Course Description

Reading fiction, the short story writer Anton Chekhov said, prepares us for tenderness. I think it does this by way of imaginative empathy – putting the reader, for the space of ten or 20 or 500 pages, in a different pair of shoes, a different chair or century, a different brain than her own. If you’re in this class, you’ve likely experienced this thrilling species of place-changing that reading a great story or novel or poem or essay can bring about. How writers create that transformation in a total stranger – the reader – out of mere language is the business and mystery this course will investigate.

Among us, we bring hundreds of thousands of pages to the table, things we’ve read and written over the years, and all these pages inform what happens we sit down to read or to write. These collective pages constitute a great asset, but to become a writing workshop in a short ten weeks, we’ll need also to develop a common vocabulary as readers and craftspeople of fiction. We’ll do this through informal writing exercises, reading published short fiction, writing and revising a short story, and responding to one another’s stories in writing and in workshop.

Required Materials

• Naming the World and Other Exercises for the Creative Writer, Bret Anthony Johnson. Random House, 2007. Available at the Stanford bookstore or online.
• Course Reader: available at Thornton Center Lobby Week 1, and CopyAmerica, 344 S. California Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94306 (650) 566-0344. **You must purchase your own copy of the course reader and have it in class by the second class meeting.**
• A writing notebook reserved for this class alone, and writing implement (pen/pencil)
• A **budget for photocopying and printing your work.** Please note that you will be required to print and photocopy enough copies of your story to distribute to the class (one for each student and one for me).

Grading Breakdown

**35% - Class Participation**

This includes attendance, punctuality and involvement in class discussions, as well as the completion of written comments on other students’ stories. Full attendance is of utmost importance in this class; it’s impossible to “catch up” on a missed workshop discussion, and the dynamics of a workshop can suffer when even one voice is missing. If you have a legitimate reason to be absent, please work this out with me in advance; otherwise every unexcused absence after the first will reduce your course grade by a letter grade.

Please come to class prepared, which means: having read the assigned material attentively and in a spirit of curiosity and intellectual engagement. Be ready to offer your thoughts in class discussion. When responding to the work of your fellow writers, please treat it with the same respect and open-mindedness with which you want your own work to be read. When we come together in workshop, we become part of a community of and for
writers. Our goal is to create for each other an environment for sharing work and ideas that is supportive, challenging, collaborative, and fun.

35% - Fiction exercises and stories
This includes writing exercises, one longer story, and a revision of that story. The revision shouldn’t simply be cosmetic, but a comprehensive rewrite of the story you turned in for workshop, incorporating the comments you received from me and your fellow classmates as well as your own ideas about where the piece could go.

15% - Written critiques
One of the most valuable elements of a writing class is the opportunity to have your work seriously critiqued both by your instructor and your peers. It will likely be as beneficial to your fiction to think critically and generously about your classmates’ work as it will be to have your own writing discussed. It isn’t necessary to write pages and pages of comments to your classmates, but make sure your letter is carefully thought-out and both critical and kind. It’s important to remember that we won’t be discussing polished stories but early drafts; we’ll be talking about the process of writing and all of the narrative possibilities inherent in each piece. Critiques given to a student after they are workshoped will be marked late, so please make sure these are done on time.

15% - Outside reading attendance
Attendance at three readings in the Creative Writing program is required. You don’t need to write a reaction to the readings, but you do need to let me know that you attended. A list of readings this quarter can be found at http://creativewriting.stanford.edu and http://events.stanford.edu/. I’ll also announce them as they come up in class.

Please also sign up for the Creative Writing Events Listserv by going to http://mailman.stanford.edu and joining “cw-undergrad.”

Things I care about (and things I don’t)
I respect you deeply as writers and humans and ask for the same respect. I care that in our ten weeks together you give total focus to your work and your classmates’ work. That you write big-hearted stories, that you experiment and take risks, and that you treat your job as a reader here as seriously as you treat your job as a writer. I expect that you commit yourself to the radical act of revision as the most necessary act of writing.

We’ll do in-class and smaller take home writing exercises in which I encourage you to take risks in voice and form and subject based on our reading and discussion. This is a safe place, but I don’t want safe writing. Authentic moves out of your comfort zone will be rewarded.

Very few of the projects you turn in for this class will find their final form in these 10 weeks, as writing is a long game, and 10 weeks an artificially short burst of time. Because of this, I care less about the finishedness of your stories than I do how they reflect risk-taking, and this quarter’s conversations and exercises. Therefore, I ask that you submit only new work for this class. My hope is that the tools and techniques we gather here will prove useful to those other projects you may already have underway.
**Classroom Etiquette and Expectations**

I respect you all as fellow writers and expect you to extend the same respect to me, and to your colleagues. Therefore:

- Arrive to class on time. Don’t leave early.
- No cell phone, smartphone, or laptop use in class, except those exceptions covered under accommodations (see below).
- Be honest and respectful. Sharing your creative work with a room full of strangers is an extremely difficult thing to do! Our comments to one another are valuable only if they are honest, and helpful only if they are delivered with compassion and respect.
- This class requires verbal participation. If this is a concern to you, come talk to me.
- A good rule of thumb to follow in critiquing work: Find one thing that's working in the story for each thing you feel is not. Helping a writer see where a story is working and memorable is as useful—often more so—than pointing out where it loses steam.
- When you are on the receiving end of workshop criticism, I invite you to be thick-skinned and to remember that all serious engagement with your work is a compliment.
- If you feel that criticism of your work or others becomes insensitive or threatening, please speak up or send me a confidential email.
- I reserve the right to report language that may be perceived as threatening to yourself or others, whether fictional or otherwise, to University authorities. Writing that makes reference to specific members of the class, directly or otherwise, will not be tolerated.

**Attendance & Participation**

Though writing is mostly a solitary sport, a writing course is undeniably a team one. That means the success of this class (and your grade) hinges on your participation and preparation for the class—engaging on the stories we read and each other's work.

- Unexcused absences will affect your grade significantly. You have one to give, no questions asked. After that, each unexcused absence will reduce your course grade by 1/2 a letter grade. If you are more than 10 minutes late to class or leave early, I will mark you absent.

An excused absence includes religious holidays observed, military service, medical appointment etc. I require documentation (a doctor’s note, for example) and email notification at least 24 hours ahead of time. If you have a question about this, email me. I cannot excuse an absence after the fact.

**Late Policy**

Turning in late assignments will negatively affect your participation grade. Absence on a due date doesn’t excuse you from these requirements; so if you know you’ll miss a class, plan to turn in your assignments early. See attendance policy.

When it is your day to distribute your story for workshop, no lateness will be tolerated. If you are ill on a day that you are supposed to distribute your story, please email me in advance.

For other assignments, here is the lateness protocol:

- A late assignment drops half a grade each day it is late (a 90 becomes an 85).
Email Policy
I will respond to you within 48 hours of sending me an email. I will send important class updates and correspond with you via your Stanford email, which I expect you to check at least daily.

Conferences
I really enjoy speaking with you about stories and fiction in my office hours, and invite you to come to them. Additionally, we’ll have the opportunity to individually conference during class time in Lab Week (Week 5) and at the end of the quarter. I really look forward to these meetings as a chance to get to know you and your work better.

Format
Please type all assignments in 12-pt Times/Times New Roman or Georgia 10.5 with one-inch margins, and double space. Number all pages.

Proofread all of your writing. Then do it again. Mechanical and grammatical errors (including spelling and typos) will negatively affect your grade on a given assignment.

Accommodation
Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae).

Honor Code
The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:
The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:
1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.
3. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.
4. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

Plagiarism
I expect the work you turn in to be your own. Lifting or using portions of someone else’s work, whether verbatim or summarized, without giving him or her credit, is considered plagiarism, and will not be tolerated.
Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, using ideas, information or quotes from published work or online sources without providing proper citations; copying all or part of an assignment from someone else; *turning in work you did for other classes*.

A student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including a failing grade for the course.

**Calendar**

I will provide you with a class calendar in the third class meeting that is subject to revision throughout the quarter.