

English 386: Intermediate Fiction Workshop

Course	ENG 386 001
Day & Time	T 5:30-8:00 p.m.
Place	Simpkins 308
Instructor	Barbara Harroun
Office	Simpkins 216
Email	BC-Harroun@wiu.edu
Phone	298-1323
Office Hours	T/TH 3:30-5:15 and W 1:00-2:00 p.m., & by appointment

Course Description: 386 Writing Workshop: Fiction. (3) Further work in the writing of fiction. Prerequisite: ENG 285 or consent of instructor.

English 386 will give you a sense of contemporary short fiction while providing a workshop setting and writing community for your own short fiction. This is a reading and writing intensive class.

Course Goals

In order to succeed in this class you must:

- have a voracious appetite for reading, thinking about and writing about short fiction.
- have an understanding of and apply the elements that are necessary in crafting artful, literary fiction.
- have the ability to read, comment on, and present at length on others' writing *as a writer*.
- give and receive constructive criticism gracefully.
- recognize the importance of revision in triggering discovery.
- refine your editing skills and learn the importance of professional manuscript presentation.

Required Texts

The Best American Short Stories 2012, edited by Tom Perrotta

Additional readings provided in class or via email

Materials

- **A notebook**—do NOT come to class without it.
- **Pen and pencil**—do NOT come to class without a writing implement.
- **Two flash sticks**. Always back up your work, and take the precaution of emailing your work to yourself. I do not accept as an excuse, ever, a crashed computer, lost flash stick or a printer that ran out of ink.
- **A pocket folder** for additional handouts and readings.
- **A three-ring binder** for your final portfolio of initial and revised work.
- **Enough copies of your work** for instructor and classmates on your designated workshop days. Copies should be ready to hand out at the beginning of class.

Assignments

English 386: Intermediate Fiction Workshop

- 1) **Four stories (50%):** 3 full length short stories should be 6(minimum)-15(maximum) pages(15% each), and 1 flash fiction story(5%). These stories must be typed, and as polished as possible. It is your responsibility to provide copies for the instructor and your fellow students. No genre fiction. We are studying and attempting literary fiction in this course. No porn, detective fiction, fantasy, science-fiction or romance. We'll discuss this at length.
- 2) **Writing Exercises (10%):** 5 exercises; 2 pages typed, focusing on characterization/setting/conflict-crisis-resolution/scene and summary/point of view: Started in class and turned in the following class period.
- 3) **Response/Reflections (10%):** 4 response/reflections; 2 pages, typed. Responses to particular authors' mastery of craft in assigned stories, and a reflection on what you've learned from the authors, your peers, and the instructor, and how you can apply this knowledge in your own work.
- 4) **Revised Fiction Portfolio (10%):** Complete revisions of two of your short stories. These revision should be a massive "re-thinking" and "re-envisioning" in which characters, setting, and plot (among other aspects of craft) can change drastically. Include a cover letter detailing your revision process and any discoveries you made about yourself and your writing process.
- 5) **Typed workshop critiques (20%):** Each story that is workshopped requires written comments on the original and a one page, typed, critique. You must email me your typed critique prior to the beginning of class, and hand back the story draft with your typed critique to your peer.
- 6) **Conferences:** You are required to conference with me, by appointment, twice during the semester; once before midterm, and once prior to the final fiction portfolio.

Grading

You must complete all assignments to pass the course. Late assignments will not be accepted without documentation of an emergency or illness.

A+=97-100%	A=94-96%	A-=90-93%
B+=87-89%	B=84-86%	B-=80-83%
C+=77-79%	C=74-76%	C-=70-73%
D+=67-69%	D=64-66%	D-=60-63%

U/F=59 and below: *Please be aware of and understand the difference between a U and an F. U indicates you attended class, and attempted all work but it wasn't at a passing level. F indicates a failure to attend and/or attempt work.*

Attendance

is necessary to foster your development as a writer and central to developing a sense of community and respect in the classroom. Your input is needed and valued. Tardiness is disruptive and disrespectful, and excessive lateness counts as an absence. I keep track of attendance, but do not grant "excused" or "unexcused" absences. You are either here or you are absent. Sleeping or texting in class will result in a marked absence. **If you are absent more**

English 386: Intermediate Fiction Workshop

than once, without documentation of an emergency or illness, your grade will be docked 1 letter grade for each additional absence. 3 absences is an automatic F. If a situation arises during the semester that prohibits you from attending class, I urge you to communicate responsibly with me. Please call me, email me or see me during my office hours. If you miss a class, please check Western Online and consult the class schedule.

Workshop Considerations

This class focuses on workshopping original student work, and it is very different from a lecture based class. It requires student participation and discussion. It also requires a level of maturity in being able to divorce yourself from your own work, and to listen to others dissect it in terms of craft.

1.) It is important for you to hand in work—finished drafts—that you care about. Don't ask the instructor or your classmates to take seriously what you do not. Start writing early, and work through several revisions before you submit things to the class. Hemingway famously said, "The first draft of anything is shit." Don't turn in first drafts.

2.) You need to remain silent during classroom discussion of your story. Take notes. Listen closely, openly and without defensiveness. The workshop does not judge you as a person; it is meant to help you become a better writer. It is not a therapy session or an encounter group or a TV talk show. It is important to remember, that as an audience, we don't care if the events actually happened to you. We are not concerned with your past traumas or heartbreaks and we aren't trained therapists equipped to assist you in dealing with them. This sounds harsh, but it is true. I often hear students say, "But this actually happened." We will treat every story and exercise as fiction, not autobiography, and we, as apprentice writers, will consider it in terms of art. Art serves humanity. This workshop does not serve your ego, this workshop serves your art. As a writing community, and as workshop, our job is to point out what as writers we often can't see in our own work—where the writing succeeds and where it fails. As the one in the workshop hot seat, this is truly difficult, but remember that the critique is about also honing your writer's eye, and finding a community of writers that you will entrust with your work even after the class is over. You are welcome to include a letter to your classmates asking specific questions or citing areas you are struggling with. This letter should be the last page of the story.

3.) After workshop you may ask 3 questions of the class pertaining to your work and/or workshop discussion. Do not defend or explain what you were attempting to achieve in your work. We will deal with what is actually written on the page.

4.) *Stories must be double spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font. Workshop copies are due the class BEFORE your workshop. Stories must be stapled prior to class, and should be printed front and back. Please don't make us wait on you. If stories aren't ready to be passed out at the start of class(exactly at 5:30 p.m.), you will forfeit your workshop. Do not test me on this. Every semester, this is an issue. Writing fiction is an art and a discipline. Present work you are proud of and present it on time.*

5.) When we respond to others' work, we do so with respect and compassion. Your written and verbal responses should be constructive and you should read as a writer reads—with an eye

English 386: Intermediate Fiction Workshop

towards elements of craft that are working and/or are problematic. Your written responses should summarize the story briefly, address what is working specifically, and what is not working, along with suggestions to strengthen the piece. Your responses must be typed and ready to be turned in on workshop days. **I will not take responses late.** Print out one copy of your response for the author and one copy for me. Your comments, both verbal and written must be respectful. Any language that demeans, diminishes or insults the author, rather than critiquing the work at hand, will result in permanent expulsion from the workshop.

Student Conduct

We are building a learning and writing community, which means creating and maintaining an atmosphere of respect. In this classroom you may encounter ideas, values, beliefs and perspectives that are different from your own. We will freely exchange ideas, but intimidating or disrespectful language (in writing or in class) or behavior has no place in our exchanges, our classroom, or at Western Illinois University. No texting, emailing, or placing/receiving calls during class. No iPods on or ear buds in during class. Turn off your cell phone before class. Excessive disruption will result in following the procedure dictated by WIU.

Plagiarism

You must do your own work in English 386. Any act of plagiarism will result in an F grade in this course. If you have any doubts about whether or not you are using your own or others' writing ethically and legally, ask me. Work cannot be handed in for credit in 386 that is or was written for another class (say, for example, ENG 285), either here or elsewhere, even if it is much revised. Work you did in high school is best left there. The whole idea of ENG 386 is to give you new occasions to write, for you to discover fresh ways to imaginatively deal with the world around you. Please submit work written only during the current term. Western Illinois University's official Academic Integrity Policy is found at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>. Please read it, in its entirety and see me with any questions you may have.

Disability Support Services

"In accordance with University policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. For the instructor to provide the proper accommodation(s) you must obtain documentation of the need for an accommodation through Disability Support Services and provide it to the instructor. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor's attention, as he/she is not legally permitted to inquire about such particular needs of students. Students who may require special assistance in emergency evacuations (i.e. fire, tornado, etc.) should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow in such an emergency. Contact Disability Support Services at 298-2512 for additional services."

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Please be advised of your rights and responsibilities as a student at Western Illinois University by visiting <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>.

Important Dates

August 19, Mon. -- Classes Begin
August 30, Fri. --Last day to withdraw from course or university with 100% refund
September 2, Mon. -- Labor Day -- No Classes/University Closed
September 16: Chad Simpson, 12:30 talk on the importance of place in art. 4:00 p.m. reading, Q & A and book signing at the University Art Gallery
October 18, Fri. -- Fall Break -- No Classes
October 21, Mon. -- Classes Resume
October 27, Sun.—last day to drop a class or withdraw from the university
November 25-29, Mon.-Fri. -- Thanksgiving Break -- No Classes
November 28-29, Thurs.-Fri. -- Holiday -- University Closed
December 2, Mon. -- Classes Resume
December 9-13, Mon.-Fri. -- Final Exam Week

English 386: Intermediate Fiction Workshop

This syllabus is subject to change. This class will be notified of changes due to University closings, severe weather, class progress, incorrect statements in this document, and unexpected demands on the instructor.