



## **SYLLABUS**

**Intermediate/Advanced Fiction Writing in Siena**

**Instructor: Karen Thompson Walker**

**Language of Instruction: English**

**UO Credits: 4**

**Contact Hours\*: 30**

**Total Hours of Student Engagement (THSE) in all course activities\*: 120**

**Level: 340/445**

## **SIENA, ITALY**

“Of the millions who visit Italy each year, some thousands will return there ‘to live’—to spend a season or a year or two. Of these, a few will remain all their lives. If they are painters, writers, or musicians, they will carry on their trade in an ambiance that still esteems the individual effort of art.”

*-The Ancient Shore: Dispatches from Naples by Shirley Hazzard*

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This class will transport a traditional creative writing fiction workshop to the city of Siena, Italy. Through the careful, close, and imaginative reading of one another’s writing, you will become better acquainted with the internal workings of storytelling and the vast array of tools available to you as a writer of fiction. We will look closely at language, sentences, narrative voice, point of view, character, detail and structure, and we will pay particular attention to the role of setting, through a series of place-based writing exercises, inspired by the sights of Siena. We will also explore how new surroundings can lead to fresh insights into one’s creative work.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Proficiency in close reading.
- Further development of vocabularies for assessing literature, with an emphasis on craft.
- Application of the formal elements of craft in fiction.
- Familiarity with fundamental concepts, forms, modes, and traditions in literary fiction.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY**

A creative writing workshop, in which students will read and critique one another’s fiction, with special attention to the role of place in fiction.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

### Creative Work:

-One piece of original fiction (8-15 pages), to be submitted two weeks before the class begins. (Exact due date TBD)

-One piece of flash fiction (2-3 pages), to be written during your time in Italy, though the subject is entirely up to you. (Due at the end of Week 3).

-Description Assignments #1 & #2: Wander the city of Siena, paying close attention to what you see, hear, and smell. Then spend a few minutes in one particular location (a small intersection or alleyway, a café table on the Piazza del Campo, one corner of the Duomo di Siena, etc.), noting as many details as you can. What does the place look like? Who is passing through this space? What snippets of conversation might you overhear? What small detail do you notice that a passerby might not? Write a vivid one-page description of your chosen location, to be shared in class. (For assignment #2, repeat this exercise in a different location.)

**\*All submissions should be new work, rather than revisions of pieces submitted to other classes.**

### Critiques:

Before each class meeting, you will read and critique two or three pieces of fiction written by your fellow students. Your written critique should consist of 1) a letter to the author, at least 3/4 of a page in length (single-spaced), and 2) a line-edited version of the story, with your suggestions captured in the form of MS Word “comments”—or something similar. Please be as specific as possible in your letter, which should address the strengths as well as the weaknesses of each submission and should give the author a clear sense of your experience reading the piece. Please keep in mind that reading and responding to the work of other students is just as important to your development as a writer as your own writing is. **Please email your critique to the author of the story as well as to the professor (ktwalker@uoregon.edu).**

\*Please be kind and respectful in your discussions of one another’s work. Your criticism should be constructive and specific. **A strong sense of community and collaboration is part of what makes the workshop environment special.**

## METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

Attendance and class participation: 40%

Long submission: (8-15 pages): 20%

Flash fiction piece (2-3 pages): 5%

Description assignments: 5%

Written critiques: 30%

### Grading Scale

97-100%: A+	87-89%: B+	77-79%: C+	67-69%: D+	0-59%: F
94-96%: A	84-86%: B	74-76%: C	64-66%: D	
90-93%: A-	80-83%: B-	70-73%: C-	60-63%: D-	

### Format for Typed Work

Times New Roman, 12 pt.  
Submissions should be double-spaced.  
Critiques should be single-spaced.

### Late Work

Late submissions will not be accepted. Late critiques will result in a one-letter drop in your grade for the assignment.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

This class will be run as a traditional creative writing workshop. This means that the vast majority of our class time will be spent discussing one another's work. Over the course of ten meetings in four weeks, you will each workshop one longer piece of fiction (8-15 pages), submitted two weeks before the trip (exact due date TBD), and one flash fiction piece (2-3 pages), written during your time in Italy. The exact workshop schedule will be established two weeks before the class begins and will proceed according to alphabetical order of last names.

### **Week 1**

**Class 1:** In-class Writing Exercise + Workshop Discussion

**Due before class, via email:** critiques of that day's pieces.

**Class 2:** Workshop Discussion

**Due before class, via email:** critiques of that day's pieces.

**Class 3:** Reading Aloud/Mini Workshops of Description Assignment #1

**Due in class:** Description Assignment #1. (1 page)

### **Week 2**

**Class 4:** Workshop Discussion

**Due before class, via email:** Written critiques of that day's pieces.

**Class 5:** Workshop Discussion

**Due before class, via email:** Written critiques of that day's pieces.

### **Week 3**

**Class 6:** Reading Aloud/Mini Workshops of Description Assignment #2.

**Due in class:** Description Assignment #2 (1 page)

**Class 7:** Workshop Discussion

**Due before class, via email:** Written critiques of that day's pieces.

### **Class 8: Workshop Discussion**

#### **Due before class, via email:**

Written critiques of that day's pieces

AND

\*\*Flash Fiction Piece (2-3 pages).

### **Week 4**

#### **Class 9: Workshop Discussion (Flash Fiction)**

**Due in Class:** N/A (Come prepared to discuss that day's flash fiction pieces, which will be distributed in advance by the instructor, but written critiques are not required.)

#### **Class 10: Workshop Discussion (Flash Fiction)**

**Due in Class:** N/A (Come prepared to discuss that day's flash fiction pieces, which will be distributed in advance by the instructor, but written critiques are not required.)

### **Standard citation needs to include: APA**

#### **Academic Misconduct**

The University Student Conduct Code (available at [conduct.uoregon.edu](http://conduct.uoregon.edu)) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at [researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism](http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism).

#### **Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment Reporting**

Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender-based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment may seek resources and help at [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu). To get help by phone, a student can also call either the UO's 24-hour hotline at 541-346-7244 [SAFE], or the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator at 541-346-8136. From the SAFE website, students may also connect to Callisto, a confidential, third-party reporting site that is not a part of the university.

Students experiencing any other form of prohibited discrimination or harassment can find information at [respect.uoregon.edu](http://respect.uoregon.edu) or [aaeo.uoregon.edu](http://aaeo.uoregon.edu) or contact the non-confidential AAEO office at 541-346-3123 or the Dean of Students Office at 541-346-3216 for help. As UO policy has different reporting requirements based on the nature of the reported harassment or discrimination, additional information about reporting requirements for discrimination or harassment unrelated to sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment is available at [Discrimination & Harassment](#).

The instructor of this class, as a Student Directed Employee, will direct students who disclose sexual harassment or sexual violence to resources that can help and will only report the information shared to the university administration when the student requests that the information be reported (unless someone is in imminent risk of serious harm or a minor). The instructor of this class is required to report all other forms of prohibited discrimination or harassment to the university administration.

Specific details about confidentiality of information and reporting obligations of employees can be found at [titleix.uoregon.edu](https://titleix.uoregon.edu).

### **Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse**

UO employees, including faculty, staff, and GEs, are mandatory reporters of child abuse. This statement is to advise you that your disclosure of information about child abuse to a UO employee may trigger the UO employee's duty to report that information to the designated authorities. Please refer to the following links for detailed information about mandatory reporting: [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).

### **Students with Disabilities**

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu).