

**English 3320**  
**Creative Writing Fiction**  
**Fall 2014**

Instructor: Dr. Laura Rebecca Payne

Email: lbutler@sulross.edu

Office: MAB 111

Phone: 837.8744/837.8151

Office Hours: M/W 12-1, 2-3; MWF 10-11; T/Th 11-1 (and by appointment)

**Required Texts:**

*Gotham Writers' Workshop Fiction Gallery* (Author: Steele) ISBN: 9781582344621

*The Making of a Story* (Author: LaPlante) ISBN: 9780393337082

**Course Description:** English 3320 is a course that explores the foundations of fiction writing through invention and workshop of our writing, reading, and discussion of contemporary short literatures. We will read various selections of short prose fiction, interpret them in discussions and writings, and then apply those interpretations to our own prose writing. We will practice strategies for invention and apply these to the creation of a portfolio that will reflect our growing sense of skills. Finally, we will workshop our manuscripts in order to prepare our work for revision. You will leave this course understanding and appreciating your own heightened skills in reading, interpreting, discussing, and writing as a *writer* in order to further develop your own distinct voice and creative processes.

**Course Objectives:** Students in English 3320 will:

- examine the processes of short fiction writing through the academic lens;
- analyze creative methodologies;
- understand techniques used in the creation of short stories, especially those historically proven with both popular and critical audiences;
- prepare to enter the academic, professional, and writing markets with a full understanding of its professional expectations;
- develop the appropriate language for expert navigation of fiction writing and the academic discussion of the story as a genre;
- prepare professional documents which reflect careful and successful rhetoric;
- communicate carefully, fully, and successfully via an online environment.

English (undergraduate) Program Learning Outcomes:

Graduating students will demonstrate in 3320 that they can

1. Construct essays that demonstrate unity, organization, coherence, and development

2. Analyze literary works by applying principles of literary criticism or theory
3. Demonstrate creativity or originality of thought in written or multimedia projects
4. Compare/contrast and analyze major works and periods within World, English, and American literature.

**Educator Standards:** For students seeking certification, this course will cover aspects of the following SBEC educator standards and competencies:

English Language Arts and Reading 8-12 Standard IV:

English language arts teachers in grades 8-12 understand an extensive body of literature and literary genres and provide students with opportunities to read diverse forms of literature and to view literature as a source for exploring and interpreting human experiences.

Competency 006: *The teacher understands literary elements, genres, and movements and demonstrates knowledge of a substantial body of literature.*

Competency 007: *The teacher understands strategies for reading literary texts and provides students with opportunities to formulate, express, and support responses to literature.*

### **First Class and Beyond:**

On the first class day, I will post opening/welcoming remarks and suggestions for getting started in the course. On subsequent days, please check announcements for instructions on lectures and answers to class questions, which will be posted each class day (i.e. Monday-Friday) when necessary and/or appropriate. I will be “off-line” on the weekends, which will begin by 12 p.m. Fridays and continue until 10 a. .m. Mondays. Office hours follow those listed above. I will be “off-line” during the week after 3 p.m. daily (i.e. look for email responses within 48 hours—or check the announcements, as I often answer general course questions there.

### **Coursework**

**\*\*Please note that you should write attached assignments in Microsoft Word to ensure we may all utilize them. Work may be submitted in “.doc, .docx, or .rtf. Please contact Sandy Bogus at sbogus@sulross.edu (or 432.837.8523) if you have technical problems or questions.\*\***

**\*\*Blackboard only works best in Firefox (rather than Explorer). It is free to download.**

The vast majority of this course will be completed via the writing and “discussion” of fiction readings and writing processes. We will read and write about selections from the required texts for the course. You are expected to participate fully in a completely engaged manner and will be held accountable for your participation, both in formal and informal forums, throughout the completion of the session’s work. All of your participation must be thoughtful, sincere, and tactful. In the pursuit of these goals, we will write a short-short story and a full-length, for-workshop short fiction manuscript. You will also complete a course journal that will hold course materials generated this semester. The course journal will consist of only assigned writings in the form of “elements.” You will participate in directed discussion boards, which will contain workshop feedback of one another’s manuscripts as well as discussion prompts as listed in the syllabus. These also serve as the class participation component of the course, as they include assigned items such as and in particular workshop participation (i.e. comments and reactions to one another’s fiction) and will largely determine the course grade. You will write an artist’s/genesis statement, which will serve as the final examination.

**\*\*I expect your coursework to mirror the time you would take with this course if it were an onsite course. Thus, you should spend the approximately three hours a week working on this course, with additional time for the actual reading and writing of the manuscripts, etc. determined by your personal reading and writing pace—just as you would for an onsite course.**

### **Detailed Assignment Description:**

*Discussion Boards*—The discussion boards allow us to speak to one another. Think of the discussion boards as the “cyber” equivalent of sitting at the workshop table with one another and talking about our readings, writings, thoughts and reactions to the coursework. The first discussion boards will ask you to do just this. Please answer in detailed manners, using examples and analysis of the why and how of your answers. The posts must be approximately three to five hundred words. Responses to posts should be approximately one to two hundred words. You will respond to two posts. Respond to posts which have not already received two responses yet. DO NOT respond to a post with two responses already unless you have no other options. The second half of the discussion boards in the course schedule serve as your workshop of one another’s manuscripts (i.e. you will read each other’s fiction pieces and write reactions to them). These essentially cover what you feel are the manuscripts’ strengths and what, if each manuscript were yours, you would wish to work on in revision. Detailed instructions will be provided in a further lecture. You will all be placed into groups (as necessary determined by course size) and asked to read and respond to chapter manuscripts (the number of which also determined by class size). The discussion boards will improve our communication skills and practice of methodologies of fiction and fiction writing through improved abilities to articulate our growing knowledge-base and expertise in the field.

*Readings*—The readings for the course involve two valuable types of writing: (1) stories by masters of fiction writing and (2) a writing text about fiction writing and writers/scholars. Thus, we will be able to read great and varied examples of fiction as a way to model techniques while also glimpsing the craft of writing via masters' instruction. I will also post lectures for you to read, in which I will impart ideas regarding craft, often tied to my own writing life. This all allows us to increase confidence in our writing and analytic abilities as a way into our writing and (perhaps) teaching of writing.

*Short-Short Story Manuscript*—The short-short story is a form growing fast in popularity among writers and readers. It is essentially exactly what it sounds like--a short-short story. The length for these maxes out at six pages and can be as brief as a page (in the form of flash fiction). Please format using MLA.

*Short Story Manuscript*—The manuscript will be an original short fiction of 8-10 pages, typed in Times New Roman, twelve-point font and double-spaced, using MLA formatting. It will be turned in as a Word attachment. It will reflect knowledge and execution of the techniques of short fiction which work to create vibrant and fully-realized fiction. The goal of writing the manuscript is to apply the knowledge gained in our readings, discussions, and growing expertise in fiction writing to create an example of the craft. Manuscripts also give us practical work about which we may discuss and analyze craft and the products of this craft. Thus, the manuscript serves as a lab for improved creative and pedagogical techniques. The manuscript is due under the assignment link by noon on its due date. Then, I will post the chapters as discussion boards on the days each manuscript's workshop discussion board is due. So, you may work ahead, but you must post your comments by its due date. Please note, the initial draft of the manuscript is the graded version. I will respond via the assignment link individually and in a graded format

*Course Journal*—The course journal will consist of exercises in *The Making of a Story*. These exercises are all invention exercises whose goals are to improve techniques in fiction writing as well as abilities to write freely and with confidence. Obviously, the responses are as valuable as the effort put into them. Please feel free to use any of the notebook exercises as inspirations for the manuscripts—they are meant to be such. I will evaluate your effort on these exercises once, at the end of the course. It will be turned in as one continuous journal entry in the course journal function in assignments and as a Word doc. You will separate elements with a page break and title each as elements and their numbers (e.g. Element One). Please write the exercises as they are due—this will maximize their success for your writing.

**Assignments:** Students in English 3320 will be required to follow the reading, writing, and discussion environment schedule as presented in the syllabus and be prepared to discuss assignments at the “class period” in which they are due. Students will be expected to write assignments consistently and timely, as this online course only works as well as the students completing the work. **Again, the online course works best if you do the work at the time it is**

assigned—I have found that the course works much, much better if we are all working in tandem.

The formal assignments will be weighted as follows:

Short-short	20%
Short Story	30%
Discussion Boards	20%
Course Journal	20%
Final Examination	10%

---

Total	100%
-------	------

**Grades:** English 3320 will be graded on a scale of 100 with an A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, and F=59 and below.

**Attendance:** As this is a web-format workshop course, consistent participation is absolutely necessary. Remaining current with the course schedule and taking part during the expected due dates will not only keep you personally engaged, but will ensure that other participants of the course can benefit from your thoughts, ideas, and reactions toward the readings and writing assignments. *If you miss due dates, I will not expect others in the class to consider your work in arrears. If you fail to participate in a workshop during the workshop timeline, you will miss out on a major component of your discussion board grade. Late work will result in an automatic ten points being taken off your grade; thus, if you received a B on an assignment, it will be reduced to a C. I do not accept any late work for this course after the final exam period has ended. If your manuscript is late, it will **not** be workshopped by the class, as this would disrupt the work schedule for the entire course.*

**\*\*Please note that this course is a workshop which necessitates that students complete discussion boards and major assignments on the day on which the assignments are made. Thus, discussion boards must be posted by 7 p.m. on Tuesdays and responses be posted by midnight on Thursdays. This will ensure that the course's discussions move forward timely and with minimum inconvenience to your fellow students. I will shut down the discussion board after the due date and time. Thus, if you miss the assignment, you will not be able to make it up and will lose the credit. Please move on to the next one.**

**Late Work:** Assignments that are turned in late receive a 10-point deduction, regardless of how late the work is. Thus, an assignment that is graded at a B will be automatically reduced

to a C, if the assignment is late. Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Assignments turned in at any time after the posted due date and time are considered late. Please let me know in advance if you are experiencing a problem. I will not accept any late work after the final examination period for this course. It is completely the student's responsibility to make arrangements for and to turn in late work. I will not remind students of late or missed work.

**\*\*Manuscripts for workshop must be turned in on the date and time due or they will not be workshopped by the class. In addition to not enjoying the readings of peers, this late assignment will lose an additional 10 points.**

**The Writing Center:** The Writing Center is an academic support service available to all Sul Ross students. I strongly encourage you to make the center an integral part of your writing process by visiting the tutors frequently during the semester. The benefits of such visits are readily apparent in your work. The Center is located on the first floor of MAB, room 102, and its phone number is 432.837.8270.

**Disabilities Statement:** Persons with disabilities that may warrant academic accommodations should contact me as soon as possible so that we may make arrangements to ensure the most hospitable and enhancing (cyber) learning environment as possible.

**Academic Ethics:** Any student who represents someone else's work as his or her own will automatically receive a zero for that assignment. Plagiarism can be purposeful or inadvertent, but either results in an unacceptable and unethical academic performance. Plagiarism will most likely result in a failure for the course.

**Miscellaneous yet Important:**

If, for any reason, you require accommodations for the successful completion of this course, please let me know as soon as possible so that we may make arrangements.

I require that all discussions of our creative/scholarly work remain tactful, sincere, and highly ethical. Take the time with one another's work that you would wish taken with your own. If you do not feel up to this challenge, please find another course.

My office hours are, of course, "cyber" hours, although I will be available on campus at Sul Ross during those hours as well. Please do not hesitate to call the office phone. Or, I can provide further numbers and arrange more convenient times to speak as necessary. I will answer emails within 48 hours of receiving them (with the exception of weekends), so please do not wait until the last moment to ask questions. Also, please check the announcements for the class each day—I often address course issues and give suggestions and directions there, as they affect all students.

## Syllabus

Date	Assignment
------	------------

---

**Week One**                      \*read course introduction and policies  
   \*read Lecture One

Discussion Board 1: Introduce yourself to the class—give us a sense of who you are, what your interests are: What do you like to read? What do you hope to gain in the course? What type of writing do you plan to attempt (e.g. genre)? Tell us a bit about your life, personality, hobbies, studies. Respond to two other writers. Respond to 2 posts!

*The Making of a Story:*        Read Chapter One

*Fiction Gallery:* Read Introduction, "First Confession"

Journal Element 1: Choose one exercise in part two from this week's chapter in *The Making of a Story* to complete (300 words each).

\*\*Check Announcements!!

**Week Two**                      \*read Lecture Two

Discussion Board 2: Discuss your writing processes in detail. Discuss your attitude toward writing, especially in terms of fiction writing. What does it mean to you to "read like a writer"? Respond to 2 posts!

*The Making of a Story:*        Read Chapter Two

*Fiction Gallery:*                "Brownies," "What the River Told Us to Do"

Journal Element 2: Choose one exercise in part two from this week's chapter in *The Making of a Story* to complete (300 words each).

\*\*Check Announcements!!

**Week Three**

\*read Lecture Three

\*read detailed assignment for short-short

Discussion Board 3: Discuss the importance of details in strong short stories. Illustrate the point by referencing a story we've read for class. Respond to 2 posts!!

*The Making of a Story:* Read Chapter Three

*Fiction Gallery:* "Going for the Orange Julius," "Labors of the Heart"

Journal Element 3: Choose one exercise in part two from this week's chapter in *The Making of a Story* to complete (300 words each).

\*\*Check Announcements!!

**Week Four**

\*\*read Lecture Four

Discussion Board 4: Discuss the difference between a linear and modular story. To which form are you most attracted? Reference specific stories we've read for class. Respond to 2 posts!

*The Making of a Story:* Read Chapter Four

*Fiction Gallery:* "Crazy Life," "Sometimes You Talk About Idaho"

Journal Element 4: Choose one exercise in part two from this week's chapter in *The Making of a Story* to complete (300 words each).

\*\*Check Announcements!!

## **Week Five**

**\*\*Short-short due!!**

Discussion Board 5: The course text uses the story, "Brownies," in its discussion of the concept of "show don't tell." How is this story a good example of this notion? Respond to 2 posts!

*The Making of a Story:* Read Chapter Five

*Fiction Gallery:* "After the Plague," "Here We Are"

Journal Element 5: Choose one exercise in part two from this week's chapter in *The Making of a Story* to complete (300 words each).

**\*\*Check Announcements!!**

## **Week Six**

\*Read detailed assignment short story manuscript

Discussion Board 6: Which point of view do you like to write in? Why? What are the advantages of each? Limitations? Respond to 2 posts!

*The Making of a Story:* Read Chapter Six

*Fiction Gallery:* "For a Long Time This Was Griselda's Story," "Home Sweet Home"

Journal Element 6: Choose one exercise in part two from this week's chapter in *The Making of a Story* to complete (300 words each).

**\*\*Check Announcements!!**

## **Week Seven**

Discussion Board 7: Discuss the unreliable narrator and its advantages to a story. Why might an unreliable narrator prove problematic to the success of a story with its readers? Discuss what character-driven stories mean. Evidence one by citing a story we've read. Respond to 2 posts!

*The Making of a Story:* Read Chapter Seven

*Fiction Gallery:* "Orientation," "Walking into the Wind"

Journal Element 7: Choose one exercise in part two from this week's chapter in *The Making of a Story* to complete (300 words each).

\*\*Check Announcements!!

## **Week Eight**                      \*Read Lecture Five

Discussion Board 8: What makes dialogue believable? Why is dialogue important to a story? Use examples from a story we've read in class. What is your attitude toward writing dialogue? Respond to 2 posts!

*The Making of a Story:* Read Chapter Eight

*Fiction Gallery:* "Night Women" "The Palace Thief"

Journal Element 8: Choose one exercise in part two from this week's chapter in *The Making of a Story* to complete (300 words each).

\*\*Check Announcements!!

## **Week Nine**

**Discussion Board 9:** Discuss the themes you hope to develop in your story. Why do themes satisfy readers to such a degree in fiction? Respond to 2 posts!

*The Making of a Story:* Read Chapter Nine

*Fiction Gallery:* "The Book of Sand," "The Secrets of Bats"

**Journal Element 9:** Choose one exercise in part two from this week's chapter in *The Making of a Story* to complete (300 words each).

**\*\*Check Announcements!!**

## **Week Ten**

**Discussion Board 10:** Revision is often the most difficult yet necessary writing processes. Discuss the concept using your own writing life as evidence. Respond to 2 posts!

*The Making of a Story:* Read Chapter Ten

*Fiction Gallery:* "The Third and Final Continent," "The Swimmer"

**Journal Element 10:** Choose one exercise in part two from this week's chapter in *The Making of a Story* to complete (300 words each).

**\*\*Check Announcements!!**



## **Week Thirteen**

Discussion Boards 13 and 14: Read and respond to manuscripts 1 and 2, corresponding.

*The Making of a Story:* Read Chapter Thirteen

Journal Element 13: Post-script to the Writing Process—Describe your writing processes. What are you most pleased with in the piece? What are you least pleased with or unsure about?

**\*\*Check Announcements!!**

## **Week Fourteen**

Discussion Boards 15 and 16: Read and respond to manuscripts 3 and 4, corresponding.

Journal Element 14: Discuss your feelings regarding the workshop experience. What are its values? Limitations? Write suggestion to create a more successful workshop.

**\*\*Check Announcements!!**

## **Week Fifteen**

**\*\*Course Journal Due!!  
Read assignment for final examination**

Discussion Board 16 and 17: Read and respond to manuscripts 5 and 6, corresponding.  
**\*\*Look for an alternative discussion board prompt if we do not have manuscript(s) this week.**

**\*\*Check Announcements!!**

**Final Examination Due by midnight, 10th December.**