

ENGL 7471: Forms of Fiction Time in Fiction

Spring 2021

Monday 5:30-8:30pm

Mark Mayer - mmayer@memphis.edu

A creative investigation of how narrative manipulates and manages time. Fiction can condense experience into fleeting summaries or hold a single moment open for a reader's extended contemplation. Fictional time can move in a straight chronological line or can zig-zag between eras. It can plod or race. It can explore how the past haunts a present landscape or how present vantage colors the past-ness of the past. How should we practitioners of narrative approach the slippery work of shaping fictional time?

Unit topics will include:

- Profluence (aka Pageturner-ology): What creates forward narrative momentum?
- Chronotope: What gives a setting its "time-feel"?
- Dilation and Duration: What happens when time is slowed and expanded or when it is condensed?
- The Moment: How can we create a sense of intensified presence for a reader?
- Past-ness: In what ways does the historical enter contemporary experience?

This course will focus on the novel and short story but should benefit any creative writer working with narrative forms. Students will develop and present an original conceptual model of narrative time and direct a workshop of their own fiction.

Required Texts:

- Nicholson Baker, *The Mezzanine*
- Evan Connell, *Mrs. Bridge*
- Edward P. Jones, *The Known World*
- Ursula K. Le Guin, *Lavinia*
- Juan Rulfo, *Pedro Paramo*
- Emily Ruskovich, *Idaho*
- Joan Silber, *The Art of Time in Fiction*
- Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*
- ENGL 7471 Coursepack with stories from Ted Chiang, N.K. Jemisin, Alice Munro, Marie NDiaye, W.G. Sebald and others.