

Metropolitan State University



WRIT 353-01: Writing Short Fiction

Fall Semester, 2021 (adapted for Covid-19)

Mondays 6:00-8:30 p.m.

August 23– December 6

Zoom weekly by invitation; St. Paul Campus for four required meetings;
4 Credits

Instructor: Belo Cipriani

Email: Belo.cipriani@metrostate.edu

Office Hours: by appointment on zoom

This is your ZOOM MEETING INVITE information for the semester (don't lose this. Login no later than 6:00 pm until 9:20 pm each week with this same invite):

<https://minnstate.zoom.us/j/95837337363>

Meeting ID: 958 3733 7363

Prerequisite: Writ 251: Introduction to Creative Writing or equivalent

Course Description: Writing Short Fiction is a writing-intensive workshop. Drawing on student ideas and experiences, this course develops the craft of short fiction writing in a workshop setting. Students read each other's work and explore the conventions of the short story. Students are encouraged to develop their authorial voices through discussion, study, and

modeling of the work of professional writers, as well as through writing exercises and workshopping one another's pieces. This course may be repeated once for credit.

Competence Statement

Drawing on student ideas and experiences, this course develops the craft of short fiction writing in a workshop setting. Students read each other's work and explore the conventions of the short story. This course may be repeated for credit.

Required Texts

The Story and its Writer: An Intro to Short Fiction (compact ninth edition) ISBN: 978-1-319-16613-7

The Art and Craft of Fiction: A Writer's Guide, Second Edition, by Michael Kardos ISBN: 978-1-319-03042

Accommodations

It is the policy of Metropolitan State University, the Department, and this instructor to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. If you have a learning or other disability, register with the Center for Accessibility Resources at (651.793.1540), and discuss your needs with me. All necessary and reasonable accommodations will be made in order to support your success in the course.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes using material without appropriately citing its source, cheating on an assignment or exam, and interfering with another student's learning. If you use the words or ideas of someone else, you must cite the original source of the information.

Course Requirements

Full, ACTIVE participation through zoom. Completion of all readings and assignments. The quality of your pertinent contributions to class discussion is crucial. **Throughout the semester, you are encouraged to speak and ask questions during class discussion.**

Weekly Readings Responses: to be written and emailed to me (Suzanne.nielsen@metrostate.edu) each week before or no later than our scheduled class meeting. You have a total of **four** from Charters; you have a total of **nine** from Kardos. See each date for the specific assignments.

Discussion Leaders: Two students each week will lead discussion of two assigned stories from Charters.

Two Formally In-Class Workshopped Stories (one before mid-semester: 2 – 5 pages (1,250 words maximum); one after mid-semester: 5 – 9 pages (2,250 words maximum) *All pages must be **proofread**, 12-point font, and DOUBLE SPACED.

A Final Revision Paper: of one of the stories you workshopped in class (5-10 pages).

Fiction Event Attendance Paper (subject to change): Attendance of a fiction reading event through an online platform by November 16th. You will be compensated for attending this event by having November 9 (week 11) off from a formal class meeting. Write One Reflection Paper (3 - 5 printed pages) addressing: a) What the most and least successful things were about the event, b) What you as an aspiring writer learned from the event, c) One question you asked of the writer on craft, and their answer. **Due: November 23.**

Critical Essay Paper: Select an element of fiction (POV, character development, setting, plot, voice, theme) and research why this element is essential for writing good fiction. I want you to use at least five sources for this paper, and please document this in APA format. This essay will take some research and fine tuning. (3-5 pages).

5) Final Portfolio will include:

1 Draft story #1 (2-5)	2 Draft story #2 (5-9)	3 Final Reflection paper (1-3)	4 Mid semester conf. Sheet	5 Fiction event (3-5)	6 Critical essay (3-5)	7 Story revision (5-10)	8 formal workshop crits (34 total)	9 Freewrites (10 total)	10 1 pg reading response [Charters] (4) [Kardos] (9) 1,2, 4,5,6,11,12,14,15
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Label these 1-10 inside a folder/portfolio.

1. Draft of short story #1: (2-5 pgs)
2. Draft of story #2: (5-9 pgs)
3. Final Reflection paper: (1-3 pgs)
4. Mid-Semester Conf. Sheet
5. Fiction Event: (3-5 pgs)
6. Critical Essay: (3-5 pgs)
7. Story Revision: (5-10 pgs)
8. Copies of **all** (34) workshop crits sent to peer writers after workshops. **THIS IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. PLEASE USE THE 50 MINUTES FROM 8:30 until 9:20 TO MAKE THESE CRITS VITALLY IMPORTANT!**
9. Freewrites: **Ten** freewrites that developed over the semester

10. 13 One-Page Reading Responses (**four** from Charters; **nine** from Kardos) See pages/dates due below:

CHARTERS: Week 2: pp. 1039-1047; Week 3: pp. 1048-1063; Week 4: pp. 1064-1073; Week 5: pp. 1074-1097

KARDOS: Week 3: pp. 224-232; Week 4: pp. 191-203; Week 5: pp. 245-250; Week 6: pp. 372-377; Week 8: pp. 365-371; Week 9: pp. 204-216; Week 10: pp. 336-348; Week 12: pp. 315-335; Week 13: pp. 233-244

6) **Final Reflection Paper.** Along with your final portfolio, please turn in a separate printed, proofread Refection Paper (1 - 3 pages), which explores what you've learned about yourself as a fiction writer since the first night of class. Specifically, please address the following: a) strengths and specific challenges you are encountering as a writer, b) possible solutions to these challenges, c) the point of view and verb tense you feel most comfortable writing fiction in, and d) the top five ideas and concepts covered in class that you found to be most helpful for your development as a fiction writer.

7) **ALL LATE WORK is discouraged as writing is a PROCESS.** Due to the tight workshop schedule, and the valuable experience of workshopping a piece of your writing, if you are absent or are unable to finish and/or print enough copies of your piece for any reason on the day you are scheduled to workshop, you must still turn in to me your piece, but you forfeit your opportunity to receive feedback from peers.

8) **Attendance. You are expected to attend each class meeting.** I understand that sometimes life can prevent one from making it to class. Thus, you get ONE missed class per semester without penalty. Missing more than one class for any reason other than a documented hospital visit/stay or verified death in the family will result in one full letter final grade drop. More than three class absences will result in a failing grade. There will be one 15-minute break per class.

9) OTHER GENERAL STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

If you miss a class or are late, you are responsible for getting any missed assignments, announcements, notes and other information from another student. You are also responsible for turning in and/or completing any assigned work from the class you missed. (You may wish to refer to the class email list that will be distributed in class.)

For each credit, dedicate 3 hours per week outside of class for reading and completion of assignments (i.e. **for this 4-credit course should be allocated 12 hours outside of class per week**).

10) **Final Student Readings.** Please be prepared to share from your Final Portfolio with a live zoom reading of 10 minutes on the final day of class. Required.

Learning Outcomes

Analyze readings of peer work, both orally and in writing.

Apply the elements of fiction to include plot, character, setting, point of view, voice and theme.

Articulate an informed personal reaction to works in the arts and humanities.
 Demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities.
 Describe and appreciate works in the arts and humanities as expressions of individual and collective values within an intellectual, cultural, historical and social context.
 Employ syntax and usage appropriate to academic disciplines and the professional world.
 Engage in the creative process or interpretive performance.
 Interpret and respond critically to works from various cultures in the arts and humanities.
 Locate, evaluate, and synthesize in a responsible manner material from diverse sources and points of view.
 Participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.
 Respond critically to works in the arts and humanities.
 Synthesize a fictional story with autobiographical experience.
 Understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within a historical and social context.
 Understand/demonstrate the writing and speaking processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing and presentation.
 Use authority, point-of-view, and individual voice and style in writing and speaking.

Grading

Readings Responses (and punctuality): **20%**

Attendance and overall quality and regularity of verbal participation during class discussions, workshops, and visiting writers: **25%**

All in-class and at-home writing assignments, including full participation with in-class writing exercises and Peer Workshop Responses: **25%**

Formal Workshop Presentations and Analyses: **15%**

Final portfolio and the depth, insights and quality of final reflection paper: **10%**

Fiction Event Attendance Reflection Paper: **5%**

Workshop Collegiality

A creative writing workshop can explore submissions that include, either overtly or indirectly, contemporary and emotional issues such as race, sexuality, social class and political or religious beliefs that can sometimes result in heated discussions and true disagreements. Always remain aware that disagreement does not mean that someone else is a morally bad person. We all want to be treated with respect and care, so listen thoughtfully to others' words and put yourself in their position. Listening is an important skill to cultivate. People are not abstract concepts; they're your fellow classmates. Metro's University Community Conduct Code in the Student Handbook contains good information. If you have a question or concern, please consult with me privately.

Notes on Workshop Participation

A workshop is an intensive seminar in which we scrutinize, pore over, examine, read and re-read, discuss, and argue over your personal writing. Writers know just how hard it is to produce a piece of good writing. It is essential, and required, to acknowledge the work another writer has put into her or his piece. When reading and critiquing others' drafts, I always ask myself this question: *How can I be most useful?* Being useful means paying careful attention to what writers are trying to do in the draft and suggesting constructive ways to help writers achieve their best work. Respect all work by working as hard as you can both on your own and others' drafts. Always note the strengths of a piece, as knowing what works can often help guide writers into a revision. Accept each piece on its own terms; do not try to change a writer's fundamental voice and/or subject matter. Finally, try to separate yourself from your work; it's not you that's being examined, but a piece of writing which stands by itself. Hard though it is at times, once you've written it and sent it out there, it belongs to the world.

Typical Weekly Schedule

6:00-6:50: Analysis and Discussion of assigned readings
 Freewrite exercise
 Discussion of exercises

Discussion of craft and technique re: readings

6:50-7:00: BREAK

7:00-8:30: Workshop student drafts

AGAIN, USE THE REMAINING 50 MINUTES FOR RE-READING WORKSHOPPED PIECES AND OUTLING A RESPONSE DUE THE FOLLOWING WEEK. A COPY OF EACH CRITIQUE MUST BE ALSO EMAILED TO ME FOR A TOTAL OF 34 CRITS.

Below is a scratch outline of the dates our class meets. (each week you will be given a weekly agenda outlining what is due for the week and what is due for next week to include readings, and weekly writing assignments):

Week One (August 23): Introduction to class/texts/each other. Explanation of workshop structure and subject matter. Discussion of local literary resources. Writing exercises.

Week Two (August 30): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

OFF SEPTEMBER 7 FOR HOLIDAY

Week Three (September 13): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

Week Four (September 20): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

Week Five (September 27): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Small Group Workshops

Week Six (October 4): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

Week Seven (October 11): Individual conferences through zoom.

Week Eight (October 18): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

Week Nine (October 25): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

Week Ten (November 1): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

Week Eleven (November 8): Off for compensation re: reading event.

Week Twelve (November 15): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

Week Thirteen (November 22): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. Student critiques.

Week Fourteen (November 29): In-class writing exercises. Discussion of readings. PORTFOLIOS DUE!

Week Fifteen (December 6): Portfolio Presentations; Potluck; Return Portfolios.

University Non-Attendance and Reporting Policy and Procedure

The purpose of the Non-Attendance and Reporting Policy is to ensure Federal Title IV regulations are adhered to with respect to a student's enrollment level for the purpose of calculating and paying financial aid. While Metropolitan State University is not required to take attendance, Federal Title IV financial aid regulations require a procedure to establish that students have attended, at a minimum, one day of class for each course in which the student's enrollment status was used to determine eligibility for the Pell Grant Program. In addition, the university needs to determine a last date of attendance for those students who receive all failing grades or unofficially withdraw.

Attendance is defined based on course delivery mode. A student is "in attendance" if he or she meets the following conditions before the end of the second week of the course:

- Classroom Courses – the student is present in the classroom and/or zoom.
- Web-Enhanced (Reduced Seat Time Courses) – the student is present in the classroom or submits at least one academically relevant assignment.
- Online Courses –the student submits at least one academically relevant assignment
- Independent Studies – the student contacts the instructor or submits at least one academically relevant assignment.

Information about other Students Success resources that are available to students:

The Center for Academic Excellence, <http://www.metrostate.edu/student/learning-resources/learning-resources/center-for-academic-excellence>

Veterans and Military Student Services, <http://www.metrostate.edu/student/student-services-support/student-services/veterans-and-military-student-services>

Student Services, <http://www.metrostate.edu/student/student-services-support/student-services>

Counseling Services, <http://www.metrostate.edu/student/student-services-support/student-services/counseling-services>

A Partial List of Local Reading Events (most of these events are adapted to an online format):

www.loft.org

www.citypages.com/events/category/readings-and-lectures

www.micawbers.com

www.magersandquinn.com

www.commongoodbooks.com

<http://www.bookstores.umn.edu>

<http://fitzgeraldtheater.publicradio.org/events/>

Sample Written Peer Critique: (34 required)

Dear Blank,

I'm greatly intrigued by *Dream House* and drawn to the images you've created. In particular I like the locked rooms with no keys to open them, the 'man who timed my showers,' the 'tall thin green house that leaned to one side' and finally toppled over like a house in a mud slide, and the girl in the blue pinafore.

Right now, the piece struck me as very rough in that its true structure seems yet to be determined. I love pieces of writing that are in this stage, because when they're as intriguing as yours is their potential seems limitless to me. *Dream House* could become a poem, in my opinion, or it could stand alone as an evocative, mysterious mood piece, not really a 'story' but in a category of its own instead. Its dreamlike quality enhances its haunting aspects.

In terms of revision, I suggest that you think about which direction you want to go, then structure the piece to suit that direction. As it is right now, I love the introductory phrases to each section ("As a child," "At 17," "When I was married to the man who timed my showers," etc.) but I feel that some are stronger than others. That feeling may be because the opening and ending sections, to me, feel extraneous, almost as if you were writing your way into the piece and then felt as if a conclusion of some kind were necessary. I'd leave them out. In that way, the simple power opening with "As a child," and ending with "When my children were taken from me," underscore the span of a life and are both related.

Similarly, think about providing some sort of structure, whether it's age, chronology, or event-related, to tie each section to the next, giving it an overall 'framework.' For example, I'm not sure if the cancer, father-dying, and loss-of-children sections are coming in chronological order, and somehow I wanted to know that. That might be because the whole piece is so episodic in nature, as opposed to structured around a plot, that somehow I craved a little more of a tangible connection to the whole.

See my notes within the text itself for suggestions as to how to enhance the power of the images. Some of these suggestions are: vary the length of the sentences within sections, consider dividing some of the single paragraphs into sections of varying length (that increases visual impact), and possibly include a few lines of dialogue here and there.

Very strong work here. I look forward to more.

Note: In order to keep a reasonable amount of flexibility in this class I reserve the right to adjust our syllabus as situations dictate.

A Course Schedule (*subject to change*) will be emailed to you as weekly agenda sheets with assigned readings/assignments due, along with what will be due for the following week.

Draft Zoom Policies and Resources

Below you will find a draft of Zoom Policies and Resources that you could include in your syllabus. Please feel free to use and/or modify as you see fit.

Zoom Policies and Resources

We will be using Zoom in this course to meet as a class and for small-group or one-on-one meetings. When using Zoom in this course, you are not required to use the web camera function. You are expected to actively engage in the sessions by asking questions (using your microphone and/or the chat function), and/or participating in discussions. Students are not allowed to share Zoom links with people outside this course.

For help getting started with Zoom, see [Getting Started with Zoom](#)

You can access your Minnesota State Zoom account from: <https://minnstate.zoom.us/>, just click the "Sign on" button and login with your StarID and password.

Visit the following link to learn more about connecting to a Zoom

conference: <https://services.metrostate.edu/TDClient/1839/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=101232>

Visit the following link to learn more about hosting a Zoom conference for presenting or teaching: <https://services.metrostate.edu/TDClient/1839/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=100273>

If you get stuck or need some extra help, you can reach out to our Information Technology Services or the Center for Online Learning.

Also, the [Zoom Help Center](#) has many great resources, live trainings, and even fantastic technical support representatives waiting to help you if need-be. As part of being a student within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, you have access to a premium license of the web conferencing tool and can use Zoom to engage with your classmates and for other personal reasons.