

Advanced Creative Writing Workshop

Instructor: Richard Thomas

Email: writingwithrichard@gmail.com

Skype: richardgthomas3

Class Hours: Wednesdays from 8:00 to 10:00 PM CST, via Skype

Length: 16 weeks—1/9/19 to 4/24/19; 5/8/19 to 8/21/19; and 9/4/19 to 12/18/19.

Class Size: 8 students

COURSE STATEMENT:

If you want to write, you need to read. This class will focus on reading three “best of the year” anthologies, and then analyzing the content to figure out what works and what doesn’t. We’ll focus on narrative hooks, inciting incidents, tension, conflicts (internal and external), dialogue, character, setting, plot, climax, resolution, and denouement. These stories have already been published in the top magazines, journals, and anthologies, and have then gone on to get additional recognition by being placed in an annual focusing on a certain genre (such as fantasy, science fiction, horror, and/or literary fiction). **TRIGGER WARNING:** We will read stories and novels that contain sex, violence, and other potentially upsetting material.

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

To learn how to recognize greatness, and then apply it to your own work. Also, to understand that not all “great” fiction works for YOU, and that’s okay.

BOOKS: (required)

- *The Best American Short Stories* (2018) edited by Heidi Pitlor, with guest editor, Roxane Gay \$10.99 336 pages 978-0544582941
- *The Best Horror of the Year (Volume 10)* edited by Ellen Datlow \$10.98 480 pages 978-1510716674
- *The Best American Fantasy and Science Fiction* (2017) edited by John Joseph Adams, with guest editor, N.K. Jemisin \$10.99 384 pages 978-1328834560

(Most of these anthologies will have to be bought new on Amazon, or other retailers. You may also find them used, depending on the time of year. And of course, check out your local libraries, but you probably want to own these.)

OVERVIEW:

Each week, you will read two stories that I have curated from the three anthologies, selecting the stories that I think are the most powerful, unique, and with the most to teach us. There will also be a weekly Skype call (2 hours), where we will talk about that week's short stories, and what the authors did well, how they are innovative, and how you might apply that to your own writing. We will also workshop two of YOUR stories, applying the same level of critical analysis. We will have additional ongoing questions and conversations on Facebook (in a private, secret group). At the end of the month, you will turn in an original short story based on whatever inspired you over the course of our studies, up to 5,000 words. I will read, edit, and critique each story, and return it to you with advice on what to do next (keep editing, drop it, polish it up, send it out). In addition to commenting on each other's work (workshopping) the stories in Skype, you will also read and give feedback on the other short stories in the class via email (and the Word docs). At the end of the semester you will get one hour of private Skype time with me to talk about anything you like—your work in class, other projects, the industry in general, markets, query letters, how to get an agent, what to do next, etc. (Note: You will have to come to class with ONE short story already written. You will write THREE in class, not turning in a story in the final month.)

WHO IS THIS CLASS FOR:

1. Advanced students who are looking to take their writing to the next level
2. Authors who write genre fiction and are looking to make their work more literary
3. Literary authors who are looking to add some genre, or supernatural aspects, to their realism
4. Authors who have published several stories already
5. Authors who don't need to be taught craft, or the basics of short story writing
6. Anyone looking to expand their understanding of contemporary fiction
7. Authors that are looking to publish in the top magazines, websites, and anthologies
8. Writers who have the time and discipline to read every week, and write a new short story once a month

(This is not a class for beginning students or authors, unless you already have some study and experience. We will not teach the basics, but will already assume you understand that, and are looking to study contemporary masters, apply it to your own work, and then create new material on a monthly basis.)

SCHEDULE/COLUMNS/STORIES:

Exact story order and selection TBD. Each week you will read two stories—which I will carefully curate from the three anthologies (I never love every story in ANY best of the year anthology) for a total of 32 stories in all. Each year there is a new anthology, so the stories and editors will change every year, obviously.

SHORT STORY FORMATTING:

Times New Roman or Cambria (Word default), 12 pt, double-spaced, one inch margins with your name, address, phone number, email address and word count in the upper left hand corner. Include page number and the title of the story in the footer—standard formatting here, really.

COST/FINANCING:

\$800, via Paypal to wickerkat@aol.com. \$100 non-refundable deposit is required to hold your spot. If you are a returning student (from ANY of my classes, anywhere) take 10% off. If you pay in FULL at the time of deposit, take an additional 10% off. Otherwise, it's \$100 upon registration, \$350 before class starts, and the balance of \$350 due prior to the start of the second month. You are required to purchase the three anthologies (or feel free to check them out at your local library) for extended discussion. (Additional payment options are available, if needed.)

Returning student + paid in full: \$640 (\$40 a week)

Returning student, not paid in full: \$720 (\$100 down + \$310/\$310; \$45 a week)

Paid in full, not returning student: \$720 (\$45 a week)

Not returning student, not paid in full: \$800 (\$100 down + \$350/\$350; \$50 a week)

Don't hesitate to reach out with other questions.

Thanks,
Richard