ENGLISH 4313/6313: Craft of Fiction
Professor: Becky Hagenston
MWF 11-11:50

“I don’t enjoy looking at these old pictures either, but it doesn’t hurt my reputation for people to think I’m a lover of fine arts.”

(cartoon by Flannery O’Connor)

Required Texts
The Best American Short Stories 2010, ed. Richard Russo
Mystery and Manners, Flannery O’Connor
The View from the Seventh Layer, Kevin Brockmeier (visiting fiction writer for spring 2011)

Course Goals and Objectives:
The central focus of this course is to encourage and support the writing, reading, and critiquing of fiction. You are expected to develop habits of responsible, constructive peer criticism, and to cultivate strenuous standards of self-criticism/analysis.

Student Responsibilities:
Write 20-30 pages of new fiction (2 or 3 short stories), read and discuss the required books and stories, read and discuss all student stories, and type end comments for each story. You will also be writing an essay on some aspect of craft.

This class is a workshop, the primary texts of which are student manuscripts. These manuscripts are to be handed out one week in advance and must be typed and double-spaced, 12 pt. font. No horror, sci-fi, romance, erotica, or fantasy genre fiction. If you have any questions, please ask me.

No stories that rely on love triangles or unwanted pregnancies; no stories about weddings unless you’re going to do something really original and interesting!

Workshops depend on polite and insightful criticism—without pettiness or condescension. I encourage you to mark up stories with editing suggestions and other comments. There is no final. There are no exams. Attendance at all readings is expected.

Grading: stories = 25%, revision and 3-5 page essay discussing revision = 25%, critiques = 25%, attendance/participation = 10%. Craft essay = 15%.