English 104/22434: Introduction to Fiction

Tuesday & Thursday, 10am-11.20am, 185 Lillis Hall

Goals of the course:
This course aims to introduce students to the study of fiction through discussion of a series of short narratives and critical readings. We will analyze and discuss various techniques of fiction, including: types of narration and the handling of time; characterization and dialogue; what makes for realism in a story; and how fiction relates to issues of political and historical concern. It will address some big questions: why are stories so important to our lives? What special properties do they have as a way of communicating experience and ideas? What exactly is a story anyway? And what is the purpose of studying literature beyond the pleasure of reading? The syllabus includes work from a variety of cultural traditions and literary critics, but has a focus on the history of American short stories and novellas. Students will develop their reading and writing skills together, and will have chance to write critical and creative pieces in response to the reading material.

Course reading:
You must complete all the essential reading listed for each seminar, and come prepared to discuss it. This is a discussion-based classroom, and I expect everyone to have something to contribute in every session. Through the class participation grade and the quizzes grade, your preparation for each class will make up a substantial proportion of your final grade for the course.

Assignments and grading:
Class participation 10%; quizzes 20%; response papers 40%, final exam 30%.

20% Paper I, 3-4 pages
20% Paper II, 3-4 pages
30% Final exam, in class, Thursday March Monday, June 7. No early or makeup exams.
15% Quizzes: there will be five pop quizzes throughout the term. Your best three quizzes will count towards your final grade.
15% Participation and in-class work.

Papers:
Questions will be circulated for papers two weeks in advance of the paper deadline.

In-class quizzes:
These will be based on the assigned reading for the day and will test your knowledge of characterization, plot, key themes etc. In order to do well in them you need to have followed the reading schedule. You must always bring pen and paper to class. Your best three quizzes will count, and each will consist of no more than 5% of the total class grade.

Class participation:
I will reward students who approach discussion in an enthusiastic, informed, and collegial way. Both I and your fellow students will appreciate informed opinions, critical insight, a willingness to take a few risks, and respect for others. I will occasionally set small in-class activities and presentations which will also count towards this grade.

Final exam:
This will comprise of a list of questions prompting you to offer your own interpretations of the fiction we have considered. You will be expected to discuss at least two stories or essays in detail, stories/essays which can be of your choosing. Questions will not ask you to discuss specific stories.
Questions will be based on thematic, formal, or ethical issues connected to the material we have covered. A series of mock questions will be released two weeks before the final exam to help you prepare.

**Attendance:**
At the beginning of each class you should sign the attendance register. You are allowed two unexcused absences. Missing three classes or more without adequate excuse and documentation (such as a doctor’s note) will result in your overall grade being lowered by 2/3 of a letter grade for each absence. Five such absences results in a failing grade.

**Classroom Electronic Communications Policy:**
In this class, cell phone use and the use of tablet devices is prohibited. All such devices should be stored in your bags or left at home. Laptop computers are permitted, but only for activities related to the content of the class.

**Plagiarism:**
All written work should be either your own or contain clear references to your sources; one of the hallmarks of good scholarship is being able to use the insights of others while keeping your ideas distinct from theirs. I expect you to abide by university regulations on the proper acknowledgement of source material, and to follow accepted conventions for how to reference scholarship. I advise you to check on the university’s student conduct code (http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx) for information about this; I recommend MLA style for the presentation of your research papers. Information about how to prepare bibliographies and citations in MLA style can be found at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/), and at the Knightcite MLA citation application (http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/).

**Late papers:**
Papers should be submitted in class on the day of the deadline listed. I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade for each day a paper is late. I will not accept any paper that is more than a week late. Any request for extensions will be carefully considered, but should be made as far in advance of the due date as possible.

**Disability:**
If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to discuss this with me as soon as possible. Also please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter outlining your approved accommodations. [Disability Services: disabsrv@darkwing.uoregon.edu, 346-1155; http://ds.uoregon.edu/].

**Office Hours:**
Tuesday 4-6pm and Thursday 4-5pm, room PLC 473. My e-mail is whalan@uoregon.edu; my office phone is (541) 346-3926.

**ESSENTIAL READING:** please purchase these texts or arrange access for them for the duration of the course. These texts are available at the Duckstore.


IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU BRING THESE BOOKS—AND PRINTOUTS OF INDIVIDUAL STORIES FROM BLACKBOARD—TO CLASS. You should also get into the habit of marking up these stories as you go along: it will help you focus your reactions and ideas for class discussion, and will improve the detail and insight of your written papers.

READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

All readings marked [A] are available in the Norton Anthology of Short Fiction, Shorter 7th Ed.

WEEK ONE: BEGINNING TO READ STORIES

1/10: Introduction and syllabus distribution


WEEK TWO: GOTHIC AND SYMBOLISM


WEEK THREE: REALISM.

1/24: FIRST PAPER DUE.


WEEK FOUR: GROWING UP AND EPIPHANY.

1/31: Look at http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0333.html, which collects several versions of the fairy-tale “Little Red Riding Hood.” These were transcribed by some of Europe’s most famous folklore collectors, including Charles Perrault and The Brothers Grimm. Read as many as you wish, but we will focus on “Little Red Riding Hood” (Charles Perrault), “Little Red Cap” (Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm), and “Little Red Hat.” Also read Angela Carter’s “The Company of Wolves” and Bruno Bettelheim’s “Fairy Tales and the Existential Predicament,” pp.6-11 [both on Blackboard].


WEEK FIVE: DIALOGUE AND CHARACTER.


WEEK SIX: MODERNISM AND SUBJECTIVITY


2/16: William Faulkner, “Barn Burning” [A], “A Rose for Emily” [on Blackboard]

WEEK SEVEN-EIGHT: RAYMOND CARVER’s What We Talk About When We Talk About Love

2/21: SECOND PAPER DUE.


WEEK EIGHT-NINE: STORIES AND SYMPATHY.


3/6: Richard Wright, “The Man who was Almost a Man,” [A], Flannery O’Connor, “Everything that Rises Must Converge,” [A].

WEEK NINE-TEN: STORIES AND CONFLICT.

3/8: Tim O’Brien, “The Things they Carried [A],” “How to Tell a True War Story” (from The Things They Carried, pp.73-91 [on Blackboard].


3/15: FINAL EXAM