ENGL 4161/5161 – ADVANCED FICTION WRITING

Summer 2018
June 19 – July 21
Cork, Ireland
Location: TBA

Instructor: Nicholas Mainieri
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Office hours: TBA

The purpose of this class:
We will participate in an intensive writing workshop with the intention of producing, reading, and responding to high quality short fiction. We will spend the vast majority of our time in a classical workshop environment, though some attention will be given to a review of fundamental terminology, theory, and workshop etiquette. Your work in this course will ultimately be evaluated according to your timely and impressive completion of assignments—which include your original stories as well as your thorough and well-intentioned participation in workshop discussion and response.

Student learning outcomes:
- Effectively analyze the elements of fiction writing and demonstrate an ability to construct fictional stories that are of a high quality.
- Begin to articulate one’s own theory of fiction writing and demonstrate its application in both analysis of contemporary texts and construction of one’s own texts.
- Analyze one’s own strengths and weaknesses as a thinker/writer and set goals for improvement.
- For graduate students: effectively serve as “workshop leader” during the discussion of a story during class.

Requirements:

Original short fiction: Students will produce three original short stories and submit them to workshop. Each story should fall somewhere between 8 and 20 pages total. Stories must be conventionally formatted: double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-pt font. Stories are expected to be virtually free from grammatical error. Given the intensive nature of the compressed summer term, your first two stories must be submitted by e-mail to the class two weeks before the start of class. This will allow each of us to get a healthy jump on coursework while also spending our time in Cork as efficaciously as possible.

Formal comments/critiques and line edits: On the day of a classmate’s workshop, you must come prepared with a formal response that is comprised of 1-2 pages of single-spaced writing. It might be helpful to think of these comments as letters of critique written directly to the author. Address strengths and weaknesses of the story, as you see them, both broadly and specifically. Your desire to be helpful, as a peer and fellow writer, underpins all insight. Keep the story front and center—we are critiquing the text, not the author. I encourage you to be as creative as you
wish when it comes to the form/structure of your formal comments, as long as you are hitting the expected touchstones. Guidelines/specific requirements for these critiques will be distributed in class (and, further, how critiques are returned may also be subject to the printing situation in Cork).

You must also return your copy of the manuscript being workshopped, replete with handwritten comments, edits, questions, and suggestions.

Discussion: Two stories will be workshopped per class period. Each student is expected to thoroughly participate in discussion. We will begin the discussion by saying what we like or enjoy about a particular piece, gradually moving toward questions we have, things that aren’t quite working for us, and potential suggestions. We will remember that the purpose of the workshop is to help one another. Be respectful of one another—this means respecting each other’s work as well as opinions during discussion. Let others speak and finish their thoughts before you jump in. We will also seek to foster an organic conversation, responding to one another.

Reading aloud: Each student will be asked to vocally share a brief portion of his work at the outset of his workshop. Additionally, each student will be required to participate in program reading events during the summer term.

For graduate students: Each graduate student in the course will serve as “workshop leader” once during the summer term. This means you will effectively guide the discussion of a story, coming prepared with specific items you wish to prompt the group with. Afterward, you must provide me with a list of the concepts/insights you used as your guidelines for the discussion.

Other rules/options/requirements:
- The author of a story will not participate in the discussion of her own story. She listens and considers.
- The author, if he chooses, may ask the class a single question at the end of workshop, in order to receive clarification on an item or hear feedback on an aspect of the story that has not been discussed.
- I welcome each author to have a follow-up conversation with me after workshop, if he or she wishes to debrief/continue the discussion.

Policy on late work: As this is an upper-level/graduate fiction writing course, wherein all due dates will be clear and understood over the course of an intensive term, nothing should be turned in late. The functioning of a workshop depends by and large upon each of us upholding our timely obligations. A late story submission will prevent you from receiving an “A.” More than one late critique will prevent you from receiving an “A.” Multiple late assignments will do further harm.

UNO Policies:

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is
not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information.

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to http://www.ods.uno.edu.

Course schedule – June 19 to July 21

To Be Announced...