

## Course Syllabus

### Course Information

CRWT 3307 HN1

Spring 2015

Creating Short Stories

Monday: 4:00 to 6:45 p.m.

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### Professor Contact Information

Betty Wiesepape

Office: JO 5.205

972-883-6352

[Bet@utdallas.edu](mailto:Bet@utdallas.edu)

Office hours: Monday: 3-4 (by appointment).

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### Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

Scholarship recipient

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### Course Description

This course is a creative workshop in which students investigate the creative processes involved in writing short stories and experiment with a variety of traditional and experimental forms.

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### Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

1. Describe and apply methodological processes: Students will be able to describe and apply basic methodologies and processes by which aesthetic judgments are made.
  2. Describe effective communication skills: Students will demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills.
  3. Demonstrate knowledge of creative writing principles and history: Students will demonstrate a broad knowledge of the principles and history of at least one major form of artistic expression.
  4. Gain experience and expertise: Students will gain experience and expertise in at least one area of the creative and performing arts.
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### Required Textbooks and Materials

R.S. Gwynn, *A Pocket Anthology* (7<sup>th</sup> edition).

Michael Kardos, *The Art and Craft of Fiction* (December 2012).

Jerome Stern, *Making Shapely Fiction* (any edition).

William Strunk & E.B. White, *The Elements of Style* (any edition).

Some Assigned Stories have been placed on Course Reserve at the UTD library; others can be obtained via Google.

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### Suggested Course Materials

During the semester, each student will be expected to provide photocopies of at least 1 original story to each member of the class for workshop (a total of 20 copies). Students also will turn in 2 copies of each original story and 2 copies of each written critique. This means that students enrolled in this class should be prepared to incur some photocopying expenses.

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## Assignments & Academic Calendar

### JANUARY 12: INTRODUCTION TO THE SHORT STORY

READ: Kardos, Chapter 1.

### JANUARY 19: SCHOOL HOLIDAY (No classes)

READ: “A Fable with Slips of White Paper Spilling from the Pockets” by Kevin Brockmeier.

### JANUARY 26: PAINTING PICTURES, MAKING MUSIC

READ: **Kardos**—Chapter 2, “On Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien; **Stern**—“Imagination,” “Narrative,” “Short Story,” “Trust Your Material,” “Write What You Know,” “Style,” “Didacticism,” “Sentimentality,” “Subtlety,” “Texture,” “Showing & Telling.”

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Choose one of the exercises at the end of Chapter 2 and produce a 2 to 3 page narrative sketch.

### FEBRUARY 2: CREATING MEMORABLE CHARACTERS

READ: **Kardos**—Ch. 4, “Midnight, Licorice, Shadow”; **Stern**—“Character,” “Names,” “Negative Positive Knowledge,” “Position,” “Stereotype,” “Psychic Distance,” “Science Fiction,” “Realism.”

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Produce a 3 to 4 page character sketch that grows out of your observation of a figure in a photograph supplied by the professor.

### FEBRUARY 9: BEGINNINGS, MIDDLES, ENDINGS

READ: **Kardos**—Chs. 3 & 7, “St. Lucy’s Home for Girls Raised by Wolves” by Karen Russell; **Stern**—“Don’t Do This,” “Beginnings,” “Premise,” “Suspense,” “Tension,” “Fretag’s Pyramid,” “Resolution,” “Endings,” **Gwynn**—“Shiloh” by Bobbie Ann Mason.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Choose a beginning sentence from a list supplied by the professor, and write 3 to 5 pages of a short story, employing the sentence by sentence technique introduced in the previous class.

### FEBRUARY 16: DIALOGUE

READ: **Kardos**—Chs. 8 & 11, “This Blessed House” by Jhumpa Lahiri; **Stern**, “Dialect,” “Dialogue,” “Diction,” “Profanity/Obscenity,” “Interior Monologue,” “Workshops”; **Gwynn**—“Wants” by Grace Paley.

ASSIGNMENT: First draft of Story #1. Bring two copies to class, one for the professor and one for peer review. Come to class prepared to sign up for a conference with the professor.

### FEBRUARY 23: REVISION

READ: **Kardos**—Chapter 10; **Gwynn**—“The Payoff by Susan Perabo.”

IN-CLASS: Practice Workshop of a published story.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Practice workshop of an assigned story.

FEBRUARY 25: Attend reading by special guest speaker/writer Skip Hollandsworth.

### MARCH 2: STUDENT CONFERENCES—No formal class.

READ: **Kardos**—Ch. 9; **Gwynn**—“In American Society” by Gish Jen.

IN-CLASS: Practice workshop of assigned story

MARCH 9: SCENE AND SUMMARY: A MATTER OF TIMING

READ: **Kardos**—Ch. 5; Stern, “Scene,” “Exposition,” “Motif,” “Irony,” “Bullet in the Brain” by Tobias Wolff.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Final Draft of Story #1.

MARCH 16: SPRING BREAK

MARCH 23: FORM, PLOT & STRUCTURE

READ: **Kardos**—Ch. 6, “Water Liars” by Barry Hannah & “Magic Words” by Jill McCorkle; **Stern**—“Plot.”

IN-CLASS ACTIVITY: Workshop of student stories.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Begin Story #2.

MARCH 30: PLACE, SETTING, ATMOSPHERE

READ: **Stern**—“Places & Place Names,” “Suspension of Disbelief,” “Accuracy,” “Atmosphere”; **Gwynn**—“Hunters in the Snow” by Tobias Wolff.

IN-CLASS: Workshop of student stories.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Two copies of first draft of Story #2.

APRIL 6: POINT OF VIEW

READ: **Gwynn**—“Everything that Rises Must Converge” by Flannery O’Connor,” **Gwynn**—“Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid; **Stern**—“Point of View;

IN-CLASS: Workshop student stories.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Two copies of a critique of another student’s Story #2.

APRIL 13: EXPERIMENTAL FICTION

READ: **Stern**—“Avant-garde,” “Genre”; **Gwynn**—“Happy Endings” by Margaret Atwood; “How to Become a Writer” by Lorrie Moore.

IN-CLASS: Workshop of student stories.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Two copies of Short Story #3 (an experimental short short story.)

APRIL 20: EPIPHANIES & DISCOVERIES

READ: **Kardos**—Chapter 8; **Gwynn**—“The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson; **Stern**—“Epiphany,” “Catharsis,” “Poetic Justice,” “Batho.”

IN-CLASS: Workshop of student stories.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Two copies of a critique of another student’s Story #3.

APRIL 27: COURSE SUMMARY AND WRAP UP

IN-CLASS: Workshop of student stories.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Final Draft of Story #2 or #3.

NOTE: All late assignments must be completed and turned in to the professor by this date.

MAY 5: No final exam will be given in this course. In place of a final exam, each student will submit one story written in this course to a journal or magazine for possible publication. Each student must present proof of this submission to the professor by noon on this date.

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### **Grading Policy**

Grades will be based upon: attendance, classroom citizenship, completion of assignments and participation in workshop sessions—20%; Written Critiques--30%; Original short stories—40%; Reaction Paper to an Arts & Humanities sponsored event—10% Students receive grades only on the final drafts of stories, but failure to perform weekly exercises or to turn in first drafts will result in the grade of the final draft being lowered one full letter grade. The professor will assign final grades of plus and minus in this course.

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### **Course & Instructor Policies**

Students will be expected to read and be prepared to discuss all assigned readings and to complete all assigned writing exercises. Failure to perform these assignments will have a negative effect upon the student's class participation grade. During the course of the semester, each student will write 3 short stories and revise 2. Students will also write a 2 to 3 page critique of another student's story on 3 separate occasions. NOTE: Stories written prior to this class may not be submitted to fulfill the requirements of this course.

All written assignments including exercises must be typed, double spaced and legible. Work submitted after the due date will be accepted, but the grade on the assignment will be lowered one full letter grade, and the professor will not make editorial comments. In addition, the professor will not accept handwritten work or work submitted by email.

Class attendance and participation in discussions and workshop sessions are mandatory. Attendance will be checked each week, and a student who misses more than 3 classes should not expect to receive a passing grade in the course. NOTE: No make-up work will be assigned; no extra credit projects will be offered, and no absences will be excused except those mandated by the administration of this university. No exams will be given in this workshop class. In lieu of a final exam, students will select one original story to submit for possible publication and submit proof of submission to the professor on a date specified by the professor.

The use of cell phones, recorders, laptop computers and other communication devices will not be permitted in this class. Please turn these devices off before entering the classroom.

**NOTE: Descriptions and timelines in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.**

**NOTE: The University of Texas at Dallas syllabus-policies can be accessed at: <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.**