

**Bryn Mawr College Fall 2026
CRWT B260 – 001 Short Fiction I
Syllabus**

Professor Nicole Dennis-Benn

English House 209

Class Meeting Time: English House I, Mondays and Wednesdays 10:10 AM-11:30AM

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: ndennisben@brynmawr.edu

Required Texts

- Girl Woman Other by Bernardine Evaristo
- If I Survive You by Jonathon Escoffery
- Ghostroots by Pemi Aguda
- Everything Inside by Edwidge Danticat
- Drinking Coffee Elsewhere by ZZ Packer
- A Visit from the Goon Squad by Jennifer Egan
- Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri

***These books are available in the Bryn Mawr College Bookstore and are reserved at the library. **Please note: Students are expected to purchase these texts, in these editions, for this course. If the purchase of these texts presents a problem, please see the instructor.**

Helpful Resources:

- Special Services for Students with Disabilities:
<https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/access-services/information-students>
- Writing Center: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/writing-center/students>
- Library: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/library-information-technology-services>

Course Description:

This course is for students who have a genuine interest in storytelling and craft despite their major and writing backgrounds. The course will explore how identity, culture, community, memory, history, and the human experience can anchor entire universes in brief fiction. Each student will have the opportunity to workshop a short story. Following their in-class critiques, students will meet with the instructor for individual conference.

We'll discuss selected readings to aid our discussions on technique/craft in relation to shaping your story. Excerpts of other books and stories will be listed as we go along to

better aid your individual storytelling process. Authors considered may include Bernardine Evaristo, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Edwidge Danticat, to name a few. Secondly, prompts will be given at the beginning of the workshop to get your creative juices flowing.

Learning Objectives:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Discern voice and the right point of view to tell their story.
- Create compelling character driven narratives.
- Structure their stories in a way to highlight what's at stake and develop it.
- Understand how scenes operate to drive the story/plot.
- Revise their work to flesh out storylines and polish the story as a whole.

Course Requirements:

Read and write.

Responsibilities:

You will be responsible for preparing stories (10-15 pages) for workshops in a timely manner. Excerpts should have specific questions you would like your classmates and instructor to address at this stage of the work. Keep in mind that specific questions do not prevent people from commenting on other components of the story they deem necessary, but will give a sense of direction and make your critiquing experience more fulfilling.

You are required to read and write **detailed** critiques for your classmates' stories each week. Make sure to let your classmate know what is working and why, what they can improve, and any helpful suggestions. Critiques should be typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins, and in 12pt. Times New Roman font. And at least one and a half (1.5) to two (2) pages. In addition, you will also be responsible for reading the required texts, which will aid in our brief discussions about outline, setting, character development, and plot.

Submitting Stories via SLACK:

Please submit stories for critiquing 1 week before workshop. This should give us time to properly read and critique your work. However, critiques of classmates' works are expected to be shared directly with the student and with me via Slack within 24 hours after the workshop. You will sign up via a Google Sheet to select when you will be workshopped.

Attendance and engagement:

Since this class is a fiction workshop, which warrants class participation and meaningful engagement, a chunk of your grade is based on your attendance and engagement.

Lateness:

Unforeseen circumstances happen to everyone; this is understood. However, class begins at 1:10 PM. **Prompts are given at the beginning of class, and each student is expected to participate.** If for any reason you are running extra late or are unable to attend class, please email instructor and the student(s) whose work is scheduled for critique that week. **If this occurs often, your grade may be affected.**

******Your success in this course is based on your written work, your full participation in the class and your efforts.**

Instructions for Turning in Work:

1. Title Your Work
2. Name/Page numbers on all pages
3. Double Space Microsoft Word
4. Print One Side Only.
5. Submit Electronic Copy and make sure your name and the title of your work are in the subject.

Grade Rubric:

- 60% Story Submissions (*10% Turned in on time; 10% innovation; 10% effort; 10% structure; 20% incorporation of craft discussed in readings & lecture*).
- 20% Critiques of classmates' work
- 20% Class Participation (Thoughtful critique of students' work; active participant in discussion, preparation for leading story discussion during your week, attendance).

Statement of Belongingness:

In this course, we must be respectful of others' identities and perspectives even if they differ from ours. We will strive to create an inclusive learning environment where we value all voices. We will address everyone by their preferred names and pronouns. In this course, we will not make assumptions about what someone knows and does not know. We will make knowledge accessible to everyone. In this class, we will grow as writers and, most importantly, as human beings.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week	Required Readings	Recommended Readings/Resources
Week 1 Class Dates - 8/31 + 9/2 <i>*Be prepared to discuss the required reading for Week 1 on 9/2.</i>	Chapter 1 of GIRL, WOMAN, OTHER by Bernardine Evaristo	Read Bernardine Evaristo's Guardian Interview "I Want to Put Presence into Absence" accessible here .
Week 2 Class Date - 9/9 <i>*No class on 9/7.</i>	Chapters 2-3 of GIRL, WOMAN, OTHER by Bernardine Evaristo	Listen to Bernardine Evaristo: The Waterstones Interview - Booker Prize 2019 Winner accessible here .

Week 3 Class Dates - 9/14 + 9/16	Chapters 4-5 and Epilogue of GIRL, WOMAN, OTHER by Bernardine Evaristo	
Week 4 Class Dates – 9/21 + 9/23	“Manifest” and “Breast Milk” from GHOSTROOTS by Pemi Aguda	Read Pemi Aguda’s interview in Interview Magazine accessible here .
Week 5: Class Dates – 9/28 + 9/30	“The Hollow” and “Imagine Me Carrying You” from GHOSTROOTS by Pemi Aguda	“Masquerade Season” and “Things Boys Do” from GHOSTROOTS by Pemi Aguda
Week 6: Class Dates – 10/5 + 10/7	“An Honest Exit” by Dinaw Mengestu in The New Yorker accessible via BMC Library.	
Required attendance at Dinaw Mengestu Reading: October 7th at 6:30pm in Goodhart Hall Music Room		
Fall Break: No Classes for the Week of 10/12		
Week 7: Class Dates – 10/19 + 10/21 *Group 1 will workshop on 10/21.	“Sunrise Sunset” and “The Port- au-Prince Marriage Special” from EVERYTHING INSIDE by Edwidge Danticat	Interview of Edwidge Danticat on NPR accessible here .
Week 8: Class Dates – 10/26 + 10/28 *Group 2 will workshop on 10/26.	“The Gift” and “Without Inspection” from EVERYTHING INSIDE by Edwidge Danticat Excerpt of LIBERTIE by Kaitlyn Greenidge accessible here .	
Required attendance at Kaitlyn Greenidge Reading: October 7th at 6:30pm in Goodhart Hall Music Room		
Week 9: Class Dates – 11/2 + 11/4 *Group 3 will workshop on 11/4.	“A Temporary Matter” and “Sexy” from INTERPRETER OF MALADIES by Jhumpa Lahiri	“When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” from INTERPRETER OF MALADIES by Jhumpa Lahiri Watch Interpreting Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri In conversation with BBC Journalist Razia Iqbal LLF2021 accessible here .
Week 10: Class Dates – 11/9 + 11/11 *Group 4 will workshop on 11/11.	“Mrs. Sen” from INTERPRETER OF MALADIES by Jhumpa Lahiri	“The Third and Final Continent” from INTERPRETER OF MALADIES by Jhumpa Lahiri
Required attendance at Lain Haley Pollock Reading: November 11th at 6:30pm in Goodhart Hall Music Room		
Week 11: Class Dates – 11/16 + 11/18 *Group 5 will workshop on 11/18.	“Drinking Coffee Elsewhere” and “Geese” from DRINKING COFFEE ELSEWHERE by ZZ Packer	“The Ant of the Self”, “Brownies” and “Speaking in Tongues”

Week 12: Class Date – 11/23 *Group 6 will workshop on 11/23.	“Influx” and “Under the Ackee Tree” from IF I SURVIVE YOU by Jonathan Escoffery Read Jonathan Escoffery interview: 'Humour is a coping mechanism used by people who are aware of their powerlessness' accessible here .	“If He Suspected He’s Get Someone Killed This Morning, Delano Would Never Leave His Couch” from IF I SURVIVE YOU by Jonathan Escoffery
Thanksgiving Break: No Class on 11/25		
Week 13: Class Dates – 11/30 + 12/2 *Group 7 will workshop on 12/2.	“Safari” from A VISIT FROM THE GOONSQUAD by Jennifer Egan	“Gold Cure” from A VISIT FROM THE GOONSQUAD by Jennifer Egan
Week 14: Class Dates – 12/7 + 12/9 ***Last day of class on 12/9	“Out of Body” from A VISIT FROM THE GOONSQUAD by Jennifer Egan	“Found Objects” from A VISIT FROM THE GOONSQUAD by Jennifer Egan