

# CAMOSUN COLLEGE - COURSE OUTLINE - WINTER 2010

## ENGLISH 154 (002)

### CREATIVE WRITING: FICTION 1

**Instructor:** Christine Kirchner

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

**Class Meets:** Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. – 7:20 p.m. in WT 225.

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

**Calendar Description:** This course offers students with strong writing ability a chance to develop their skills and possible goals in writing prose fiction, especially short stories. Students study such elements as characterization, plot, dialogue, setting, point of view, openings and endings, and theme.

**Course Description:** Writing for its own sake, developmental exercises, craft-focused readings, and in-class story workshopping are at the heart of this course. To develop as a creative writer involves 1) tapping your creativity and 2) learning technique. These projects involve *practice*, in both senses. When you practice writing, you perform exercises, acquire skills, and build towards a larger goal, such as creating a successful short story. When you make writing your practice, you write as a daily habit that forms an end in itself. Such process-oriented writing prevents writer's block by releasing a verbal flow and by strengthening your relationship to the page. Both kinds of practice thus form crucial components of this class. A willingness to engage in them is primary; a close second is active participation in discussions and in-class assignments.

#### **Texts: Required**

Steven Schoen (2000) *The Truth About Fiction*.

Lucy Rosenthal (2004) *The Eloquent Short Story*.

English 154 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 and style manual.

Any good collegiate dictionary.

**Learning Outcomes:** At the end of this course, students should be able to

- Appreciate, at the beginner's level, what it means to write fiction.
- Practice the writing process appropriate to fiction.
- Produce plots, settings, characters and appropriately nuanced language with effective use of figures of speech.
- Compose a journal for the purpose of experiencing the effectiveness of journal keeping.
- Practice appropriate research for giving fiction credibility.

- Identify the various resources available for writers.
- Prepare a story for submission for publication.

**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 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 texts to every class in order to facilitate study.

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

**1. Final Drafts: You write FOUR out of the following six stories:**

- \* Story #1 is due on Tues., Feb. 2
- \* Story #2 is due on Tues., Feb. 16
- \* Story #3 is due on Tues., Mar. 2
- \* Story #4 is due on Tues., Mar. 16
- \* Story #5 is due on Thurs., Mar. 25
- \* Story #6 is due on Tues., Apr. 6 4 X 5% = 20%

2. Midterm Portfolio of 2 Short Stories (due on Thurs., Mar. 11)	30%
3. Journal: in-class and assigned exercises (due on Thurs., Apr. 8)	10%
4. Final Portfolio of 2 Short Stories (due on Fri., Apr. 16)	30%
5. Participation (class, writing workshops, attendance, etc.--ongoing)	10%
	100%

Detailed instructions will accompany each assignment. 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.

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 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 154, 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.

## **TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE**

The following outline will give you a general overview of the class. I will distribute detailed handouts in class as the course progresses. If you are ever in doubt as to what I expect of you, *please ask*. The need to adjust the schedule will almost certainly arise, so pay attention to announcements in class and over email.

- *TF* = *The Truth About Fiction* by Steven Schoen.
- *ESS* = *The Eloquent Short Story* by Lucy Rosenthal.
- *CP* = English 154 Course Package of Readings.
- You are not responsible for the Exercises and Assignments contained within the Readings unless specifically noted.
- Readings and Assignments are **due** on the dates listed.

**Thurs., Jan. 7**

#### **Week One**

Course Introduction  
\* Welcome to the class

#### **Mini-autobiography in class**

**Tues., Jan. 12**

#### **Week Two**

**READ:** "Preface to the Student" pp. xv-xvii (*TF*)



“Car Crash While Hitchhiking” by Denis Johnson  
pp. 183-189 (ESS)

**Thurs., Feb. 25**      **Writing Workshop: Story #3: Point of View.** Please bring in four copies of your story for in-class critique.

**Tues., Mar. 2**      **Week Nine**

***Due: Story #3: Point of View***

**READ:** Chapter 2 “Details” pp. 9-17 (TF)  
“The Painted Door” by Sinclair Ross pp. 34-52 (CP)

**Thurs., Mar. 4**      **READ:** Appendix: “Research” pp. 103-106 (TF)  
“Nilda” by Junot Diaz pp. 75-85 (ESS)

**Tues., Mar. 9**      **Week Ten**

**READ:** “Brownies” by ZZ Packer pp. 190-213 (ESS)

**Thurs., Mar. 11**      ***Due: First Portfolio: two Finished Stories***

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

**Tues., Mar. 16**      **Week Eleven**

***Due: Story #4: Setting***

**READ:** Chapter 5 “Story Structure” pp. 51-66 (TF)  
“Mr. Know All” by W. Somerset Maugham  
pp. 62-67 (CP)

**Thurs., Mar. 18**      **READ:** “Address Unknown” by Kathrine Kressmann Taylor  
pp. 232-256 (ESS)  
“Demonology” by Rick Moody pp. 19-31 (ESS)

**Tues., Mar. 23**      **Week Twelve**

**Writing Workshop: Story #5: Structure.** Please bring in four copies of your story for in-class critique.

**Thurs., Mar. 25**      ***Due: Story #5: Structure***

**READ:** Chapter 8 “Style” pp. 91-102 (TF)  
“Sweet Town” by Toni Cade Bambara pp. 3-7 (ESS)

**Tues., Mar. 30**      **Week Thirteen**

**READ:** “Snow” by Ann Beattie pp. 61-63 (ESS)  
“Miriam” by Truman Capote pp. 267-280 (ESS)

**Thurs., Apr. 1**      **Writing Workshop: Story #6: Style.** Please bring in four copies of your story for in-class critique.

Tues., Apr. 6

**Week Fourteen**

***Due: Story #6: Style***

**READ:** Appendix: "Publication and Market Research Exercise" pp. 107-110 (*TF*)

Thurs., Apr. 8

FINAL CLASS / WRAP UP

***Due: Journal***

\* Fri., Apr. 16

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