Instructor: Saher Alam  
Email: smalam@wustl.edu  
Virtual Office Hours: TBA and by appointment.  
Details of Contact: I check email daily, M-F and generally respond within 24 hours. On weekends, I check email once per day and will respond within 36 hours. I respond to Canvas posts within 24-48 hours all week long.

Course Description  
In this class you will write, learn how to read like a writer, and write some more. Our focus will be on short fiction, and our approach will be to explore the stages linking inspiration to final (or nearly final) draft—that is, we will explore how to find a story idea and how to grow it.

The class will be run as a virtual workshop, which means you’ll be actively engaged in meaningful online discussions about your classmates’ original works-in-progress, and you’ll make your own compositions available for such discussions. You’ll also be prompted, via regular weekly reading responses and writing exercises, to examine common craft-of-fiction elements—from the basic building blocks of stories such as details, characters, and dialogue, to more slippery units of narrative design such as scene, summary, point of view, and theme. Along the way, we will also read a range of published short stories, from classics to works by contemporary masters. This course is introductory in nature, and there are no prerequisites required.  (3 credit hours, Sept. 14-Dec. 18, 2020)

Course Goals  
My hope is that students taking this course will:  
• Recognize craft-of-fiction elements operating within a short story.  
• Apply the techniques of Reading Like a Writer (RLW) when annotating a story.  
• Expand their own story material via a series of writing prompts and group activities.  
• Write an original short story to put up for (online) workshop.  
• Produce formal and informal written feedback for a range of works-in-progress.

Course Materials  
The only required text for this course that you will have to purchase is The Art and Craft of Fiction: A Writer’s Guide, 2nd edition, by Michael Kardos.

Course Requirements  
1. Timely, substantive, steady participation in weekly online class discussions and group activities.  
(Avoid waiting until the due date to begin assignments. The effects of procrastination will show themselves quickly online.)  
2. Creative writing exercises (four total, of 1-3 pages (or 350-1,050 words) each) submitted for online discussion.  
3. Generous, constructive feedback on peer work that has been shared online.  
4. One original short story of 5-10 pages (1,750-3,500 words) for virtual workshop.
Course Details

Tentative Semester Schedule (Subject To Updates)

Here is a tentative semester schedule that depicts the phases and modules described in the “Course Structure” section below and provides details about some of the topics we will cover and the activities we will do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topics Covered</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wk 1</td>
<td>Sep 14 Welcome &amp; Orientation 1</td>
<td>• Defining a Short Story</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Creating Literary Profile</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading Like a Writer (RLW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wk 2</td>
<td>Sep 21 Establishing Our Writers’ Colony</td>
<td>• Building Literary Profile</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wk 3</td>
<td>Sept 28 Learning the Writer's Craft: Read, Write, Repeat.</td>
<td>• Annotation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Surface Facts, Puzzlers, Design Observations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading Collaboratively</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wk 4</td>
<td>Oct 5</td>
<td>• Takeaways, Puzzler Responses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Writing a Story in the Rough (SIR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>Wk 5</td>
<td>Oct 12 Practicing the Writer’s Craft</td>
<td>• Details</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Beginnings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading Collaboratively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>Wk 6</td>
<td>Oct 19</td>
<td>• Writing SIR Exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Small Group Feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>4b</td>
<td>Wk 7</td>
<td>Oct 26 Practicing the Writer’s Craft</td>
<td>• Elements of Fiction</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Creating Scenes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wk 8</td>
<td>Nov 2</td>
<td>• Reading Collaboratively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b</td>
<td>Wk 10</td>
<td>Nov 16 Practicing the Writer’s Craft</td>
<td>• Writing SIR Exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wk 11</td>
<td>Nov 23</td>
<td>• Small Group Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c</td>
<td>Wk 12</td>
<td>Nov 30 Practicing the Writer’s Craft</td>
<td>• Writing a Compelling Story</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading Collaboratively</td>
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<td>• Endings</td>
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<td>• Clarity</td>
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<td>• Revision</td>
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<tr>
<td>5a/b</td>
<td>Wk 13</td>
<td>Dec 7 The Writer’s Workshop</td>
<td>• Workshop Stories</td>
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<tr>
<td>5c/d</td>
<td>Wk 14</td>
<td>Dec 14 The Writer’s Workshop</td>
<td>• Workshop Stories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Structure
Generally speaking, our class will progress through three phases (shown in the schedule above with bold lines):

- **Establishing a Writers’ Colony:** For the first four weeks, you will engage in activities designed to orient you in our classroom environment and workings, establish a common body of literature via the Story Bank, investigate your literary origins, learn what it means to read like a writer, write a Story in the Rough.

- **Craft-of-Fiction Modules:** In the second phase, we will work through four craft-of-fiction modules. Each two-week module will be organized around a particular short story and a couple of craft topics under study such as Details, Beginnings, Elements of Fiction, Scenes, etc. Generally speaking, in the first week of each module, you will practice Reading Like a Writer skills via digital annotation and online discussion activities. In the second week, you’ll complete and distribute a craft-focused writing exercise, and then provide and get some feedback on your writing.

- **Workshopping:** In the final phase of the course, we will workshop your original short story via a virtual workshop. You will get feedback that’s both individually composed and collectively exchanged.

Since workshops usually involve submitting work on a rotating basis, I’ll also have a workshop submission schedule ready for distribution in the early part of the semester, so participants can sign up for a due date that best fit their schedules.

Expectations For Student Attendance & Participation
A few words on being “here”… please make sure that you are and that you’re here on time. In the online format, this means you are expected to have an active engaged presence within Canvas (our online classroom) and that is one of the ways in which I will monitor your attendance in the course. I am able see when last you logged into Canvas and how much time you’ve spent in various areas of the classroom. This is a semi-self-paced course in that we have specific due dates for all assignments, but you will work on the course at your own convenience within those parameters. Lack of participation in discussions or not answering email messages sent to you will be considered lack of attendance and will result in a loss of points.

Since this class is conducted as a workshop, with a great degree of interactivity, your participation is **vital**. As in a face-to-face seminar-style course, steady participation from every student, every week, on every piece of literature or workshop story we read is expected.

Workshop Logistics & Etiquette
In this class, you will submit original works of fiction for discussion and workshop. You will also be reading and responding to the works of others in small groups. The advantage of the workshop format is that you will be exposed to a variety of writing styles and, in the case of writing exercises, be able to compare how your peers have approached the same writing task differently. In essence, workshopping is an effort to help the writer of a story not only to refine her/his story’s use of craft, but to see more deeply into her/his material. When your story is up, you will (I hope) benefit from this close attention.
But there’s also an important byproduct of the process that you’ll benefit from when you’re a participant in the workshop: the process of looking carefully and thoughtfully at so many different works-in-progress from so many different authors will, as the course progresses, hone your ability to assess and edit your own work. The shared experience, happily, adds to everyone’s writing toolbox.

The typical ballet of exchanging manuscripts among people is simplified by the online format. It makes giving an author individually composed feedback very easy: I simply compose my reading of your story into an end comment and email it along. But the hallmark of a writer’s workshop—one of its great (and terror-inducing) benefits—is that the author sits in a room, typically in silence, while readers discuss the author’s manuscript. While this open discussion is a focused one, it’s also loose and unpredictable like all conversations; and the author is left to decide for themselves what to take away from all that is said.

Obviously, we can’t do that in this course. But in order to make it possible for you to reap some of the benefits of the experience of receiving collectively exchanged feedback, I’ve tried to design our discussions with semi-synchronous elements and collective annotation activities, which I hope will simulate some aspects, perhaps the best aspects, of a workshop’s open exchange of ideas and readings.

**Manuscript Format**

Note that all your work for this class must be neatly typed and free of spelling and grammatical errors. In the case of creative work, there’s a formatting specific to publishing that I would like you to try it out, so you develop, at very least, the same sense of measure that editors and agents are familiar with when they review a manuscript. So, please submit all creative work as a document in manuscript format: double-spaced with one-inch margins, a font size of 12, a page number and your name on each page in the header or footer, and the word count showing on the front page somewhere.

**Inclusive Learning Environment Statement**

Writing workshops thrive when there’s active engagement in the process as well as authenticity, trust, and a sense of reciprocity. We participants build such environments together. Here is more information about how the University supports inclusive learning environments:

The best learning environment—whether in the classroom, studio, laboratory, or fieldwork site—is one in which all members feel respected while being productively challenged. At Washington University in St. Louis, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive atmosphere, in which all participants can contribute, explore, and challenge their own ideas as well as those of others. Every participant has an active responsibility to foster a climate of intellectual stimulation, openness, and respect for diverse perspectives, questions, personal backgrounds, abilities, and experiences, although instructors bear primary responsibility for its maintenance.

A range of resources is available to those who perceive a learning environment as lacking inclusivity, as defined in the preceding paragraph. If possible, we encourage students to speak directly with their instructor about any suggestions or concerns they have regarding a particular instructional space or situation. Alternatively, students may bring concerns to another trusted advisor or administrator (such as an academic advisor, mentor, department.
chair, or dean). All classroom participants—including faculty, staff, and students—who observe a bias incident affecting a student may also file a report (whether personally or anonymously) utilizing the online Bias Report and Support System.

**Statement Regarding Academic Honesty**
You are to respect originality in this class—that of published authors as well as that of your classmates. More so than in other English courses, the reading for this class will be supplied by YOU. Take advantage of that, but please give credit where credit is due and be aware that the university has a strict policy for violations of academic honesty. Here is a summary of this policy:

Students are bound by the University College policy on academic integrity in all aspects of this course. All references to ideas and texts other than the students’ own must be so indicated through appropriate footnotes, whether the source is a book, an online site, the professor, etc. All students are responsible for following the rules outlined in the document regarding the university academic integrity policy.

All students are expected to abide by proper citation and attribution techniques.

**Technology Matters**

**Notice On Technical Requirements And Supported Browsers**
- Canvas works best in the most recent version of all major browsers. You can also double-check that your browser is supported.
- Be sure you have downloaded the most recent version Java and/or a Java plug-in. This free software program helps you to be able to access certain Canvas tools. You can check which version of Java you currently have and update it (if necessary) by visiting www.java.com. Keep Java updated for best results.
- The use of audio and video tools within the content editor may require the use of Adobe Flash.

**Technical Support**
This is a fully online, technology-based course. Because computers are not perfect, plan on having technical issues at least once during the term. While this can cause some incredibly frustrating moments, the overall benefits of the technology do outweigh any issues that may arise. Just be ready to contact technical support in the event of difficulties. Send an email to student.technology@wustl.edu or call 935-8200 with any questions/problems concerning Canvas. (This is technical support for any problems you experience within the Canvas classroom only, not other external software). For additional Canvas support:
- Chat with a Canvas Support Agent (accessible by clicking “Help” in lower left corner of the classroom)
- Call the Canvas Support Line (Students) +1-844-865-2581
Online Classroom Tips

General Tips For Success In The Online Classroom

The following is a list of helpful information that represents habits of students who have succeeded in online courses. These tips should help each of you to have a positive experience as well.

1. **GET STARTED:** Remember that this online course begins on day one of the semester. Log in early during the first week to print the syllabus, become oriented to the online classroom, and get to know your professor and classmates. Waiting until the end of the first week to get started may derail your efforts to succeed before you know it.

2. **STAY ORGANIZED.** Bookmark our course websites (Canvas, Online Dictionary, other websites indicated by professor etc.) Create a special binder or folder to organize any printed materials. Study time will be easier and more fruitful if you are organized and up to date.

3. **INTERACT WITH YOUR CLASSMATES.** Students who study in small groups or pairs tend to be more successful. You can help each other to understand difficult points in the unit simply by participating regularly in the Discussion Forums.

4. **SHOW UP & ASK QUESTIONS.** Visit me in office hours occasionally for extra discussion as needed. Make an appointment and we can talk in real time via collaboration software or phone. You can also email me any questions that arise or post them in the “Watercooler” discussion forum.

5. **DO THE READING.** The assigned reading is a valuable part of the course. Students who consistently stay up to date on the reading tend to receive higher grades than those who do not. In this class, the reading will prepare you to participate in the classroom discussion forums.

6. **STUDY “OFFLINE” SOMETIMES.** Although this is an online course, you need not do all of your studying online. Spend time studying away from the computer by taking notes on the readings.

7. **DON'T PROCRASTINATE.** Procrastination will ruin your experience in the class in several ways. Not only does it prevent you from learning what you are here to learn, but it will also cause you to lose a lot of points. Refer to the list of assignment due dates in the modules and follow the steps outlined in order to better understand how to pace yourself appropriately.

8. **HANG IN THERE!!** If this is your first online class, the experience may challenge you at first, but as long as you keep up with the reading and follow instructions, you will develop an understanding of the rhythm of the course after the first unit. See me for help as needed, I am your resource and I want to see you succeed and enjoy this course!

“Netiquette” Statement On Internet Communication

- Remember your audience. If you would not say it in a face-to-face classroom, do not include it in the online discussions either. Consider what you write, as it is a permanent record and can be retrieved easily. Use courtesy and common sense in all your electronic communications.
• Write in complete sentences and check spelling before you post anything in class.
• DON'T TYPE IN ALL CAPS. This is hard to read and is considered "shouting."
• Respect the opinions of others and be sensitive to the diverse nature of people in the class. Keep in mind that although you cannot "see" your classmates, you can show respect for individual differences. Diversity issues may include the following and others: race, ethnicity, religion, disabilities, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, marital status, urban vs. rural dwellers, etc.
• No profanity will be allowed. This includes writing in punctuation. For example, #%$#! is considered profanity and is not permitted. Also, language expressed in inappropriate acronyms is not acceptable.

Guidelines For Discussion Forum Participation
1. Be sure to write in the subject line to whom your message is addressed. Changing the subject line is the number one way to make sure your post is noticed by the intended recipient.
2. Be sure to sign your name at the bottom of your messages. Writing your name at the end of each message helps to clarify the author and helps your classmates remember who you are.
3. Before responding to a particular discussion topic, be sure to complete the reading assignment of the corresponding unit. Remember that the discussion topics are specifically tied to the readings. Be sure to take your time and write meaningful discussion forum postings. Your ideas and content are important, and issues such as grammar, spelling, accents, vocabulary, and sentence structure count as well. Be sure your posts are well edited before you submit them, since unedited posts do not receive full points.
4. Participate in each discussion over several days within the lesson and avoid waiting until the due date to get started. Each discussion requires several posts from you, including replies to classmates. Waiting until the last day to participate minimizes the opportunity to interact your classmates and me and makes discussion participation much less meaningful for you. It will also result in a loss of points.
5. Finally, the discussion forums are meant to be fun! Check in often to communicate with your classmates and me.

Grading Information and Criteria
Grading Weights
Roughly speaking, grading for this course will break down this way:

- Participation/Engagement (in discussions, reading activities, quizzes, workshop feedback): __60%
- Creative Writing Assignments (4 total, of 1-3 pages each): ________________________________20%
- Workshop Story (of about 5-10 pages): ________________________________________________20%

As you can see from this grading scale, this is a class that emphasizes process!
Grading Scale
For your reference, I have included the grading scales below for your review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University GPA System (Office of Registrar):</th>
<th>Converted grading scale:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.9 – 4.0 A</td>
<td>A  100-94 C+ 79-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 – 3.8 A–</td>
<td>A-  93-90 C  76-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 – 3.5 B+</td>
<td>B+  89-87 C-  73-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 – 3.1 B</td>
<td>B  86-84 D  69-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 – 2.8 B-</td>
<td>B-  83-80 F  59 and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But it might be more helpful to know what each letter grade means to me:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>This is <strong>stellar, sparkling</strong> work. “A” represents work of exceptional quality, inventiveness, and depth, which has exceeded my expectations for the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>This is <strong>good, strong</strong> work, above average. “B” means your work not only satisfies the parameters of the assignment, but goes a step beyond in terms of its quality, inventiveness, and/or depth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>This is <strong>adequate</strong> work, in the average range. “C” means that your work just barely satisfies the parameters of the assignment, demonstrating minimal understanding of its underlying concepts and/or minimal effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>This is <strong>not adequate</strong> work, falling below average. “D” means your work is incomplete and/or does not meet the expectations of the assignment, demonstrating little understanding of its underlying concepts and/or little effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>This means you <strong>failed</strong> to complete the assignment and thus demonstrated no understanding of its underlying concepts and/or no effort.</td>
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**Statement Regarding Grades Of “Incomplete”**
Grades of incomplete are rare and are reserved for medical crises or other documented emergencies occurring late in the semester. Incompletes are reserved for students who were otherwise making satisfactory progress in the course prior to the emergency and will be allowed at the instructor’s discretion.

**University College & Washington University Policies**
1. **STATEMENT REGARDING ACADEMIC HONESTY:** (See details in “Course Details” section above.)

2. **STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS:** Washington University is committed to providing equal opportunity for students with disabilities. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) assists students with disabilities by providing services and arranging for reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access and equal academic opportunities. Students wishing to request services or accommodations must register and provide appropriate documentation to the DRC at cornerstone.wustl.edu. The DRC serves as a resource and advisor to students with disabilities and welcomes opportunities to consult with students, families, faculty, and staff. This online course has been designed with accessibility in mind. Be sure to visit the Canvas accessibility statement for more information on these features and reach out to your instructor should accessibility issues arise.

3. **INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:** (See details in “Course Details” section above.)

4. **PREFERRED NAME POLICY FOR STUDENTS:** The Preferred Name policy at Washington University in St. Louis lets students change their names in most university information systems without pursuing a legal name change. Learn how!
5. ACCOMMODATIONS BASED UPON SEXUAL ASSAULT: The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such measures may include but are not limited to: implementation of a no-contact order, course/classroom assignment changes, and other academic support services and accommodations. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu), Director of the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center. Ms. Webb is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University’s Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to speak with the Title IX Coordinator directly, Ms. Kennedy can be reached at (314) 935-3118, jw.kennedy@wustl.edu, or by visiting her office in Umrath Hall, Rm. 001. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to Sheryl Mauricio (314-935-4174 or smauricio@wustl.edu), Associate Dean for Students and Director of Student Conduct, or by contacting WUPD at (314) 935-5555 or your local law enforcement agency.

You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling (314) 935-8761 or visiting the 4th floor of Seigle Hall.

6. BIAS REPORTING: The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University’s Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team.

7. STATEMENT REGARDING COURSE EVALUATIONS: I sincerely value your feedback about this course. University College students are encouraged to submit course evaluations at midterm and end-of-semester.

Academic Support
All University College students are encouraged to take advantage of the following Academic Support services on campus:

- **Cornerstone:** Cornerstone provides access to academic peer mentoring, assists students with essential study and test-taking skills, and offers disability resources to students in need. In addition, Cornerstone connects first-generation college students to leadership programs and offers academic, research and career opportunities.
• **Writing Center:** The *Writing Center* staff members are writers helping writers through the process of revision. They are undergraduate students, graduate students and faculty members who love to write and to help others clarify their thoughts and ideas. The Writing Center and The Speaking Studio at Washington University in St. Louis provide free, one-on-one tutoring to all WUSTL students for any writing or public speaking project. Students interested in using the Writing Center should call in advance to make an appointment.

• **Arts & Sciences Computing:** *Arts & Sciences Computing* operates two labs that are open to students, faculty, and staff.

• **Library:** *Washington University Libraries* boast an impressive array of services, including course reserves, interlibrary loan, reserved study spaces, the Arc Computing Lab, and so much more.

**Disclaimer**
The instructor reserves the right to make modifications to this information throughout the semester.