

English 104 - Introduction to Literature: Fiction
Spring 2014 MWF 9:00 to 9:50 am in 106 Deady
CRN 34632

Prof. Gordon Sayre

gsayre@uoregon.edu * office 472 PLC * ph. 346-1313
Office hours are 10-noon Mondays and 2-3 pm Thursdays

Introduction to Literature: Fiction is designed for Freshmen and Sophomores, and meets the Arts & Letters group requirement. This course is not intended for Juniors, Seniors, or English majors. In this section of English 104 we will be reading exemplary short stories and novels centered on the theme of the double--tales of alter egos, split personalities, and peculiar psychological connections between characters. The texts were written over the past 200 years or so in the United States, Portugal and England.

Learning Objectives

In this course students will learn to read literary fiction by notable writers from various nations and cultures, and comprehend how the historical context and generic conventions inform these novels and short stories. In analyzing these works, you will learn some of the basic elements of narrative structure and techniques of fiction writing, including point of view, frame narratives, diegesis and denouement. The written assignments for this course ask students to write clear grammatical prose, and to develop critical and creative arguments.

Books (at the University Bookstore)

Please buy the edition indicated, ordered by the UO bookstore, so that you will have the same page numbers and editorial apparatus as the other students.

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness/The Secret Sharer* (Signet)

James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (Dover)

Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* (Penguin Classics)

Chuck Pahlaniuk, *Fight Club* (Henry Holt/Owl)

Samuel Clemens / Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson + "Those Extraordinary Twins"* (Oxford)

José Saramago, *The Double* (Harcourt/Harvest)

Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" our first reading, is available on-line, see URL below

Reading questions

You need to complete the entire reading assignment before coming to class, and bring the book with you to class. To help focus your reading, I have prepared one or two questions for each class meeting. These questions may address the text's plot, vocabulary, or literary techniques. The daily questions are found at the end of this syllabus, and on the blackboard site. You should keep these questions in mind as you read, and be prepared to discuss and write about them in class. The questions will often (but not always) form the basis for in-class essays or quizzes, which you can expect once a week. Alternatively, you may be asked to post answers on the blackboard site before class.

Writing Assignments

This is a reading-intensive and writing-intensive course. Although we will meet only three hours

a week, this four-credit class requires two critical papers of at least 4 pages each, as well as the weekly writing quizzes and a prepared essay to be written on the final exam, which constitutes a third paper. To do well on these essay assignments, you will need to devote substantial time to drafting, revising, and proof reading your work. When formatting papers, please follow the "requirements and advice for papers" handout posted on the blackboard site.

Blackboard Site

On the blackboard site you can check on the assignments and schedule, get paper topics, and participate in the on-line discussion board by posting your short responses or comments.

Attendance

I will take attendance by the method of a sign-in sheet that will circulate during each class session. Please sign your full name to verify your presence. Absences should be limited to four classes, and those missing five or more will be penalized on the final grade. Please don't tell me reasons for absences, save those in writing from a doctor or UO health services.

Academic Integrity:

All work submitted must be your own and must be written exclusively for this class. All writing assignments must address the required paper topics. All sources you use for your writing must be properly documented. If you have any questions about documentation or plagiarism, please ask me for clarification.

Classroom Electronic Communications Policy

In this class, cell phone messaging and the use of laptops is prohibited. All such devices should be stored in your bags or left at home. I encourage note-taking, on paper, and quizzes and exams will be written by hand on paper. Please see me during the first week if you have a reason to request an exception to this policy.

Grades:

in-class essays or quizzes, 3 points each	30 points
mid-term exam	10 points
first paper	20 points
second paper	20 points
final exam	20 points

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

3/31 Introduction to Poe and "William Wilson" -- read the story in digital edition at <http://www.eapoe.org/works/tales/wilwilc.htm>

4/2 Poe, "William Wilson"

4/4 Conrad, "The Secret Sharer" part 1

4/7 Conrad, "The Secret Sharer" part 2

post response to daily question

4/9 Pahlaniuk, *Fight Club*, chapters 1-8

4/11 *Fight Club*, chapters 9-18

- 4/14 watch scenes from film *Fight Club*
- 4/16 *Fight Club*, chapters 19-30 first paper due
- 4/18 Saramago, *The Double* pp. 1-86 [chapters 1-5]
- 4/21 *The Double* pp. 87-159 [chapters 6-9]
- 4/23 *The Double* pp. 160-227 [chapters 10-13]
- 4/25 *The Double* pp. 228-320 [chapters 14-19] post response to daily question
- 4/28 Mid-term Exam
- 4/30 Brown, *Edgar Huntly* chapters 1-7
- 5/2 *Edgar Huntly*, chapters 8-12
- 5/5 *Edgar Huntly* chapters 13-20
- 5/7 *Edgar Huntly* chapters, 21-27 post response to daily question
- 5/9 Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 1 (chapters 1-8, pp 1-60 in Dover ed.)
- 5/12 *Frankenstein*, vol. 2
- 5/14 *Frankenstein* vol. 3
- 5/16 watch scenes from *The Bride of Frankenstein* second paper due
- 5/19 Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* chapters 1-8
- 5/21 *Pudd'nhead Wilson* chapters 9-15
- 5/23 *Pudd'nhead Wilson* chapters 16-end
- 5/26 No class-Memorial Day holiday
- 5/28 Twain, "Those Extraordinary Twins"
- 5/30 Johnson, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* chapters 1-4
- 6/2 *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* chapters 5-8
- 6/4 *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* chapters 9-11
- 6/6 excerpt from W. E. B. Du Bois on "double consciousness" and review for final exam
- 6/12 Final exam at 10:15 am

Daily Reading Questions

Poe's "William Wilson"

April 2nd - What evidence can you find that the second William Wilson may be only an hallucination or psychic projection of the first? What do you think happens at the end of this story?

Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*

April 4th - On the third page of the story the narrator refers to "that ideal conception of one's own personality every man sets up for himself secretly." How does this line turn out to be important in the story?

-or-

When the captain of the *Sephora* is introduced at the beginning of part II of the story, how does the vocabulary of the passage convey the narrator's unfavorable impression of the man? List several significant words and analyze the impressions they create.

April 7th - The story uses a good deal of nautical terminology which may be unfamiliar. Try looking up three such words in a dictionary, or, if you don't find them, venture a guess. Then, compare Leggatt's account of setting the reefed foresail on the *Sephora*, which occurs midway through part I, with the captain's version early in part II. What is the key difference, upon which Leggatt asserts his righteousness?

Palahniuk's *Fight Club*

April 9th - In the first few chapters, how do you get a sense that the narrator is anxious about his masculinity? What kinds of behaviors or symbols does he believe are masculine? Are these things that he is comfortable having or doing?

April 11th - Perhaps the most venerable form of the Double in western literature is that of the soul (or character) divided into good and evil manifestations: think of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, or of the mythology of lycanthropy and vampirism. How does *Fight Club* update these traditions to make them suit a modern setting and sensibility?

April 14th - At what point in the story (or film, if you saw it before reading the novel) did you realize that Tyler Durden and the narrator were the same person? How does the film overcome the challenge of concealing or representing this phenomenon?

April 16th - The film adds new elements to the doubling of Tyler and the narrator beyond what is in the novel. For instance: How does the briefcase resemble William Wilson's cloak? Did you recognize any Portland locations in the film? How did the filmmakers use the settings and colors to create an appropriate mood for the story?

Saramago's *The Double*

April 18th - Discuss a few of the many proverbs--some colloquial and some invented by the author--that are recited in the novel by the narrator and main character.

April 21st - Describe the character called "Common Sense." What purpose does it serve in *The Double*? Why does Common Sense only talk to, or appear to, Tertuliano?

-or-

One of the doubles in this novel is a history teacher; the other is a movie actor. What might each profession symbolize in Saramago's novel? Also, along those same lines, what do you make of the fact that a math teacher makes the suggestion that sets this entire plot in motion?

April 23rd - Discuss how women are portrayed in this novel: Tertuliano's girlfriend, António Claro's wife, Tertuliano's mother, etc. Does the author seem to regard women in a manner different from men? Defend your view by citing passages from the text. Who is Cassandra and why does this allusion add to the figures of women in the novel?

April 25th - Analyze the brief final chapter that concludes *The Double*. Were you surprised, perplexed, or gratified by it? How did the ending change your view the novel's form, or of its protagonist?

Brown's *Edgar Huntly*

April 30th - Huntly admits to a strong curiosity about Clithero. In chapter 2 he says, "Curiosity is vicious, if undisciplined by reason, and inconducive to benefit." Yet just after this he adds, "Curiosity, like virtue, is its own reward." How does Huntly justify his curiosity and his pursuit of Clithero through the middle part of the novel? Do you think his actions are virtuous?

May 2nd - Detective novels often employ the device of doubling between the detective and the criminal. For example, it is common for investigators to try to recreate the scene of the crime and think like the criminal. Edgar Allan Poe is often credited with inventing this motif with his character C. Auguste Dupin, who appeared in three of his tales. How does *Edgar Huntly* also follow this pattern?

May 5th - Chapters 14 and 15 may seem like a digression from the plot of the novel. To see why it is relevant, think of the question of whether or not Huntly should believe Weymouth's story as related to the issue of sympathy with another's emotional state, such as we discussed it with regard to Clithero in the opening chapters of the book. How does Weymouth's situation actually resemble Edgar's own? What do Edgar's lines addressed to Mary Waldegrave

reveal about his relationship with her?

May 7th – A mystery or detective novel usually ends with a *dénouement*, a French word meaning “untying of a knot.” In this concluding section of *Edgar Huntly*, the mysteries of who committed the crimes and how are resolved. Describe how the final chapters of *Edgar Huntly* resolve mysteries created by the main characters’ sleepwalking, through which they performed actions they were not conscious of.

Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

May 9th – *Edgar Huntly* and *Frankenstein* are both Gothic novels. The Gothic mode was the textual ancestor to the horror film genre, known for its dark, scary settings and frightening monsters or villains. But it also is characterized by a tension between supernatural and rational systems of belief. For example: do werewolves or vampires really exist?, or are they mythical? Find some elements of the Gothic in the first chapters of *Frankenstein*.

May 12th – Near the end of volume 2 Victor says “I compassionated him, and sometimes felt a wish to console him, but...as I could not sympathize him, I had no right to withhold from him the small portion of happiness which was yet in my power to bestow.” What is the distinction between compassion and sympathy in this passage? Is Victor’s sense of rights or justice correct? Compare this attitude with *Edgar Huntly*’s toward Clithero.

May 14th – Discuss the question of the ethics of Dr. Frankenstein’s creation of his monster in the context of recent debates over genetically modified organisms. Should Victor be held responsible for the actions of his creature?

Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson*

May 19th: The two plot lines of *Pudd’nhead Wilson* revolve around a pair of infants, native to Dawson’s Landing, who are switched in the cradle, and a pair of twins, outsiders to the town. Compare the two pairs and discuss how “twinning” might be defined broadly or metaphorically, and how it can pose questions about the ways in which two individuals’ fates and personalities are linked together.

May 21st: Tom Driscoll, the villain of the story, is the son of Roxy and Cecil Burleigh Essex. Chambers, who is Percy Driscoll’s son, is raised as a slave. What accounts for the eventual contrast between these two characters: nature or nurture, blood or upbringing? Advance your own opinion on the matter, and speculate on the message Twain was trying to deliver.

May 23rd: How does the ending of *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, with the court trial scene, constitute a *dénouement*? Compare it to that in *Edgar Huntly*.

May 28th: “Those Extraordinary Twins” is the discarded or alternate version of Twain’s novel, which he says he had to surgically separate from the final version. How does making Luigi and Angelo conjoined twins comment upon the relationship between Tom and Chambers in the novel, and the interdependence of blacks and whites in the American South?

Johnson’s *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*

May 30th - What does the narrator’s reaction to Atlanta when he first arrives there reveal about him?

June 2nd - Describe the narrator’s relationship to his patron, “my millionaire,” in chapter 8. Why is he drawn toward this man?

-or-

To which of the three classes of black residents in Jacksonville does the narrator fit in? What opportunities and problems does this offer for him?

June 4th – In class we watched several film clips of “cakewalk” dances and talked about the tradition of black minstrelsy in American theatre and film. How does this constitute a process of racial mimicry and mockery? Why do you think the narrator of the novel says that the cakewalk is something to be proud of?

