Writers in New York: Fiction (Craft Seminar)
Darin Strauss

This class will teach you to read as a writer. (It may dampen the naive joy of reading for pleasure a bit).

We'll use outside texts to answer the elemental questions of story telling. And we'll look at things that lit classes don't: how to begin a story, say; how to introduce a character. And we'll take up such questions as, “What is the relationship of plot to sub-plot? How does one hold the reader's attention?”

Of course, in Art, rules must be flexible—but I ask my students to think of writing in strategic terms; each story-telling decision needs to make tactical sense. With that in mind, we'll examine—with so much esprit de corps as to arouse envy—the tenets of the Art of Fiction.

Grades are in large part based on class participation and attendance. If you show up and talk about the books you've read, you'll likely to do well. If you don't do either, then you'll do poorly. (Each class missed will take your grade down a notch.) Also, we have a strict no-plagiarism policy. One strike and you fail.

BOOK LIST
- Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro (978-0679731726)
- Course Reader available for purchase at a local copy shop (details TBA)

READING SCHEDULE

Class 1) Barthleme's "The School," Saunders essay on "The School." (This will be read in class.)
Class 2) Raymond Carver's "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love."
Class 3) V.S. Pritchett "The Saint." (This will be read in class)
Class 4) Lorrie Moore: "People Like That Are The Only People Here"; "And You're Ugly, Too"
Class 5) Grace Paley: "A Conversation with My Father"
Class 6) V.S. Pritchett: "The Diver"
Class 7) Jhumpa Lahiri: "Interpreter of Maladies"; "Sexy"
Class 8) Kazuo Ishiguro: Remains of the Day

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

1) Students will be designated "discussion leaders" for the fiction that's on the reading schedule. Each student, therefore, will have to work with a partner (or partners) to guide the discussion for a single class session.

2) A final paper, examining -- on a craft level -- two or more of the works discussed in class. This will differ from a standard lit class final paper in that the students will address a nuts-and-bolts storytelling technique ("How Lorrie Moore and Jhumpa Lahiri differ in their approach to building character," for example.)

3) For the stories and/or novels that aren't read in class, each student will be required to submit a very brief response: no more than a paragraph, summarizing what you thought was effective (or ineffective) about each.