

CRWR 39A: INTRODUCTION TO SHORT FICTION WRITING

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	5
Hours:	5 lecture per week (60 total per quarter)
Prerequisite:	Demonstrated proficiency in English by placement via multiple measures OR through an equivalent placement process OR completion of ESLL 125 & ESLL 249.
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 3: Arts & Humanities
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

Student Learning Outcomes

- Use the elements of the craft with proficiency in short fiction.
- Identify the elements of the craft in masterworks in short fiction.

Description

Explicit instruction and practice in reading short fiction and writing in a variety of short fiction styles and forms. Emphasis on an integrated reading and writing process in which students study the characteristics of the genre and its history, and examine published short fiction representing diverse cultures and literary traditions, in order to compose original works of fiction informed by the history of the genre and the elements of craft found in published works. Focus on critical analysis and feedback on original works written by peers, and developing a writing process to generate, revise, and edit works of short fiction. Assignments include reading, analyzing, and responding to published works and student work, as well as writing original work. Analysis of public readings and/or interviews with authors of short fiction.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the distinctive elements of short fiction and what characteristics distinguish the genre from other forms of literature, as well as the historical development of the genre
2. Analyze and compare short-fiction genres and different types of genre experimentation in published short fiction
3. Read and analyze published short fiction by authors representing diverse cultures, communities, and ethnicities
4. Read and analyze published short fiction to identify elements such as character, conflict, dialogue, setting, symbolism, tone, etc.
5. Compose short fiction stories of various genres that reflect understanding of fictional elements
6. Employ a writing process that entails meta-awareness of strategies used during invention, drafting, revision, and editing
7. Revise original short fiction based on self-analysis, workshop critiques, lecture, and conference
8. Provide generative and reflective feedback on peer-written short fiction in a workshop setting

Course Content

1. Examine distinctive elements of short fiction and the history of the genre
 - a. Distinctive elements, such as:
 - i. "Shortness": flash fiction, short fiction, and the novella
 - ii. Narrative scope and compression
 - iii. Focused character portraits
 - iv. Resolution and epiphany
 - v. Exposition and scene
 - b. History of the genre, such as:
 - i. Early forerunners of the modern short story, such as myths and fables
 - ii. The origins of the modern short story in the 19th century
 - iii. The development and popularization of the short story in the 20th century
 - iv. Diversity and experimentation in late-20th and early-21st century short fiction
 - v. The evolution of short-form fiction in the digital era
2. Analyze and compare published works of short-fiction representing diverse genres, such as:
 - a. Fantasy
 - b. Flash fiction
 - c. Historical fiction
 - d. Horror
 - e. Magical realism
 - f. Minimalism
 - g. Mystery
 - h. Postmodernism
 - i. Realism
 - j. Science fiction
3. Read and analyze published short fiction by authors representing diverse cultures, communities, and ethnicities, such as:
 - a. Arab authors
 - b. Asian American authors
 - c. Authors from the LGBTQ+ community
 - d. Authors with disabilities
 - e. Black authors
 - f. Indigenous and Native American authors
 - g. Jewish authors
 - h. Latine authors
 - i. Low-income and working-class authors
 - j. Pacific Islander authors
4. Identify elements of fiction in published stories, the evolution of their use throughout the history of the genre, and their use by authors representing diverse culture, communities, and ethnicities, such as:
 - a. Characterization
 - b. Conflict
 - c. Content
 - d. Description and sensory detail

- e. Dialogue
 - f. Diction
 - g. Figurative language
 - h. Irony
 - i. Mood
 - j. Point of view
 - k. Plot and structure
 - l. Setting and world building
 - m. Symbolism
 - n. Theme
 - o. Tone
5. Compose short fiction stories informed by the history of the genre and the elements of craft found in published works
 - a. Compose short stories that emulate a particular genre or the characteristics of short stories representing a particular historical period
 - b. Compose short stories that use particular devices specific to studied short stories or authors (e.g., characterization, dialogue, diction, dialogue, characterization, linguistic diversity, etc.)
 - c. Compose short stories that emulate subject matter or thematic considerations of studied short stories
 6. Employ a writing process
 - a. Identify as creative writers
 - i. Deconstruct stereotypes and assumptions pertaining to the "figure of the writer"
 - ii. Cultivate "authorial permission" for the student-writer and marginalized voices
 - b. Scaffolded invention
 - i. Writing prompts and exercises targeting specific elements of craft
 - ii. Writing prompts and exercises cultivating self-reflection, unearthing material for original fiction
 - c. Develop a writing practice (e.g., notebooks and journals, consistent schedule)
 - d. Apply course content (elements of craft, genre, etc.) to conceptualization, development, and drafting
 - e. Develop meta-cognitive awareness of writing process
 7. Revise original short fiction
 - a. Discern between relevant and irrelevant feedback with regard to artistic intention
 - b. Apply relevant student and instructor feedback, as well as course content/lectures, to global and local revision of original work
 - c. Self-analysis of original work; identify opportunities for improvement
 8. Provide generative and reflective feedback in workshop
 - a. Workshop participation
 - i. Collaboratively establish norms, language, and goals of workshop
 - ii. Regular and constructive contributions to workshop discussion
 - iii. Substantive written feedback in advance of workshop
 - iv. Focused, equitable, and supportive feedback
 - v. Support "authorial permission" for the student-writer and marginalized voices
 - b. Meaningful, constructive feedback

- i. Identifying and honoring writers' intentions; tailoring feedback to writers' intentions
- ii. Using shared terms, techniques, and elements of craft from course content in feedback
- iii. Distinguishing between summative and formative feedback; balancing appreciation with constructive criticism
- iv. Distinguishing between global and local feedback and appropriate application of each

Lab Content

Not applicable.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

When taught online/hybrid, ongoing access to computer with email software capabilities; email address; internet browsing software.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Participation in workshop discussions
 Production of written critiques of student work
 Five analytical responses of at least one page each to assigned published writings
 In-class writing exercises
 A minimum of fifteen pages of short fiction
 A two-page short story analysis for class presentation
 Revision of original work
 Writing portfolio or personal collection; book/zine (digital or print)
 Portfolio review of at least two pages
 Quality of original work

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Lecture presentations and classroom discussion on the craft of short fiction
 Cooperative learning exercises, oral presentations
 Workshop student short fiction assignments as a group
 Participate in writing workshop sessions to provide and receive feedback on short stories
 Independent and collaborative reading/viewing/listening of the assigned texts
 Instructor-guided and collaborative interpretation and analysis
 Student-led discussions and presentations
 E-portfolios/blogs/wiki for sharing student works in progress, providing feedback, and to demonstrate mastery, comprehension, application, and synthesis of a given set of concepts
 Guest lectures by visiting writers
 View or attend community-based readings

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Bausch, Richard, ed.. The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction, 8th ed.. 2015.

Burroughway, Janet, and Elizabeth Stucky-French. Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft. 2019.

Frisch, Mary, ed.. Coming of Age in America: A Multicultural Anthology. 2007.

Hills, Rust. Writing in General and the Short Story on Particular. 2000.

La Plante, Alice. The Making of a Story: A Norton Guide to Creative Writing. 2010.

Mazer, Anne, and Brice Particelli, eds.. America Street: A Multicultural Anthology of Stories. 2019.

Mills, Mark. Crafting the Very Short Story: An Anthology of 100 Masterpieces. 2003.

Shapard, Richard, and James Thomas, eds.. New Sudden Fiction: Short-Short Stories from America and Beyond. 2007.

Treisman, Deborah, ed.. A Century of Fiction in The New Yorker. 2025.

Williford, Lex, and Michael Martone, eds.. The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction. 2009.

Although most of these texts are older than the suggested "5 years or newer" standard, they remain seminal texts in this area of study.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Read short fiction texts.
2. Written analysis of published short fiction.
3. Read texts which include instruction on craft.
4. Composition of original short fiction.

Discipline(s)

English