

CUYAMACA COLLEGE
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

English 130 – Short Fiction Writing I

3 hours lecture, 3 units

Catalog Description

Discover the art of storytelling in this hands-on introduction to short fiction. You'll read and analyze powerful stories by classic and contemporary writers, then craft your own original short fiction using the techniques you learn. Workshops give you the chance to develop your voice, get feedback, and share your work publicly if you choose. This is an open-access course (all are welcome) and no previous experience is required—just curiosity and creativity.

Prerequisite

Placement into ENGL C1000 (formerly ENGL 120) or ESL 122

Recommended Preparation

"C" grade or higher or "Pass" in ENGL 126 or equivalent

Course Content

- 1) Creation, composition, and revision of short fiction texts.
- 2) Techniques of invention and strategies for cultivating inspiration.
- 3) Fundamental elements and techniques of the craft of short fiction, including point of view, setting, character, theme, narration and plot, language and style, and structure.
- 4) College-level grammar, punctuation, and mechanics used in short fiction writing.
- 5) Strategies for and approaches to reviewing and commenting on original short fiction.
- 6) Approaches to effective revision across drafts.
- 7) A diversity of short fiction by emerging, established, and contemporary writers, in print and/or online chapbooks, books, anthologies, literary magazines, and journals.
- 8) Writing exercises and activities designed to develop the craft.
- 9) Critical essays on the discourse of fiction writing.
- 10) Aesthetic criteria for short fiction and standards for evaluation of craft.
- 11) Strategies for performatively reading short fiction.
- 12) Practice in assembling a portfolio of short fiction.
- 13) Introduction to publishing.

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

- 1) Distinguish, both orally and in writing, the fundamental tools, techniques, and forms used by professional practitioners of short fiction writing, including plot construction, point of view, setting, description, characterization, dialogue, and theme.
- 2) Identify and employ basic techniques of invention and strategies for cultivating inspiration.
- 3) Write short fiction utilizing fundamental tools, techniques, and forms.
- 4) Practice competency in college-level grammar, punctuation, and mechanics used in short fiction writing.
- 5) Evaluate benefits of criticism of their own work and demonstrate application in consequent revisions.
- 6) Revise their own work across drafts.

- 7) Evaluate and critique works of short fiction, including peer work, both orally and in writing.
- 8) Cultivate aesthetic criteria for short fiction.
- 9) Participate meaningfully in academic discourse regarding fiction writing.
- 10) Practice performatively reading their own writing.
- 11) Assemble a portfolio of original work.
- 12) Submit original short fiction for publication.

Method of Evaluation

Grades are based on demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter determined by multiple measurements for evaluation. Assessment frameworks may include alternative, equity-minded approaches to evaluation, such as ungrading, labor-based grading, contract-based grading, etc.

The instructor continually evaluates students' writing and provides regular and timely feedback so that students can improve their writing skills. Feedback is strengths-based and supportive. The instructor also proactively addresses concerns with attendance and assignment outcomes before the student is in danger of failing the course.

Methods of evaluation may include:

- 1) Student writing and revision of short fiction.
- 2) Participation in writers' workshop, both orally and in writing.
- 3) Participation in class discussion, and writing exercises such as modeling based on published authors
- 4) Completion of short fiction portfolio (including exercises, drafts and revisions) as a final project.
- 5) Performative reading of original works composed for the class, presented as part of a final examination.

Special Materials Required of Student

None

Minimum Instructional Facilities

Smart Classroom

Method of Instruction

Instructors use culturally relevant and equity-minded approaches to teaching and learning. These approaches center student identities, values, experiences, and goals; use strengths-based approaches to learning; convey growth-minded faculty mindsets about student potential; offer just-in-time remediation strategies to boost language and writing skills; are attentive to student affective domains; and individualize support so that students may have equitable learning experiences.

On writing assignments, the instructor will include comments to indicate strengths and areas for improvement, enabling students to revise their work. Class time is also devoted to explaining and discussing various writing techniques, analysis and discussion of published and student writing, and peer commentary of selected assignments. A variety of teaching methods may be used:

- 1) Lecture by instructor, visiting writers, and media
- 2) Workshopping, reviewing, and reading activities in small or large groups
- 3) Discussion and writing exercises based on tools, techniques, and forms of short fiction
- 4) Discussion and analysis of short fiction by emerging, traditional, and/or contemporary authors
- 5) Individual conferences

Out-of-Class Assignments

- 1) **Reading:** Reading and studying of work by emerging, established and/or contemporary short fiction practitioners, researching material for works of short fiction.

- 2) **Writing:** Composing and revising works of short fiction, Reading and writing critiques of classmates' short stories, Craft and imitation exercises.
- 3) **Other:** Attending and/or participating in campus and community literary events and readings, submitting manuscripts to the Cuyamaca College literary journal, *The Cuyamaca Creative*, as well as researching online and print publication opportunities.

Texts and References

- 1) Required (representative example):
 - a. Bradburn, Richard. *Self-Editing for Self-Publishers: Incorporating—A Style Guide for Fiction*. Reen Publishing, 2020.
 - b. Burroway, Janet, and Elizabeth Stuckey-French and Ned Stuckey-French. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*. 11th ed. University of Chicago Press, 2022.
 - c. Dyson, J. Paul. *Writer's Handbook 2025*. Amazon, 2024.
 - d. LeGuin, Ursula K. *Steering the Craft: A 21st Century Guide to Sailing the Sea of Story*. Harper, 2015. Classic.
 - e. Mills, Mark. *Crafting the Very Short Story: Anthology of 100 Masterpieces*. Prentice Hall, 2002. Classic.
- 2) Supplemental: None.

Exit Skills

Students having successfully completed this course exit with the following skills, competencies and/or knowledge:

- 1) Write short fiction utilizing fundamental tools, techniques, and forms at a novice level.
- 2) Evaluate short fiction, both orally and in writing, at a novice level.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Create short fiction that employs the fundamental tools, techniques, and forms of the craft.
- 2) Use workshops and/or other review exercises to critically evaluate their own short fiction manuscripts as well as the manuscripts of others.