description. This semester we shall conceive of fiction writing as a possibility space, a locale just outside our comfort zones where we can and should take multiple chances in order to imagine in new ways, explore fresh strategies for finding and cultivating story ideas, re-view what it is we’re doing and why, what fiction is and why, and, at the end of the day, understand better what the great Samuel Beckett meant when he wrote: “Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” While we shall sharpen such conventional fiction writing gestures as style, scene, and character development, we shall also question the often unconscious assumptions behind those gestures; attempt various methods of generating adventurous narratives that resist, rethink, and/or expand the very notion of rules in fiction writing; visit a number of important concerns/trends/obsessions in contemporary fiction; discuss marketplace (ir)realities; hone our critical reading and manuscript editing capabilities; and strengthen our problem-solving muscles from brainstorming to final revision — all in an honest, friendly, fierce workshop environment.

evaluation methods. Requirements will include: at least one finished story (7 pages); various in-class and out-of-class exercises (length to be determined by assignment); two written reviews (1 page each) of out-of-class public readings by established authors (usually on Thursday evenings); remarkably active class participation; reading and responding thoughtfully and respectfully to other students’ work and to that of established writers; attendance at a conference with the professor for a conversation about your writing; and one end-of-the-semester public reading of a new piece of your own fiction.