

Fall 9-1-2001

ENCR 510.02: Graduate Fiction Workshop

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ENCR 510/sec 2 Graduate Fiction Workshop
Fall 2001
T 3:10-6:00 LA 233

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hours: T1-3, R 5-6

Your job in here is to write with force and surprise and to tender your efforts regularly and cleanly. My job in here is to induce criticism, from you and from me, that will cure whatever ills are at hand without making the writer ill.

It is difficult to say what is wrong with a piece of fiction in a way that will be at once corrective and palatable to its author; I fear, after a dozen years trying, that it is virtually impossible to do this in a direct way to a given piece of writing for the writer then and there. I believe, though, it is possible in speaking ostensibly about a piece of writing to speak prescriptively and salubriously toward the bettering of later writing, both that done by the present author and by critical witnesses to his or her ordeal. A general sense of what constitutes good writing is supposed to obtain in the course of our specific daily assaults.

I grade hard. The last workshop I taught received two As. I despise grading you in here, but I despise even more the pandemic impression that these courses are easy. And in point of fact, the very nature of this endeavor--the invidious impact of criticism upon that which you cannot properly write, surrounded as you are by the distractions of school--nearly ensures that no one's behavior in it is excellent.

Please attend class. While my hard grading is not deliberately punitive, this policy is. Do not bring food to the room.

Objective of course clearly stated at outset: that you leave it writing better than when you entered it. If your writing is lively and interesting, we can correct for its faults in form. Then it will be up to you to say something new: to put to paper things not said before that surprise us. This will not happen until you surprise yourself. Please do that.

For our reading, I will decide with you in the first class what might best serve us.

NOTES: