Course Objectives:
Because Writers’ House students can reasonably expect to be spending the next two years reading each other’s work, the question of how to create a positive and constructive creative writing workshop environment lies at the center of this course. Students will learn how to respond to each other’s work in a constructive manner. Intrinsic to this endeavor is the understanding that thoughtful and insightful reading and discussion is as important as thoughtful and insightful writing. Students will be able to articulate elements of the craft of fiction writing in a way that is meaningful to their peers. Students will be able to identify abstractions, vagaries and clichés in their own writing and be able to expunge upon revision. Final work will demonstrate an appreciation for specificity and detail as well as elements of craft idiosyncratic to the particular writer. Reading assignments will focus on a cross-cultural range of contemporary literary fiction writers.

Weds 8/31   Introductions
Set schedule of submissions.
What we will read: (Stories Handout)
How we will workshop
Handout: Some Tools for Analysis
Read in class: Janet Burroway, Chapter 1 “Image” from Imaginative Writing

Weds 9/7   In-class discussion.
In-class Writing Exercise: Exquisite Corpse
Reading Due: Black Box by Jennifer Egan and Home by George Saunders

Submissions are due 11:59pm the Saturday before the Wednesday they are workshopped, throughout the semester. Please do not throw off your classmate’s and instructor’s time management strategies by submitting late. Use the group e-mail to submit. The first participants will submit by Saturday, Sept10th, 11:59pm When you receive the copy of your submission with Johnna’s comments on it, save it! You’ll need to bring it in to Advising and turn it in with your final revision.

Weds 9/14:   Workshop 1: Ciera and Henry
Discuss: Structure
Reading Due: Brownies by ZZ Packer and Jump by Ann Packer
Due: Read/respond to workshop submissions
**Weds 9/21**  Workshop 2: Rees and Maryam  
Reading Due: Álvaro Enrigue: The Death of the Author

**Weds 9/28**  Writers Here and Now  
NO CLASS – Meet at 5:00 in Queen Anne’s to help set up Reception and Q and A  
5:30: Q and A w/Álvaro Enrigue  
6:15: Reception at QA MPR. SIGN IN!  
7:00: Reading at Ulrich Recital Hall

**Weds 10/5**  Workshop 3: Kat and Kiki (will be sent in by Saturday, October 1, 11:59pm)  
In Class: Style & Narrative Modes  
Reading Due: Aimee Bender: Off and Junot Diaz: HT date a brown girl (black girl, white girl, or halfie).

**Weds 10/12**  Workshop 4: Shuping and Meghan  
In Class:  
Reading Due: Sarah Shun-lien Bynum: Yurt by Sarah Shun-lien Bynum and Raymond Carver: Cathedral

**Weds 10/19**  Workshop 5: Tianna and Meredith  
Discuss: Homework readings from previous week.  
Reading Due: Packet of poems by Ocean Vuong.  
Read/respond to workshop submissions,

**Weds 10/26**  Writers Here and Now  
NO CLASS – Meet at 5:00 in Queen Anne’s to help set up Reception and Q and A  
5:30: Q and A w/Ocean Vuong  
6:15: Reception at QA MPR. SIGN IN!  
7:00: Reading at Ulrich Recital Hall

**Weds 11/2**  Workshop 6: Cassie (will be sent by Saturday, Oct 29 11:59pm.)  
In Class: BRING IN A SMALL OBJECT (Pet Milk Exercise, Dybek)  
Reading Due: Sherman Alexie: What You Pawn I Shall Redeem and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Birdsong

**Weds 11/9**  Workshop 7: Small Group Workshops, TBD  
Discuss:  
Reading Due: Taiye Selasi: The Sex Lives of African Girls and David Foster Wallace: Brief Interviews with Hideous Men

**Weds 11/16**  Workshop 8: Small Group Workshops, TBD  
Review: Rubric for Final Manuscript  
Discuss Revision  
Reading Due: Flannery O’Connor, Geraniums and Judgement Day
Thursday 11/17, Friday 11/18 and Monday 11/21: One on One Advising
Come into Advising with your submission copy w/Johnna’s comments.

Sign up for a time:

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Weds 11/23  NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break.
During Thanksgiving Break consider: Work ahead on your revision to make finals easier!
Read the story of your choice off the list and e-mail one paragraph response to Johnna by 11/30.
Focus on craft in your response. What can you learn from this writer about how to write a story?

Weds 11/30  TBA
Reading Due: Story of your choice (see above). 1-paragraph response due to Johnna via e-mail.
Focus on craft in your response. What can you learn from this writer about how to write a story?

WHN Alumni Reading – OPTIONAL (can be used as a make-up for earlier missed event)
7:00: Reading at Ulrich Recital Hall

Weds 12/7  Draft Peer Edit/Final Manuscript Preparation. Bring in a copy of your final revision for a peer editing session.
Reading Due: Yiyun Li: A Sheltered Woman and Colson Whitehead: The Gangsters
Reflection session.
Course Evaluation.

Weds 12/14 By 4PM: Turn in your final MSS to the box outside my office, paper-clipped together with the 2 copies of the peer edited draft.
The policies outlined on this webpage pertain to all UMD courses:
http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html

Electronics: Please turn off cell phones and keep laptops closed during all classes unless such electronics are explicitly being used as a part of the class.

Absences: Because participation in discussion lies at the heart of this class, your attendance and participation at every class is important. Writers’ Here and Now Events (including the Q and A at 5:30 and the reading at 7:00 are counted as one class meeting. Don’t forget to sign in at Writers Here and Now. You may have one unexcused absence per semester without it directly affecting your grade. All additional absences must be excused in the formal, University-Guidelines use of the term (i.e.must be documented), or else the “Participation” percentage of your grade will be diminished. If you need to discuss an absence with me, E-MAIL me.

Tardiness: This is a workshop, and we are pressed for time. It is disrespectful to your fellow workshop participants to be late. If you are more than 20 minutes tardy for a class it will be noted as an absence. Because of the nature of this class (discussion-based), there is really no way to make up for tardiness.

Participation: Each workshop participant is expected to participate (i.e. speak up) in every single class. If you are unable to speak about the work being discussed (whether it’s a fellow student’s work or other assigned reading), this will be duly noted and reflected in your grade.

Guidelines for Submissions and Homework: Submissions are due 11:59pm the Saturday before they are discussed. Late submissions/homework is not accepted or graded. Lateness on your submission date is entirely unacceptable, as it throws the whole class off their schedules. Late submissions if accepted because of dire circumstances, may not receive a workshop, and always will receive a lesser grade for having been late (dropping one letter grade per day late, as is customary).

• Guidelines for Submissions: Your 2 submissions will equal a total over the semester of 8-15 pages. However, there will be 2 submission dates, so you could submit a piece of flash fiction (1 or 2 pages) for one submission, then a longer piece the 2nd submission, if you prefer, or vice versa. You may submit more than one piece, but avoid submitting excerpts from longer work if possible. Work you have turned in to another workshop, and also work from a previous semester (e.g. your application writing sample) is not acceptable. 12 point type, double-spaced, 1-inch margins.

Guidelines for Responses to the work of your peers:

• Use the vocabulary of the elements of craft (plot, structure, character, style and tone, dialogue, tension, theme, image, sound, pace, point of view, description, etc.). Reference specific points in the text whenever possible, using either quotes or page and paragraph citations.
• Strive for balance and judiciousness in your responses to each other. Be generous, but truthful.
• Remember, the worst thing you can do is to give someone else writer’s block by devastating them with your wicked wit. Don’t write to impress me or your classmates, write to help your peer.
• Think more, write less. Be as precise and concise as possible. Avoid wordiness.
**Grading Rubric for Final Manuscript/Revision**

**Length:** The revised story (or group of very short stories) should be between 8 and 15 pages in length, with an eye towards quality not quantity. (8 excellent pages will earn a higher grade than 15 pages in which 8 are excellent and 7 only OK).

**Deadlines:** Bring a copy of revised manuscript to class **12/7** for editing (worth 10% of final grade; your edit of your peer worth 5%).

The final manuscript with 2 previous drafts (see below) is due **12/14** at 4pm, and is worth 20% of your final grade.

**The revised story will be graded according to the following rubric:**

10% - - Completion: your Final Manuscript will be turned in with:

   - Johnna’s copy of original submissions
   - Your peer-edited draft from 12/7 and
   - The final, revised manuscript.

10% - - Cleanliness/professional **presentation** of final manuscript. 1-inch margins, 12-point type, double-spaced, with no typos or grammatical errors (unless intentional: working in dialect, for instance).

30% - - **Quality of Writing:** characters and/or a fictional world rendered with attention to the appropriate amount of **detail;** an awareness of **narrative structure;** and use of fresh, energetic **language** (not relying upon clichés).

50% - - Evidence of **significant revision, not just editing. Both the original version with my comments, plus the peer edited revision from Dec 7 class should be handed in WITH the final manuscript.**

**Grading of the course consists of:**

Participation = 25%
includes in-class discussions(15%), as well as attendance at events (3% each WHN event = 6%), and your advising appointment (4%)

Written work = 35%
includes all assignments until December: written responses to your classmates (12%), response paragraph due 11/30 (3%) and both workshop submissions (10% each for 20%)

Final Manuscript = 35%
(includes 12/7 revision (10%) & peer edit (5%) and final manuscript (20%)

**Disability**

If you have a registered disability that will require accommodation, please speak to me as soon as possible, within the first two weeks of the semester. If you have a disability which requires accommodation, you must register with Disability Support Services in the Shoemaker Bldg. (4-7682 or 5-7683).
Put a * and your initials ON THE LEFT of the title if you would LIKE to read it and discuss it; put a checkmark and your initials ON THE RIGHT if you've already read it; add a story on the back of this page if you would like:

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi: Birdsong
Alexie, Sherman: What You Pawn I Shall Redeem
Bambara, Toni Cade: Gorilla, My Love
Barthelme, Donald: Views of my Father Weeping
   Bender, Aimee: Off
   Brockmeier, Kevin: The Ceiling
   Bynum, Sarah Shun-lien: Yurt; The Burglar
   Carver, Raymond: Cathedral; A Small Good Thing
   Cooper, T: Swimming
   Cortazar, Julio: Hopscotch
   Diaz, Junot: How to date a brown girl (black girl, white girl, or halfie).
   Dybek, Stuart: Pet Milk or We Didn’t
   Egan, Jennifer: Black Box
   Gay, Roxane: North Country
   Hempel, Amy: In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried
   Jin, Ha: After Cowboy Chicken Came to Town
   Jones, Edward P: Bad Neighbors
   Lahiri, Jhumpa: The Third and Final Continent
   Li, Yiyun: A Sheltered Woman
   Mengestu, Dinaw: An Honest Exit, The Paper Revolution
   Moody, Rick: Boys
   Munro, Alice: Wenlock Edge, Home Furnishings
   Moore, Lorrie: People Like that are the Only People Here
   O’Brien, Tim: How to Tell a True War Story, The Things They Carried
   O’Connor, Flannery: Geraniums and Judgment Day
   Packer, Ann: Jump
   Packer, ZZ: Brownies
   Saunders, George: Home; Semplica-Girl Diaries
   Selasi, Taiye: The Sex Lives of African Girls
   Tower, Wells: Leopard
   Van den Berg, Laura: Antarctica; I looked for you I called your name
   Wallace, David Foster: Brief Interviews with Hideous Men
   Whitehead, Colson: The Gangsters
Response Rubric for Creative Writing Projects at JPWH:

( Due on the day we are workshopping the work referenced. **No late responses please.** ) Please think about your response for an extra minute before writing, then write clearly and concisely in a manner that you believe will be helpful to the writer. Questions 1-3 must be filled out when you come into class, the 4th and 5th can be filled out in class. Use the vocabulary of the **elements of craft** to respond.

Responding to (Title) ____________________________________________    by _____________________________

1. Global Questions (choose the most pertinent question): What is this poem/story/etc about? How do you interpret it? What is/are the major theme/s? What is the writer attempting here?

2. What do you perceive as the poem’s/story’s/etc greatest strength? What’s working well? How does it succeed? If there is something particularly unique about the story, please describe it here.

3. Where would you point the writer to revise? Please give specific page/line or paragraph. And/Or What questions do you have that are unresolved about what the writer is trying to achieve?

4. Optional: After having a workshop discussion on the work, I would like to add that:

5. Optional: Suggestion for related reading:

Signed: ___________________________ Date: _________________________
(Instructor will gather these at the end of each workshop, record, then give originals to writer.)