ENG 104 Introduction to Fiction
CRN 32130, 4 credits, Spring 2020
Monday/Wednesday 10-11:20am, Hedco 146
Professor Thorsson (thorsson@uoregon.edu)
Office Hours: Please email me to make an appointment to meet via Skype or phone.

Course Description
In this class, we will read short stories by African American women writers. These texts will be our common ground as we learn to think deeply and write precisely about fiction in general and the short story form in particular. We will study each story with attention to its specific formal strategies, thematic concerns, and political, historical, and literary contexts. This means we will read for, discuss, and write about textual details such as voice, structure, character, syntax, and imagery; ways that our authors navigate ideas about race, gender, sexuality, ability, and class; and the relationship of each text to the African American literary tradition. This class requires substantial reading, at least 8-10 pages of writing, and vigorous participation.

This course counts toward the Core Education group requirement in Arts & Letters.

The course counts as a lower-division elective for the English Minor and for the English Major, but only one Introduction to Literature course (ENG 104, 105, 106) may be used toward requirements for the major or minor.

Learning Outcomes
The goal of this course is to help you engage with literature, improving your writing, reading, and critical thinking skills in the process. To that end, you will:

1. Read literary and cultural texts with comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions.
2. Draw on relevant information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts.
3. Offer written interpretive analyses of literary texts.
4. Write in clear prose with correct grammar and correct citation.
5. Use logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments about specific texts.

Remote Learning Plan
While UO is not holding in-person classes, we will work together to help you learn remotely. This is not an online course. Rather, I have adapted this syllabus to allow your learning to happen as best it can during times we cannot meet in person. We are in this together, we will be patient and flexible with each other, and we will figure it out as we go!

I am available via email, phone, and Skype to talk with you about our readings, assignments, or anything else. I will respond to emails within 24 hours during the week and may take a bit longer to respond on the weekend. If you would like to talk on the phone or meet via Skype, please email me at thorsson@uoregon.edu to make an appointment.
In the case of the current health emergency and in the case of any emergency that disrupts academic activities, our course requirements, assignments, due dates, and grading percentages are subject to change. I will communicate any changes as soon as possible via Canvas and email.

Whether or not we are meeting in person, please continue to do the reading and other assignments per the schedule below on this syllabus.

**Required Texts**
All assigned readings and handouts on the schedule below are in the files section of the Canvas website for our class.

**Course Requirements and Policies**
You will spend more than half of the time you devote to this course actively reading our assigned texts. Active reading means reading with a pen in your hand, taking notes, writing down observations and questions you have about the text, and looking up words you don't know or that the author is using in a surprising way.

Given the circumstances this term, I will not record attendance and will not penalize students for missed classes.

The Writing Associates Program offers free, one-on-one peer tutoring for students in 100- and 200-level English and Composition classes. Writing Associate tutors are available to help students with any aspect of their writing for this course, from learning how to write about literature and media to crafting clear and effective arguments. To make an appointment with a Writing Associate, go to [https://writingassociates.uoregon.edu](https://writingassociates.uoregon.edu). There will likely be remote tutoring options during weeks that classes are not meeting in person.

Online tutoring will be available starting April 6th, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm through UO's Online Writing Lab (OWL), a free service that allows all UO students to submit work via an online portal and receive detailed feedback within 24 hours. Log in at [https://owl.uoregon.edu/](https://owl.uoregon.edu/).

If you anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please let me know soon. If applicable, please request that the Accessible Education Center (aec.uoregon.edu/) send me a letter outlining your approved accommodations.

The University Student Conduct Code ([dos.uoregon.edu/conduct](https://dos.uoregon.edu/conduct)) defines academic misconduct. Students may not commit or attempt to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Students should acknowledge and document all sources of information. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, see me.

UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender-based stalking. If you have experienced gender-based violence, know that you are not alone. UO has staff trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, getting academic and housing accommodations, getting legal protective orders, and accessing other help. If you tell me about harassment or assault, I am not required to report this information to anyone
unless you request that I do so. I am required to consult with a confidential UO employee (someone with legal confidentiality, such as a counseling professional or a crisis center advocate) to ensure that you are supported. If you decide to make a report, I and other UO employees will help you to do so. My goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available and that you have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO’s 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options or visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

In this class, we are studying literature of the United States in its historical and political contexts. This means that we will read about and discuss racial and sexual violence. There are incidents of both in our readings, some of which include explicit language and graphic sexual acts, both consensual and not. Please consider whether the content of the course may be disturbing to a degree that interferes with your learning. We will not use the n-word in this class, even if it appears in our texts. We will not use the f-word in this class, regardless of a person’s perceived sexual orientation or gender expression. When reading aloud from a text, for example, we will simply pause for a beat or say "n" or "n's." We will work together to apply this policy to other slurs and biased language as needed over the course of the term.

**Grading**

Canvas Discussion Posts 80%
Concluding Reflection 20%

Grade Point Distribution:

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**Assignments**

Please complete all assignments via Canvas by **10am** on the due dates listed below on our schedule. Please read assignment instructions on the schedule below, look at the assignment on Canvas, and then email me if you have questions.

All assignments are open-book.

Regardless of whether we are able to meet in person or not, I will grade generously this term given the circumstances we are working under. If there are things I can do to make it possible or easier for you to complete each assignment by the time and day it is due, please let me know.
Schedule

Week One
M 3/30  **Post** answers to the three questions in "Welcome to ENG 104" discussion by 10am on Monday 3/30.
**Read** the Syllabus available in the files section on Canvas.
**Post** any questions you have about the syllabus to Syllabus Questions discussion by 10am on Tuesday 3/31.
**Read** posts and replies to both above discussion threads.

W 4/1  **Read** Paule Marshall, "Reena" (1962)
**Post** one question or observation about this story to the "Reena" discussion.
**Read** your classmates' questions and observations in the "Reena" discussion.
**Post** one reply to one classmate's question or observation in the "Reena" discussion.

Week Two
M 4/6  **Read** Toni Cade Bambara, "Gorilla, My Love" (1972)
**Listen** to Hattie Winston reading "Gorilla, My Love" here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2EvMCWfn08](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2EvMCWfn08)

W 4/8  **Read** Toni Cade Bambara, "My Man Bovanne" (1972)
**Listen** to the interview with Toni Cade Bambara by Kay Bonetti available in the files section of Canvas.
**Post** 1 paragraph to the Toni Cade Bambara thread explaining a connection you notice between one thing Bambara says in the interview and one sentence or phrase from one of the two stories we've read this week. Your paragraph should quote from both the interview and the story.
**Read** your colleagues' posts to the Toni Cade Bambara discussion.

Week Three
M 4/13  **Read** the Close Reading Handout available in the files section on Canvas.
**Post** any questions you have about the handout or about close reading to the Close Reading Questions discussion.
**Read** posts and replies to Close Reading Questions discussion.

W 4/15  **Read** Alice Walker, "Everyday Use" (1973)

Week Four
M 4/20  **Read** Toni Morrison, "Recitatif" (1983)

W 4/22  **Post** to the Character Sketch discussion. Your post should be 1-2 paragraphs about one character of your choice from one story we've read so far. Tell us the
character's name (if you know it) and the title of the story in which that character appears. Describe your chosen character and say what you know about them. Name two ways the author of the story conveyed, revealed, or implied the traits of the character you have just described. You may want to quote from the story you choose.

Read your classmates' posts to the Character Sketch discussion.

**Week Five**

**M 4/27**
Read Octavia Butler, "The Evening the Morning and the Night" (1987)

**W 4/29**
Post to "The Evening the Morning and the Night" discussion. Your post should be 1 paragraph and should answer the following questions: Do you think Butler uses "Duryea-Gode disease" in this story as a metaphor for race? Why or why not? Is it a metaphor for something else? Please quote a phrase or sentence from the story supports your answer.

Read your classmates' posts to "The Evening the Morning and the Night" discussion.

**Week Six**

**M 5/4**

**W 5/6**
Post one sentence from "Snakes" that you find useful, confusing, beautiful, or otherwise worth special attention and 2-3 sentences saying why you chose that sentence and what you think about it to the "Snakes" discussion thread.

Read your colleagues' posts to the "Snakes" discussion thread.

**Week Seven**

**M 5/11**
Read Danielle Evans, "Robert E. Lee is Dead" (2010), pages 199-212.

**W 5/13**
Read Danielle Evans, "Robert E. Lee is Dead" (2010), pages 212-229.
Post one sentence from "Robert E. Lee is Dead" that you find useful, confusing, beautiful, or otherwise worth special attention and 2-3 sentences saying why you chose that sentence and what you think about it to the "Robert E. Lee is Dead" discussion thread.

Read your colleagues' posts to the "Robert E. Lee is Dead" discussion thread.

**Week Eight**

**M 5/18**
Watch Danielle Evans interview with Prof. Paul Peppis (28 minutes) on UO Today here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8g65fFRJ-bM
Post to the Danielle Evans open discussion any connections you notice between what Evans says in this interview and the stories we read, questions or comments
about the interview or the stories, and/or replies to your classmates' post. This is an open, threaded discussion for you to talk with each other about the Evans stories and interview.

W 5/20  Read your colleagues' posts to the Danielle Evans open discussion. Reply if you wish. This thread will be open until 5pm on Friday for you to continue discussing the Danielle Evans stories and interview.

Week Nine
M 5/25  Memorial Day – No Class

Watch N.K. Jemisin's 2018 Hugo Award Best Novel acceptance speech (6 minutes) here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lFybhfRxoVM

Week Ten
Post to the Favorite/Least Favorite discussion one paragraph telling us which story of those we read this term is your favorite and why and one paragraph telling us which story we read this term is your least favorite and why.
Read your colleagues' posts on the Favorite/Least Favorite discussion.

W 6/3  Concluding Reflection Due (2-3 pages)
Please write 2-3 pages of concluding reflection on our study of African American women's short stories this term. You may approach this assignment any way you wish. You might identify one or two themes or formal strategies you have observed in our readings and explain how those characteristics work in two or three of our readings. You might write about all or part of one text you read this term that you think is especially useful, beautiful, or important. You might use our Close Reading Handout to offer observation, analysis, and argument about a passage of text from any of our readings. You might write about what has been difficult, useful, annoying, or inspiring about studying fiction during this particular term. This is a written assignment that you will turn in via Canvas to me. Unlike our discussion posts, which the whole class will see, this assignment is one that only I will see.