ENGLISH 437, ADVANCED FICTION WORKSHOP
FALL 2000

INSTRUCTOR: Jeff Lodge
CLASS TIME: Wednesday, 7-9:40, in Hibbs 307
OFFICE: Hibbs 306D
OFFICE HOURS: M-F, 8-4:30
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is a workshop designed to serve the needs of
students who 1) are dedicated to the study of the craft of fiction writing, and 2) have
previous workshop experience. For the most part, we will be discussing student work,
though we will begin each class with a discussion of a story from the assigned text (see
below).

TEXT: The Pushcart Prize, XXIV: The Best of the Small Presses, ed. Bill Henderson
(available at Carriage House Book Shop)

REQUIREMENTS: Each of you will submit for critique at least two new fiction
manuscripts (either short stories or chapters of a novel) to the group throughout the
course of the semester. These will be due in class the week before they are to be
discussed and will be professional in appearance: typed, double spaced, single sided, and
proofread. Both manuscripts you submit will be revised and turned in with the original
copy (the one on which I have written my comments, please) by the day of the scheduled
final exam, December 13.

DISCUSSION OF STUDENT WORK: Read the work of your fellow writers seriously and
with respect, considering all manuscripts submitted to the workshop works-in-progress,
subject to revision. Direct your comments to the work itself and focus on issues which
may help to improve it, trying to be positive and constructive. What’s at the heart of the
piece? Is the sequence of events clear? Are the characters complex and believable?
Where is the language strongest, and where does it falter or become murky? After we’ve
discussed a manuscript, the writer will have a chance to speak and to ask questions.

It will be important that you provide the writer with written comments in addition to
those you give in class. Mark the manuscript freely, and try to give a cohesive summary
of your responses on the last page or on a separate page. Be sure to put your name on the
manuscript you return to the writer so that he or she may come to you to ask questions or
get clarification.

Full participation in the workshop is expected of everyone in the group.
**ATTENDANCE:** Attendance is mandatory every week. Contact me if you have a problem.

**GRADES:** Grading is a source of concern in any class. This is especially so in writing workshops, where criteria may seem subjective, especially at first. So turn your manuscripts into the class on time, participate in class discussions fully and respectfully, do the required revisions, and you will receive no lower than a C. Of course, you may receive an A or a B.

Since the stories you submit to the workshop are works-in-progress, no individual stories will be graded. The only grade you will receive will be your final grade.

**READING:** We will discuss the following stories in class, but you should read as many of the other stories in the text as you can, as well as the poems, essays, and memoirs. Reading other genres can help you to think about your own writing in different ways.

- **August 30**  
  “The Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Animal Kingdom” Dan Chaon

- **September 6**  
  “The Loop, the Snow, Their Daughters, the Rain” Liza Wieland

- **September 13**  
  “Miss Famous” Robert Boswell

- **September 20**  
  “Oblivion, Nebraska” Peter Moore Smith

- **September 27**  
  “The Houses of Double Women” Julian Anderson

- **October 4**  
  “What I Eat” Charlotte Morgan

- **October 11**  
  “What They Did” David Means

- **October 18**  
  “The First Men” Stacy Richter

- **October 25**  
  “Dear Mother” Harry Means  
  “Self Knowledge” Richard Bausch  
  “The Dead Boy at Your Window” Bruce Holland Rogers

- **November 1**  
  “Nachman” Leonard Michaels

- **November 8**  
  “Seed” Mary Yukari Waters

- **November 15**  
  “The Sheriff Goes to Church” Robert Coover

- **November 29**  
  “Harry Ginsberg” Charles Baxter

- **December 6**  
  “The Best Girlfriend You Never Had” Pam Houston