

English 104: Introduction to Fiction “Body Language”

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CRN: 12176
Term: Fall 2014
Location: 142 HEDCO
Time: MWF 11:00-11:50

Course Description

This course introduces students to the study of fiction by exploring a selection of short stories, two novellas, and a novel. In addition to enjoying these texts for their own sake, we will read with an eye to literary structure, learning how techniques like point of view, characterization, and setting enhance the effects that stories produce on their readers. What we will not do is approach literature as though it has a fixed meaning, something to “get” and then move on. Instead, we will cultivate our powers of observation, helping each other to make sense of both the most mundane and the most curious features of our texts.

To focus our studies, I have selected stories that emphasize the peculiarities of the human body. The texts will span the early-nineteenth and late-twentieth centuries, and they will cover topics as diverse as plague, madness, disability, disfigurement, and “tainted blood.” We will certainly take each text on its own terms, but our discussions might start with questions like: how does our text represent the body? How does the writer treat illness, disease, or dysfunction? How do issues of identity (like class, race, and gender) change writers’ attitudes toward the body? What do those choices illustrate about the writer’s culture—or even our own?

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Perform “close readings” of literary texts to illustrate *how* those stories mean what they mean
- Develop an intriguing argument about the importance of a story’s literary strategy
- Write a focused analytical essay in clear, grammatical prose
- Assert a strong argumentative thesis about a story’s literary features
- Identify and analyze salient textual evidence to defend an essay’s thesis

Required Texts and Materials

Dracula, by Bram Stoker (ISBN: 9780141439846; available in the Duck Store)
Selected Short Fiction from Project Gutenberg (see Course Documents folder on Blackboard)

Assignments and Grading

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| Short Story Kit | 15% |
| Poetics Presentation | 15% |
| Midterm Exam | 20% |
| Essay #1 | 20% |
| Essay #2 | 30% |

Short Story Kit

You will complete a short story kit early in the term. This assignment requires you to annotate a short story, calling attention to its basic literary features, major themes, distinctive word choices, and eccentricities. Using that information, you will then generate a written “close reading” of a preselected passage from the text. This brief essay (1-2 pages) will assert an argumentative claim about the poetics of the passage in question (what the text tells us and how). Your close-reading essay will need to cite and analyze textual details to defend your thesis. Specific instructions, grading criteria, and tips for this and all other assignments are forthcoming.

Poetics Presentation

Once this term, you will join forces with three colleagues to lead class discussion. Your group will highlight a theme, problem, or strategy in your chosen story. You will then pick out two passages for discussion, using “close readings” of them to show how they develop the problem you raised. *At least one week in advance* of the presentation, you will meet with me to discuss a written plan for your presentation, including the passages you will discuss, preliminary conclusions about them, and a sketch of what your group will do to instruct the class.

Midterm Exam

There will be a midterm in Week #6. This exam will consist largely of multiple-choice questions that test your reading comprehension and your knowledge of key literary terms discussed in class. The exam will also include a few short answer prompts. Any material—from readings, class discussions, or group presentations—is fair game for the exam. Except in the direst situations, the exam cannot be rescheduled.

Essays

This class is designed to help you generate arguments about a story’s poetics (how its literary features further its narrative goals). Our two essays give you chances to practice this crucial skill. The first will be 4-5 pages long. It will require you to generate an argument supported by close readings of a single text. The second will be 5-7 pages; its argument will likely depend on close readings from two texts.

Course Policies

Attendance

Regular attendance and participation are vital to this course because stories are living documents: their meanings endure and change because of your discussions about them. Come to class on time and having read the assigned texts. Be prepared to participate in class-wide discussions and group activities.

You may miss *three* classes without penalty. Your final grade will drop 1/3 of a letter grade—e.g., a B+ drops to a B—for each subsequent absence. In spite of any absence, you are responsible for knowing any material covered in class and for making sure your work is turned in on time. Three weeks of absences will result in course failure. If you cannot come to class for *any* reason, please stay in contact with me.

Readings

Most of our readings are available for free online through Project Gutenberg. I have included MS Word versions of these readings on our Blackboard page (see Course Documents). *You must always bring some form of the reading to class.* I recommend printing each story so you can take notes in the margins and highlight important passages, but you may save the readings to your laptop or iPad and bring that to class. If you expect problems accessing the texts, meet with me as soon as possible to discuss other arrangements.

Technology in the Classroom

Because so much of the course material is available electronically, you are welcome to bring a laptop or iPad to class. If you do, refrain from randomly surfing the Web or getting on Facebook. Activities like those are distracting to people who want to get the most out of class time. Such distractions also signal your unwillingness to add to class discussion; thus, I will mark each instance as an absence, *often without notification.*

Late Work (*Please read this policy carefully*)

All assignments are due *at the beginning of class* when indicated on the schedule of assignments. Failing to turn in an assignment by the start of class means that that assignment is late. An assignment will be marked down a full letter grade for each calendar day it is late (i.e. an A- paper turned in one day late will earn a B-; two days late brings the grade to a C-). If you anticipate difficulty making a deadline, contact me at least 48 hours in advance to see if we can make alternate arrangements to avoid late penalties. (Policy continues on next page.)

Note that I will *not* excuse late work because of printer problems. Technology can be treacherous, but you should be organized enough to anticipate those issues. If you have a printer malfunction, you can avoid a penalty by emailing me your assignment *before class*. However, I will not grade the electronic version: you must submit a hard copy to receive a grade. I will not remind you to bring the hard copy.

Blackboard and Email

You should regularly check the class’s Blackboard page. I will post announcements, class materials, and the like to that page, so it is imperative to stay updated with that page. The same goes for your university email. If I need to contact you, I will email your UO address (rather than a Gmail or Hotmail account).

Assignment Submission and Formatting

You must submit all assignments in *hard copy*, though I reserve the right to ask everyone to submit coursework via SafeAssign (on Blackboard). I will not grade assignments submitted by email, except in special circumstances. Each essay must be double-spaced, using 12 point Times New Roman font and 1” margins on all sides. Unless you ask in advance to use another citation apparatus, I expect you to follow MLA citation and formatting guidelines. See the “MLA Formatting Sheet” on Blackboard.

Outside Research

None of our assignments require outside research. In fact, I strongly discourage research because I want to hear *your* thoughts about our texts rather than scholarly theories about them. If you need to do research, you must document that research using MLA guidelines; moreover, *you must get approval from me* in advance of the assignment’s deadline. Assignments using unauthorized research will receive failing grades (50%). Papers plagiarized in part or whole are subject to the Academic Honest policy (below).

Academic Honesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. Unacknowledged borrowing of others' words or ideas constitutes plagiarism, a serious academic crime that results in disciplinary action up to expulsion. If you use someone else's words or ideas, you must quote them and provide relevant citation information. If you have any questions about plagiarism or the University's policy on it, talk with me or refer to the summary of the Code of Student Conduct on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website. In cases where academic dishonesty has been clearly established, awarding an F for the final course grade is the standard practice of the English Department, so it is imperative that you speak with me about any questions regarding outside sources.

Access

If you have a disability (physical, learning, or emotional) which you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities.

Schedule of Readings & Assignments

This schedule is tentative and subject to change. BB = Text Available on Blackboard D = Penguin *Dracula*

WEEK ONE: Genre and Plot

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| M 9/29 | Syllabus; Introduction to course | |
| W 10/1 | Charlotte Stoker, “The Cholera Horror” (D 412-418) Edgar Allan Poe, “The Masque of the Red Death” (BB) | |
| F 10/3 | The Brothers Grimm, “The Girl Without Hands” (BB) | |

WEEK TWO: Narration and Time

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| M 10/6 | Kate Chopin, “The Story of an Hour” (BB) | |
| W 10/8 | Gabriel Garcia Marquez, “The Third Resignation” (BB) | |

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| F 10/10 | Lecture on Close Reading—No Additional Reading | |
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WEEK THREE: Point of View

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| M 10/13 | Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (BB) | Story Kit #1 Due |
| W 10/15 | Gilman (cont.) | |
| F 10/17 | <i>Metamorphosis</i> (sections I-II) | |

WEEK FOUR: Characterization

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| M 10/20 | <i>Metamorphosis</i> , cont. (sections III-end) | |
| W 10/22 | Ernest Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants” (BB) | |
| F 10/24 | Writing Papers for English Classes—No Additional Reading | |

WEEK FIVE: Symbol and Allegory

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| M 10/27 | Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Rappaccini’s Daughter” (BB); PINK Group Presentation | |
| W 10/29 | Rappaccini’s Daughter (cont.) | |
| F 10/31 | Hawthorne, “The Birthmark” (BB) | Essay #1 Due |

WEEK SIX: Style

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| M 11/3 | Midterm Exam | |
| W 11/5 | Charles Chesnutt, “The Goophered Grapevine” (BB) | |
| F 11/7 | Junot Diaz, “Ysrael” (BB) GREEN Group Presentation | |

WEEK SEVEN: Irony

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| M 11/10 | Stephen Crane, <i>The Monster</i> (I-XIII) (BB) | |
| W 11/12 | Crane, <i>The Monster</i> (XIV-end) (BB) | |
| F 11/14 | Flannery O’Connor, “The Life You Save May Be Your Own” ORANGE Group Presentation | |

WEEK EIGHT: Novel, Form, and Discourse

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| M 11/17 | <i>Dracula</i> (Chapters I-V) | |
| W 11/19 | <i>D</i> (VI-VII) YELLOW Group Presentation | |
| F 11/21 | <i>D</i> (VIII-IX) | |

WEEK NINE: Setting

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| M 11/24 | <i>D</i> (X-XIV); PURPLE Group Presentation | |
| W 11/26 | <i>D</i> (XV-XVI) | |
| F 11/28 | No Class—Happy Thanksgiving! | |

WEEK TEN: Literary Theory

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| M 12/1 | <i>D</i> (XVII-XXII) BLUE Group Presentation | |
| W 12/3 | <i>D</i> (XXIII-XXV) | |
| F 12/5 | <i>D</i> (XXVI-end); Conclusions about the course | |

Finals Week:

M 12/8: **Essay #2 Due**