

# *Advanced Characterization Syllabus*

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**Instructor**  
*Susan Hubbard*

**Quarter:** Spring 2024  
**Start – end date:** March 26 – May 14  
**Session day/time:** Tuesday, 1:30 – 4:00 pm CST  
**Course Code and Section:** WRIT33899 24S1

**Email**  
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**Course Overview**  
Characters are the driving force behind stories. Indelible, passionate, single-minded characters set stories in motion and provoke fierce oppositions that churn up story drama ripe with complications. Crafting characters of this caliber and placing them in high wire do or die situations sells stories across genres.

**Modality**  
Remote learning

In this class we'll go beyond the basics to strive for complex characters with tangled histories, misguided agendas, and flawed world views, driven forward by a core of unassailable truth. We'll pit them against other characters and sources of conflict to generate compelling plotlines, create suspense, and evoke deep subplots that add up to stories rich in meaning and entertainment value.

Participants will complete in-class and at-home exercises, workshop their work in class, and read, support, and critique each other's work. Participants will workshop their work twice in class during weeks two through seven. They may also submit shorter submissions during their non-workshop weeks and receive peer and instructor feedback on all work submitted. All submissions are due by 3:00 p.m. CT on the Sunday preceding each class.

**Prior to the first class:** watch the study film as the foundation for our introduction to course concepts on the first day of class and begin reading the study novel so that we can integrate it into our class discussions.

**Required texts:**

1. *The Holdovers*, 2023 film starring Paul Giamatti, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, and Dominic Sessa; written by David Hemingson and directed by Alexander Payne. Nominated for five 2024 Oscars including Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay. Winner 2024 Golden Globe for Best Actor for Paul Giamatti and Best Supporting Actress for Da'Vine Joy Randolph.
2. *Demon Copperhead*, 2022 novel by Barbara Kingsolver, Harper Perennial, ISBN-13 : 978-0063251984

\*\*\* **Study texts are subject to change.** Email the instructor after registering to confirm the final study texts. \*\*\*

## Course Schedule

Week	Topics and Assignments
Before First Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Watch the study film. It will provide the foundation for our first class discussion of course concepts.</li><li>• Read as much as you can of the study novel so that we can begin to integrate it into class discussions.</li></ul>
Week 1	<p><b>Complete the two assignments to complete in advance listed above</b> in preparation for our first class. Email the instructor after you have registered to confirm the final study texts and receive a link to the script.</p> <p><b>TOPICS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Personal truths &amp; driving desires</li><li>• Complications-inducing antagonistic forces</li><li>• Subtext: Images, settings and metaphors that elucidate character</li></ul>
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Legacies: Integrating backstories and motivations in scenes</li><li>• Group 1 workshops</li></ul>
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Characters in relationship; crafting compelling subplots</li><li>• Dialogue in relationship scenes</li><li>• Group 2 workshops</li></ul>
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Essential plot points, pivots, and character re-dedications</li><li>• Group 3 workshops</li></ul>
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suspense, tension; character doubt and despair</li><li>• Group 1 workshops</li></ul>
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positive, negative and neutral character arcs</li><li>• Group 2 workshops</li></ul>
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Character arcs, subplots and explosive themes</li><li>• Group 3 workshops</li></ul>
Week 8	Discussion of our study novel as a review of course concepts

## Accessing remote courses

Remote courses are taught through our Canvas platform. Approximately two weeks before your class begins, we will add you to your canvas site using the email address you provided at the time of registration. An invitation will then be sent to that email. Click the “Get Started” button in the email to begin the Canvas login

process. For step-by-step instructions, please visit <https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts>. Once you've created your Canvas account, you can access any Graham School canvas course for which you are registered at: <https://canvas.uchicago.edu>.

### **Accessibility information**

Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class session at 773.702.6000 or [disabilities@uchicago.edu](mailto:disabilities@uchicago.edu).

### **UChicago CARES Statement:**

The University and its faculty are committed to creating a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all students. At the University, all faculty, staff, graduate student instructors, and teaching assistants are considered "Individuals with Reporting Responsibilities" and are required to let the University's Title IX Coordinator know about any disclosures they receive from students about experiences of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment). This includes disclosures of experiences that happened before their time at the University. This is to ensure that all students who have experienced sexual misconduct receive support, options, and information about their rights and resources. Students are not obligated to respond to this outreach, and this will not generate a report to law enforcement.

For more information, please see [this handout for students](#) as well as the [University's Policy on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct](#) and [Policy on Title IX Sexual Harassment](#). You can also reach out directly for services and support from the [Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Support](#) by emailing [titleix@uchicago.edu](mailto:titleix@uchicago.edu).

If you, or another student you know, wishes to speak to a confidential resource who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact the Sexual Assault Dean on Call through the UChicago Safe App or at 773.834-HELP.

Questions? Contact Zoë Eisenman at [zmel@uchicago.edu](mailto:zmel@uchicago.edu).