

The Evergreen State College

Fall Quarter, 1987

Rudy's Copy

THE EXPERIENCE OF FICTION

Faculty Team:

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Welcome to The Experience of Fiction! As a faculty team of workers in the craft and art of fiction, we are excited about working with you and with the materials of this group contract. All of us will work hard, as we expect you to, but we also expect to have fun together.

We will deal with works of fiction in as many aspects as our time and competencies permit. We assume that all of you, as we do, have different levels of ability at reading and writing fiction. So we will try to do our work on a number of levels and in a range of ways. Our aims are to help everyone to improve in the ability to read fictive works analytically and to write them creatively. To achieve those aims, we will read together a number and variety of pieces of fiction and texts about writing/thinking/feeling, and we will WRITE, WRITE, WRITE. We will critique what we have written, and we will WRITE, WRITE, WRITE again.

READING

More than anything else, we will expect you to read short stories this quarter. Lots of short stories--some assigned by us and some of your own choosing. In our weekly seminars, we will closely examine sample stories, trying to understand how/why they work as they do. Since fictions are made, not born, our seminars should help us determine some of the techniques master writers have used in their works and learn some techniques we might develop for use in our own. In addition, we'll expect you to select and read a number of short stories you should discuss in your Reader's Notebook, stories that will comprise the subject matter of one substantive expository essay, stories that might be the focus of a term-end examination.

Besides fiction, we will read three (3) texts bearing upon our work. One is a commentary on the nature of language, another speaks to the relationship between form and content, and the third deals with uses of the imagination. The information in these books will be discussed in seminars, called upon in our craft workshops, and factored into other elements of our

collective and individual work. We hope you will enjoy and learn from these collateral readings.

THE READING LIST

FICTIONS, Trimmer and Jennings
LESS THAN WORDS CAN SAY, Mitchell
THE SHAPE OF CONTENT, Shahn
THE MAN WHO MISTOOK HIS WIFE FOR A HAT, Sacks
HARBRACE COLLEGE HANDBOOK, Hodges and Whitten (Suggested)

All of these books are on sale in the college's bookstore. We have no preference whether you buy new or used books, but we urge you to get the required texts as quickly as you can.

WRITING

Since writing is one of the major foci of this work, we'll expect each of you to do five (5) different kinds of writing. All of them are required; all work submitted for us to read must be typed (computer-produced copy is acceptable) and double-spaced. You should keep all your writing together in your portfolio for you/us to review periodically. The required writings are the following:

1. Weekly Craft Writing Assignments. These exercises will be used in craft workshops. Their purpose is to give you practice at specific techniques. They may be modelled on elements in your readings, they may come from faculty members, they may emerge from our work together. However derived, these craft pieces are likely to comprise much of the work we'll do in craft workshops.
2. Ten (10) pages per week in your "universe book" to titled "I'm Chevy Chase and You're Not." These pages may comprise one or more pieces; they may be part or all of your "finished" story, they may be character sketches, scenes, dialogues, descriptions, whatever. These pages must be fiction. At intervals during the quarter, your seminar leader or one of the other faculty team members will read through your books and discuss them with you in conference.
3. "Reader's Notebook." These reflections on your reading will be useful to you in seminars and in most of your writing efforts. We expect you do do them regularly, and we may, on occasion, call them in to be examined by us.
4. One "finished" (i.e. revised, reworked, recrafted) short story by the end of the term.

5. One expository essay on a group of short stories (To be assigned).

These are only the required writing assignments, the minimums. We hope you'll write more. Let the spirit, or the muse, move you. Obviously, we cannot read and comment on every word you produce, but we hope you'll write for yourselves, for the experience and the joy of writing. We'll read enough of your writing to be able to give you helpful responses.

Weekly Activities

Although the opening week and the evaluation week will differ, the normal, weekly, in-class activities will include several things. We expect you to participate in all of these elements, for en toto they comprise the full essence of our work together.

Here's how the normal week should look:

Weekly Schedule

Monday

10:00-12:00

Craft Workshop

CAB 108

1:00-3:00

Critique Session (Large Group; Craft Assignments)

CAB
108

Tuesday

9:00-12:00

Critique Session (Small Group: "I'm Chevy Chase")
Bldg. 3151, 3155, 3157, and other locations to be announced.

Sem.

Wednesday

Reading/Writing Day--No Class Sessions Scheduled

Thursday

9:00-11:00

Text Seminar

SE 3151--Clemens

SE 3155--Martin

11:00 - 12:00 *Small Grp. Sem.*

SE 3157--Simon

12:30-2:30

Craft Workshop

Library 1612

2:30-4:30 Faculty Seminar

Friday
Reading/Writing Day--No Class Sessions Scheduled

Each week there will be:

Two (2) Craft Workshops--These will include lectures, readings, or presentations by your faculty team members and/or guests. You may be expected to write during these workshops; you can always expect to hear/see things aimed at helping you write better fiction.

One (1) Text Seminar--This will be the setting for close, analytical reading of stories and collateral materials. Sometimes, entries in your "Reader's Notebook" will be taken up, and often you'll receive assignments to include in your notebooks. They will be led by the faculty team members.

Two (2) Critique Sessions--One of these will be a full-group session (Large Group Critique) in which all of the faculty team and all of the students will meet together and examine pieces submitted by the students (or the faculty). The goal will be to share insights into and suggestions for the improvement of a piece or a portion of a piece. The other session will be student-led (Small Group Critique). Groups of several students will meet, read and discuss each other's work. At times, one or more of the faculty team will move around from group to group or be available at specified places for consultation. You should always bring "I'm Chevy Chase" to both of these meetings. As a great deal of teaching/learning will occur in these groups, everyone is expected to present pieces for consideration and to contribute to the consideration of other people's work.

Conferences--Each faculty member will be available at specified times and places and will expect to confer with each member of her/his seminar group. We will also be willing to meet with people not in our seminar groups, but our seminar members have first call upon our time/energy. One of us should be able to meet with each of you about once every two weeks. Go to your seminar leader first.

Award of Academic Credit

Ideally, we should be able to do this work together without being concerned about things like academic credit. But since this is, after all, an academic institution, and since most of you do, in fact, want to earn a bachelor's degree, we must take up the question.

The study and writing of fiction is not easily/cleanly divisible into measurable parts, thus we will award credit on an

all-or-nothing basis. Only in the most extreme and legitimate circumstances will we consider awarding incompletes or partial credit.

The credit we award will be the same as, and in one-half the quarter hours, as that listed on p.54 of the college catalogue:

8--Creative Writing: Short Fiction

2--Creative Writing: The art and use of critique

4--English and American Literature: A survey of fiction

2--Literature: Literary theory and criticism

Some Odds and Ends

Portfolio--You should keep/store all of your writing in one place for easy access and reference. The specific form of the portfolio is up to each individual, but be sure you're able to bring all of your writing to class and to conference with your faculty members.

Blank audio tape--We may record our comments about your writing on tape, so bring in a blank audio tape. A C-60 cassette should be adequate. Our recorded comments will supplement whatever marks we make on your pages, so keep track of your tape and refer to it often.

Guest Writers--We will try, within the limits of our time and funds, to bring visitors to this group. We will be constantly on the alert for such people, and we encourage you to bring such people you know to our attention.

Field Trips--We will try to schedule at least one field trip per quarter--to readings, lectures, performances, whatever. Let us know of writers, places, performances you think it would be good for us to visit.

Public Readings--We may try to schedule public readings by faculty team and/or student members of our group. We'll take this up with you before scheduling anything.

Submissions for Publication--We will encourage you to submit pieces for publication. We will be doing likewise. Since we don't see writing as therapy or a hobby, we think it might be a nice idea to submit pieces to Slightly West (the college's literary magazine) or to publish a volume of the stories written by members of this group. Takes money, but we'll talk with you about it. In any event, we will offer suggestions about what to send where.

Covenants

In keeping with the tradition of covenanting together to do work at Evergreen, sign whichever covenant below applies to you.

Faculty Covenant

We, the undersigned faculty team members of "The Experience of Fiction," promise to provide all of the things offered in this description/syllabus, to do our required work in a consistent, timely fashion, and to work with each other and our students in a helpful, cooperative manner.

Mark Clemens

S. R. (Rudy) Martin, Jr.

Sandra Simon

Student Covenant

I, the undersigned student in "The Experience of Fiction," promise to fulfill all of the requirements specified in the group contract's description/syllabus and to work helpfully and cooperatively with the faculty and student members of the group.

Reader's Notebook Themes and Issues

We list below some things you should pay special attention to as you read stories. Of course, you should always read as critically and as sensitively as you can, but these items are to jog your memories and to give you a little guidance as you go. We suggest that you write comments about these elements of your readings into your Reader's Notebooks for use in seminars, workshops and conferences. You may choose to write about others in place of, or in addition to, these, but these may help you get started.

1. Outdoor/indoor settings (How are they the same? Different? What about either requires special techniques?)
2. Uses of colors
3. Philosophical/ethical/ponderable questions/issues
4. Narrator (s), character/narrator (s) (Who/what is the "teller"? Does his/her identity matter? Why? How?)
5. Individual-vs-collective problems/issues ("Universals"?)
6. Internal-vs-external realities
7. Experience-vs-imagination (Are they different? The same? So what?)
8. Intersections of a reader's experience and a narrator's presentation (What can/do readers/tellers assume? What's legitimate?)
9. Perceptions and uses of the senses (By characters and/or narrators, by readers)
10. Uses of dialogue
11. Coincidence/consistency between what a narrator says and what a character/characters say
12. Uses of the past, present and future
13. Forces that make consequences/a resolution inevitable
14. Character identification
15. Mood, tone, or affect

READINGS

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The short stories assigned below will form the basis for discussion in our group contract's text seminars. The readings from Mitchell, Shahn and Sacks will supplement that discussion. In addition, you should read at least three other stories each week for the purpose of writing observations and analyses in your Reader's Notebook. These may be unassigned stories in Fictions or other stories of your choosing. You may substitute a film for one of these outside stories as long as you focus on writing about its narrative technique.

Week	Dates	Assignments from <u>Fictions</u>	Collateral Readings
1	Sept. 28- Oct. 2	A CONVERSATION WITH MY FATHER, Paley THE EGG, Anderson	Mitchell, foreword and parts 1-6
2	Oct. 5-9	PAUL'S CASE, Cather ARABY, Joyce DEFENDER OF THE FAITH, Roth	Mitchell, parts 7-11
3	Oct. 12-16	WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT LOVE, Carver ONE OFF THE SHORT LIST, Lessing	Mitchell, parts 12- 17 and critical bibliography
4	Oct. 19-23	THE ONES WHO WALK AWAY FROM OMELAS, Le Guin THE DESTRUCTORS, Greene THE STAR, Clarke	Shahn, pp. 1-52
5	Oct. 26-30	SHILOH, Mason THE CHRYSANTHEMUMS, Steinbeck	Shahn, 53-91
6	Nov. 2-6	SONNY'S BLUES, Baldwin	Shahn, 92-131
7	Nov. 9-13	FLOWERING JUDAS, Porter I STAND HERE IRONING, Olsen	Sacks, preface and part one
8	Nov. 16-20	THE OPEN BOAT, Crane THE HORSE DEALER'S DAUGHTER, Lawrence	Sacks, parts two and three
x	Nov. 23-27	Thanksgiving Week--we're out of here	
9	Nov. 30- Dec. 4	LOST IN THE FUNHOUSE, Barth KING OF THE BINGO GAME, Ellison	Sacks, part four
10	Dec. 7-11	Wild card week: revisions, wrap-up, looking ahead	
11	Dec. 14-18	Evaluation Week	

Reading List: Fictions, Trimmer and Jennings; Less than Words Can Say, Richard Mitchell; The Shape of Content, Ben Shahn; and The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, Oliver Sacks