

Mr. Francis
Writers Workshop

Course Description

The river is within us, the sea is all about us;
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
Its hints of earlier and other creation
--from T. S. Eliot's "The Dry Salvages"

This course is designed to make students aware of the wide-variety of techniques used by fiction writers and to guide students in practicing those techniques in their own fiction. Students will build an awareness of fiction writing conventions while developing their understanding of voice.

Students will discuss the effectiveness of a variety of pieces of fiction, will consider the theory of fiction writing, will produce original short fiction, and will devote effort to editing the short fiction of classmates. Assigned readings will be for the purpose of identifying writing techniques, discussing fiction writing theory, evaluating the choices that fiction writers make, and building a community of writers.

All drafts must be original fiction produced specifically for our class. I have a **zero indifference policy** regarding plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct and regarding cutting or other violations of Stuyvesant and/or DOE policies.

Attendance: Since class participation and demonstrable mastery of the material are criteria for assessing performance, attendance is critical. Students are expected to be in class every day. If you know that you will be absent ahead of time, please notify me as soon as possible. Students will not be excused from class for oversleeping or taking a long lunch, to study for other courses, to complete assignments, or to prepare for standardized exams. Students must solicit permission in advance to miss for extracurricular activities.

You must manage your own academic, extracurricular, and personal pursuits. When you are absent, it is your responsibility to copy class notes, to acquire missed assignments, and to catch up on the material in a timely manner. Unexcused absences will be considered cuts and will affect your final grade for class work. Students who violate the school's cutting policy will earn serious grade penalties.

Final grade: Class work 20%, Assignments 80%

Class Work

Discussion (approx. 10%): Contributions to discussion should reflect first-hand knowledge of the texts being considered, a solid understanding of the course material, and an awareness of the contributions of other class members. In order to receive full credit for class participation, you should participate about once per class period. A student will not receive a final grade above 88 if he or she never contributes to discussion.

- extemporaneous contributions to discussion
- reading from classroom writing activities
- asking appropriate questions

Engagement (approx. 10%): Students must obtain and maintain a notebook devoted to this class and a folder devoted to storing handouts and protecting returned assignments. You are expected to participate actively in all classroom discussions and activities. Do not make a habit of visiting the rest room with excessive regularity.

- active listening and note-taking
- writing activities and small group discussions
- reading aloud and general helpfulness

The following expectations may also affect the grades a student earns for discussion or engagement.

1. Preparedness: Habitual lateness will affect your final grade. You are expected to be ready to begin class when the bell rings: this includes having your materials in class and being prepared to discuss the homework for the previous night. You must bring your notebook and any assigned readings to class, and students will be forgiven for forgetting the text only once per marking period. Do not make a habit of asking to return to other classrooms, your locker, etc.

- being punctual
- bringing assigned texts and other materials
- bringing rough drafts for peer editing
- returning books

2. Workshops: Students will participate in workshop groups with the purpose of providing feedback to classmates regarding their writing samples.

3. Class tone: There will also be an informal "community score" for the overall tone of the class. Students are expected to encourage each other to engage in appropriate academic behavior.

Assignments

Writing Assignments: Specific details for each writing assignment will be provided on the class Web-site as the semester progresses. These assignments include false starts, synopses, pitches, fragments, final drafts, and any other writing uploaded to turnitin.com

- Students can only receive credit for written assignments uploaded to turnitin.com in a timely manner.
- Submitting a document to turnitin.com will be construed as a student asserting that he or she understands the school's academic honesty policy.
- Please confirm that your documents have been added to your portfolio.

Most weeks, students will be expected to submit a writing sample to turnitin.com. Samples may be assessed pass/fail based on how adequately and appropriately they address the prompt. Each marking period, students will be expected to revise and expand their work into a major fiction fragment. Major writing assignments will be assessed according to the SHS English Department grading rubric.

The final project for this class will be to revise and expand one major fragment.

Extensions may be granted under extenuating circumstances, but must be negotiated in advance. If necessary, students are encouraged to make appointments with me during free periods to discuss writing assignments or writing practices.

If you will be absent when an assignment is due, you still must submit it electronically to turnitin.com by 7:59 a.m. to avoid lateness. Failure to submit an assignment in a timely manner will also result in a zero for that assignment.

Any excuses intended to circumvent my expectations will be ignored. Students found to be engaging in any form of academic misconduct will receive a zero for the assignment.

Projects: Projects may include group assignments or oral presentations. Specific details for any projects will be provided on the class Web-site.