

Graduate Fiction Workshop

M. Evelina Galang, 309 Ashe Building, 284.5573, mgalang@mail.as.miami.edu
Conferences: by appointment

Required Texts: TELLING TALES, Edited by Nadine Gordimer,
Supplemental Text: BING CROSBY'S LAST SONG, by Lester Goran, ELECTRA, adaptation by Jennifer Vellenga, EL SALVADOR (a play adapted for film) by Rafael Lima.

Course Description: This workshop will look at the construction of effective first chapters, stories and opening sequences. In addition to workshopping student works, we will ground our discussions in the text of novels and story collections. This seminar will encourage writers to explore the possibilities of effective beginnings through reading published and peer narratives; writing creative and critical text; workshopping their own stories/chapters; and mimicking published works.

Policies, Procedures:

Attendance: Regular attendance is essential. I encourage you to attend all workshops, knowing that sometimes things come up. Our community grows from your insight, so please attend.

Workshops: It is best to think of this seminar as a work studio for your MFA thesis. Workshop pieces you have honed and refined to the point of completion. Let us read material you want feedback on, pieces where you are looking for solutions, or pieces that are (in your perception) ready for publication. We are your test readers, your new sets of eyes. If you are drafting new works, let us see the second or third drafts. I encourage you to challenge yourselves and each other, to take risks in your writing.

You'll have the opportunity to workshop at least two major pieces. There may be space and time for a third workshop. Our mission as readers is to help the author fulfill his or her intentions. Focus your criteria on substance and how it is reflected in the craft. Consider our discussions from *The Shape and Substance of the Book* and read/respond to peer works with great care. Please write letters of response to the authors and make two copies of each letter one for the author and one for myself.

Portfolios: Revise those pieces you have workshopped for your final portfolio. You may also include your etudes, letting them stand alone or integrating them into a larger body of work. Include the original drafts I have marked with your revisions and a short reflection/contemplation regarding your work as a writer.

Craft Discussions: Choose something you are interested in knowing more about, something that challenges you or something you are really good at. Your mission is to provide us (and yourself) with a new way to consider this element of craft and how it might better serve our fiction. You may assign your peers (and myself) reading material or a writing etude prior to your discussion.

5 Etudes: We'll be reading short stories from Nadine Gordimer's anthology, TELLING TALES and looking at different elements of style and technique. From these stories and our discussions you will be asked to concentrate and employ these elements into your fiction through literary etudes.

One encyclopedia definition of the etude (from the French word *étude* meaning "study") says that the etude is a short musical composition designed to provide practice in a particular technical skill in the performance of a solo instrument. So well crafted are these musical etudes that they often transcend their practical function and have come to be appreciated for the music, for their artistry. Artists creating large works might zoom into a mural and draw several sketches to practice getting the essence and the detail of a figure perfected in order to later incorporate that figure into the mural.

We are going to create five literary etudes that you may extract from your own larger works or create for insertion into your larger works.

Guest Artists: We've invited four artists of diverse genres to visit our seminar and share their work and their creative process. You'll find bios for our guests attached. Your mission is to open up to their process and see what revelations you may have for your own creative process.

SYLLABUS

Week One: January 19

Introduction to class.

For next class, please read Rushdie's "The Firebird's Nest" in TELLING TALES.

Week Two: January 26

Workshop Cruz and Tkac.

Assign Etude #1

Week Three: February 2

PROCESS: Be ready to share your creative process with our seminar. Please bring in a sample of your best and worst work. What works best for you, what are your challenges? What advice can you give each other? When and how are you most productive? In upcoming classes, our guest artists will address these same questions about their process. In today's course, let's explore our own process in order to determine how to best hear their conversations.

For next class, please read "Warm Dogs" by Paul Theroux in TT pg. 175

Week Four: February 9

Workshop

Assign Etude #2

Week Five: February 16

Craft Discussion with _____.

Guest Artist Conversation with Jennifer Vellenga and her upcoming production of ELECTRA. Jennifer has written a contemporary adaptation of ELECTRA and is currently directing the production. You are invited to visit one of her rehearsals. You are also encouraged to attend one of the performances February 14, 16, 18, 22 and 24 at 8PM, Ring Theater.

For next class read "Sugar Baby" by Chinua Achebe.

Week Six: February 23

Workshop

Assign Etude #3

Week Seven: March 2

Craft Discussion with _____.

Guest Artist filmmaker Konstantina Kontaxis. About her work, she says, "I have films that I refer to as subjective documentaries. I use no scripts for these (or if I do, I use the script for production then throw it out during the editing). My "writing process" takes place during editing at which point I construct the "narrative" of the film from notes not a script." During this hour, we'll be screening her film and talking with her about process.

For next class, please read "Death by Constant Love" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Assign Etude #4.

Week Eight: March 9

AWP. We will not hold a formal class this day. Please make an appointment with me for a one-on-one story/chapter meeting regarding your work prior to Wednesday March 7.

Week Nine: March 16

SPRING BREAK

Week Ten: March 23

Craft Discussion with _____.

Guest Artist Lester Goran will be talking about his creative process and the book, BING CROSBY'S LAST SONG. I have ordered copies and they should be available for you to purchase at the UM Bookstore.

For next class, please read Nadine Gordimer's "The Ultimate Safari."

Week Eleven: March 30
Workshop
Assign Etude #5

Week Twelve: April 6
Craft Discussion with _____.
Guest Artist Rafael Lima will be talking about the process of adapting his award winning play, EL SALVADOR for film production. We will provide you with copies of his play.

Week Thirteen: April 13
Workshop

Week Fourteen: April 20
Workshop

Week Fifteen: April 27
Final Portfolios are due.
Mystery Guest Artist and You!

Guest Artist Bios

Lester Goran is a professor of English at the University of Miami. His publications include TALES FROM THE IRISH CLUB: A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES, THE BRIGHT STREETS OF SURFSIDE: THE MEMOIR OF A FRIENDSHIP WITH ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER, OUTLAWS OF THE PURPLE COW AND OTHER STORIES, and nine novels, including MRS. BEAUTIFUL, THE DEMON IN THE SUN PARLOR, and THE KEEPER OF SECRETS.

Over the last few years **Konstantina Kontaxis'** films have explored the intersection of art and moving image, tracing the profiles of artists and places, as they combine elements of memory, biography and history. In 2003 she was commissioned by Miami Dade County Art in Public Places to produce a subjective documentary on the creation of six works of public art and their integration to the new Miami Performing Arts Center.

For her work she has received the Golden Sheaf Award for Best International Drama at the 2000 Yorkton Short Film Festival and honors at the 2001 Moondance, and 1998 Cleveland Film Festivals. Her documentary on painter Maria Sevastaki premiered in competition at the inaugural 2002 Tribeca film Festival in NYC.

Currently Kontaxis is at work on a series of three films documenting objectives, ideas and practice in representation of nature in public art; a collaboration with artists Barbara Neijna, Brad Goldberg and Norie Sato and their respective installations for the Miami International Airport.

Based on his experience as a reporter for CNN, **Rafael Lima's** first play, El Salvador, was developed and staged at the Circle Repertory Theater in New York and was later translated, published, and produced in seven languages. For his efforts, Mr. Lima was awarded a grant by the Rockefeller Foundation. He has also written for several television series including China Beach and Wiseguy, and has just completed two screenplays commissioned by HBO: Calle Ocho and Arturo. In addition to developing new screenplays, Professor Lima has written two documentaries for PBS, and has recently written and directed an independent documentary, "Presidio - The Trip Back.

Jennifer Vellenga teaches beginning through advanced acting in the conservatory and liberal arts programs, as well as voice & speech in the liberal arts program. She has been working in theatre professionally for nineteen years. She has served as an assistant director to Mark Lamos at both The Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis and the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego. She has directed at the Monomoy Theatre on Cape Cod and has directed many new plays including Charles Smith's premier reading of Pudd'nhead Wilson and Knock Me a Kiss, as well as fully produced productions of Stephen Svoboda's plays Fore and Sleepwalker. As a member of Actors' Equity Association, she has performed as an actor and singer in New York, Chicago and as far away as China and Croatia. Jennifer performed in Ed Gracyk's 20th anniversary production of his award winning play Come Back to the Five and Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean. She has taught acting and voice workshops in New York, New Jersey, Chicago, Columbus, and Miami. Jennifer has a BFA from the University of Miami and holds an MFA in Directing from Ohio University where she also taught acting, directing and voice and speech.

WORKSHOP SIGN-UP

Sign up for at least two story/chapter workshops and one etude workshop.

Week Two: January 26
Cruz and Tkac.

Week Four: February 9
1.
2.
3.

Week Six: February 23
1.
2.
3.

Week Eleven: March 30
1.
2.
3.

Week Thirteen: April 13
1.
2.
3.

Week Fourteen: April 20
1.
2.
3.

Craft Discussions

Week Five: February 16
1.
2.

Week Seven: March 2
1.
2.

Week Ten: March 23
1.
2.

Week Twelve: April 6
1.
2.