

Small Press Publishing: Berkeley Fiction Review DeCal, Fall 2020

Facilitators: Regina Lim, Alex Jiménez, Maddy Peterson, Aaron Saliman

Meetings: Thursdays, 6:30 to 8pm

Websites

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Course Description

The *Berkeley Fiction Review* is a student-run, ASUC-sponsored, annual publication that publishes artwork and 12-15 short stories from around the world. We publish innovative short stories from every genre. Established in 1981, *BFR* is the second oldest literary journal on campus. In the spring, we will publish Issue 40. Our 14th issue is in the Library of Congress.

As members of this DeCal, students read, discuss, and vote on submissions for publication. In addition, members have the chance to have their own work published through our Student Story Week. Occasionally, we have guest speakers from the creative writing or publishing fields. As a student in the class, you will play an integral role in the production of the journal from reading and voting on stories for publication, completing reader's reports, and completing a personal project that assists on tasks such as editing, design, or writing for our magazine.

Reading List

40 (1 unit) or 80 (2 units) short story submissions (averaging 15 pages each story) on bCourses

Recommended Readings

"The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson

"The Husband Stitch" by Carmen Maria Machado

"The Birthday Party" by Katherine Brush

"Bullet in the Brain" by Tobias Wolff

The Thing Around Your Neck by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Grading

60% - Written response to reading on bCourses

20% - Attendance and participation

10% - Reader's Report

10% - Personal Project

Course Goals and Methods

By the end of the semester, you should have in-depth knowledge of the editorial selection process and a broader appreciation for small-press publishing. You should be able to provide concise comments on the qualities of a wide variety of genres and styles of short stories regarding their selection for publishing. Your comments should consist of constructive criticism and/or well-explained praise.

The course emphasizes practical experience as the preferred educational method. Small group discussions and experience reading submissions are underscored by occasional lectures.

Note: The stories you read for the DeCal are real submissions by real authors. Please be considerate of every submission and make a conscious effort to keep your feedback both constructive and sensitive. You may not copy, distribute, or publish any story elsewhere, as this would be a violation of the author's copyright.

Class Format/Assignments

To pass the class, you must meet the following requirements in a timely and diligent fashion. Detailed instructions for each assignment are posted under the Assignments tab on bCourses—please refer to them before contacting us with any questions you may have.

1. Taking the class for units: To earn credit for 1 unit, you must read 40 stories on bCourses under the Discussions tab and leave a paragraph-long reading response in the comments of each story, evaluating whether or not it should move forward in the review process. For 2 units, you must read 80 stories on bCourses under the Discussions tab and follow the same method as above.
 - a. Stories discussed during class **do not count** for your logsheet, your log sheet is meant to keep track of readings done **outside of class**.
 - b. You must record the titles of these stories either by hand or in a Word document on a log sheet, a template for which can be found under Files on

bCourses.

- c. For your **midterm** logsheet, you must turn in your log sheet documenting that you have read HALF of your total required stories. If you do not turn in your midterm on time, you are responsible for completing a make-up assignment. You must read the rest of your stories by the end of the semester and record them on your log sheet. Keep this document safe.
 - d. For your **final** logsheet, you must turn in your log sheet documenting that you have read ALL of your total required stories. If you do not turn in your log sheet as your **final** assignment, you cannot pass the class.
2. Attendance: Full attendance is mandatory to pass the class. You are allowed only TWO unexcused absences. If you miss a third class, you must complete a make-up assignment. Missing more than three classes results in an automatic failure.
3. Weekly Discussion: For our weekly class meetings, you must read and be prepared to discuss 2-4 stories that the managing editors email to you the week prior. These are the stories that have already been reviewed by students and editors and have reached the final stage of the review process. At the end of each class, we will vote on whether or not to publish the stories we have read that week. **Note that these stories do not count toward the 40 or 80 stories you must read independently throughout the semester.**
4. Reader's Report: Reader's reports are typical in the publishing industry in order for editors to argue for or against a manuscript. This will be a purely diagnostic assignment, allowing students to evaluate their critical understanding of fiction. This assignment will be 1-2 single-spaced pages in length.
5. Personal Project: Each semester, BFR students are required to submit a project of their choice outside of the regular reading, reading responses, and class discussions. This project can be as follows and other options are offered closer to the date:
 - a. Write an article related to the literary world for our online magazine
 - b. Compose another reader's report on one of our short story submissions
 - c. Perform design work by creating ads or artwork to publicize or include in the issue
 - d. Help content or copy edit an accepted story

- e. Write a rejection letter for a story

Navigating bCourses

Under the Discussions tab on bCourses, you will read, comment, and vote yes or no on the submissions in the Discussions section, NOT the stories in the Pinned Discussions section.

Every story needs **THREE YES'S out of FIVE VOTES** to advance in the review process. Once a story has a passing number of votes, editors review it in a separate review process. The stories we read in class are the ones that editors have decided to present before the class as a result of this additional review. **DO NOT** comment on stories that already have three yes votes. If you do so, you will not receive credit on your log sheet for having read that submission.

Your comments should be thoughtful and demonstrate critical engagement with the story.

Comments should be 3-5 sentences and should highlight a story's merits or flaws in an analytical way. We will discuss elements of literary analysis at the beginning of the semester so that everyone knows how to comment appropriately on submissions.

Please keep in mind that these stories and their authors deserve your full attention. You should not skim or copy previous comments. We can tell based on your analysis if you have actually read the story or not.

Schedule

Week 1, September 3: Introduction to the course

Week 2, September 10: Discuss 2-4 class stories and how to critique a short story

Week 3, September 17: Discuss and vote on 2-4 class stories

Week 4, September 24: Discuss and vote on 2-4 class stories

Week 5, October 1: **Reader's Report due by 6:30 pm**

Discuss and vote on 2-4 class stories

Week 6, October 8: Discuss and vote on 2-4 class stories

Week 7, October 15: Discuss and vote on 2-4 class stories

Week 8, October 22: **Midterm logsheet due by 6:30 pm**

Discuss and vote on 2-4 class stories

Week 9, October 29: Discuss and vote on 2-4 class stories

Week 10, November 5: Discuss and vote on 2-4 class stories

Week 11, November 12: **Student story submissions due by 11:59PM**

Discuss and vote on 2-4 class stories

Week 12, November 19: **Personal Project due by 6:30 pm and Student Story Week**

Discuss and vote on 2-4 class stories

Week 13, December 3: **Final logsheet due by 6:30PM on December 10th**

Discuss and review accepted stories for publication

Please note that the schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be discussed in class and emailed out as reminders. All assignments should be submitted via bCourses.

Other Information

Near the end of the semester, we will have a Student Story Week. Writers in the class may submit their stories directly to the class meeting, bypassing the student review process. This is a great way to receive constructive criticism on your work and potentially get published in an upcoming issue.

Please feel free to come to any of us at any point during the semester with comments, concerns, or general feedback! We want to make this class a comfortable and safe space for all, so please let us know if you have any concerns, and we will do our best to address them.

UC Policies for DeCal Courses

Please be aware that we must abide by the following policies:

Facilitators may not charge a course fee, accept gifts from students, have romantic relationships with students, or discriminate on the basis of gender, sexuality, race, disability or religion. These policies are in place to maintain the integrity of the DeCal program.

The instructor of record, Professor Marno, is available to the student facilitators to provide advice regarding teaching the course and dealing with students. The student facilitators are able to meet with the instructor of record any time when they feel it is necessary to discuss the progress of the course and any issues that may arise, but the instructor of record plays a mostly hands-off role.