Creative Narratives (LAS 6938/LAS 4935)
Fall 2024 ǀ Class No. 26690/28900 ǀ Sec. LF08/LF00
Center for Latin American Studies ǀ University of Florida

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CLASS SESSIONS: Rogers Hall 376, Monday 4:05 pm – 7:05 pm
OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 9:00 am – 1:00pm and Tuesdays 11:30 am – 1:30 pm. You can email me to arrange a more convenient time to meet, either via zoom or in person.

OBJECTIVES: This course has been designed for graduate and undergraduate students from any discipline—humanities, natural sciences, social sciences—and at all stages of their undergraduate or graduate program. It is creative writing workshop specifically crafted for students whose academic and creative interests, and/or personal and cultural background, are in Latin America, Africa, and in other non-hegemonic communities. As such, students are encouraged to write in their language of preference, with an emphasis on English, Spanish, Portuguese, and any combination of these three. Throughout the course, we will work on individual projects (such as capstone projects, dissertation, novels, et cetera) while discussing and practicing several creative writing techniques useful for academic writing, fictional writing, and non-fictional non-academic writing. At the conclusion of this course you will be able to:

1. Identify and reflect on your locus of enunciation.
2. Recognize the pros and cons of writing for a particular audience in mind.
3. Find your several voices and styles and the best time to use them.
4. Ponder the impact and importance of adding feelings and sensations to your writing.
5. Manage the effects of using different tones and points of view in your writing.
6. Articulate narrative structures and thread your narratives with a variety of connectors.
7. Analyze the best possible beginnings and endings for your writings.
8. Exercise the use of archetypes and reader’s preconceptions.
9. Advance in your close-reading analytical skills.
10. Develop a deeper understanding of the aesthetic and discursive principles of any narrative.
11. Explore Latin American and other non-hegemonic cultures through literature.
12. Improve your writing skills.
13. Have a final draft of your personal writing project.
**COURSE FORMAT:** All sessions, unless stated otherwise, will be divided into three sections. The first section will be dedicated to whole-class discussion of the assigned readings; the second will be devoted to practicing the techniques learnt through those readings and, finally, the third will consist in analyzing and commenting the writing exercises. Every week students must write a 1000 word (or more) journal entry on a notebook specifically dedicated to this matter.

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

**COURSE MATERIALS:** There are no required textbooks for this course. Nevertheless, it is strongly advised that the student, based on their own research interests, will get a print copy of at least some of the books listed in the bibliography. Most readings will be provided on the course Canvas page. Films will not be screened during class time.

Finally, a traditional, old-fashioned notebook is required for keeping your journal and writing exercises.

**ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION**

- Participation: 10%
- In-class exercises: 20%
- Journal: 20%
- Midterm workshop: 10%
- Final workshop: 15%
- Final project: 25%

Guidelines and rubrics for each one of the above-mentioned items will be provided on the course Canvas page.

**Evaluation:** Final grades will be assigned on the following scale (based on percentage points out of the total): **A:** >93% **A-:** 92-90% **B+:** 89-87% **B:** 86-83% **B-:** 82-80% **C+:** 79-77% **C:** 76-73% **C-:** 72-70% **D+:** 69-67% **D:** 66-63% **D-:** 62-60% **E:** 59% and below.

**Attendance and Make-Up Work:** Because this is a discussion-based seminar plus a writing workshop, students’ attendance and active participation is required for the course’s functioning and the mutual enrichment of all its participants. Requirements for class attendance and coursework are consistent with university policies found at: [https://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/graduate/regulations/#text](https://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/graduate/regulations/#text). Assignments will be subject to the following reduction of points if turned in late: within 24 hours of the posted date and time, the assignment will be docked 25% of the total possible points; 24-48 hours late will result in 50% loss of total possible points. Assignments will not be accepted beyond 48 hours past the due date. Let me know as soon as possible if you need to miss an assignment due date for any reason (e.g., conference, illness, family emergency).

**UF ACADEMIC POLICIES & SUPPORT SERVICES**

- **Academic Honesty:** As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.” You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see: [https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/](https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/).
• **Services for Students Requiring Accommodations:** The Disability Resource Center (0001 Reid Hall, 352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. *I want you to do well in this class and will gladly work with you to implement any necessary accommodations.*

• **Course Evaluation:** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via www.uflbluera.com/ufl/.

• **Student Privacy:** There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see the Notification to Students of FERPA Rights.

• **Campus Helping Resources:** Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university’s counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

• **Food Insecurity.** The Pantry is a resource on the University of Florida campus committed to eradicate food insecurity ([https://pantry.fieldandfork.ufl.edu/](https://pantry.fieldandfork.ufl.edu/)). Food insecurity is not having a reliable access to nutritious foods for yourself on a regular basis. If you, or anyone you know is experiencing food insecurity, the Pantry is a resource to visit.

• **Software Use:** All faculty, staff, and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

• **Sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated in this course:** UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment: [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041)

• **Gender Equity Statement.** Gender-based discrimination and violence are antithetical to the university’s mission and values, violate university policies, and may also violate federal and state law. The Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity is here for anyone who has been affected by gender-based discrimination and violence. If you or someone you know has experienced gender-based discrimination or violence, please contact the Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity to get support and information about your rights and reporting options. You can learn more about university protections, supportive resources, response processes, and prevention efforts by visiting [www.titleix.ufl.edu](http://www.titleix.ufl.edu) The University Title IX Coordinator is located in the Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity and is responsible for providing support to anyone affected by gender-based discrimination or violence. If you would like to report gender-based discrimination or violence affecting our community, please contact Russell Froman, Assistant Vice President for Accessibility and Gender Equity and ADA and Title IX Coordinator at (352) 273-1094, or by e-mail at rfroman@ufl.edu. You can also submit a report using the online portal: [https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofFlorida&layout_id=20](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofFlorida&layout_id=20)

• **Video or Audio Recording of Class Lectures.** Students may record video or audio of class lectures for their own personal educational use, in connection with a complaint to the University, or as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation delivered by faculty (including any individual hired or appointed by the University to conduct classroom, teaching activities) or guest lecturer, as part of a University of Florida course, intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the faculty or guest. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered to be published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, or leaflet. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by
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the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

• **U Matter, We Care:** If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

• **University Counseling & Wellness Center:** 3190 Radio Road, (352) 392-1575, www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/ (Counseling Services, Self-Help Library, Groups and Workshops, Training Programs, Outreach and Consultation, Community Provider Database).

• **Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS):** Student Health Care Center, (352) 392-1161.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

• **E-learning technical support:** (352) 392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu.

• **Career Resource Center:** Reitz Union, (352) 392-1601. www.crc.ufl.edu/. Career assistance and counseling.

• **Library Support:** [https://uflib.ufl.edu/find/ask/](https://uflib.ufl.edu/find/ask/) Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

• **Teaching Center:** Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. [https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/](https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/) General study skills and tutoring.

• **Writing Studio:** 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. [https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/](https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/) Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
WEIGHTLY TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Subject to change based on the research interests and individual writing projects of students enrolled in the course and the availability of invited speakers

General note on the readings: This is not a theoretical course. We won’t be analyzing the texts in the bibliography as is usually done in the social sciences and the humanities. Instead, the purpose of the readings is to exemplify a wide range of writing techniques. So, once you understand how an author is using a particular technique, you may want to keep reading and finish the book right away or finish it later. It’s up to you.

In some weeks, you will choose among different readings (because the authors use similar techniques), and in some other weeks you may also find “optional” readings. But, the important goal in this course is to write—and therefore we will spend more class time writing than discussing what an author was trying to say or the cultural implications of a text.

Week 1: The basics. Or how to write a whole book—at least in your mind—in two hours.

1. Let’s start with the foundations: a general introduction, the rules and dynamics of the class, and how do we make sense of/in fiction and non-fiction. In short: how can we have a complete new book in our minds in two hours.
2. In-class activity: How to write a book in two hours.
3. General discussion on final projects.
4. Homework: Start writing your journal and final project!
5. Suggestion: Also start reading the long/not-that-long books: Pedro Páramo, Freedom Papers, etc.

Objective: Agree on the general procedures for this course and identify the main, simple aspects of any narrative.

Week 2: No class.

Week 3: Don’t kill the messenger: Locus of enunciation.

1. A message’s meaning changes when said by a different actor. We all know that and have experienced it first hand in our everyday lives. But which is our locus of enunciation or how are we perceived by others. We’ll find out in this session.
3. In-class exercise: The others’ gaze.
4. In-class exercise: First workshop on general projects.
5. Complementary optional readings:

Objective: Analyze the pros and cons of our own locus of enunciation.
Week 4: Playing with your reader’s mind: Writing for whom?

1. The messenger matters. But also the receiver. Private codes in fiction and non-fiction, between messenger and receiver, alter the whole meaning of a texts. In this session we are going to talk about “points of view” or how to play with your reader’s mind: grammatical voices, metaliterature, and the beloved “bibliography” section of your papers. Readings:
   e. Optional:
      i. Watch *Catching Feelings*. On Netflix.

2. In-class exercise: Cliffhangers and the esoteric discourse of self in other grammatical persons.

   **Objective:** Identify readers’ baggage potential and variety, and the impact of cliffhangers and grammatical voices.

Week 5: Finding your “own” voice: Auto-fiction or dancing with myself.

1. It doesn’t matter if you are writing a political speech, a paper on quantum electro-dynamics, your master’s dissertation or a poem, if your reader doesn’t believe in your words you’re lost. So, let’s use your “own” voice to convey verosimilitude, and test how cutting reality and adding “reality” to fiction and non-fiction improves any text.

2. Select one of these readings:

3. In-class exercise: Time and point of view, the “accident” drill.

   **Objective:** Analyze the pros and cons of selecting a particular (or many) point of view for your narrative.
Week 6: Appropriation and dis-appropriation, or giving voice to someone that you (used to) know.

1. In democracy, numbers count. They also count in literature. Adding more “direct” voices/testimonies/opinions to your text may improve its verosimilitude. Readings:
   
   
   
   
   d. And select one of these:
      
      
      
   

2. In-class exercise: Copy and paste scavenger’s writing.

   **Objective:** Apply the use of archives, testimonies, and other documents in your narrative to convey a deeper sense of “reality.”

Week 7: Indirect voices: Giving voices a (real?) voice.

1. We all have an own internal rhythm of speech. When writing, either fiction or non-fiction, we need to simulate the internal rhythm of other voices. We'll learn how to do that in this session. Readings:


2. Optional readings:


3. In-class exercise on dialogues: What on earth do you think you’re doing?

4. **Deadline:** in-class agreement on how are we going to proceed for the midterm workshop (who will peer-review who, when are you going to submit your drafts, et cetera).

   **Objective:** Learn how to mimic oral discourses in written texts.

Week 8: Midterm Workshop.

Week 9: Catching feelings.

1. Writing is not only about reason, and reason is only one of the many brain activities we call “thinking.” If we could express everything with logical reason, we would only need to write mathematical equations. So, here is how feelings can be intertwined in your writing of fiction and non-fiction, and how this inclusion of feelings changes your reader’s reading. Texts:


d. Optional: Watch Moana. (Yes, that movie).

2. In-class exercise: Abstracts and magical realism, or “it is scientifically proven that imitating García Márquez will always…”

Objective: Identify when and how to produce emotional reactions in your readers.

Week 10: Structures and threading I.

1. As with clothing or houses, texts have to be structured and connected. Let’s start with the “simple” logical structures: the second chapter, cliffhangers, ABC, asking one question, asking two questions, flashbacks, flashforwards, et cetera. Readings:

2. In-class exercises:
   a. Thinking back.
   b. Thinking ahead.

Objective: Ponder the advantages (and disadvantages) of simple narrative structures.

Week 11: Structures and threading II.

1. And then let’s continue with the “not-that-simple” sensorial/sentimental structures: valencies and tension, connecting and elevator words, five senses, meta-connectors, the reasons for “useless fillers or fluff”, et cetera.
   1. In Spanish: https://ciudadseva.com/texto/la-noche-boca-arriba/

2. In-class exercises:
   a. Voices of Chernobyl.
   b. Elevator words.

Objective: Analyze the effect of intentionally confusing your reader.

Week 12: No class.

Week 13: Characters and Archetypes in fiction and non-fiction.

1. Finally, all texts need characters. An electron is a well-defined character in nuclear physics. Also, all your theoretical terms in the social sciences can be thought as characters. In this session we are going to work in building fictional characters, translating “real” characters, and using “box” characters and archetypes. Readings (all of them easily available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese):
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Optional:

- Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet.* (And/or see the homonym movie by Baz Luhrmann, with Leonardo DiCaprio).
- In English or Spanish: Molina, Tirso de. *El Burlador de Sevilla.* (Online at UF Libraries).

2. In-class exercises:

- How to build a complex character.
- Using flat characters and caricatures in fiction and non-fiction or “Latin America and your favorite politician as characters.”

**Objective:** Use complex, cliché, archetypical, and flat characters.

Week 14: Final workshop.

Deadline for final projects and submission of journals.

Optional modules:

- **Tell me how it ends: endings and beginnings.**
  - How to predict all endings and when to (re)write your beginning: the main difference between fiction and academic writing in the USA. Readings: Carlos Fuentes, *Aura;* J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye;* and any academic book from the social sciences and/or the humanities you want.

- **Finding the right tone.**
  - Tone changes everything. And sense of humor is not universal. Readings: Kathryn Seymour, *Bad Environmentalism* (non-fiction); José Emilio Pacheco, *Las batallas en el desierto;* Pepetela, *Yaka.*

- **The question of beauty and rhythm.**
  - Literature is also about beauty and music. And also any academic text *sounds* better if some music and beauty is added to it. Readings: Derek Walcott, *Omeros;* James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake;* Mayra Santos-Febres, *Sirena selena vestida de pena.*

- **Graphic novels.**
  - This genre has rules of its own. So, we would have a guest speaker.

- **Children’s literature.**
  - Same here: we would have a guest speaker too.

- **Jungles and gardens: The “Latino” essay vs the “Anglo” essay.**
  - Long vs short phrases, the world in a paragraph vs one idea per paragraph, suggesting vs stating, the DJ sampler vs the engineer. Readings: Antonio Gramsci, *History of the Subaltern Classes;* Octavio Paz, *Hygiene and Repression;* Terry Eagleton, *Ideology.*

- **Dropping clues and the other story.**
  - We all write two stories at the same time. It doesn’t matter if we are writing an academic essay or a short story, two stories are always present: one is obvious (the driver) and the other is in the shadows waiting to shine at the end (the meaningful one). Analyzing how to make that second story shine is the goal of this module. Any of the texts in this syllabus will serve for the purpose. Actually, any published text: from movies to advertising.
Writing strategies.
- For this module each student will interview 3-5 writers and/or scholars about their writing procedures and strategies.

Symbols and elements.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Hartman, Saidiya. *Loose your mother: A journey along the Atlantic slave route*.


