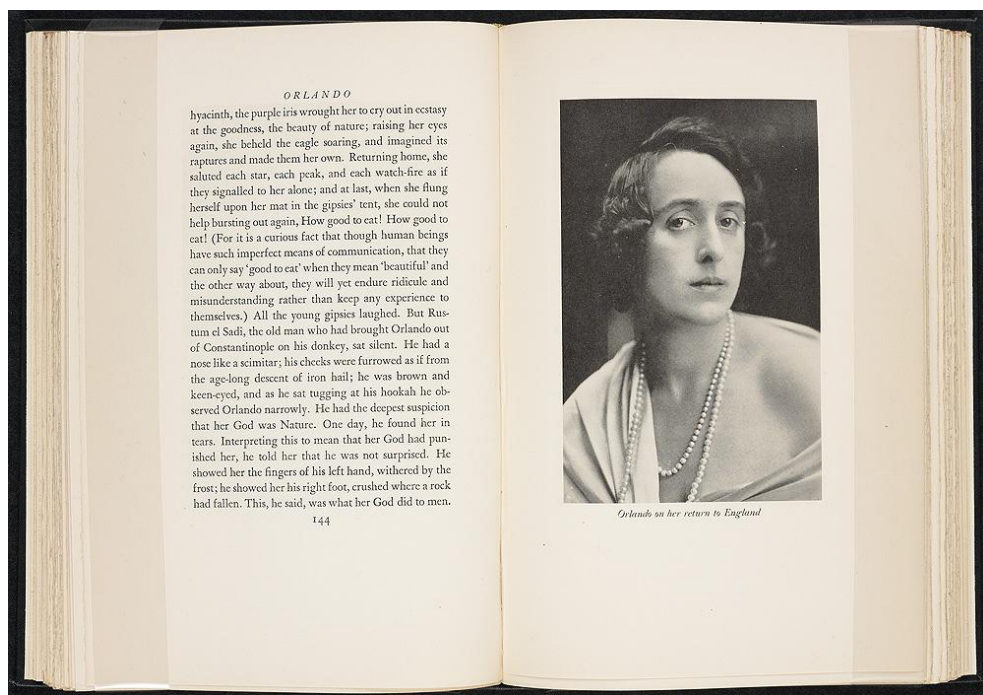


LT111 Reading into Writing A fiction workshop



*A fine gentleman like that, they said, had no need of books. Let him leave books, they said, to the palsied or the dying. But worse was to come. For once the disease of reading has laid upon the system it weakens it so that it falls an easy prey to that other scourge which dwells in the inkpot and festers in the quill.
The wretch takes to writing.*

Seminar Leader: Paul Festa
Course Times: Tuesday & Thursday, 15:45 – 17:15
Email: p.festa@berlin.bard.edu
Office Hours: By appointment—optimally after class.

Course Description

Requirements

Attendance, dos, and don'ts

- Attendance at all classes is expected. This is true of all your classes, but especially a workshop, where your fellow artists depend on your presence.
- Two absences, no penalty. Each additional absence, 0.3 is deducted from the semester course grade unless excused by leave of absence from the registrar.
- Eight and a half absences, excused or otherwise, amount to more than 30 percent of the course, and Bard does not award credit. Do consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.
- Lateness is billed in 45-minute increments (so 5 min. late = 1/2 attendance). Be ready to start writing at 15:45 sharp. A writing prompt will be awaiting you.
- Lack of required texts—paper copies—equals 1/2 attendance.
- No electronic devices, not even in your lap. Phones off or on airplane mode. Fiction is holy.
- You are strongly encouraged, though not required, to schedule office hours with me at least once over the course of the semester.

A word on plagiarism

As the course's title suggests, much of our work will be based on studied imitations of model fiction. This does not license us to lift passages verbatim or to submit original work written outside of LT111. Plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and chat with the Dean.

Required texts

- *Reading Like a Writer*, Francine Prose
- *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction* (sixth edition or thereabouts)
- *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere*, ZZ Packer
- *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf
- *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Jennifer Egan
- *The Elements of Style*, Strunk & White
- Course packet
 - o *Pankow Rat*, Issue 1, Fall 2017
 - o "Slow Fiction: Reading into Reading like a Writer"
 - o Interview with Francine Prose
 - o From "Heidegger's Mistress," Wayne Koestenbaum
 - o From "Salinger's Cigarettes," Janet Malcolm
 - o From *The Sounds of Poetry*, Robert Pinsky
 - o "A Story About the Body," Robert Hass
 - o "The Earthquake in Chile," Heinrich von Kleist
 - o "The Gift," Mila Hamp
 - o From *Wolf Hall*, Hilary Mantel
 - o "Detail," from *How Fiction Works*, James Wood [59 – 94]
- Film: *The Mystery of Picasso*, dir. Henri-Georges Clouzot (1956—to be screened in class.)

Assignments / Assessment / Grade breakdown

25% Completion of in-class writing, weekly revisions of same, class presentations of both, and constructive criticism of colleagues' work.

- In-class writing and revisions are assessed primarily on quantity, following the attendance formula. Everyone starts out with a 4.0; two missing assignments are overlooked; each one after that deducts 0.3; and nine or more missing assignments zeroes out the score.

25% Story #1

- Probably a development of work you've done in class and revised, a short story of between 2000 and 4000 words. I'm not a stickler on word count but anything shorter than 2k or longer than 4k bears an extra burden of justifying its length.
- If your preference is to write short short fiction, you may submit multiple shorts whose combined word count lands in the range.
- Stories are assessed on the basis of emotional sensitivity, observational acuity, vividness of characters and setting, coherence of plot and action, strength of prose, cleanliness of copy, and a balance of originality on the one hand and reflection of course readings and class discussion on the other. Good poets borrow, great poets steal—but make it your own.
- Due before midnight, Friday before Week 6

25% Story #2

- Same drill as above.
- Due before midnight, Friday before Week 11

25% Revision of one (or both) of your stories

- As published in Issue 2 of BCB's literary magazine, *The Pankow Rat*
- For the revision to receive a score, *The Pankow Rat* Issue 2 must be distributed (at least 80 copies) in a well-advertised launch event that includes a public reading on or before the Wednesday of Completion week.

EXTRA CREDIT

- *Pankow Rat* publisher (submissions solicitation, staff coordination, scheduling, printing)
- *Pankow Rat* editor (works with instructor and writers on revisions)
- *Pankow Rat* layout editor (sets type and graphics)
- *Pankow Rat* pinch-hitter (publicity, and equal opportunity helper)
 - Each role worth up to 0.5 points on top of 4.0 semester potential total.
 - Regardless of whether these positions are filled, or well executed, revision credit is still contingent on a publicly launched Issue 2.

Policy on Late Submission of Work

Please note the following policy from the Student Handbook on the submission of essays; it applies to stories: *Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

Schedule

Against Feedback

WEEK 1A — September 4

- *Pankow Rat*, Issue 1, Fall 2017
“Slow Fiction: Reading into Reading like a Writer”
An interview with Francine Prose
- From “Heidegger’s Mistress,” Wayne Koestenbaum
- From “Salinger’s Cigarettes,” Janet Malcolm
- From *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf
- From *The Mystery of Picasso*, dir. Henri-Georges Clouzot (1956)

Close Reading, White Elephants

WEEK 1B — September 6

- FP: “Close Reading” (1 – 12)
- From *The Sounds of Poetry*, Robert Pinsky
- “Hills Like White Elephants,” Ernest Hemingway

Brownies and Bodies

WEEK 2A — September 11

- FP: “Words” (13 – 34)
- “Brownies,” ZZ Packer

WEEK 2B — September 13

- “A Story About the Body,” Robert Hass
- “A Continuity of Parks,” Julio Cortázar

Sentences and Earthquakes

WEEK 3A — September 18

- FP: “Sentences” (35 – 62)
- “The Earthquake in Chile,” Heinrich von Kleist

WEEK 3B — September 20

- From *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf
- “The Gift,” Mila Hamp

Paragraph / Blues

WEEK 4A — September 25

- FP: “Paragraphs” (63 – 84)
- “My First Goose,” Anton Chekov

WEEK 4B — September 27

- “Sonny’s Blues,” James Baldwin

Narration Pauses and Objects

WEEK 5A — October 2

and

WEEK 5B — October 4

- FP: “Narration” (85 – 108)
- Three Stories from *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Jennifer Egan
 - “Found Objects”
 - “Out of Body”
 - “Great Rock and Roll Pauses”

DEADLINE: Story #1

Friday, 5 October, 11:59 p.m.

Character: Gusev

WEEK 6A — October 9

and

WEEK 6B — October 11

- FP: “Character” (109 – 142)
- “Gusev,” Anton Chekov

STORY 1 WORKSHOP

WEEK 7A — October 16

WEEK 7B — October 18

CATCH-UP WEEK

WEEK 8A — October 23

WEEK 8B — October 25

***Mon, Oct. 29 – Fri, Nov. 2, 2018

Fall Break***

Wolf / Dialogue

WEEK 9A — November 6

FP: Dialogue (143 – 192)

WEEK 9B — November 8

From *Wolf Hall*, Hilary Mantel

Details

WEEK 10A — November 13

FP: “Details” (193 – 208)

From *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf

WEEK 10B — November 15

“Detail,” from *How Fiction Works*, James Wood [59 – 94]

Gesture / Geese

WEEK 11A — November 20

FP: “Gesture” (209 – 232)

“Drinking Coffee Elsewhere,” ZZ Packer

WEEK 11B — November 22

“Geese,” ZZ Packer

STORY 2 WORKSHOP

WEEK 12A — November 27

WEEK 12B — November 29

CATCH-UP WEEK

WEEK 13A — December 4

WEEK 13B — December 6

Learning from Chekov

WEEK 14A — December 11

FP: “Learning from Chekov”

Reading for Courage

WEEK 14B — December 13

FP: “Reading for Courage”

Mon, Dec. 17 – Fri, Dec. 21, 2018 Completion Week

DEADLINE: *The Pankow Rat*, Issue 2, including one or more of your revised stories, must be published, distributed, and read from on or before Wednesday of Completion Week.