COURSE: WRITING ACTION-ADVENTURE FICTION
Undergraduate Course CSDY 4910 CRN 29220
Graduate Course CSDY 5910 CRN 29221
ROOM #: LAR 234
DAY: Thursday
TIME: 7:30-10:10pm
INSTRUCTOR: Jeri Van Cook (a/k/a Jerry VanCook)
OFFICE: LAR 118
OFFICE HOURS: By appointment
EMAIL: jcook@uco.edu   PREFERRED EMAIL: jerryvancook@cox.net
PERSONAL PHONE: 691-4879

REQUIRED TEXT/S: N/A    NO PREREQUISITES

COURSE OBJECTIVE: 1) To develop book-length writing skills. 2) To begin, continue, or finish and market a novel, 3) To develop critiquing skills.

TEACHING METHODS: Semi Formal lectures, Qs and As, Class Discussion, MAINLY WORKING ON A NOVEL IN PROGRESS.

WORK TO BE DONE: Reading aloud of works in progress and critique by fellow
students. Attendance is stressed because this cannot be made up. Students are
EXPECTED to be engaged in writing ongoing novels. Extra credit is given to students who
show enthusiasm constructive to the class without MONOPOLIZING everyone else’s time.
Students are expected to turn in submission-level (like, final draft---what you’d send to a
publisher) novel manuscript pages for grading and adhere to the following scale to
QUALIFY for semester grades:

A = no less than 40 pages
B = no less than 30 pages
C = no less than 20 pages
D = no less than 10 pages
F = anything less than 10 pages

(Turning in this number DOES NOT GUARANTEE that grade but simply
QUALIFIES the student for it.) Actually, you should be writing MUCH MORE if you
are serious. I just can’t READ any more during the semester. NOTHING will be
accepted after the second-to-last class period (last class period being considered
FINAL NIGHT.)

Assignments must be typed, double-spaced, 1 inch margin on right and left, 24-26 lines
per page. ONE side of paper. Include cover sheet with 1) Name, 2) Class, 3) Graduate
or Undergraduate. Proof read and turn in a copy suitable for submitting to an editor for
publication. Unprofessional pages will be returned UNREAD and UNGRADED. Folks, if
you are not serious about writing and getting published, you’re in the wrong class.
Here’s the grading in a nutshell: 1) Quantity of work turned in, 2) Quality of work turned
in, 3) Class discussion/participation.

GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY: Market research: Turn in list of potential publishers
suitable for your novel. (Consult WRITER’S MARKET and other sources.)
TESTS: NONE. Just write MORE.

ATTENDANCE: >4 unexcused absences = F. Getting an excused absence is not that hard. Just tell me whatever sob story you come up with in advance, or afterward in case of emergency. Extra credit given for lies which show exceptional creativity---and I didn’t use myself as an undergraduate. (I got SERIOUS as a graduate student.)

GRADES: A-F. Audit: S&U. I (incomplete) only in VERY extreme cases.

MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION: See Work to Be Done.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE: Two students will be chosen each week to read during the next class. If it is your turn and you cannot attend, contact one of the other students to take your place. DO NOT CONTACT ME and expect me to do that for you. (Keep in mind that the class is depending on you. If you don’t show up or get a substitute your semester grade will be dropped by one letter.) ALSO: Have your “hand out” copies of the pages you will read READY BY THE BEGINNING of class---no one wants to sit around after 7:30 doing nothing while we wait for you. Also: DO NOT try to submit your pages to me by e-mail. DO NOT e-mail me on Thursday and expect an answer---I’ll be on my way to class. If you need to call me, call my home phone. My cell phone is not listed because I only carry it on Thursdays when I’m THERE.

DO NOT EVER, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, TEXT ME.

Here are some of the things we will cover in discussion: Mechanics of writing: Hey Yous, similes, metaphors, rhythm sentences, overall rhythm, alliteration, etc. Choosing story topics, transfer of emotion: Writer to paper to reader, plotting, outlining, research, creating characters, making characters come alive, conflict, pacing, turning fact into fiction.
COMMENTS: I run a fairly loose ship in order to spawn creativity. The mood should be light and friendly, and a joke here and there is helpful in creating a relaxed atmosphere in which to learn. When overdone, however, everybody’s learning suffers. I do not mind an occasional personal word or two between students but ongoing private conversations which distract the rest of the class will not be tolerated.

You should have learned spelling and grammar in grade school. If you didn’t, it may be the fault of an American public educational system on the fast train to hell. But if you don’t know these things by now, it is YOUR fault and I don’t know how you think you’re ever going to write a novel in the first place. So, if these things are problems check into the English Department’s labs. I don’t correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. but I do lower grades for blatant mistakes---because editors return such submissions unread. The rules of writing are loose, and sometimes made to be broken. But you must understand them to break them with control.

Now, I have some good news and some bad news. BAD NEWS: I’m one of those teachers who doesn’t really believe you can TEACH anyone anything, including how to write. GOOD NEWS: I think I’m a fairly good guide at helping you teach yourselves.

RULES FOR CLASS DISCUSSIONS: (I would never have thought I’d have to even mention these because they’re nothing but decent manners. But I’ve recently found that some people are devoid of such manners.)

DO NOT interrupt people who are speaking. This includes me. I may not always show it (the first or second time I try to be polite) but interrupting makes me
insanely angry and AT LEAST by the third time you WILL SEE AND HEAR IT. ESPECIALLY DO NOT interrupt a speaker, then keep talking louder and louder when he/she tries to finish what they were saying. This INFURIATES ME EVEN FURTHER and very bad grades will result.
Okay, enough negativity. We usually have fun (ask the students who have taken one or more of my classes before.)
And I’ve found that people having fun write better.