

**English 3903: Intermediate Fiction Writing**  
**T/Th 9:30-10:45**  
**Bowen 108**

**Professor:** Ms. Becky Hagenston (not Dr., not Mrs.)  
**Email:** bhagenston@english.msstate.edu  
(If you email me after 5pm, I will get back to you the following morning.)  
**Office:** Lee 2006  
**Office Hours:** 10-12 M, 1-2 TTh and by appointment  
**English Department Phone:** 325-3644 (to leave a message for me)

**Required Texts and Materials – (You will *not* be using electronic editions)**

*Method and Madness*, Alice LaPlante  
*Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives*, Brad Watson  
*A Visit From The Goon Squad*, Jennifer Egan  
*On Writing*, Stephen King  
Notebook for in-class writing  
Folder or large envelope for drafts of story  
Binder or accordion file for turning in portfolio  
Students will also be required to bring copies of their work to class.  
**Be sure to back up your work in more than one place. I will not accept “my computer crashed” excuses.**

This is a course for students who have taken EN 3303, Introduction to Creative Writing, enjoy reading and writing short fiction, and would like more experience with both. We will be reading contemporary fiction that illustrates the skills necessary to write successful short stories.

In this class, you will *not* be writing genre fiction (sci fi, fantasy, horror, romance, erotica, historical fiction, children’s stories, etc.) but about realistic characters in a contemporary setting.

**Very Important: You should have a strong grasp of sentence mechanics, tenses, dialogue format, and punctuation. Any work that has problems in these areas will not earn higher than a C, and work that has a lot of problems cannot earn higher than a D. I expect that if you are taking this class, you are already a strong writer.**

**Requirements:**

3 fiction exercises	15%	
typed critiques of student stories	15%	(If you miss more than 2 critiques, you cannot earn higher than a D for this portion of your grade.)
quizzes/homework	15%	
craft paper (1000+ words)	7.5%	
short-short story (500-1000 words)	10%	
story (3000+ words)	25%	
revision paper (1000+ words)	7.5%	
participation	5%	(Participation = you’ve done the reading, you have the assigned material with you, and you are prepared to discuss the material in a thoughtful and focused way.)
	100%	

Grading Scale:	90 – 100	A
	80-89	B
	70-79	C
	60-69	D
	Below 60	F

**I will not accept late work. Late = not turned in during class time.**

You are required to bring hard copies to class on days you are workshopping, so give yourself time to print these out. If you fail to bring your copies to class, this will count as an unexcused absence.

### **The Emergency Assignments**

I will not accept late writing assignments or critiques. You are allowed TWO emergency assignments, to be **posted on MyCourses before class**.

(You may email it to this address: [bhagenston@english.msstate.edu](mailto:bhagenston@english.msstate.edu) **only if MC isn't working.**)

If it doesn't attach, if I can't open it, if you misspell my name and it bounces back, if it doesn't go through—then it doesn't count. It's your responsibility to make sure that the attachment attaches.)

Use your emergency assignment option if you have a printer problem or other emergency. These assignments must be posted **before class**. No exceptions.

### **Quizzes**

There will occasionally be quizzes (announced and unannounced) at the beginning of class. If you are late, you may end up with a zero.

### **Participation**

We have the benefit of being a small class. The English Department works hard to keep creative writing sections small because learning writing skills requires personal attention and full responsibility by each and every student. This is an asset for you, and also a responsibility. Attendance is required. I expect you to bring the assigned reading to class, to be on time, and to be prepared to discuss the day's assignments.

If you miss a class, please contact me by email or come to my office hours and find out what you missed.

**Missing 6 classes or being late 12 times = an F in the class**

***\*If you miss a class, you are required to come to the following class prepared, even if I've assigned something not on the schedule. The schedule is subject to change.\****

If you are absent, please bring verification of your illness or excuse from class--doctor's receipt, death notice, etc--to the class meeting upon which you return.

You are allowed ONE unexcused absence. Absences will undoubtedly hurt your performance on quizzes, *which you can't make up for any reason, so please don't ask*. If you have some required event that will cause you to miss class, discuss this with me well in advance. If you are sick, please contact me via email asap and use the Emergency Assignment option to turn in any work that's due.

If you want to do well, don't miss class.

Attendance at one or more of the campus readings this semester is required.

### **Classroom Decorum**

Cell phones must be **TURNED OFF** (or on silent) and **NOT** kept on your desk **or on your lap**. Please do not read newspapers or out-of-class material. Do not text or keep a phone on your desk or in your lap. Texting/checking your phones in class is extremely rude and disruptive and = 1 unexcused absence.

### **Email Etiquette**

Please feel free to email me ([bhagenston@english.msstate.edu](mailto:bhagenston@english.msstate.edu)) if you have a question or need clarification on an assignment. All emails should begin with my name and conclude with your name.

I am happy to respond to any email that is both **necessary** (you need clarification on an assignment or to find out what you missed if you were absent) and **polite**.

### **Student Honor Code**

Mississippi State has an approved Honor Code that applies to all students. The code is as follows: "As a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do." Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Student will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. For additional information, please visit: <http://honorcode.msstate.edu/policy>.

### **Title IX**

MSU is committed to complying with Title IX, a federal law that prohibits discrimination, including violence and harassment, based on sex. This means that MSU's educational programs and activities must be free from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination, sexual violence and/or harassment by any member of the University community, you are encouraged to report

the conduct to MSU's Director of Title IX/EEO Programs at 325-8124 or by e-mail to [titleix@msstate.edu](mailto:titleix@msstate.edu). Additional resources are available at [www.msstate.edu/web/security](http://www.msstate.edu/web/security), or [students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/](http://students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/)

### **Support Services**

Students who need academic accommodations based on a disability should visit the Office of Student Support Services, 01 Montgomery Hall, call 662-325-3335, or visit the website at [www.sss.msstate.edu](http://www.sss.msstate.edu).

### **Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:**

Plagiarism of any kind constitutes grounds for failing the course and may result in further disciplinary action. It is academically dishonest, and often illegal, to present someone else's ideas or writing as your own. It is also academically dishonest to submit your own previously written work for a current assignment or to submit an assignment in more than one class without previous knowledge and permission of the instructors.

Cheating on any assignments or quizzes, helping someone cheat, or plagiarizing will result in an XF in the course.

### **The Writing Center**

There are several locations (President's Circle, Templeton Athletic Center, mobile sites) as well as online appointments. Please go to <http://www.writingcenter.msstate.edu/>.

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### **FORMAT FOR PAPERS:**

Times New Roman font

12 point font

One inch margins (You may have to change your margins.)

Double-space (**Please turn off extra spaces between paragraphs.**)

Most assignments will require a word count. (Word count does obviously not include your own name, date, etc.).

**You will lose points for papers that do not follow this format, and work that does not meet the minimum length requirement cannot earn higher than a C. I may ask you to post or email some assignments, so *always save electronic copies of each draft.***

## **English 3903: Intermediate Fiction Writing** **Tentative Schedule: Subject to change**

**Quizzes cannot be made up for any reason. Assignments and readings are due the day they appear on the schedule.**

- T 8/18 Introduction to the course and in-class writing  
Bring to class: *Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives*
- Th 8/20 Read: “Are You Mister Lonelee?” and “Terrible Argument”
- Please read actively. Look at how the author uses elements of craft (characterization, conflict, dialogue, etc.) to create a compelling story.**
- READ: LaPlante 257-267  
**Due: Dialogue assignment** (10 quiz/homework pts)
- T 8/25 Brad Watson visits our class!
- Read: “Vacuum,” “Water Dog God,” “Visitation,” and “Ordinary Monsters”—and more if you can! Take notes. What questions do you have?  
I expect each of you to have at least one question to ask Brad Watson.
- 3:30 Fowlkes Auditorium: Watson Reading, reception to follow
- Th 8/27 READ: LaPlante Chapter 1 (1-10) Chapter 2 (29-38) Underline things you find interesting.
- Due: (for discussion only—I won’t collect it. Fine to write in your notebook or type/print out): Exercise 1 or 2 on pp. 38-39.
- T 9/1 READ: “**Silver Water**” (21-27) and “**Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?**” (40-52)  
**Due:** Type up responses to 2 questions on p. 28 (at least 5 sentences each) (10 pts)
- READ: Chapter Ten: Crafting Characters (326-338)
- In class: Character Profile
- Th 9/3 Read: “**Sonny’s Blues**” by **James Baldwin** (290-312)  
Due: 1.5- 2 pages discussing which character (Sonny or the narrator) you sympathize with the most, and why. Use paragraphs! Counts as 15 pt quiz.
- T 9/8 Read: “**Brownies**” (163-178)  
Assignment TBA
- Read: 278-288  
DUE: Exercise 2 on p. 289-90  
Read: King: TBA

**Th 9/10**      **FICTION EXERCISE 1 DUE: Point of View Exercise: Exercise 1 on 206-207**  
Instead of writing about something that happened to you, write about something that happened to your character, or to someone you know. Use first and close third pov (not omniscient).

At least 300 words for each point of view. Everyone turns this in, and three people will bring copies to workshop. **Include word count at the top of the page.**

Workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

T 9/15      Read: Egan first four stories (to p. 83)

**Th 9/17**      **FICTION EXERCISE 2 DUE: Character Exercise: Exercise 3 on p. 340.**  
**400+ words**  
Workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

T 9/22      Read: Egan to end of chapter 8

**Th 9/24**      **FICTION EXERCISE 3 DUE: The First 3 Pages. Write the first 900+ words of what could be a 10-15 page story. Make sure you have clear characters, setting, conflict, dialogue. What is going to make the reader want to keep reading?**

Workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

T 9/29      Finish Goon Squad

**Th 10/1**      Flashback scene assignment: **Write a Flashback Scene (500+ words). Begin with a transition (“Three weeks ago,” “When Harold was fifteen,” etc.) This can connect with your first three pages, or it can be something new. First or Third Person pov. Counts as 15 point homework assignment.**

T 10/6      FALL BREAK

Part 2 of syllabus to follow