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Fall 2015

## ENGL 6161

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*University of New Orleans*

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English 6161  
Graduate Fiction Writing  
Monday 6-8:45  
Fall 2015

Office Hours: M: 4-6 or by appointment. Don't hesitate to call or email me at fredrick.barton@uno.edu to arrange a meeting.

English 6161 is a workshop course in fiction writing; it consists of four activities:

1. Writing stories -- 3 per student
2. Reading and discussing stories
3. Writing critiques of your classmates' stories
4. Annotating your classmates' manuscripts

English 6161 is an advanced skills acquisition course. Its goal is to assist aspiring fiction writers to become better and more instinctive at their craft. To that end, close attention is given to the ways stories are made, to the structure and language that propel plots and make characters come alive. Students who are successful in the class will be those who can grasp the elusive and sometimes paradoxical principles of storytelling, who can analyze the works of others and apply the process of analysis to their own writing. Attendance, of course, is mandatory and essential for any successful student. Few 6161 students ever miss a class.

Grading in the course is holistic. Grades will not be given on individual stories or critiques. The final grade in the course represents the workshop leader's assessment of the student's overall performance in the course, the writing of stories and critiques, and participation in class discussion. Do not worry about grades. Grades are required by the university, but true success in a writing workshop is measured in an individual writer's growth in his or her craft.

Stories, of course, are the original work of the author submitting them. No story, including its revision, may be workshopped more than once while a student is in the program. Each story will be of professional length, normally 8-20 double-spaced, type-written pages. Proper margins should be maintained so that stories may be marked. Except for the class's early sessions, when stories will be emailed, each class member will be responsible for duplicating his or her stories and distributing them in workshop on the dates they are due. The workshop leader and each class member will return marked copies to the author after a story has been discussed. Some students may want to submit selections from a novel. This is not advised, especially not for first-year students. Workshop does not work as well when submitted material is not complete. But students *may* submit novel passages limited to a maximum of 20 pages. Such passages, insofar as possible, should be able to stand alone. If you think you want to submit a novel selection, you must discuss the idea with me first.

Every student will write a critique of each of his or her classmates' stories. Critiques are due at the class meeting when a story is discussed. One copy is given to the author after a story is discussed; the other is given to the workshop leader. Critiques should be a minimum of one double-spaced, typed page. Critiques may discuss a story in any way that the critic feels pertinent to the work. In general, though, a critique should proceed from an analysis of the author's desired goals and assess the extent to which those goals are achieved. Each critique should underscore those elements of the story that are succeeding and go on to make constructive suggestions about ways to strengthen the story further in subsequent drafts. The purpose of the critique, like the purpose of workshop discussion, is to assist the author in making the story stronger.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Students will learn how effectively to analyze the elements of writing fiction and will exhibit their analytic skills in the writing of the required critiques, the annotation of their peers' manuscripts and their oral comments during workshop.
- 2) Students will learn to apply the fruits of their literary analytical skills to the drafting, revising and completion of their own stories.
- 3) Students will learn to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses as a fiction writer and thus will learn to utilize their strengths, diminish their weaknesses and grow as a literary artist.