

Topics in Intermediate Fiction Writing: Novella Salon (190T)

Winter 2018

Instructors: Kate Petersen & Mark Labowskie

Mondays and Wednesdays: 3:30-5:20PM

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Course Description

To write well, one must read well. In this course, students will read, not as critics or historians of literature, but as writers, approaching each work as a template for imitation and inspiration. Our templates, however, will not be novels or stories but that rarer species among prose forms: the novella. Though long flourishing in the non-Anglophone world, the novella still occupies a somewhat shadowy space in the American literary marketplace, defined perhaps more by what it's not than what it is. In Novella Salon, we'll investigate the potential available in such formal negative space—what moves can one make when free of genre expectations?—and explore the wide range of styles, modes, and themes accessible by the genre. We will grapple with craft possibilities and risks peculiar to the form, both in class discussion and in conversation with visiting authors throughout the quarter. We'll do a number of writing exercises based on the novellas we read in order to explore and refine principles like compression, world-building, voice, and dramatic structure, and prepare ourselves to write our own novella-length works.

STUDENT EVALUATION

CLASS PARTICIPATION (40%): It is crucial that you arrive at each class on time (see below for specific attendance policies), having read through all the assigned work—carefully and actively—at least once. We expect everyone to speak at (the very) least once per class. Substantive, meaningful contribution to class discussion includes specific and targeted questions as well as comments and observations. Comments can be text-oriented, returning us to specific passages, or they can build off of—or challenge, respectfully—earlier comments. We are here to explore and understand a range of texts, become familiar with an understudied form, discuss ongoing issues of craft, and ultimately come to more acutely understand ourselves as writers. This class relies on student contributions, and each voice is significant and highly valued. Each participant is expected to contribute to our discussion consistently and meaningfully, in class and online. Absolute courtesy at all times is a requirement. In addition to discussing the published novellas, we will also be sharing and discussing the various short writing exercises completed during the quarter, and here it's useful to remember that we won't be discussing your polished work but early drafts and exercises; we'll be talking about the process of writing and all of the narrative possibilities inherent in each piece. When you put yourself out there in a personal way—as you do whenever you write—you want and deserve respectful feedback from everyone.

Your participation grade also includes posting on the novellas on our Canvas page.

WRITING EXERCISES (25%): This will include short writing exercises to be completed both in and out of class. The prompts we'll assign are designed to explore the craft issues spotlighted by a particular novella, as well as to generate ideas and inspire your ongoing writing. We're not expecting polished pieces and encourage you to try new and risky things here. If you do the work, put in the appropriate effort, and turn assignments in on time, you will get full credit for this portion of your evaluation.

GROUP PRESENTATION (15%): Beginning in Week Three, in groups of 2-3 students, you will facilitate a half-hour class discussion of one of the novellas on the syllabus. As a group, you will spotlight one specific craft principle that is being illumined—exemplified, subverted, complicated, etc.—by the author of the novella, lead a full-class discussion, and design an in-class exercise in order to explore our understanding of the craft element.

NOVELLA OPENING (15%): Near the end of the quarter, you will submit the opening five pages of an original novella. In small-group workshops, you will discuss the possibilities inherent in each opening and potential directions in which the work could go.

CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM ATTENDANCE (5%): Attendance at THREE readings in the Creative Program is required. We'll announce these readings in class as they come up, but a full list can be found at: <http://creativewriting.stanford.edu/event-list>. Please also sign up for the Creative Writing Events Listserve by going to <http://mailman.stanford.edu> and joining "cw-undergrad".

Other Expectations/Policies

- *Attendance:* Due to the discussion-based nature of this class, attendance is absolutely critical. We will take attendance at the beginning of every class. If you're late, it's up to you to remind us at the end of class to record your presence. You are allowed TWO absences for the quarter, so use them wisely. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to turn in, on time, whatever work is due that day; if you are dealing with a family or medical emergency, you can arrange an extension, but otherwise work is still due on the day of your absence (you can also, of course, hand it in earlier, if you know in advance you will be absent). For each absence after the second one, we will subtract 5 points from your final grade (i.e., a 90 becomes an 85).
- *Lateness:* If, after the first day, you are more than ten minutes late to class (or leave early without our prior permission) that will count as an absence. If there's a valid reason why you may sometimes be late (i.e., a class immediately before or on the other side of campus), please let us know.
- *Late Assignments:* A late assignment drops half a grade each day it is late (i.e., a 90 becomes an 85).
- *Office Hours:* You are more than welcome to come visit us in our office to talk about your work or anything relevant to it. (For example, we'll often recommend "outside" stories, novellas, novels, and craft essays you might personally benefit from reading). If

our office hours do not fit with your schedule, we can set up an appointment, either in person or on the phone.

- *E-mail*: E-mail is the best way to reach us. We check e-mail every weekday and respond as soon as we are able. We will address all communications to your Stanford e-mail and expect you to check it daily.
- *Formatting*: All short writing exercises and stories should be **double-spaced** in 12-point easily-readable black font with **full-size margins**. (Your written critique letters, however, should be single spaced.) Use print, not web, formatting: indented paragraphs, no double line breaks between paragraphs. Include your name and the **page number** on every page of an assignment, and include the assignment number on the first page. Make sure you **staple** anything more than one page. Please **spell-check and proofread** all work. Failure to follow these guidelines will impact your grade.
- *Electronic Devices*: Again, no laptops or tablets present in class. Phones must be turned off or placed in vibrate mode.
- *Plagiarism*: The Board on Judicial Affairs says: “For purposes of the Stanford University Honor Code, plagiarism is defined as the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person’s original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s).” If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism in the context of this course or a particular assignment, **ask us**.

Students with Documented Disabilities

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.

Course Material Support

Stanford University and its faculty are committed to ensuring that all courses are financially accessible to all students. If you are an undergraduate who needs assistance with the cost of course textbooks, supplies, materials and/or fees, you are welcome to ask the Diversity & First-Gen Office for assistance by completing their questionnaire on course textbooks & supplies: <http://tinyurl.com/jpqbar> or by contacting Joseph Brown, the Associate Director of the Diversity and First-Gen Office (jlbrown@stanford.edu; Old Union Room 207). Dr. Brown is available to connect you with resources and support while ensuring your privacy.