

**WRT582, Online Multigenre Workshop III**  
**Clements, HI205F**  
**Office Hours: M 1-3:00, W 10-10:30 and 1-3:00**  
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## **Introduction**

This installment of the OMG! Workshop will provide students with additional opportunity to write new work in multiple genres and to gain expertise at responding to work in multiple genres. Thesis students will have an opportunity to receive feedback on their proposals, abstracts, and thesis work. Pre-thesis students will get some valuable practice on a couple of thesis process elements such as proposal and abstract writing.

This semester you will submit work in small groups, respond in writing to each other's work, determine on an individual basis whether it is worthwhile to apply those discussions to your work in revisions, and gain some experience contributing to an online publication.

***A Note on the Multigenre Workshop:*** In this course, you are expected to engage (that is, read and respond to) multiple genres, and you may be outside your comfort zone with some of those genres. *That's part of the point.*

Professional writers must be adept at reading and communicating across genres, and one can cultivate that ability only by practicing it. Therefore, "I don't understand poetry" and "I don't know much about plot structure", etc., are irrelevant and counterproductive comments. *I expect no one to use these excuses/apologies in the course.* I mean that whole-heartedly and will call you out on it if you try it.

We are all intelligent readers capable of making useful comments based on our reading experiences. I *do* expect all members of the course to commit full attention to the work of their peers and to engage themselves fully in honest and thoughtful commentary.

What does that mean specifically? In the past I have simply asked everyone to interpret "commit full attention to the work of their peers" as best they could, but that seems to have resulted in some laziness in responding to peer work. So this semester I am going to ask for specific word counts in your responses. If you do not meet the word counts in a thoughtful way and *on time*, your grade will suffer. Sorry to be that way, but I have to have a way to differentiate between those who apply themselves and those who don't. Consider the fact, also, that meeting the minimum word count does not constitute in and of itself full engagement in honest and thoughtful commentary.

As ever, I expect all responses to be considerate, thoughtful, engaged with the text, and brilliant.

## **Requirements**

I. Submit **new** writing (that is, do not recycle old material) by the deadlines and in the amounts indicated in the Assignments section.

II. Respond to peer writing by the deadlines in the **Assignments** section.

III. Log in to the course on a regular enough basis to keep engaged in the flow of discussion and to keep aware of any course-related news, information, and changes. Please see the **Evaluation** section. *Please note: some students have been disappointed by grades in OMGW's resulting from lack of attention to this requirement.*

IV. From time to time, respond to spontaneous discussion questions or surveys posted by the instructor, who will indicate clearly in the post whether or not everyone is expected to respond.

## **Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will become adept at analyzing and commenting on the work of peers.
2. Students will increase their expertise at recognizing and using essential elements of a variety of genres.
3. Students will gain insight into the process of finishing a book-length thesis project.
4. Students will complete substantial creative writing.
5. Students will learn to receive constructive criticism and incorporate it into their revisions.
6. Students will gain experience contributing to the production of an online literary journal.

## **Assignments**

### **(Pre-semester assignment: read ALL of this syllabus!)**

I. **No later than noon on Wednesday, September 7**, post in the same document 1) a draft of your thesis proposal or an exploratory essay of at least 1000 words on the topic of what you might do with your thesis project and 2) a draft of your Abstract (if you aren't sure exactly what your thesis project is going to be yet, then write a hypothetical Abstract just for practice). The Abstract should be a paragraph or two objectively describing your project—it is not jacket copy, and it is not a summary or synopsis, and it should not use first person.

Consult the Thesis Advising Guide on the website for thesis proposal expectations.

If you are a Thesis student this semester, the purpose of this assignment is obvious. If you are not a Thesis student this semester, there may be some value in drafting your proposal now—it may give you some perspective and make some things clear that hadn't occurred to you yet. If you feel you are not yet ready for a draft of your proposal, then the exploratory essay may achieve the same purpose for you.

Post this assignment in your "**September 7**" work group as assigned below in **Group Schedules**.

II. **No later than noon on Wednesday, September 21**, respond to the other proposals/essays in your work group. In responding to proposals, we are looking here for formatting, grammatical, bibliographical errors or errors of logic/sense that might trip up your peers in the Thesis Committee review process; but also take a deeper look at the structure of the project, possible pitfalls in the project as described, etc. In responding to essays, respond with critical support (and by that I mean that you should respond with an eye toward helping the author with his/her thinking on their possible direction for the thesis project).

All responses should be at least 300 words.

III. **No later than noon on Wednesday, September 28**, post a substantial selection of *new* work (10 pages for poets, 20 pages for everyone else) to your "**September 28**" peer group as

assigned below in **Group Schedules**. Include in your post a list of issues that you would like to see addressed in responses from your peer group. For example: "I am concerned that the central conflict is not clear," or "What do you think of the way I've broken the lines," or "Is the invisible Rolls Royce I've put in the story credible in a realistic narrative about contemporary Cuba?"

I define "new" work as anything written since the end of the Spring semester, but I hope you will post work produced within the last couple of weeks. You may post work in **any** genre.

**IV. No later than noon on Wednesday, October 12** [and preferably earlier to give the authors a chance to use your feedback well before their revision due date], provide a response to each of the members of your group, keeping in mind my comments in the Introduction about responses. Responses here should be at least 300 words and should make a point of responding to each author's questions about their own work. NOTE: IT IS EXPECTED THAT YOU WILL NOT *MERELY* RESPOND TO THOSE QUESTIONS.

**V. No later than noon on Wednesday, October 26**, post to your **September 28** peer group EITHER a revision that substantially incorporates the suggestions or comments you received from your group OR a paper of 500 words explaining why you choose not to take heed of those comments. By "substantially incorporates" I mean *revisions that plainly and clearly have changed the way the piece or some significant part of the piece is written*--I do NOT mean line edits. If you did not receive comments for any substantial revisions, then take it upon yourself to explore the piece from a different angle in a new draft—for example: shifting from first person to third person; shifting from past tense to present progressive; shifting to another character's perspective; rewriting poems in received forms rather than in free verse.

**VII. No later than noon Wednesday, November 9** (but as early as you like), post to the **Reader's Choice** thread a paper of 750-1250 words that:

- a) analyzes the strengths and/or weaknesses of a craft or theory book's argument
- b) discusses whether the book's approach will be useful to you in thinking about your approach to your thesis project. Is there anything found there that you can specifically apply *now*?
- c) explains why, in your opinion, the book might or might not be useful to your peers in this OMGW

Obviously, not everyone will be reading the same book for this assignment, so our discussion will revolve primarily around (a) and (c), but (b) is perhaps most important to each of you individually. *After you have posted your response papers, I will have follow up questions with which I will expect everyone to engage.*

You are expected to use a book that you have not read before. You may read one of the following or you may **CONTACT THE INSTRUCTOR** to request approval to use another book:

- Stanley Fish, *How to Write a Sentence*: 978-0061840548, \$20
- Marion Roach Smith, *The Memoir Project*: 978-0446584845, \$12
- John Gardner, *On Moral Fiction*: 978-0465052264, \$18.50
- Dean Young, *The Art of Recklessness*: 978-1555975623, \$12 [for poets]
- Tracy Kidder and Richard Todd, *Good Prose: The Art of Nonfiction*. 978-1400069750, \$26 (but available at time of syllabus composition for \$15.50 on Amazon)
- Richard Walter, *Essentials of Screenwriting*. 978-0452296275, \$17.

**VIII. No later than noon on Wednesday, November 16** all *non-thesis* students will post to the "**November 16**" peer group a substantial selection of work (about 10 pages for poets or 10-20 pages for prose writers) of work in your thesis genre (preferably work that will be in your thesis

project) *that have never been posted to any OMG workshop*. Include in your post a list of issues that you would like to see addressed in responses from your peer group.

Thesis students are exempt from this assignment.

**IX. No later than noon on Wednesday, November 30**, read the work of each of the people in your **November 16** work group and compose a response of at least 300 words to each of them. Be sure to address the questions left by the author of each piece.

Thesis students are exempt from this assignment.

### **X. Flex Assignment**

Each student will speak with the editor of *Poor Yorick*, Carolyn Bernier, and find a way to contribute to the journal during the semester. Possible ways to contribute include server as a reader for submissions, writing an accompanying piece to one of the creative pieces accepted for publication, writing one or more blog pieces, and/or serving as a staff member in some other capacity.

**No later than Wednesday, December 7** (but as early as you like), each student will post to the Flex thread a brief summary of the work that they did for PY during the semester.

### **Evaluation**

50% Assignments submitted on time as instructed

25% Regular, engaged contributions to the discussion board (in response to instructor discussion questions, in response to comments/questions posts by your peers, and *above and beyond the minimum number of posts required in the Assignments*)

25% Demonstrated effort and striving for quality writing, editing, and revision in all assignments

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the representation of another person's work as your own. Plagiarism in the MFA program is punishable by course failure and dismissal from the program. For more information, please see university policies and procedures for Academic Honesty.

### **Accommodations**

Any student needing accommodations for any reason to complete this course should contact Accessibility Services.

### **Group Schedules**

**Sept. 7**

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**Group 1**

**Bernier, Chase, D'Andrea, Dabrowski**

**Group 2**

**Macfadden, Manzillo, Myers, O'Donnell, Siebert**

**Sept. 28**

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**Group 3**

**Bernier, Macfadden, Chase, Manzillo**

**Group 4**

**D'Andrea, Myers, Siebert, Dabrowski, O'Donnell**

**Nov. 16**

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**Group 5**

**Dabrowski, Macfadden, Chase, Myers**

**Group 6**

**Bernier, Manzillo, D'Andrea, Siebert**