

# Fiction Writing

ENG 307-3

CRN 35706

## Course Meeting Information:

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**Name of Course:** Fiction Writing

**Course Number:** ENG 307-3

**Class Days/Times:** MWF, 2:00-2:50PM

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Format:** Face-to-Face

## Instructor Information

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**Danielle Curry** (she/her)

English Department

Ball State University, Muncie, IN

## Course Information

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**Course Description:** Intensive study of fiction, with practice in writing and critique.

**Prerequisites:** ENG 285

**Course Objectives:** By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify basic vocabulary and literary terms associated with reading, writing, and thinking about fiction writing.
- Identify and evaluate the effectiveness of the various craft techniques relevant to fiction writing in both revising their own work and critiquing their peers' work.
- Utilize those craft techniques to produce original works of fiction with a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Analyze a wide variety of contemporary, diverse fiction writing using their knowledge of vocabulary, literary terms, and craft techniques.
- Demonstrate sensitivity to diversity and inclusivity by avoiding stereotypes and misrepresentation in original work and critiques.

**Course Modality/Structure:** Course content will be delivered face-to-face, three times a week as listed at the top of the course syllabus. Canvas will be used as a central point of communication and to supplement the in-class work. Content in Canvas will be broken into weekly modules that match the course calendar where assignments will be posted. All course work, unless otherwise stated will be submitted via Canvas on the day, date, and time provided to students via the course calendar and Canvas. Modules will run Monday-Sunday.

## Course Materials

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Students will need to purchase the following textbook for our semester together:

1. Michael Kardos, *The Art and Craft of Fiction: A Writer's Guide*, Second Edition ISBN:978-1-319-03042-12.
2. Other Required Readings Assigned will be available on Canvas as PDF files or as weblinks

3. A designated writing notebook for in-class exercises and notes
4. Access to Zoom, a camera, and microphone.

## Course Assignments and Assessments

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**Grading Scale:** Students will be graded on a thousand-point scale for the course. Students at any point in the semester should be able to compute their grade by dividing the total points earned by the total points possible of graded assignments.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Point Totals
A	93-100%	930 - 1000
A-	90-92%	900 - 929
B+	87-89%	870 - 899
B	83-86%	830 - 869
B-	80-82%	800 - 829
C+	77-79%	770 - 799
C	73-76%	730 - 769
C-	70-72%	700 - 729
D+	67-69%	670 - 699
D	63-66%	630 - 669
D-	60-62%	600 - 629
F	59% or less	Below 600

**Grading Breakdown:** Students will be graded on the following Categories

Category	Point Totals
Craft/Reading Quizzes (10 @ 15 pts)	150
Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workshop Participation (150 pts)</li> <li>- In-Class Discussions (50 pts)</li> <li>- Writer Event Reflection (50 pts)</li> </ul>	250
Writing Journal	100
Workshop Critiques	200
Revision Manuscript & Reflection	300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>

**Note:** Assignment details, including instructions, relevant readings, due dates, and grading criteria/rubrics will be posted and updated on Canvas. Please check Canvas regularly to stay informed and on track.

**Reading Quizzes:** Throughout the semester students will take 10 quizzes based on craft application and course readings for the class period. If you read the work, you should be okay. Remember though that you will need to be an active reader and take notes as you read to understand and engage with the text. These

quizzes will be given in the first 10 minutes of class via Canvas. After the 10 minutes are up, the submission portal will close.

**Participation:** Our goal this semester is to create a community of writers and help one another grow in our understanding of fiction writing, therefore, daily participation is required. Participation activities will include in-class discussions, workshop participation, and a writer event reflection. More guidelines will be provided in the grading policy document in Canvas.

- **In-Class Workshop:** According to Charles Baxter, “The workshop is an opportunity not merely to receive responses but also to give it—a sustained practicum in criticism.” Workshop requires creating an open dialogue discussing student work in order to provide constructive feedback for help with revision and to create community among writers. With that in mind, speaking up during workshop days are a crucial part of creating community among other writers. Students will have time to review the drafts ahead of time and prepare comments for the workshop. During workshop, I expect active discussions. Students who miss workshop and whose absence does not fall under the excused absence category as defined by the college, will forfeit their participation points for workshop days as well as their workshop time. (See Attendance Policy)
- **In-Class Discussions:** Outside of workshop days, students will need to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and work. Students will receive on average **5 points per week** for their active in-class participation and engagement. Students will have the option of actively engaging in the discussion or in real-time posting in the weekly discussion board during the class meeting. **At the end of the week, the discussion board postings will close for credit.**
- **Campus Writer Event Reflection:** Students must attend one scheduled campus writing event as listed on the course calendar and write a two-page reflection on the writing life and what they learned from the event. An assignment sheet will be provided with more directions, and a grading rubric will be provided.

**Writing Journal:** Students are asked to keep a writing journal where they will complete story sketches from writing prompts in-class, from the course textbook, or independently when an idea hits you that you must write down. Students will turn in their writing journal **2 times** over the course of the semester. Each submission will contain **10 journal entries** for a total of **20 entries** at the end of the semester. You can use this notebook for notes in-class as well. The goal is to create a habit of writing in the journal and to focus in on craft-based exercises. More guidelines will be provided in Canvas.

**Workshop Critiques:** During workshop, students will be required to read and annotate the work of their classmates, as well as write a critique letter for their peers’ drafts using the terminology of craft studied during the first half of the semester. Students will only have a portion of their critiques graded which will be dependent on the number of students in the course. I will choose the critiques at random to grade. More details will be provided closer to workshop time.

**Revision Manuscript & Reflection:** **This will essentially be your final for the course.** From day one of the class, you should begin planning a creative project to draft, workshop, and revise over the duration of our time together. So: get started. You can expand on anything we do in class or come up with an idea of your own. **If you turn in your first draft late, your Final Story Revision will lose 5 points for every calendar day the first draft is late.** I will not accept the final story revision & reflection late.

**Note on Manuscript Content:** In this course our purpose is to come together as a community of writers.

1. Please avoid bringing in material or writing about topics you are not prepared to subject to public scrutiny.

2. You are free to write about almost any topic; however, please do not write about any material that can be seen as threatening to other members of the class, or anything that can be construed as harassment, will not be accepted. Finally, please note that *I am a mandatory reporter* (see Title IX policy).
3. **All written work MUST be grounded in realism** as this will help you in developing your understanding of craft that you can later branch out and apply to the style of writing you like to do best. you may not submit *works of formula (genre) fiction, fanfiction, and fiction intended for children*. Fiction intended for children engages a different skill set than fiction for adults, though unique, original fiction intended for young adults is fine.

## Course Policies

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**Attendance:** This is not a class to miss as it is student-driven and will rely on student’s active participation. Students have **three** “unexcused” absences in the course. After students exceed their unexcused absences, the student’s final grade for the course will be assessed a penalty of **5% (50 pts) at the end of the semester** in addition to any portions of the participation grade as outlined in the course grading policies. Excused absences include disability accommodations, pregnancy, hospitalization or medical leave, bereavement leave, religious observance, jury duty or court witness leave, military leave, and Ball State approved events. Contact me *prior to* missing class in order to avoid an unexcused absence.

**Missed and Late Work Assignment Policy:** All coursework is due via Canvas on the due date indicated on the course calendar. If you have an extenuating circumstance that will make it impossible for you to submit your assignment on time, please contact me *before* the assignment deadline and alternate arrangements can potentially be arranged.

**Communication Expectations:** I value communication with my students as I see communication as a key component to student success. If you need to meet with me outside of class, please utilize my office hours as listed on the course syllabus or schedule an appointment with at least 24-hour notice. I strive to respond to all emails within 24 hours Monday-Friday (8:00AM-4:00PM) during business hours. To ensure student success, students should strive to keep an open line of communication with me throughout the semester. Students should reach out when they have questions and come to class prepared with the readings and assignments complete to actively participate in the class session.

**Engagement Expectations:** All students should demonstrate respect for one another, for this class, and for the rules of the University. You are free to speak (and write) your mind in this class, so long as what you say doesn’t personally attack your fellow students. To support a respectful and engaging academic community that encourages the free exchange of ideas and civil discourse, we will follow these ground rules:

- **Respect different perspectives.** Share your ideas and let others share theirs.
- **Challenge ideas, not people.** Disagree respectfully. No personal attacks or put-downs. Focus on exploring ideas critically and constructively.
- **Listen to understand.** Stay curious, ask questions to understand, and give others space to speak.
- **Assume good intentions.** Approach discussions with curiosity and compassion.
- **Keep it private.** What is shared in class stays in class. Do not share others’ words or work without permission.
- **Be respectful.** Avoid hurtful language, stereotypes, or content that may demean others. Keep feedback constructive.

**Trigger Warnings:** The readings I assign and/or that your classmates may submit for critique may deal with difficult and triggering subject matter. If I think a piece may contain something disturbing, I’ll do my

best to provide a general warning. Remember that I can't possibly know everything that might be upsetting to you. I'm willing to exempt you from the reading, work, or discussion of a text that makes you uncomfortable, but only if you have an accommodation on file through disability services.

**Plagiarism Policy** All work conducted and/or submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with the Ball State University's [Student Academic Ethics Policy](#). Plagiarism comes in many forms including but not limited to the following

- Direct plagiarism: Taking another person's ideas word for word without giving proper citation.
- Self-plagiarism: Submitting your own previous work as part of a current assignment without permission.
- Mosaic plagiarism (aka patchwriting): Quoting another's work without quotation marks or replacing words in another's work with synonyms while maintaining the same overall structure and meaning.
- AI plagiarism: Using ideas, words, or phrases generated by artificial intelligence (see AI policy for more information about generative AI usage in the class)
- Accidental plagiarism: Forgetting to cite sources, misquoting sources, or paraphrasing sources without giving credit where credit is due.

For the purpose of this course, plagiarism—any type as defined above--on any assignment will result in disciplinary action on a case-by-case basis. Plagiarism in this course, will result in failure of the assignment, failure of the class, or suspension or expulsion from the institution.

**Generative AI Usage Policy:** You may not collaborate with or make use of ChatGPT or any other generative AI applications at any time to develop materials submitted in this course. Generative AI platforms, like Chat GPT are tools that writers rely on in some situations, but it is important to note that these generative AI tools may often present misleading and/or inaccurate information as the systems work on observed patterns extracted from data input into these platforms. Not to mention there are many ethical questions we can ask about these systems. If you are concerned about what programs could fall under this policy, please come speak with me prior to using them.

## University Statements and Policy

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**University Statement:** We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.

**Disability Statement:** If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or [dsd@bsu.edu](mailto:dsd@bsu.edu).

**Freedom of Expression:** In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's [Statement on Freedom of Expression](#), the resources on Ball State's [Freedom of Expression webpage](#), and [Ball State's Beneficence Pledge](#).

**Title IX:** Ball State University is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment

**for all students.** If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment—including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone. The University offers support services and resources. For more information or to report an incident, please visit [www.bsu.edu/titleix](http://www.bsu.edu/titleix) or contact the Title IX Coordinator at 765-285-1545 or at [titleix@bsu.edu](mailto:titleix@bsu.edu). **As your instructor, I am a mandatory reporter under the Title IX policy and required to report any information I receive about possible sexual harassment.** This includes information shared in class discussions, assignments, office hours, or conversations outside of class.

### ***Student Academic Ethics Policy***

Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity. Visit the VPAA's [academic integrity website](#) (Students tab) for resources on understanding academic integrity, citing sources properly, and avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty. To learn about BSU's academic integrity expectations and students' rights, please read the University [Student Academic Ethics Policy](#).

Academic integrity violations include giving or receiving an unfair academic advantage (cheating), presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), and falsifying academic records. Unless otherwise indicated, you must work independently by yourself. Check with me if you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty. Examples of academic integrity violations include but are not limited to:

- Using resources not authorized by the faculty member (including devices, AI tools, hidden notes, and open books)
- Using commercial study websites to find answers to graded assignments (Chegg, Course Hero, StudyPool, OneClass, etc.).
- Without the instructor's written permission, giving away, buying, or selling graded assignments class notes, exams, study guides, or other course materials to other students or to third-party vendors (Course Hero, Chegg, 24HourAnswers, etc.).
- Working with another person on any assignment other than authorized group projects.
- Sharing or allowing others to access your files, whether done with permission or not.
- Reusing your own work from another semester, course, or section.
- Sharing answers with others during exams (passing notes, texting, whispering, gesturing)
- Discussing exam questions and answers with students who have not taken the exam.
- Soliciting others to complete work for you

## Student Resources

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### ***The Writing Center***

All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (in Robert Bell 295 during weekdays, Bracken Library First Floor West in the evenings, or online during any of our regularly scheduled hours) to get additional feedback on your writing.

The Writing Center offers free planning, feedback, and accountability sessions (in person and online) to all students composing essays, reports, reflections, research projects, web content, lesson plans, slideshows, poster presentations, resumes, and other digital or print texts. To schedule a free appointment to discuss your writing, go to [bsu.edu/writingcenter](http://bsu.edu/writingcenter). Online and in-person appointments are available; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly!

***The Basic Needs Hub***

If you are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the Basic Needs Hub. The Basic Needs Hub has information, resources, and provides individualized support to students. To talk with a supportive staff member about your experience, receive one on one assistance, or learn more about resources, you can submit a Basic Needs Assistance Form.

***The Counseling Center***

The Ball State University Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to all students. The Counseling Center is located in Lucina Hall, Room 320. To schedule an appointment, you can contact us at 765-285-1736. Ball State also offers a 24/7 Crisis Line, which can be reached at 765-285-HOPE (4673). The Crisis Line is a mental health resource for those who are struggling with any mental health concerns, including thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide.

At the Ball State Counseling Center, we see students for a variety of reasons, some of which include homesickness, relationship concerns, anxiety, and depression. At your first appointment, you will work with a therapist to create a plan that will connect you with resources that best fit your needs. We assist students with getting connected to therapy at our Center as well as connecting students to self-help resources, other on-campus resources, and community-based resources. All Ball State students also have access to several on-demand, self-help resources through a variety of different platforms. All of these resources, including a direct link to our website, can be found here.

## Course Calendar & Major Projects Link

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To support a learning experience that is responsive to the needs, interests, and pace of our class community, the course schedule may shift over the semester. The most current version of the schedule will always be available on Canvas linked through Google Docs. I encourage you to check Canvas regularly for updates and contact me if you have any questions.

*Please note that you are to have completed the readings prior to showing up for class for the date listed.*

Week	Day	Date	Course Topics & Major Readings	Major Assignments
1	M	1/5/25	Course Overview & Introductions	
	W	1/7/25	Writing Realism	
	F	1/9/25	What Makes a "Good" Short Story	
2	M	1/12/25	AC: Ch. 2, pp. 12-27; PDF: "Butterfly on F Street"	Quiz #1
	W	1/14/25	AC: Ch. 5, pp. 72-95: The Basics of Scene Writing	
	F	1/16/25	AC: Midnight, Liccorice, Shadow" by Hagenston pp. 233-242	Quiz #2
3	M	1/19/25	<b>No Class MLK Jr. Day</b>	
	W	1/21/25	Writing Strong Dialogue; PDF: "Emergency" by Denis Johnson	Quiz #3
	F	1/23/25	Writing Dialogue Activity	
4	M	1/26/25	AC: Ch. 4, pp. 45-71; AC "Bullet in the Brain" by Wolff, pp. 372-377	Quiz #4

Week	Day	Date	Course Topics & Major Readings	Major Assignments
	W	1/28/25	PDF: "Place" by Dorothy Allison; PDF: Excerpt from "Virgins"	
	F	1/30/25	Continued Discussion About Place PDF "The Rope Swing" by Corcoran	Quiz #5
5	M	2/2/25	Character Development & POV	
	W	2/4/25	PDF: "Lust" by Minot	Quiz #6
	F	2/6/25	PDF: "Diem Perdidi" by Otsuka	
6	M	2/9/25	AC: Ch. 6, pp. 96-117; PDF: "How Far She Went" by Mary Hood	
	W	2/11/25	AC: "Magic Words" by McCorkle, pp. 269-285	Quiz #7
	F	2/13/25	PDF: "Jael" by Deesha Philyaw	
7	M	2/16/25	AC: Ch. 3, pp. 28-44 - The Shape of Stories	
	W	2/18/25	Zoom Class - Writing Day	
	F	2/20/25	Structuring the Story Cont.	First Submission of Writing Journals
8	M	2/23/25	AC: Ch. 8, pp. 133-147; AC: "Indulgence" by Perabo pp. 336-350	Quiz #8
	W	2/25/25	Working on Story Titles & Naming in Fiction	
	F	2/27/25	In-Class Writing Day	Workshop Students 1-6 Short Stories Due
9	M	3/2/25	<b>No Class Spring Break</b>	
	W	3/4/25	<b>No Class Spring Break</b>	
	F	3/6/25	<b>No Class Spring Break</b>	
10	M	3/9/25	Workshop Students 1 & 2	
	W	3/11/25	Workshop Students 3 & 4	
	F	3/13/25	Workshop Students 5 & 6	Workshop Students 7-12 Short Stories Due; Weekly Critiques Due
11	M	3/16/25	Workshop Students 7 & 8	
	W	3/18/25	Workshop Students 9 & 10	
	F	3/20/25	Workshop Students 11 & 12	Workshop Students 13-16 Short Stories Due; Weekly Critiques Due
12	M	3/23/25	Workshop Students 13 & 14	
	W	3/25/25	<i>No Class - Instead, students will attend In-Print Festival of Books - Pittenger Student Center Ballroom at 7:00 p.m</i>	
	F	3/27/25	Workshop Students 15 & 16	Workshop Students 17-20 Short Stories Due; Weekly Critiques Due
13	M	3/30/25	Workshop Students 17 & 18	Writing Event Reflection Due
	W	4/1/25	Workshop Students 19 & 20	

Week	Day	Date	Course Topics & Major Readings	Major Assignments
	F	4/3/25	You Have Short Story Now What? - A Brief Look at Getting Work Ready to Publish in Lit Mags	
14	M	4/6/25	AC Ch. 7, pp.118-132; PDF "Silverwater" by Amy Bloom	Quiz #9
	W	4/8/25	PDF: "A Temporary Matter" by Lahiri	Quiz #10
	F	4/10/25	Charact Complexity Activities	
15	M	4/13/25	AC Ch. 10, pp.163-173; Review Final Revision Project	Second Submission Writing Journals
	W	4/15/25	In-Class Revision Activity	
	F	4/17/25	In-Class Revision Activity Continued	
16	M	4/20/25	<b>No Class - Conferences on Final Revisions</b>	
	W	4/22/25	In-Class Reading	
	F	4/24/25	In-Class Reading; Course Wrap-Up	
17	M	4/27/25	<b>No Class - Conferences on Final Revisions</b>	
	FINALS	TBA	Reflective Essay Due & Final Revised Short Story	

## Subject to Change Statement

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This syllabus is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.