Mechanics:** Dialogue and Names

**Plot: Conflict**

**READ:** Chapter 7, “The Tower and the Net: Story Form, Plot, and Structure,” pp. 259-276 (*Writing Fiction*).  
“The Use of Force” by William Carlos Williams, pp. 277-279 (*Writing Fiction*).  
“Happy Endings” by Margaret Atwood, pp. 279-281 (*Writing Fiction*).

\* Freewriting Assignment: Plot Outline.

**Thurs., Jan. 22**

**Connection and Disconnection**

**READ:** “Everything That Rises Must Converge” by Flannery O’Connor, pp. 282-292 (*Writing Fiction*).  
“Ring Ring” by Caroline Adderson (course package).

\* Freewriting Assignment: Incongruous Situation, Connection and Disconnection.

**Tues., Jan. 27**

**Week Four**

**Writing Workshop: Story #1: Stories Stumbled Upon.** Please bring in four copies of your story for in-class critique.

Thurs., Jan. 29

*Due: Story #1: Stories Stumbled Upon*

**Show Don't Tell**

**READ:** Chapter 2, "Seeing is Believing: Showing and Telling," pp. 25-79 (*Writing Fiction*).

"Big Me" by Dan Chaon, pp. 39-53 (*Writing Fiction*).

**Faults to Avoid / Prose Rhythms**

**READ:** Chapter 9, "Is and Is Not: Comparison," pp. 336-357 (*Writing Fiction*).

**Metaphor**

Tues., Feb. 3

**Week Five**

**Characterization, Part I**

**READ:** Chapter 3, "Building Character: Characterization, Part I," pp. 80-99 (*Writing Fiction*).

"Gryphon" by Charles Baxter, pp. 99-110 (*Writing Fiction*).

"Every Tongue Will Confess" by ZZ Packer, pp. 110-120 (*Writing Fiction*).

"Rock Springs" by Richard Ford, pp. 120-134 (*Writing Fiction*).

\* Freewriting Exercises #1 - #4.

Thurs., Feb. 5

**Characterization, Part II**

**READ:** Chapter 4, "The Flesh Made Word," pp. 137-153 (*Writing Fiction*).

"A Visit of Charity" by Eudora Welty, pp. 154-157 (*Writing Fiction*).

Tues., Feb. 10

**Week Six**

**Writing Workshop: Story #2: Plot.** Please bring in four copies of your story for in-class critique.

Thurs., Feb. 12

*Due: Story #2: Plot*

**Characterization, Part III**

Tues., Feb. 17

**Week Seven**

**Setting I**

**READ:** Chapter 5, "Far, Far Away: Fictional Place" pp. 173-187 (*Writing Fiction*).

"Love and Hydrogen" by Jim Shepard, pp. 206-215 (*Writing Fiction*).

Thurs., Feb. 19

*READING BREAK. COLLEGE CLOSED.*

Tues., Feb. 24

**Week Eight**

**Writing Workshop: Story #3: Character.** Please bring in four copies

of your story for in-class critique.

5

Thurs., Feb. 26

**Due: Story #3: Character  
Setting II**

**READ:** Chapter 6, “Long Ago: Fictional Time,” pp. 218-231 (*Writing Fiction*).  
“A Serious Talk” by Raymond Carver, pp. 253-256 (*Writing Fiction*).  
“Bullet in the Brain” by Tobias Wolff, pp. 158-161 (*Writing Fiction*).

Tues., Mar. 3

**Week Nine**

**Point of View I**

**READ:** Chapter 8, “Call Me Ishmael,” pp. 296-303 (*Writing Fiction*).  
“Orientation” by Daniel Orozco, pp. 311-315 (*Writing Fiction*).  
“Who’s Irish” by Gish Jen, pp. 315-323 (*Writing Fiction*).  
“Gusev” by Anton Chekhov, pp. 323-332 (*Writing Fiction*).

Thurs., Mar. 5

**Point of View II**

**READ:** Chapter 8, cont’d., pp. 304-311 (*Writing Fiction*).  
Discussion about the Unreliable Narrator.  
“Rock Springs” by Richard Ford, pp. 120-134 (*Writing Fiction*).

Tues., Mar. 10

**Week Ten**

**Due: First Portfolio: 3 Finished Stories**

**Theme Revisited**

**RE-READ:** Chapter 10, “I Gotta Use Words When I Talk to You,” pp. 359-368  
(*Writing Fiction*).

**Dream Journal**

Thurs., Mar. 12

**Unity**

**Non-linear structure**

**READ:** “The Fair” by Michael Trussler (course package).

*Writers’ Confessions 2* (film)

Tues., Mar. 17

**Week Eleven**

**Writing Workshop: Story #4: Setting.** Please bring in four copies  
of your story for in-class critique.

Thurs., Mar. 19

**Due: Story #4: Setting**

**Structure Revisited**

\* Flashbacks and other structures to explore

Tues., Mar. 24

**Week Twelve**

**Revision:**

- \* Scenes / Summary
- \* Setting / Details

**READ:** Chapter 11, “Play It Again Sam,” pp. 388-397 (*Writing Fiction*).

**Discussion: Appropriation of Voice**

**Thurs., Mar. 26**      **Writing Workshop: Story #5: Flawed Narrator.** Please bring in four copies of your story for in-class critique.

## COURSE SURVEY

**Tues., Mar. 31**      **Week Thirteen**

*Due: Story #5: Flawed Narrator*

**Revision:**

- \* Dialogue and Metaphor

**READ:** “Dialogue as Action” (course package).

**Thurs., Apr. 2**

**Publishing:**

- \* Preparing a collection of short stories for submission.
- \* Writing a query letter to an agent /publisher.
- \* Publishers for short story collections.
- \* Writing Groups.

**Tues, Apr. 7**

**Week Fourteen**

**Writing Workshop: Story #6: Nonlinear Structure.** Please bring in four copies of your story for in-class critique.

**Thurs., Apr. 9**

FINAL CLASS / WRAP UP

*Due: Story #6: Nonlinear Structure*

**\* Fri., Apr. 17**

**Hand in second portfolio (with three finished stories)  
at my office, Paul 226 by 5:30 p.m. (There will be no extensions.)**

