



ENGLISH 3020: TOPICS IN WRITING

Professor	David H. Wilson
Office	248 Dwyer
Phone	419.586.0317
Office Hours	MT 11-1 and by appointment
Email	david.wilson@wright.edu
Website	dharlanwilson.com
Pilot	pilot.wright.edu
Prerequisite	ENG 2100

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This section of English 3020 focuses on creative writing in the form of short fiction. Students will read and compose stories of various lengths. This includes extended works (500-2,000 words) and shorter pieces (less than 500 words), the latter of which has been referred to as flash fiction, sudden fiction, quickfiction, microfiction, nanofiction, short shorts, and prose poetry. Students will be exposed to different kinds of readings and experiment with the elements of fiction, such as narration, point of view, style, characterization, story, plot, setting, figurative language, genre, and theme. The course foregrounds the processes of reading, writing, and editing through the following activities: [1] the study of a diversity of short stories which will be used as models for students' own creative explorations, [2] the study of criticism on fiction writing and authorial techniques and advice, [3] writing exercises designed to develop students' imaginative and stylistic skills, and [4] constructive criticism of fiction in an online workshop setting.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This is an online course with clear deadlines for all assignments; as long as you are attentive to these deadlines, you may work at your own pace. I am available during office hours, by email, and by appointment for personal consultation. I always answer emails within 24 hours, usually sooner, on the condition that your queries are written in complete sentences and free of mechanical errors. Do not email me in textspeak. This is a college writing course. Make sure your writing is polished and professional and I will promptly address your concerns.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to do the following: prepare and submit a piece of fiction for professional publication, respond critically and creatively to a wide variety of short fiction, assess the aesthetic of a particular genre of fiction, compare literary works to distinguish differences in style and theme, analyze devices that help construct

meanings in literary texts, actively and effectively edit and revise short stories, and identify the literary conventions and elements of fiction writing.

TEXTBOOKS

Olsen, Lance. *Architectures of Possibility: After Innovative Writing*. Bowie: Guide Dog Books, 2011.

Thomas, Denise and James Thomas, eds. *Flash Fiction: 72 Very Short Stories*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992.

GRADING SCALE

Course grades will be based on a points system in which major assignments (e.g., short fiction) are generally worth 100 and minor assignments (e.g., discussions and responses) are worth 25. Your journal (see below) will carry the bulk of your grade at 200 points. As I grade your work, Pilot tallies the points so that you may gauge your performance in the course at any time during the semester. At the end of the semester, points will be converted to percentages, and percentages will be converted to letter grades. Here is the grading rubric:

90.0-100%	A
80.0-89.9%	B
70.0-79.9%	C
60.0-69.9%	D
0-59.9%	F

ASSIGNMENTS

ENG 3020 will expose students to a wealth of short-fiction venues. Throughout the semester, you will be given a number of assignments, most of which consist of reading and writing exercises. Directions and due dates for all assignments are clearly demarcated on Pilot: refer to **Content > Assignments** and/or **Assessment > Dropbox**, where everything is carefully broken down on a weekly basis. Additionally, there are several discussion postings (refer to **Communication > Discussions**) where you will reflect on assigned readings and talk about them with your peers.

Go to the assignments folder and read through all of the content so that you have a sense of how the course will unfold from beginning to end. There is content for fifteen weeks as well as an exam week. Familiarize yourself the material: I have designed this online version of ENG 3020 to be cumulative; every new week builds on the weeks that precede it.

Submit all assignments as .doc, .rtf, or .pdf files.

You are responsible for monitoring the upload of each assignment. Assignments submitted after their due dates have elapsed (whether it be one day, ten days, or one minute) will not be accepted. Assignments are due every **Friday at 8 a.m.** with the exception of exam week. Organize and manage your time accordingly. Never wait until the last minute to submit work in case of computer glitches, personal emergencies, etc. Always provide yourself with ample time.

I do not grade creative writing on the basis of "talent." Rather, I base grades on three simple criteria: [1] grammar and writing mechanics; [2] following directions; and [3] evidence of a substantive effort to do a good job.

FICTION

The fiction you produce in this course will vary in length and genre. You will be asked to model some of your fiction after our readings, mimicking the style, voice, characterization, and narration of other authors. You will also be asked to devise fiction from scratch as well as journal entries and writing prompts. There are FIVE major fiction-writing assignments.

JOURNALS

Journals are valuable tools for developing and refining your creative writing and thinking skills. You are required to keep a regular journal in which you address issues and topics posed to you on Pilot as well as record ideas of your own. You should form the habit of writing in your journal on a daily basis, if only briefly, detailing your thoughts, observations, dreams, insights, experiences—anything you might draw on for your writing.

Unless specified otherwise, each assigned journal topic should be addressed in no less than 250 words. There is no maximum limit. Self-guided entries may vary in length.

There are a total of 15 entries assigned to you. You are expected to produce AT LEAST this many entries on your own, rendering a minimum total of 30 entries by the end of the semester. For your personal entries, consider responding to the many writing prompts located at the end of each chapter in *Architectures of Possibility*.

I do not assign due dates to individual journal entries. Finished journals will be due at the end of the semester, at which point I will carefully read and grade them. Do not wait until the end of the semester to write your entire journal—your haste will expose your deferral. Work on it throughout the semester as topics are assigned to you, demonstrating care, refinement, and effort.

Writing prompts for the 15 assigned journal entries are conveniently located at the end of every module for weeks one through 15.

As this is an online class, please do not write your journal by hand. Compose and save your entries via computer, and be sure to revise and polish your work before submitting the finished product. All entries must be saved on the same .doc, .pdf, or .rtf document. Do not upload them individually to Pilot.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism occurs when a writer: [1] copies verbatim from an author without quotation or attempts to disguise the act by selective omissions or alterations; [2] paraphrases from an author without naming the source in the text of the paper or providing a list of references at the end; [3] turns in a paper written by somebody else. As a point of academic integrity, you are required

to submit original material of your own creation. Plagiarism is a serious offense. If established with sufficient evidence, it can result in failure of the course or dismissal from the university.

STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER (SSC)



The Student Success Center offers FREE services to help students meet their full potential. Students can find tutoring in any subject, study buddies, one-on-one technology workshops, feedback on writing assignments, and general academic skills coaching. Web: lake.wright.edu/ssc. Phone: **419.586.0333**. Location: **182 Andrews**.

OFFICE OF DISABILITIES SERVICES (ODS)

If a student has a disability that requires special accommodations, it is essential that he or she discuss it with the instructor and the Office of Disability Services before or during the first week of the semester. ODS will work with these students on an individual basis to determine what services, equipment and accommodations would be appropriate regarding their documented needs. Students who qualify for these types of service should initiate contact with the instructor and/or ODS as soon as possible to enable the university to meet their needs. Please call Deanna Springer at **419.586.0366** or email her at deanna.springer@wright.edu. For more information, visit the ODS in **182 Andrews**.

LIBRARY AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER (LTC)

The Library and Technology Center provides free access to scholarly resources in all formats. Students can also visit the LTC for assistance with creating or editing multimedia projects (i.e., PowerPoint, Voiceovers, Website development, etc.). Phone: **419.586.8400**. Location: **197A Andrews Hall**.

CLASS CALENDAR

For all assigned selections in *Architectures of Possibility* (AOP), it is expected that you will read the author interviews that accompany each chapter. Additionally, I have only assigned a portion of stories from *Flash Fiction* (FF), but you are encouraged to read the entire text. There are a total of six lessons and five discussions: see the modules in Pilot for specific details.

Below is a weekly breakdown of readings, assignments, lessons, and discussions.

- 1 Due: Summaries**
AOP: Chp. 1 – Possibility Spaces
AOP: Chp. 2 – Eat Your Elders
AOP: Chp. 3 – The Mcdonaldization of the Literary Marketplace
FF: Introduction
- 2 DUE: Fiction #1 (A-Z Story)**
AOP: Chp. 4 – Workshop Model(s)
FF: Gary Gildner, “Fingers”

FF: Marlene Buono, "Offerings"

- 3 Due:** Russell Edson, "Dinner Time" (Discussion #1)
Lesson #1: Show vs. Tell
AOP: Chp. 5 – The Garbage Disposal Imagination
FF: John Updike, "The Widow"
FF: Joyce Carol Oates, "August Evening"
- 4 Due:** Summaries
AOP: Chp. 6 – Beginnings
AOP: Chp. 7 – Narrativity
AOP: Chp. 8 – Settings
FF: Pamela Painter, "I Get Smart"
- 5 Due:** Fiction #2 (8-Word Story)
Lesson #2: Genre, Speculative, and Literary Fiction
Featured Magazine: *Nanoism** (Twitter Fiction)
- 6 Due:** Francine Prose, "Pumpkins" (Discussion #2)
AOP: Chp. 9 – Characters: Flat/Round
AOP: Chp. 10 – Characters: The Metaphysics of the Pronominal Hoax
FF: Rod Kessler, "How to Touch a Bleeding Dog"
FF: Raymond Carver, "The Father"
- 7 Due:** Summaries
Lesson #3: A Writer's Vocabulary
AOP: Chp. 11 – Temporality
AOP: Chp. 12 – Point of View
AOP: Chp. 13 – Word Worlds
FF: Kenneth Bernard, "Vines"
- 8** SPRING BREAK
- 9 Due:** Fiction #3 (Story Prompt)
Lesson #4: Techniques for Revision
AOP: Chp. 14 – Endings
FF: David Foster Wallace, "Everything Is Green"
FF: Mary Morris, "The Haircut"
- 10 Due:** Margaret Atwood, "Bread" (Discussion #3)
Featured Magazine: *PANK** (Literary Fiction)
- 11 Due:** Summaries
Lesson #5: Submitting and Publishing Your Writing
AOP: Chp. 15 – Materiality and Immateriality: One
AOP: Chp. 16 – Materiality and Immateriality: Two
FF: Allen Woodman, "The Lampshade Vendor"
FF: Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl"

12 Due: Fiction #4 (Quest Story)

AOP: Chp. 17 – Re-Visions

FF: Julia Alvarez, “Snow”

13 Due: Brian Keene, *The Rising** (Discussion #4)

Lesson #6: Promoting Your Writing

AOP: Chp. 18 – Publishing Pragmatics

FF: Larry Fondation, “Deportation at Breakfast”

14 Due: Fiction #5 (Story and Cover Letter)

AOP: Chp. 19 – Literary Activism and the Tribal Ecology

FF: Kate McCorkle, “The Last Parakeet”

15 Due: D. Harlan Wilson, “The Storyteller”* (Discussion #5)

Featured Magazine: *The Cafe Irreal** (Irreal Fiction)

E Due: Journal

* Denotes content available via Pilot and/or online.