FICTION WRITING
Eng. 464.001
Instructor: Joe Powell
Room: L&L 229
Office: 416C L&L
Time: W 4-7:20
Phone: 963-1535
Office Hrs: Tues & R: 1:30-2; Wed. 3-4

Texts: What If? Bernays & Painter
Oxford Book of American Short Stories, ed. Joyce Carol Oates

Course Description: We will be reading stories by professional writers and considering the effects of points of view, tone, endings, voice, etc. We will read not only for content, but the strategies writers use to achieve their effects and how you might appropriate those strategies in your own fiction. Half of the course will be spent on reading from What If? and professional stories which will help us develop ideas about piecing together stories, developing a narrative arc, use of flashbacks, seeing how dialogue works best, using exposition, and developing characters. Your own work turned into the workshop will be the second part of the course. We will collectively consider the merits of the material you submit as well as how the stories might be improved or where a writer might take them. There will be some in-class exercises and language experiments assigned to help develop your range.

Course Objectives:
* to read a range of professional stories to see what is possible in terms of tone, point of view, sequencing; to see how fiction is typically constructed, how flashbacks are used to develop character, how to move in and out of time, etc.
* to develop criteria for critiquing the work of fellow writers and applying those in the workshop setting
* to complete two stories that aim toward literary publication
* to appreciate the possibilities in good, patient revisions

Course Requirements: You will have to complete two short stories, and submit them to the workshop. They will be revised and comprise the major part of the grade. There will be quizzes over the reading, and there will be several in-class writing exercises which will also be turned in with the final portfolio which is due at the end of the quarter. The completed stories will be turned in during the quarter so that I can provide feedback, and you have a chance to revise them before they are submitted for a final grade. There are also reports where you describe a contemporary story you’ve read, its arc, how that was achieved, whether the protagonist changes, and the story’s most interesting qualities (description, analysis, dialogue, figurative language, etc.); you will lead the class discussion on these stories. We will also do some of this with our own stories.

Course Policies: Because this class meets once per week, it is absolutely vital that you attend all class meetings. Missing one class is equal to missing four regular classes. I keep attendance each week, and if you miss more than one class meeting you should consider dropping the class. Three absences is an automatic “F” for the class. You must
turn in the completed stories when they are due; you cannot just hand in two stories at the end; this also is an automatic “F.”

When responding to the stories of your fellow students, remember to be polite and sensitive to their points of view—please keep all sarcasm to yourself. Simone Weil once wrote that “The man who is proud of his intelligence is like the condemned man proud of his large cell.” Let’s not be rattling cups, it disturbs the other inmates.

Late Papers: The stories must be handed in on time; if there is an issue, talk to me about it before the story is due, and we’ll see what we can work out. I don’t take stories more than a week late.

E-mailing papers: I have a reader, Crystal Sauby, and she will give you line by line editing feedback, so the stories need to be sent to RaypoleC@cwu.edu when they are due; I would like a hard copy with the peer evaluations. You need to print off and bring to class all workshop submissions; I can’t print them off for you.

ADA Statement: Students with disabilities who wish to set up academic adjustments in this class should give me a copy of their “Confirmation of Eligibility for Academic Adjustments” from the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office as soon as possible so we can discuss how the approved adjustments will be implemented in this class. Students without this form should contact the DSS Office, Bouillion 205 or dssrecept@cwu.edu or 963-2171.

Electronic Devices: When class starts, all electronic devices should be shut off.

Length of Stories:

One of the first questions I get each quarter is “How long do the stories have to be?” The short-short story is enjoying some popularity, but it usually depends on stereotypes or outlandish characters because there isn’t time or space to develop real characters. Character-driven stories take more time and space. It is possible to have a short story of 4-5 pages, but I want you to try a longer one as well. Overall, I’d like a minimum of 14 double-spaced pages (that’s 7 per story; other possibilities: 3 and 11, 8 and 6, whatever).

Grades: Although it is rather presumptuous to grade creative work, we do not, at this time, have any alternatives. I also know that if no grade were given, few people would be motivated to do all the work as well as they could. I will, therefore, grade the stories handed in and the quizzes. The portfolio, along with attendance and participation, will determine much of the final grade. The grades on the drafts of stories will be fully replaced by the revised stories submitted in the portfolio. Note: When you submit your story for grading (even the electronic version), submit it like an essay: double-spaced, your name in the upper right corner, proofread, spell-checked, one-inch margins. The grade distribution looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>30%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final form of story #1:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final form of story #2:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes and Reports:</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Projects</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; attendance:</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workshops: I used to have people submit 2 single spaced pages per week of story-parts writers were working on, but that creates too much reading and chaos. So I’ve decided to only read completed stories; each person is required to submit two stories to the workshop and provide copies for everyone a week before we workshop them (there are 15 of us). It they are passed out one week and gone over the next, everyone can provide feedback and give those marked up versions to the writers. It is a rare opportunity to get attentive feedback from so many people interested in what you do, so take the marking responsibility seriously. Two people will be assigned each story to give in-depth critiques. In the critique, you will need to address the story’s structure (whether it has an effective arc: rising action, a climax, a resolution; or some other purposeful organization), its use of genre, its use of character development, flashbacks and flash-forwards, dialogue, exposition, setting, and formal elements (indenting quotations properly, use of speech tags, time transitions, etc.). Examine what works well and what does not. These critiques will be handed to me and to the writer. Keep your tone serious, respectful, and professional.

Reports:
There will be one group report. You will get in groups of three (one group will have four), and you will give reports on types of literary fiction currently being written. Several of the stories in The Oxford Book of American Short Stories can be grouped into categories. Some of these literary genres include fantasy, realism, minimalism, postmodernism, and ethnic identity. I would like you to read the stories in each category from our text, recommend which we should read as a class, and to do some research about the strengths and weaknesses of the literary method or perspective, examine to what purposes the genre is typically used, as well as who seems to be the masters of this genre currently. The group will then lead the discussion of both the genre and the story you want the class to read. Of course some of the perspectives interconnect; for example, Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues” is realistic but also ethnic. A regionalist may also be a realist or a minimalist (Carver can be seen as a Northwest writer and a minimalist). But we won’t worry too much about those cross-overs. I’ve organized some stories in these genres:

Fantasy: “Rip Van Winkle” by Washington Irving, 14
“The Ghost in the Mill” by Harriet Beecher Stowe, p. 71
“Peter Rugg, The Missing Man,” William Austin, 34
“The Reach,” Stephen King, 707
“There Will Come Soft Rain,” Ray Bradbury, 475

Realism: “The Girl with the Pimply Face,” William Carlos Williams, 284
“Mercy,” Pinkney Benedict, 824
“The Persistence of Desire,” John Updike, 536
“That Evening Sun,” William Faulkner, 336
“Where is the voice coming from” Eudora Welty, 395

Minimalism: “The Strength of God,” Sherwood Anderson, 259
“Hills Like White Elephants,” Hemingway, 354-58
“Are These Actual Miles,” Carver, 611

Postmodernism: “Blood Burning Rain” Jean Toomer (he’s a modernist, but precursor to postmodernism)
“The School,” Donald Barthelme, 531
“Good People” David Foster Wallace, 814

Ethnic (Black) writers: “The Sheriff’s Children,” Charles Chestnutt, 173
“Battle Royal,” Ralph Ellison, 441
“Sonny’s Blues,” James Baldwin, 482
“The Man Who Was Almost a Man,” Richard Wright, 365
“Red Headed Baby” Langston Hughes, 359

The second in-class project is a critique of someone’s story (1-2 single spaced pages; you give me a copy and the writer a copy), and you help lead a class discussion about that story. Each person will need to do this twice because everyone has to do two stories, and both stories must go through the workshop. In the critique, you will need to address the story’s structure (whether it has an effective arc: rising action, a climax, a resolution; or some other purposeful organization), its use of genre (realism, fantasy, postmodernism, etc.), character development, flashbacks and flash-forwards, dialogue, exposition, setting, and formal elements (using quotations properly, use of speech tags, time transitions, etc.). I will send around a signup sheet both for story submission dates and individual presentations; we won’t begin these until the third class meeting (April 16th).
Syllabus: Powell, Eng. 464

Texts: What If? (IF), Bernays & Painter
       Oxford American Short Stories (MSS), 2nd ed., Joyce Carol Oates

April
2: General Intro: In-Class writing

9: IF: 7-24; do Ex. 7 p. 25; in-class writing. Read Amy Hempel’s “Today will be a quiet day” 754 and Willa Cather’s “Death in the Desert” 238; Note: Fiction writer Donna Miscolta reads in the SURC theatre April 15th at 7:30

16: IF: 31-44; do Ex. 14, page 44; read Mary Freeman’s “Old Woman Magoun” and Joyce Carol Oates “Heat” 620; workshop 3 stories: Sean/story/Kat/presenter; Amy/Kristi; Claire/Seana

23: IF: 46-54; do ex. 16, p. 50; workshop 3 stories; “Fantasy” genre group presentation(by Serena, Brittany, Cody); read Ray Bradbury’s “There will come soft rains” 475; Note: Brandon Schrand, nonfiction writer, 7:30 in Wildcat Shop, on Tues., the 29th. Workshop stories/presenters: Megan/Serena; Haley/Cody; Kristi/Sam; Seana/Ebony

30: IF: 72-86; Story #1 due; workshop 4 stories; “Realism” genre group presentation (by Ebonesiah, Claire, Sean); read William Faulkner’s “That Evening Sun,” 335; Workshop stories/presenters: Serena/Megan; Kat/Amy; Cody/Jennifer; Sam/Brittany

May
7: IF 87-106; workshop 4 stories; “Minimalism” genre group presentation (by Haley, Jennifer, Sam); read Carver’s “Are These Actual Miles” 611; Workshop stories/presenters: Ebony/Seana; Haley/Sean; Jennifer/Sam; Brittany/Claire

14: IF: 107-124; workshop 4 stories; “Postmodernism” genre group presentation (Kristi, Kat, Stephen); read David Foster Wallace’s “Good People” 814; Workshop stories/presenters: Sean/Cody; Sam/Haley; Claire/Amy; Seana/Sean

21: IF: 125-141; Story #2 due; “Ethnic” (Black) genre group presentation (Seana, Megan, Amy); read James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues”; workshop stories/presenters: Ebony/Claire; Megan/Haley; Stephen/Megan; Jennifer/Brittany; Note: Xavier Cavazos, poet, Hertz Auditorium, 7:30 on May 27th.


June
4: IF: 175-186; workshop 3 stories; read Louise Erdrich’s “Fleur,” 762; Workshop stories/presenters: Kat/Serena; Amy/Stephen; Stephen/Kristi

Final: Portfolios due: A reading of your work; each person gets about 7 minutes.
**Story and Presenter sign-up sheets:** Sign up for two stories and two presentations. You will actually have to have the stories done a week prior to this date because they need to be photocopied and handed out so people can read them. The “Presenters” will critique the stories right above their names on the date assigned. When everyone has signed up, I’ll put this information on the syllabus and redo it so everyone will know who is up when. You will have to sign up twice for “stories” and twice for “presenters.”

April 16: Stories: __________________; ______________; ___________________
Presenters: ______________; ______________; ___________________

April 23: Stories: ______________; ______________; ___________________
Presenters: ______________; ______________; ___________________

April 30: Stories: ______________; ______________; ___________________
Presenters: ______________; ______________; ___________________

May 7: Stories: ______________; ______________; ___________________
Presenters: ______________; ______________; ___________________

May 14: Stories: _____________; _____________; ______________; ______________
Presenters: _____________; _____________; ______________; ______________

May 21: Stories: _____________; _____________; ______________; ______________
Presenters: _____________; _____________; ______________; ______________

May 28: Stories: _____________; _____________; ______________; ______________
Presenters: _____________; _____________; ______________; ______________

June 4: Stories: _____________; _____________; ______________; ______________
Presenters: _____________; _____________; ______________; ______________