“Art is the lie that tells the truth.” -- Pablo Picasso

Goals:

We’re going to tell the truth. By the end of the term, I hope you will be able to accomplish the following:

1) Demonstrate an understanding of the components that conspire to make good fiction
2) Write good fiction based on that understanding
3) Provide effective critiques of fiction through the deployment of that understanding

Texts:

Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft by Janet Burroway et al.

Methods:

During the semester, you will be drafting 3 pieces of fiction (5 to 6 pages each) based on my assignments. First, for each assignment, most of you will be submitting electronically a “mini-draft” of the first 1-2 pages of your story. I will make comments on the draft and return it to you within 4 days. Some of you, however, will be submitting the first 4-6 pages of your story. Those drafts will be submitted to me a few days after the “mini-drafts.” Then, these drafts will be distributed to the class without your names on them, and we will consider and discuss these drafts in a workshop format. Each student will have at least one draft considered by the workshop during the semester.

Our discussions of drafts will be substantive—and not trivial or mean-spirited. Here’s an example of a trivial comment: “I like this paragraph. It’s so nice.” And here is an example of a mean-spirited comment: “This paragraph is worthless. It’s just a bunch of sappy clichés.” And, finally, here’s the kind of comment that would be most welcomed: “I think this paragraph is frightening. I mean it has frightening images, and that’s weird, because its sentences are delicate and beautiful. Can we
talk about the tension between what’s frightening and what’s beautiful in this paragraph?”

So, your first responsibility is informed, thoughtful participation. It counts for a whopping 20% of your grade. You cannot participate effectively unless you have completed all of the reading and writing assignments in advance of the class in which they will be discussed.

To facilitate your participation, you will be given assignments in advanced of each reading and workshop. More on that later.

During our final period, each of you will be making a presentation of your work. Again, more on that later.

**Policies**

More than 2 unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your final grade by one full grade. More than 4 unexcused absences will result in your failure of the course. Frequent tardiness will result in the lowering of your grade by at least one full step.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Consult your student handbook for more details.

No cell phones in class. If you use a cell phone in class without my permission, you will be asked to leave, charged with one unexcused absence, and your participation grade will suffer greatly. Count on it.

**Grades**

Your final grade will be based upon the following percentages:

- Story #1: 24%
- Story #2: 24%
- Story #3: 24%
- Presentation: 8%
- Participation: 20%
  - ½ Critical Evaluations
  - ½ Contribution to Discussion
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Jan 16
Jan 18  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 21-43
Jan 23  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 43-66
Jan 25  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 67-82
Jan 30  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 83-115
        Mini-draft 1 due
Feb  1  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 116-138
Feb  6  Workshop
Feb  8  Workshop
Feb 13  Workshop
Feb 15  Workshop
Feb 20  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 139-155
        Story 1 due
Feb 22  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 156-171
Feb 27  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 172-192
Mar  1  Mini-draft 2 due

Spring Break

Mar 13  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 230-262
Mar 15  Workshop
Mar 20  Workshop
Mar 22  Workshop

Easter Break

Apr  5  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 262-274
        Story 2 Due
Apr 10  *Writing Fiction*, pp. 276-315
Apr 12  No-Class
        Mini-draft 3 due
Apr 17
Apr 19  Workshop
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<td>May 1</td>
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<td>May 9</td>
<td>Final Period: 8:00-10:30, Presentations</td>
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