

English 130: Critical Reading and Writing II – Fiction

Spring 2004, Section 1 TTh 9:30–10:45, Section 12 TTh 2:00–3:15

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Goals:

Why do authors write fiction? Why do people read it? Beginning with these fundamental questions, this course will teach you how to get more kinds of pleasure out of reading fiction. We'll start with a series of short stories to explore how a story produces emotional and intellectual effects through its structure, narrative techniques, and style. By becoming acquainted with a writer's tools, you can deepen your response to fiction, just as learning the techniques of music or a sport helps you to enjoy listening to or watching it, and allows you to appreciate a player's skill. We'll progress to longer stories with more complex features, building to the novel *Frankenstein*. From there we'll move to a collection of short stories by one author, to consider how stories may speak to each other even as they're speaking to us. As you hone your analytical skills, you'll also learn to use the writing process to develop and refine your interpretations, and ultimately to express them in the form of convincing critical arguments.

Texts:

- Ann Charters, *The Story and Its Writer*, Compact Sixth Edition (Bedford)
- Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Second Edition (Broadview)
- Raymond Carver, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please* (Vintage)
- Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*, Fifth Edition (St. Martin's)
- a good quality desk dictionary

Expectations:

Class participation and quizzes (10%): This is a discussion-based course. Plan to read all material closely, and be ready to participate actively and thoughtfully in class discussion. Don't be fooled by how short the early readings look! You will need to spend two to three hours preparing for each regular class session – more, of course, when papers are due.

To aid in class and paper preparation, keep a notebook of your responses to each reading. Use the handout "Analyzing Short Stories" to practice asking and answering questions

about the elements we'll be discussing in class. Then add your own reflections. Which aspects of the story intrigued you? Repelled you? Moved you? Confused you? Be sure to write down any questions you have. Bring your notebook to class. Although notebooks will be neither collected nor graded, you may turn them in as evidence of your class participation at the end of the semester.

Toward the end of the semester, each student will be responsible for leading a close reading discussion on a story or a segment of *Frankenstein*.

Regular attendance is essential in a discussion-centered course. More than two unexcused absences will lower your final grade. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to borrow the notes from another student, acquire any materials that were handed out, and learn if changes have been made to the syllabus.

Quizzes will be given as needed to ensure that everyone is keeping up with the reading. There will be no make-up quizzes.

Assignments (15%): To help you think critically about our readings and practice the steps leading up to paper-length analyses, for many sessions I will assign one-page written exercises. Since the writing in these exercises is informal and exploratory, assignments will receive general marks (√, √-, or √+) based on how thorough and thoughtful they are. For legibility's sake, I ask that assignments be typed. Assignments must be on time to receive credit.

Papers (75%): one 4–5pp paper (10%), two 4–6pp papers (20%each), and one 5–7pp paper (25%), each due *at the beginning of class* on the dates specified in the Schedule. We will discuss paper topics in advance. For papers we workshop in class, grades will be based on completion of first drafts, thoughtfulness of peer reviews, and quality of revision work as well as final drafts.

No extension of deadlines will be granted without prior permission or a dean's letter. Late papers will be accepted only at my discretion. If I accept one, it will drop 1/3 of a grade for each class period or part of a class period it is overdue. For example, if a paper is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, an A- essay submitted after Thursday 9:30 (section 12 2:00) and before Tuesday 9:30 (section 12 2:00) will receive a B+. I will not accept papers more than two class periods late.

Papers must be printed in a conventional twelve-point text font (like Times) and double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. In the upper left corner of the first page, list your name, my name, the course number, and the date on separate lines. At the center of the next line, please provide a title designed to prepare your reader for your argument. Remember to proofread carefully for spelling and mechanical errors before you print. I will not read papers whose pages are not numbered and stapled.

Academic Honesty: Your work should be your own and should be prepared specifically for this class. Since you are working to develop your own close reading skills in this course, please do not use any secondary sources except reference texts like dictionaries.

If some circumstance necessitates your making use of outside sources (*including web sites, books, roommates, etc.*) for language **or ideas**, you must acknowledge the sources in formal citations. Failure to acknowledge them constitutes plagiarism, a serious academic offense. First-time plagiarists earn a zero on the assignment, a letter in their college file, and two semesters of academic probation. Second-time offenders will be suspended for a year, and third-time offenders will be dismissed from the college. If you ever have questions about what needs to be cited and what does not, please ask me.

Please use MLA format for all citations. You'll find an overview of MLA format in *A Writer's Reference*. For issues the overview doesn't address, consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* in the Dinand Library reference room.

Schedule:

This schedule offers a tentative outline of the course; it may change as the course progresses. It does not contain all of the short exercises that will be assigned throughout the term.

Thurs. 1/22: Introductions

Tues. 1/27: Guy de Maupassant, "The Necklace," pp. 523–530
"The Elements of Fiction," pp. 1003–15

Thurs. 1/29: Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour," pp. 156–58
Anton Chekhov, "The Darling," pp. 134–43
Due: narrative structure exercise

Tues. 2/3: Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown," pp. 328–38
Stephen King, "The Man in the Black Suit," xerox

Thurs. 2/5: William Faulkner, "A Rose For Emily," pp. 268–75
"Writing About Short Stories," pp. 1016–27
Discussion of Paper 1
Due: characterization exercise

Tues. 2/10: Ambrose Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," pp. 63–69
Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants," pp. 339–43

Thurs. 2/12: James Joyce, "Araby," pp. 397–402
Due: narrative technique exercise

Tues. 2/17: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," pp. 305–18
Due: "Observe" exercise

Thurs. 2/19: James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues," pp. 24–47
Practice "Observe" exercise
Due: Paper 1 (4–5 pp)

- Tues. 2/24: “Sonny’s Blues,” cont’d
 Joyce Carol Oates, “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” pp. 618–31
In Class: “Collect” exercise
- Thurs. 2/26: “Sonny’s Blues,” cont’d
 Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” pp. 531–58
 Practice “Collect” exercise
- Tues. 3/2: “Bartleby, the Scrivener” cont’d
 Edward P. Jones, “The Girl Who Raised Pigeons” (xerox)
 Discussion of Paper 2
Due: “Claim” exercise
- Thurs. 3/4: Franz Kafka, “The Metamorphosis,” pp. 432–467
 Practice “Claim” exercise
 Discussion of thesis & topic sentences
- Mon. 3/8–
 Fri. 3/12 Spring break. No class.
- Tues. 3/16: “The Metamorphosis” cont’d
Due: possible thesis for a paper on “The Metamorphosis”
- Thurs. 3/18: Writing Workshop – peer reviews
Due: draft of Paper 2
- Tues. 3/23: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein* Volume 1, Introduction, Preface, and Letters 1–4, pp. 11–42 and 45–62
- Thurs. 3/25: *Frankenstein* Volume I, pp. 63–115
Due: Paper 2 (4–6 pp), with draft and peer reviews
- Tues. 3/30: *Frankenstein* Volume II, pp. 117–174
- Thurs. 4/1: *Frankenstein* Volume III, pp. 175–244
 Discussion of Paper 3
- Tues. 4/6: Raymond Carver, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*: “Fat,” “Neighbors,” and “The Idea,” pp. 3–21
- Thurs. 4/8: Easter recess. No class.
- Tues. 4/13: *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*: “They’re Not Your Husband” and “Are You a Doctor?” pp. 22–40
 Discussion of evidence & quotation, quick review of introduction and thesis
- Thurs. 4/15: Writing Workshop – peer reviews
Due: draft of Paper 3

- Tues. 4/20: *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?:* “Nobody Said Anything,” “What’s in Alaska?” and “Collectors,” pp. 43–61, 77–93, and 102–110.
- Thurs. 4/22: *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?:* “What Do You Do in San Francisco?” and “Put Yourself in My Shoes” pp. 111–153.
Discussion of Paper 4
Due: Paper 3 (5–7pp), with draft and peer reviews
- Tues. 4/27: *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?:* “Why, Honey?” “Bicycles, Muscles, Cigaretts,” and “What Is It?” pp. 170–76 and 195–218
- Thurs. 4/29: *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?:* “Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?” pp. 227–51.
Raymond Carver, “On Writing,” “Creative Writing 101,” and “The Ashtray,” pp. 941–50 in *The Story and Its Writer*.
Discussion of argument
- Tues. 5/4: Writing Workshop – peer reviews
Due: draft of Paper 4
- Wed. 5/5–
Fri. 5/7 Study period
- Mon. 5/10: **Due: Paper 4 (4–6pp), with draft and peer reviews**