

Fall 2015

ENGL 6161

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University of New Orleans

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SYLLABUS, REQUIREMENTS, & PROTOCOLS FOR ENGLISH 6161

BARB JOHNSON

FALL 2015

Table of Contents

Syllabus	2
Critique Rubric	4
Protocols	6

ENGLISH 6161 SYLLABUS

GENERAL INFORMATION:

I am always happy to meet with you to discuss your writing. All appointments should be made via email so that we can both remember what we said.

Within a week of having your story workshopped, I would like to discuss it with you one-on-one. Therefore, after you've been workshopped, you should remember to make an appointment with me.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

English 6161 is an advanced-level skills course conducted as a workshop in fiction writing.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Each student writes 3 stories
2. Each student reads classmates' work and participates in a weekly discussion forum about those stories
3. Each student writes weekly critiques for the stories under discussion
4. Each student annotates classmates' manuscripts weekly
5. Each student will have a mid-term and a final exam

GRADING:

No student will receive a passing grade without turning in 3 stories on time and in full. Each item in the requirements above is worth 20% of your grade.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By writing and reading fiction, preparing weekly critiques, and participating in discussions about classmates' writing, students will learn to recognize and discuss the elements of fiction writing and to apply this understanding to their own work as evidenced by the content of critiques and markup as well as individual stories.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory. A written critique and an annotated manuscript are your tickets to each class. **No student will be allowed to participate in a class for which s/he has no critique or annotated manuscript.** See Moodle for full UNO attendance policy.

Contact:

Barb Johnson
LA 277
504-280-6239
bajohns3@uno.edu

Email protocol: email received before 5pm will be answered within 24 hours M-F. Weekend email will be answered before 5pm Monday.

Office Hours:

M 5-6 p.m. & 9-10p.m., T 4-6 p.m.,
W 4-6 p.m. (CST)
And by appointment

Texts:

Digital material via Moodle

The Official Stuff:

The ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS box on Moodle contains all official course documents. You should be familiar with the contents of the following:

"Syllabus, Requirements, & Protocols"

"Sample Critique & Annotation"

"Evaluating Criticism"

"Professional Story Format"

"UNO Policies"

SUBMISSION CRITERIA:

Every story should be written by you alone and submitted only once during your matriculation in the CWW. No revisions under different titles, etc., no matter how significantly different you believe they are. No changing the names in your nonfiction essay and trying to pass it off as fiction. Same for those prose poems, ya heard? No stories you workshopped in any UNO course for which you received credit. You must submit a new story each time. No previously published material. If it's been published, it doesn't need to be workshopped, right? Every story should be formatted per the instructions in "Professional Story Format" on Moodle.

BE WORTHY:

It is my assumption that, because you have enrolled in a graduate-level creative writing program, it is your heart's desire to be a writer. Everything I ask you to do is with an eye toward preparing you to be that writer. You are the luckiest writers-in-training in all the world because our program is based entirely on co-operation rather than the snarky, mean-spirited competition that gets so much play in magazine articles about MFA programs. Everyone in your workshop is a potential lifetime reader. You will need them now as well as after you've finished the program. You will form casual writing groups outside workshop. They will support your efforts at every stage of your development as a writer. Be worthy.

YOU SAY PO-TAH-TO:

It is not my aim to foist a particular style upon you. This is not a factory. But just as Jackson Pollack spent his early years painting realist murals, a good writer spends time mastering the basics of literary fiction. If you can adhere to the requirements of literary fiction and still write about post-apocalyptic life or rabbits running a disco, go ahead on. There is no specific story length, but the average story is somewhere between 8 and 20 pages. More than 20, and you probably need to do more revising before you turn it in. Less than that, and you are in the neighborhood of the short-short. **No short-shorts or flash fiction unless they have been specifically assigned. They are different forms.**

IN WHICH YOU ARE WARNED OF THE PITFALLS OF SUBMITTING NOVEL CHAPTERS:

You may want to write a novel while you're in the program. I did. A few of my classmates and I were adamant about being allowed to workshop novel chapters. Here's what we learned: It is difficult and frustrating to workshop novel chapters if you are writing the novel concurrent with submitting the chapters. You will not get helpful feedback. I was, in fact, not learning how to write a short story, which is a compact way to learn about characterization and plot and narrative tension, etc., the very things I needed to write a successful novel. The quality of your writing is compromised by the necessary early focus on plot. Novels and short stories are completely different forms, and the workshop is aimed at practicing the short story. Having said that, **you may workshop chapters so long as those chapters can stand alone.** Most literary publications have this same standard.

Definition of "able to stand alone": If, in order to understand the chapter, you don't need to explain what happened before or what's going to happen next, then the chapter can stand alone. This requirement has the added benefit of forcing you to make every word count, to include tension in every chapter. This will ultimately help you to deepen character. Win, win, win.

Now, go. Prepare yourself for an amazing time.

CRITIQUE RUBRIC

English 6161

1. WHAT WAS FUN, MEMORABLE, OR INTERESTING:

This section is to talk about what you enjoyed about the story. Something that made you laugh or left an impression. A funny name or an interesting situation. Anything. This is not about craft but enjoyment or other feelings.

2. WHAT'S WORKING WELL:

Use this section to talk about what's working in the piece. Be specific. Mention the great dialogue or the good characterization. The engaging plot. Quote. Give page numbers. **Avoid using the phrase "I like" or "I love."** Put that in the annotation or in #1 of the critique. This part of the critique should divorce itself from emotion and engage in text-supported craft observations.

3. WHAT STILL NEEDS SOME ATTENTION:

Talk about what needs work in the story and cite examples or page numbers. EX: "There were several shifts in POV that made the action hard to follow. See page 5. Also, I couldn't tell whether Tweedle Dum's best friend, Tweedle Dee, was supposed to be an absent-minded genius or a clueless dimwit. See pp. 4, 6, 9 & 10 for confusing lines." It's always more helpful to phrase your observations as "I" statements. This helps the writer hear what you're saying instead of getting defensive. It also acknowledges the possibility that you may have misread something. Hey, it happens.

4. DISCUSS ONE ELEMENT OF CRAFT:

The elements of craft are things like plot, characterization, POV, setting, dialogue, secondary characters, symbol, theme, metaphor, flashback, time, and that perennial favorite, the objective correlative. And lots of other stuff. Check the Writers Grab Bag on Moodle for more. It's important to learn how to discuss the elements of fiction. In this imagined story, perhaps you choose:

NARRATIVE TIME

EX: The flashback to Tweedle Dum's earlier stint in prison seemed to be a short story of its own. Six pages of flashback in a ten-page story made me think maybe the whole thing should be set in the time of the flashback. The material in the flashback definitely helped me understand Tweedle Dum better—who would've guessed he was a psychopath based on his behavior in the present-tense of the story!? However, the length of the flashback and the great number of details overwhelmed my attention, so that I ultimately lost track of when things had happened.

Specifications:

- Use Critique Rubric
- **Number & bold rubric sections**
- 12pt. Times New Roman
- Number pages
- Label DIGITAL document per PROTOCOLS
- Use headings that make it clear what I'm looking at
- Okay to single space
- Critique=craft-based observation

WHY A RUBRIC?

I ask that all of you use the rubric to write your critiques for the entire semester. The rubric also will be used to frame our class discussions. For those of you who have never written a critique for a short story, this will help you focus your attention on the things you need to learn. I expect you will find this approach helpful, most especially when you are stuck and can't figure out how to begin talking about a story. Having a rubric prevents the sort of breezy, meaningless, responses that at first are thrilling for the author (They like me!) but are ultimately useless when it comes time for revision—What does “it just pulled me along” really mean? HOW did it pull the reader along? By what means? Why is that a good thing?

Using a critique makes you work harder, and you may feel resistant at first. This isn't jumping jacks; it's a treasure hunt. Think. Dig. Push yourself.

OTHER DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do mark up the hard copy. Be sure to mark the things you think are working as well as those that are not. **The annotation is the place to talk about what you liked, too. In your annotation, feel free to draw little hearts next to spiffy lines or nice dialogue.**
- Do be specific in your critique. Give page numbers and examples. Use quotes to illustrate.
- Never use less than a 12 point font for anything. (I've done it here to save you paper and ink.)
- Though I would hope it would go without saying, don't ever be snarky in your comments, no matter how smart and witty it makes you feel. Example of snarky: “Really? Her dead husband visits her and tells her adorable things? Not cliché at all.”
- You're writing to help yourself and to help the author. Remember that being an attentive reader will lead straight to being a better writer. Be honest. Be thorough. Be respectful and professional but never soft. Soft is not helpful, and neither is vague.

PROTOCOLS

English 6161

WHAT TO BRING TO CLASS:

- An annotated physical copy of the story under discussion as well as the critique. A student without both of these will not be admitted to class.
- **IF YOU ARE SUBMITTING:** Bring enough copies of the story for everyone in class, including me.

WHAT TO TURN IN WHERE

STORIES WILL BE TURNED IN 2 PLACES:

- On Moodle, find the Turnitin icon with your name on it. Be sure to check the date carefully. Label your story document YOUR NAME Story 1 (or 2, or 3)
- When it is your turn to submit, bring a sufficient number of paper copies for everyone in the class including me.
- **Both of the above are due before 6pm.**

CRITIQUES

- On Moodle, find the proper week's link marked "ALL turn in critique for Story X HERE."
- LABEL YOUR DOCUMENT: **YOUR NAME Critique for AUTHOR'S NAME Story 1** (or 2 or 3)
- Critiques are due before 6pm even if you are missing class.

ABSENCE

- As soon as you know you are going to be absent, you should send an email to me. Make sure you have uploaded your critiques on Moodle. Upon your return, submit the paper annotated manuscripts/critique to me at the beginning of class.
- All work is due by 6pm on a given class day regardless of whether you are absent.
- More than 5 min. late= ½ absence. See attendance policy in ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS box.
- Work not turned in on time=no credit and 1 absence. See BOX O'FORGIVENESS on Moodle for exceptions.

IXNAY:

- Be where you are: turn off phones. **OFF.**
- No tadinkas: computers, tablets, iphones, etc. may NOT be used in class.
- We'll have a break midway through class. Please do not eat until then.
- If you get up suddenly and rush out of the room with a "my phone's vibrating" look, there's a good chance I'll follow you out and invite you not to return. Don't do it.

Manuscript	Date of Submission
TURN IN: 1Caroline	8/17
TURN IN: 2Linden, 3Cameron CRITIQUE: 1Caroline	8/24
TURN IN: 4Ambata , 5 Abby CRITIQUE: 2Linden,3Cameron	8/31
TO PREPARE FOR DISCUSSION NEXT WEEK: See flash fiction reading in 9/7 box on Moodle	9/7 LABOR DAY: NO CLASS
TURN IN: 6Emily,7 Alex CRITIQUE: 4Ambata,5Abby	9/14
TURN IN: 8Jacob, 9Wilson CRITIQUE: 6Emily,7Thomas	9/21
TURN IN: 10Dylan,1Caroline,2Linden CRITIQUE: 8Jacob,9Wilson	9/28 BEGIN FLASH FICTION
TURN IN: 3Cameron, 4Ambata, 5Abby CRITIQUE: 10Dylan, 1 Caroline & 2Linden	10/5 MID-TERM RECALIBRATION DUE
TURN IN: 6Emily, 7Alex, 8Jacob CRITIQUE: 3Cameron,4,Ambata 5Abby	10/12
TURN IN: 9Wilson,10Dylan CRITIQUE: 6Emily,7Thomas,8Jacob	10/19
TURN IN: 1Caroline,2 Linden CRITIQUE: 9Wilson,10Dylan	10/26
TURN IN: 3Cameron,4 Ambata CRITIQUE: 1Caroline, 2Linden	11/2
TURN IN: 5Abby,6 Emily CRITIQUE: 3Cameron, 4Ambata	11/9
TURN IN: 7Alex,8Jacob CRITIQUE: 5Abby, 6 Emily	11/16
TURN IN: 9Wilson,10Dylan CRITIQUE: 7Thomas,8Jacob	11/23
TURN IN: NO ONE CRITIQUE: 9Wilson,10 Dylan	11/30
All Turn in revised flash fiction and publication plan.	12/7 SPECIAL WORKSHOP: Revision, Submission, and Publication

UNO POLICIES

Distance Learning Classes

ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARD BEHAVIOR

Discussion board posts are to be focused on the craft of the assigned work. Any posts that operate solely on the level of taste or that are insensitive/dismissive of other students' posts/thoughts will be removed, and the student will not get credit for the work.

The professor will issue a warning to the student about these posts, and any more than 2 of these offending posts will mean course failure.

This, after all, is a graduate level class and not a comments board on Youtube. Please respect the classroom environment. We expect well-articulated and professionally presented conversation and will hold online students accountable to the same standards which campus students are held to.

DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENT IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES

The University of New Orleans partners with Proctor U, a live, online proctoring service that allows students to complete exams from any location using a computer, webcam, and reliable internet connection.

To ensure academic integrity, all students enrolled in distance learning courses at the University of New Orleans may be required to participate in additional student identification procedures. At the discretion of the faculty member teaching the course, these measures may include on-campus proctored examinations, off-site or online proctored examinations, or other reasonable measures to ensure student identity. Authentication measures for this course are identified below and any fees associated are the responsibility of the student:

AUTHENTICATION MEASURES for English 6161, English 6191, and English 6941 include the use of your Moodle password and video conferencing with the professor only. There are no fees associated with this class.

Students with Disabilities

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements.

Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu>.

Attendance

UNO's attendance policy allows you to miss 225 minutes of class per semester, which translates to 1 1/3 classes in a 3HR seminar.

CAMPUS CLASSES: (3HR Seminars) Missing two or more classes will result in failure unless excused in writing by a doctor

If you are not in class when I call the roll, you will be marked absent for that day. If you walk in within 5 minutes of my calling the roll, you will be marked "tardy;" two "tardies" equal an absence, so it's vital that you are on time for every class. If you leave before the end of the class period, this will also count as a "half absence".

ONLINE CLASSES: (3Hr Seminars) Attendance in an online class is measured by participation in forums and by turning in completed assignments on time. The criteria for full participation are listed in the syllabus that is posted in the ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS box at the top of our Moodle course. Failure to participate fully is equivalent to missing one class. One class on campus equals 180 minutes or 3 hours. You should expect to spend that much time posting and responding in the class forums. Failing to participate fully or to turn in assignments two or more times will result in failure unless excused in writing by a doctor.

CAMPUS CLASSES: The physical copies of a given class period's assignments are your tickets to class. Any failure to have physical copies of the assignments will be counted as an absence and you will not be admitted to class.

ONLINE CLASSES: Making the required initial post(s) is a prerequisite for participating in the week's discussion. Failure to make the required initial post(s) will be counted as an absence.