

## ENGL F375: Intermediate Creative Writing: Fiction



University of Alaska-Fairbanks  
Fall Semester 2016  
MWF, Sept. 3-December 9  
11:45 – 12:45 PM (3 Credit Hours)  
Classroom: GRUE 201

**Instructor:** Dr. Daryl Farmer  
**Office:** 820 Gruening  
**Phone:** 474-5307  
**E-Mail:** [dlfarmer@alaska.edu](mailto:dlfarmer@alaska.edu)  
**Office Hours:** Monday and Wednesday, 10:30-11:30 and  
Thursday, 4:30-5:30; or by appointment

ENGL F111X; ENGL F211X or ENGL F213X; ENGL 270; or permission of instructor

### Course Description

**From Catalog:** ENGL F375 W Intermediate Creative Writing: Fiction (h)

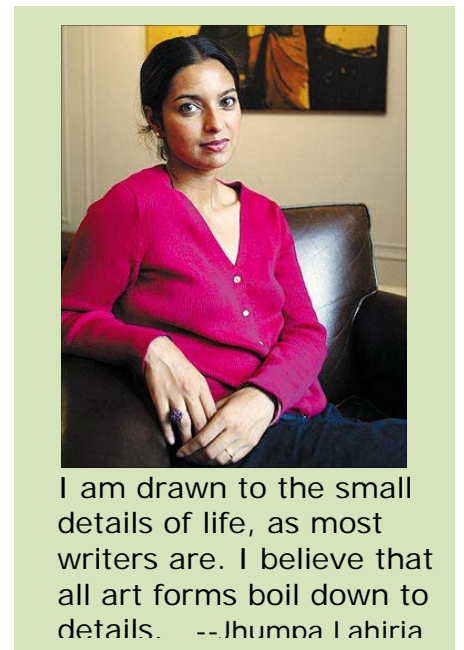
Offered fall, spring

Forms and techniques of fiction. Students' work read and discussed in class and in conference with the instructor. Close study of the techniques of established writers.

This is an introductory class in the writing of fiction. In this course, we will explore the basic craft of fiction writing: plot, character, setting, point of view, dialogue, etc. As we write, we will discuss matters such as getting a first sentence on the page, creating characters, developing a rising tension strong enough to carry the reader through the story, and revising a final draft.

We will produce stories, analyze our own writing, and respond to other writers in the class and in the assigned texts. Writing fiction is the best way I know to learn about ourselves--about our hearts, our passions, our dreams, about what it is that motivates us, drives our emotions, makes us persevere against all obstacles, causes us to love or to hate--in short, what it is that makes us human.

A final note: For me, the study of creative writing is an important form of the study of literature. It would be unthinkable for an art student to get a degree without ever creating a work of art, or for a music major to never play an instrument. Just as painting on canvas can help one to better appreciate Renoir or Picasso, or pounding out notes on a piano can greatly inform one's appreciation of Mozart or Coltrane, so can the writing of fiction allow us a greater appreciation for Anton Chekhov or Z.Z. Packer. This course is, in part, designed to offer you the chance to become better, more imaginative *readers* of fiction. Even if you leave this class and never write another story in your life, if you engage with the work in the class, you should leave with a greater understanding of the power of language, and with tools for a deeper knowledge of the creative process as it applies to all literature.



I am drawn to the small details of life, as most writers are. I believe that all art forms boil down to details. --Jhumpa Lahiria

## Student Learning Outcomes

In this class students will:

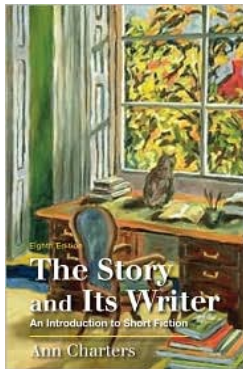
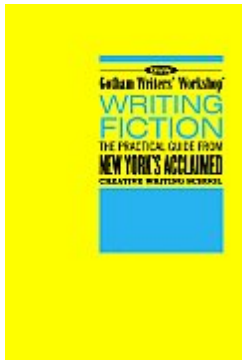
- develop polished texts of their own writing based on applicable skills in invention, process, revision and editing;
- participate in critical peer responses to classmate's writing in both small group and full-class format;
- read and analyze texts written by published writers well known for their contributions to fiction writing;
- participate in the production of a class anthology collection of the semester's best work.

## Course Goals

By the end of the semester, you will have developed the skills necessary to develop nonfiction project ideas, generate new essays in a variety of forms, revise and edit the texts you create, and respond critically to professional and peer writing. You will also leave with a deeper understanding of the publishing business.

## Required Texts

- 1) *Writing Fiction*, Gotham Writers Workshop
- 3) *Story and its Writer*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, ed. By Ann Charters



There will be a variety of handouts throughout the semester. It's a good idea to keep a portfolio or file of some kind to help organize these handouts.

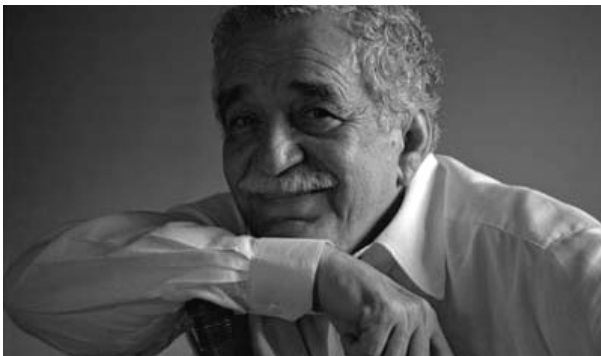
## Other Materials

A personal journal

Also: plan to spend up to \$20 for photocopying drafts

## Instructional Methods

The class will consist of in-class discussion of assigned reading, writing exercises, craft lectures, and small peer workshop.



---

One of the most difficult things is the first paragraph. I have spent many months on a first paragraph, and once I get it, the rest just comes out very easily.

--Gabriel Garcia Marquez

---

## **Evaluation and Grading**

### **Grading:**

Your grade will be broken down as follows:

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Points</b>
Writing Exercises (10 @ 1.5 each)	15%	150
Story 1	20%	200
Story 2	20%	200
Story 3	20%	200
Final Polished essay	15%	150
Final Public Reading	10%	100
Total	100%	1000

### **Writing Exercises (15%)**

Writing exercises are for the writer what scales are for the musician--a way to practice, and to perfect technique. The exercises assigned for this class will be pulled directly from the writing prompts at the end of the chapters in the *Gotham Writers Workshop* textbook. These prompts will help you to develop a storehouse of ideas and materials for the stories you will be asked to write.

### **Essay Projects (3@ 20% each and 1 Final at 15%)**

Each student will turn in three polished stories. These projects will be developed and revised and should be clean polished drafts with no grammatical errors. They should also demonstrate some of the elements of writing that we discuss in class. I will grade these using a rubric which evaluates grammar, content, depth, syntax, sentence fluency, and story elements. You will not be downgraded for taking risks, and it is not a matter of whether I like or dislike the essay. As writing students, you are all competent writers, and it's easy to rest on your laurels and whip off a "good" story the night before it's due. Don't settle for good. Your biggest challenge as a writer is to make people care about your subject. For them to care, you must.

### **Final Reading (10%)**

Over the final 2-3 class periods, we will convene to listen to each of you present your best work. This will be in lieu of a final exam, and will be the culmination of what I am sure will be a great semester!

Grade will be based on following scale:

93-100 – A  
90-92 – A-  
87-89 – B+  
83-86 – B  
80-82 – B-  
73-79 – C+  
70-72 – C-  
60-69 – D  
59 and below – F

## Writing Workshop

### Workshop Process

Please note that workshop pieces are due the class period before the workshop. On the class period before the workshop, all work will be distributed for the rest of us to take home, read and write our peer responses. If you would like for me to make copies of your work to distribute, I am happy to do so, but you must get the piece to me **NO LATER THAN 3:00 PM** on the day before it is due.

### A Note on Workshop Etiquette

There's no way around it, workshops sting. Peers are discussing work that you have struggled over, and sometimes their responses are less than complimentary. Listen, learn, and keep an open mind. Discard those comments that are of no use to you. But remember that your classmates have been asked to respond to your work, and are merely trying to be helpful. On the other side, this is an open forum, where all should feel free to offer critiques that are honest. Less than honest evaluations don't help the writer. However, work to coat the language you use in ways that remain constructive, and are dictated always by how you feel you can most help the author of the work. Inappropriate or mean-spiritedness will not be tolerated. Please keep in mind that in nonfiction, we are not only discussing writing, but actual lives.

### UAF Sponsored Readings (or, otherwise put: EXTRA CREDIT)

Please plan to attend as many of the UAF readings this semester as you can. I will give extra credit, in the equivalent point value of one exercise each (1.5%), for attending up to two of these events. This is a great opportunity to hobnob with actual living writers and enter into the literary community here at UAF. Here is a website with the schedule for the Midnight Sun Visiting Writers Series:

<http://www.alaska.edu/english/midnight-sun-visiting-wri/>

### Course Policies

#### Attendance and Participation

I conduct an active writer-centered classroom. Your **attendance** and participation is an integral part of the course. **Each absence after three will automatically lower your final grade by 5%** unless we have discussed the absences and agreed on an alternative arrangement. (Alternate arrangements include attending outside literary events and/or additional writing assignments. Such arrangement must be initiated by the student). I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. The point is not to punish or forgive: the point is that when a student is out of class, that student is missing the learning that goes on there, and is not contributing to the learning of others. Absence is never an excuse for coming to class unprepared—it is *your* responsibility to find out what was missed, including handouts and/or changes to this syllabus.

In addition, I (and I imagine many of you) find late arrivals disruptive. Please make every effort to be on time. **Participation** means coming to class prepared, having completed and read all assignments, and contributing informed thoughts, ideas and critiques.

#### Plagiarism

Examples of plagiarism are: 1) submitting work as one's own that is at least partly the work of another; 2) submitting work that has been obtained from an Internet or other source; 3) incorporating words or ideas of another author without citing author as source. **If you willfully commit plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct, you will fail the assignment. A second offense will result in a failing grade in the class.**

#### Draft Workshops

Writing quality essays is a process—you should plan on writing at least two drafts per essay. During draft workshops days, come to class prepared with **4 copies** of your rough draft. In groups of 4 or so, you will read through these drafts and receive and give feedback. This process will help you strengthen your argument and delve deeper into your topic, as well as help you to identify grammatical and syntax errors. **Please remember to bring draft copies on assigned draft workshop days.**

## ETC.

- All assignments should be double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman, with MLA style heading. Also, insert last name and page number in upper right hand corner in a header, beginning with page two (2). **Papers must be handed in as hard copy on the day that they are due. I do not accept e-mailed assignments, unless pre-approved.**
- Please staple all multi-page assignments.
- Please make sure that cell phones and all electronic devices are turned off at all times during class.

## The Writing Center

The Writing Center, located on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of Gruening, provides a valuable (yet free!) service to UAF students. The center provides tutors who are available to go over your papers in detail. These tutors are generally graduate students who are well trained in helping students with all aspects of the writing process. Sometimes these tutors are better able to provide help and feedback than even your professors. And it's not just for remedial writers—even the most experienced writers know that sometimes an outside reader can help identify and overcome stumbling blocks. The Writing Center can be reached at 474-5314. Hours are:

- 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday – Thursday,
- 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Monday - Thursday
- 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Friday
- 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. Sunday

## Disability Services

Please contact me if you are having any difficulties with the material due to a documented disability. If you have special needs and have not done so, please contact the Office of Disabilities Services (208 Whitaker Building) at 474-5655. I'm more than willing to accommodate you in a reasonable manner to help you succeed in this course.

## A Final Note

Carl Hiassen writes: "If you work as a reporter long enough and you end up sitting in a prison cell listening to someone tell his story, it will dawn on you that he's in this situation for committing a truly gruesome and heinous act, and yet you're having a fairly normal conversation, as if you were sitting with him in Starbucks. You realize that there are glimmers of humanity in even the most ghastly of characters. It's important to have that if you're going to tell realistic stories."

Writing is, at its best, an act of empathy. By examining the world through our words we engage more deeply, and develop skills that will help us understand others and take us deeper into our own hearts in ways that will benefit us far beyond what we publish, or what accolades we are awarded. Thanks for being here. Enjoy it!



**ENG F377 Class Schedule**  
**Spring, 2017**  
**Farmer**

**Schedule:**

You will be expected to have completed the reading/ assignments prior to the dates indicated. If you don't read the material before class, it will be difficult to have meaningful discussions. On days when reading is assigned, bring your text so that you will be able to follow what is being discussed.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reading Assignment</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
<b>Week 1</b>		
<b>F Sept 2</b>	Introductions, Cauty story	
<b>Week 2</b>		
<b>THE ELEMENTS OF FICTION</b>		
<b>M Sept 5</b>		
Labor Day – no classes		
<b>W Sept. 7</b>	Gotham, Ch. 1	Exercise #1
<b>F Sept. 9</b>	Mock Workshop	
<b>Week 3</b>		
<b>CHARACTER</b>		
<b>M Sept. 12</b>		
Gotham Chapter 2		
<b>W Sept. 14</b>	Charters: Poe and Hawthorne	Exercise #2
<b>F Sept. 16</b>	Draft Workshop	
<b>Week 4</b>		
<b>DETAIL AND DESCRIPTION</b>		
<b>M Sept. 19</b>		
Gotham Chapter 3		
<b>W Sept. 21</b>	Charters: London and Woolf	
<b>F Sept. 23</b>		<b>STORY 1 Due</b>
<b>Week 5</b>		
<b>SETTING</b>		
<b>M Sept. 26</b>		
Gotham Chapter 4		
<b>W Sept. 28</b>	Charters: Carver and Lahiri	Exercise #3
<b>F Sept. 30</b>		
<b>Week 6</b>		
<b>VOICE AND POINT OF VIEW</b>		
<b>M Oct. 3</b>		
Gotham Chapter 5		

<b>W Oct. 5</b>		<b>Charters: Erdrich and Ellison</b>	<b>Exercise #4</b>
<b>F Oct. 7</b>	<b>Individual Conferences</b>		
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>PLOT</b>		
<b>M Oct. 10</b>		<b>Gotham Chapter 6</b>	
<b>W Oct 12</b>		<b>Charters: Oates and Barth</b>	<b>Exercise #5</b>
<b>F Oct. 14</b>	<b>In Class Writing Practice</b>		
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>THEME</b>		
<b>M Oct. 17</b>		<b>Gotham Chapter 7</b>	
<b>W Oct 19</b>		<b>Morrison and Bender</b>	
<b>F Oct. 21</b>	<b>Draft Workshop</b>		<b>STORY 2 Due</b>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>SPECULATIVE</b>		
<b>M Oct. 24</b>		<b>Gotham Chapter 8</b>	
<b>W Oct. 26</b>		<b>Atwood and Marquez</b>	<b>Exercise #6</b>
<b>F Oct. 28</b>			
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>REVISION</b>		
<b>M Oct. 31</b>		<b>Gotham Chapter 9</b>	
<b>W Nov. 2</b>	<b>Individual Conference</b>		<b>Exercise #7</b>
<b>F Nov. 4</b>	<b>Individual Conference</b>		
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>EDITING</b>		
<b>M Nov. 6</b>		<b>Gotham Chapter 10</b>	<b>Exercise #8</b>
<b>W Nov. 8</b>	<b>Collage</b>	<b>Shields and Baxter</b>	
<b>F Nov. 10</b>	<b>In-Class Writing Practice</b>		
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>FLASH FICTION</b>		
<b>M Nov. 13</b>		<b>Packer story (handout)</b>	
<b>W Nov. 15</b>		<b>Flash Essays (handouts)</b>	<b>Exercise #9</b>
<b>F Nov. 17</b>			

<b>Week 13</b>	<b>PUBLISHING/LIT Journals</b>	
<b>M Nov. 20</b>		<b>Alvarez (handout)</b>
<b>W Nov. 22</b>		<b>Bass (handout)      Exercise 10</b>
<b>F Nov. 24</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING – No Class</b>	
<b>Week 14</b>		
<b>M Nov. 27</b>		
<b>W Nov. 29</b>		<b>Humor (handouts)</b>
<b>F Dec. 1</b>		<b>STORY 3 DUE</b>
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>PUBLISHING</b>	
<b>M Dec. 4</b>	<b>How to submit</b>	
<b>W Dec. 6</b>	<b>Choosing final stories for publication</b>	
<b>F Dec. 8</b>	<b>Final Edits for class publication</b>	
<b>Week 16</b>	<b>FINAL</b>	
<b>M Dec. 11</b>	<b>Final Edits for class publication</b>	<b>Final Polished Draft Due, via email by 5:00 PM</b>
<b>Th Dec. 14</b>	<b>FINAL CLASS 10:15- 12:15 Public Readings</b>	

**Please note: This schedule is subject to change.**