If you’re taking this course, chances are you’re a lover of stories. In other words, you’re a reader. Time and again, you’ve been willing to give stories a chance, to grant them your attention and put your energy and emotions at their disposal. And stories haven’t let you down. Time and again, they’ve made meaning, made feeling. They have mattered.

Seize, transport, baffle, provoke, astonish, haunt: like settings on the fiction ray gun, these verbs describe some of the ways in which stories act upon us. In this class, we will work to become aware of how great stories do what they do. Your awareness as a reader will become the foundation of your craft as a writer. We’ll study craft elements, including character, plot, voice, and dialogue, considering them as experiences co-created by a writer and a reader.

You’ll write your own brand-new short stories—at least two. Our class will convene as a workshop in which we’ll read and discuss each other’s stories. The workshop is a kind of living laboratory in which you can test your control over your prose. Just as importantly, it’s a supportive community of fellow writers.

Material Requirements

- Humor
- Empathy
- An open mind
- Notebook for journaling
- Instead of a course reader, I’ll be distributing each week’s readings in soft copy.

Grading

- Class Participation (30%)
- Creative Work (30%)
- Morning Pages (30%)
• **Leading Discussion (10%)**

**Class Participation (30%)**: Read the assigned readings closely, come to class with questions, concerns, and something to add. Read your peers’ work thoughtfully; give it the attention you hope to receive. Everyone must be willing to talk and contribute to discussion for this class to work. Sharing one’s work is hard for most people, myself included, but rest assured we will work together to establish a safe space with the goal to lift one another up.

**Creative Work (30%)**: Everyone will submit two short stories to the class. The first story is due on **Monday, July 11** and should be at least 6 double-spaced pages long. The second is due on **Monday, August 8** and should be between 2 and 3 double-spaced pages long.

Your final project will be a short reflective paper about your writing process. You may also choose to submit an *optional* revision of the story of your choice. Your process paper is due by 11:59 p.m. on **Friday, August 19**.

**Morning Pages (30%)**: The morning pages are a practice adapted from *The Artist’s Way*, by Julia Cameron (a good, wise book on creativity that’s been around for 25+ years). They are a substantial part of the work of this course.

The morning pages are 1+ pages of longhand writing, done every morning as soon as you get up. (If you can’t or don’t like to write by hand, the pages may get done another way.) The idea is that there’s no wrong way to do morning pages. You can write “I don’t know what to write” over and over; that’s fine. Keep your pen moving and don’t judge what you write. Eventually any blockage clears, as does the sense of artificiality, and you establish an authentic connection with yourself. Of course this only works if you keep up the practice.

Clearly, there’s no way for me to verify that you completed your daily morning pages (unless I were to read them, which would destroy their safety and privacy as a practice). Therefore, I will base your grade for the morning pages on completion of a weekly check-in. Your weekly check-in is due on Canvas every Sunday by 11:59 p.m. Your grade is based on *whether* you post your check-in, *not* what you say in it. In other words, if you tell me you did zero morning pages this week, you still get full points if you completed the check-in on time.

**Leading Discussion (10%)**: You will help me lead discussion at least once during the quarter. Outside of our usual class meetings, you’ll work with a partner to come up with questions about one of our assigned readings. More guidelines to follow.

**Course Policies**

- **Canvas**. I will post all assignments and soft copies of all handouts on Canvas ([https://canvas.stanford.edu/](https://canvas.stanford.edu/)).

- **Attendance**. I take attendance at the beginning of class. If you’re late, please remind me at the end of class to record your presence. Unexcused absences will affect your grade. If you must miss class and you believe your absence should be excused, contact me as soon as you know you will be absent. Check Canvas for handouts distributed or work assigned in your absence.

- **Punctuality**. It’s appreciated. Being on time to class shows respect for me, your peers, and the material we are studying together.

- **Office Hours**. I love talking with students in office hours and hope you’ll drop by as many times as you like. To book an appointment, go to [https://nstarano.youcanbookme.com/](https://nstarano.youcanbookme.com/). My Monday and Wednesday office hours are held in my office at 205 Mariposa House, and my Friday office hours are
• Communication with Me. Email is the best way to reach me. I check email every day and respond as promptly as I am able. **I will address all communications to your Stanford email and expect you to check it at least daily.**

• Plagiarism. The Board on Judicial Affairs says: “For purposes of the Stanford University Honor Code, plagiarism is defined as the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person’s original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s).” If you are in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism in the context of this course or a particular assignment, ask me.

**Affordability of Course Materials**

Stanford University and its instructors are committed to ensuring that all courses are financially accessible to all students. If you are an undergraduate who needs assistance with the cost of course textbooks, supplies, materials and/or fees, you are welcome to approach me directly. If you’d prefer not to approach me directly, you can ask the Diversity & First-Gen Office for assistance by completing their questionnaire on course textbooks and supplies (http://tinyurl.com/ipq barn) or by contacting Joseph Brown, the Associate Director of the Diversity and First-Gen Office ([jbrown@stanford.edu](mailto:jbrown@stanford.edu); Old Union Room 207). Dr. Brown is available to connect you with resources and support while ensuring your privacy.

**Students with Disabilities**

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty for the current quarter. Because accommodations are not retroactive, students should contact the OAE as soon as possible in order to ensure timely notice and coordination. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (voice: 723-1066, TTY: 723-1067, [https://oae.stanford.edu/](https://oae.stanford.edu/)).

**Honor Code**

The Honor Code is the University’s statement on academic integrity, written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work.

1. The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:
   1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
   2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.

2. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.

3. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.
**Provisional Course Schedule**

**Week One**  
Mon 6/20 Welcome & Introduction  
Wed 6/22 Authenticity

**Week Two**  
Mon 6/27 Reading Like a Writer  
Wed 6/29 Voice

**Week Three**  
Mon 7/4 NO CLASS (Fourth of July)  
Wed 7/6 Plot

**Week Four**  
Mon 7/11 Dialogue; Story #1 due  
Wed 7/13 Workshops 1, 2 & 3

**Week Five**  
Mon 7/18 Workshops 4, 5 & 6  
Wed 7/20 Workshops 7, 8 & 9

**Week Six**  
Mon 7/25 Workshops 10, 11 & 12  
Wed 7/27 Workshops 13, 14 & 15

**Week Seven**  
Mon 8/1 Character  
Wed 8/3 Revision

**Week Eight**  
Mon 8/8 Voice (Again); Story #2 due  
Wed 8/10 Small-Group Workshops

**Finals Week**  
Friday 8/19 Process Paper and Optional Revision due