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Summer 2020
Cork, Ireland

English 6171
Graduate Fiction Writing
Various Days

English 6171 is a workshop course in fiction writing; it consists of six activities:

1. Writing stories -- 3 per student
2. Reading and discussing stories
3. Writing critiques of your classmates' stories
4. Annotating your classmates' manuscripts
5. Attending evening readings
6. Reading aloud your own work at least once

English 6171 is an advanced skills acquisition course. Its goal is to assist aspiring fiction writers to become better and more instinctive at their craft. To that end, close attention is given to the ways stories are made, to the structure and language that propel plots and make characters come alive. Students who are successful in the class will be those who can grasp the elusive and sometimes paradoxical principles of storytelling, who can analyze the works of others and apply the process of analysis to their own writing. Attendance, of course, is mandatory and essential for any successful student. Few 6171 students ever miss a class.

Grading in the course is holistic. Grades will not be given on individual stories or critiques. The final grade in the course represents the workshop leader's assessment of your overall performance in the course, your writing of stories and critiques, and your participation in class discussion. Do not worry about grades. Grades are required by the university, but true success in a writing workshop is measured in an individual writer's growth in his or her craft.

Stories, of course, are the original work of the author submitting them. No story, including its revision, may be workshopped more than once while a student is in the program. Each story will be of professional length, normally 8-20 double-spaced, type-written pages. Some students may want to submit selections from a novel. This is not advised, especially not for first-year students. Workshop does not work as well when submitted material is not complete. But students *may* submit novel passages limited to a maximum of 20 pages. Such passages, insofar as possible, should be able to stand alone. If you think you want to submit a novel selection, you must discuss the idea with me first.

Proper margins should be maintained so that stories may be marked. Each class member will be responsible for emailing his or her first **two** stories to me and to classmates by **Monday, May 25**. Third stories will be distributed in workshop on **Wednesday, July 1**. Class members will be responsible for bringing copies of their peers stories with them to Ireland. Each student will be responsible for duplicating his or her third story and distributing them on the above due date.

The workshop leader and each class member will return marked copies to the author after a story has been discussed. Every student will write a critique of each of his classmates' stories. Critiques are due at the beginning of the class meeting when a story is discussed. They should be a minimum of one double-spaced, typed page. Critiques may discuss a story in any way that the critic feels pertinent to the work. In general, though, a critique should proceed from the author's desired goals and assess the extent to which those goals are achieved. The purpose of every critique, in concert with the goal of class discussion, is to assist the author in making a story stronger and more successful; in short, the role of each critique is to help, not to judge. Because of printing issues in Cork, critiques may be distributed to the workshop leader and the author by email.

Those of you who are veterans will know this, but for those of you who don't, our time together in Cork will be intense. Because you will want to preserve your weekend days for excursions and individual travel, endeavor to get as much of your work as you possibly can done before leaving home.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Students will learn how effectively to analyze the elements of writing fiction and will exhibit their analytic skills in the writing of the required critiques, the annotation of their peers' manuscripts and their oral comments during workshop.
- 2) Students will learn to apply the fruits of their literary analytical skills to the drafting, revising and completion of their own stories.
- 3) Students will learn to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses as a fiction writer and thus will learn to utilize their strengths, diminish their weaknesses and grow as a literary artist.

Story Distribution Schedule:

- 1. May 25 via email to teacher and classmates: first two stories**
- 2. July 1: third stories via hard copy distribution in class:**

Class Schedule:

June 18

1. Introductions
2. Bring your syllabus and "Bridge of Sighs" common errors sheet

June 19 - July 16

Student story workshops. Schedule to be completed and detailed once enrollment closes.