

# English 104: Introduction to Fiction

**Term: Fall 2020**

**CRN# 12453**

**Instructor: Parker Smith**

**Zoom Meeting Times: MWF, 8-8:50 AM**

**Office Hours: I'll be available for Zoom meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 – 4:00 pm.**

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## Course Description

In this class we will be reading and discussing a variety of different types of fiction. The stories and novels selected for this course traverse a wide historical, geographical, and stylistic range. Many of the authors we'll read are dead and famous; others are alive and obscure; and many are unfortunately neither alive nor famous. As the curator of these diverse stories and novels, I had two goals in mind: first, to introduce you to texts that demonstrate the fundamental principles of fiction writing and storytelling; and second, to afford you the opportunity to have a passionate encounter (either of love or hate) with a fictional text. Both these intentions are meant to turn you into a self-reliant reader with a critical vocabulary for writing and talking about literature as well as an ability to select texts that will give you a satisfying reading experience.

Although there are many ways to approach these stories and novels, our central focus of discussion this term will be the relationship between fiction and reality. Here are some questions that will concern us. How can a fictional story be true or false? What makes some fiction feel real and other fiction unconvincing? How do fictional stories affect the real world? What role does fictional thinking play in our everyday lives?

**Course Material Disclaimer:** A major aspect of fiction's relationship to reality has to do with fiction's unique ability to critique negative aspects of social life. For this reason, many of the texts we will be reading this term engage issues such as racism, sexism, exploitation, and other forms of violence. These issues can and should make us as readers uncomfortable, and I will give everyone a heads up about what to expect before we read each story, but if at any time over the

course of the term you think a story will be particularly difficult for you, let me know so that you can be excused from reading it.

## **English Department Learning Outcomes**

1. Read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions.
2. Draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts.
3. Perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts.
4. Write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose.
5. Employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments.
6. Employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis.

## **Required Texts**

*Yonnondio: From the Thirties*, by Tillie Olsen, Bison Books, 2004.

*The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, by Franz Kafka, Schocken Books, 1995.  
(This is the edition I recommend because it includes many other fantastic stories by Kafka, but any edition of *The Metamorphosis* will work for this class.)

## **Course Structure**

As all of you most likely already know, this class will be conducted remotely, which means we will be relying on Internet communication for many things that would normally happen in the classroom including lectures, discussions, and assignments. Although this is probably less unfamiliar to you now than it was six months ago, I still expect there to be technical hiccups on both my and your end over the course of the term. So, don't hesitate to reach out if you're having any trouble with the remote structure of the course! With that in mind, here are the

basic structural components of the course with instructions for how they will work on Canvas.

**Readings:** At the end of this syllabus you will find the schedule for the course including the assigned readings. Most of these readings will take the form of short stories uploaded to Canvas as PDF files. Typically, we will only be reading one or two stories a week, so that we can read and discuss them in depth. I will also occasionally upload some secondary readings that will help guide your attention as you read the stories. We will read the two novels I've assigned for the course (*Yonnonidio* and *The Metamorphosis*) during weeks five and ten – these will require a lot more reading time than the stories so you should plan accordingly.

**Lectures:** Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, I will conduct Zoom meetings from 8-9 am. These meetings, along with the assigned readings will be the major source of instruction for the term, and so it goes without saying that you should attend them. For most of the weeks of the term the week's schedule will go as follows:

**Monday:** This Zoom meeting will focus on general literary concepts, forms, and theories that we will later apply to the specific stories. I will also introduce the week's reading material during this meeting with any relevant historical background or other information you may find useful as you read

**Wednesday:** In this Zoom meeting we will dig into the week's assigned reading. This will usually consist of a presentation from me about why I assigned the story, and how it illustrates whatever literary principles we're focusing on. Make sure you have read the week's assigned texts before the Wednesday Zoom meetings!

**Friday:** This Zoom meeting will be dedicated primarily to class discussion of the week's material. Usually this will involve going back and forth from small discussion groups to a full class discussion during these meetings, so be prepared to share your own questions and insights from the readings.

I realize that scheduling can be one of the most difficult parts of remote learning, so if you need to miss a Zoom meeting contact me ahead of time so that we can find a way for you to stay up to date on the course material.

**Assignments:** There are three major writing components to this course that will constitute the bulk of the grade, and all of them will be assigned and submitted through Canvas. I'll be giving more detailed instructions for these when their due dates approach, but here they are in a nutshell:

- **Reading Journal:** Each week you will submit a short (2-3 paragraph) but substantive response to an essay prompt that I will give you dealing with the reading material of the week. Rather than a rigorous, academic essay, these responses can be more personal and informal. That being said, I will still evaluate this work based on the depth of your engagement with both the material and the prompt. My intention is that these weekly writing assignments will keep you engaged with the material and hopefully help you connect with it in a personal way. These journal entries will be due each Sunday at midnight.
- **Midterm Essay:** At the end of Week 6 you will turn in a formal, interpretive essay, 4-5 pages in length, dealing with one of the readings from the first half of the term. Although there will be a prompt for this essay to guide your attention, you will be expected to produce an original and persuasive argument about the text you choose to discuss.
- **Final Essay:** At the end of Week 11 you will turn in another 4-5 page essay dealing with a reading from the second half of the term. This paper will be similar in structure to the Midterm Essay but will be geared towards the concepts and texts we discuss in the second part of the term.

**Office Hours:** If at any point in the term you would like to discuss anything regarding the course, feel free to email me to set up a Zoom meeting during my office hours (or during a different time if those times don't work for you). The University is offering free Zoom accounts to everyone, and it's pretty easy to setup. [Here](#) is a link with instructions for getting started. If you don't want to use Zoom, I will always be available via email.

***Important note regarding the online structure of the course:*** As I mentioned above, the online format is most likely something that is new for all of us and is bound to require some troubleshooting. **If at any point in the term something is not working for you, either on the level of course design or course content, please let me know so I can change it!** If something isn't working for you, chances are it's not working for other students as well and letting me know about it will help me fix the problem.

## **Grade Breakdown**

- Zoom Meeting Participation – 10%
- Reading Journal – 40%
- Midterm Essay – 20%
- Final Essay – 20%
- Other Assignments – 10%

## **Course Policies**

**Formatting Guidelines for Essays:** All written work for this course should be double-spaced, use 12 pt. font, and conform to MLA formatting standards. For guidelines on MLA, I recommend taking a look at the [Purdue Online Writing Lab website](#).

**Late Work:** Assignments or Reading Journal entries that come in after the deadline will lose 5% of their points for each day they are late. That being said, I'm always willing to be flexible with deadlines if necessary due to any complicating circumstances you may be facing. Just make sure to reach out to me about a deadline extension **before the assignment is due**.

**Accommodations:** I want everyone to have a successful and comfortable term in this course, and I am happy to make accommodations for students who need them. If you feel you will need any additional resources or assistance with course materials, please let me know as soon as possible. I realize that this is an unusually complicated term and that the online format will work for some

students better than others, but I am happy to offer any help I can to ensure everyone has a good experience with the course.

**Academic Misconduct:** All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course, which means you may not submit papers or portions of papers you have written for any other course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please refer to the Composition Program's e-handbook resources as well as the Student Conduct Code on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

## Tentative Course Schedule

### First Unit: Realism

Week 1: Sept. 29 <sup>th</sup> -Oct. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<p>Wednesday: <i>Introduction to the Course</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> Lydia Davis story selection.</p> <p>Friday: <i>The Realist Short Story</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> "Face Time," by Lorrie Moore (link on Canvas)</p>
Week 2: Oct. 5 <sup>th</sup> - Oct. 9 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Monday: <i>Social Realism vs. Psychological Realism</i></p> <p>Wednesday: <i>Anzia Yezierska and Virginia Woolf</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> "The Lost 'Beautifulness'" by Anzia Yezierska and "Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street," by Virginia Woolf</p> <p>Friday: <i>Discussing Woolf and Yezierska</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> "The Lost 'Beautifulness'" by Anzia Yezierska and "Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street," by Virginia Woolf</p>
Week 3: Oct. 12 <sup>th</sup> -Oct. 16 <sup>th</sup> .	<p>Monday: <i>Narrative Modes – Perspective, Style, and Voice</i></p> <p>Wednesday: <i>Zora Neal Hurston, Lucia Berlin</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> "Drenched in Light," by Zora Neal Hurston, "Sorrow," by Anton Chekhov and "Point of View," by Lucia Berlin</p> <p>Friday: <i>Discussing Hurston and Berlin</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> "Drenched in Light," by Zora Neal Hurston, "Sorrow," by Anton Chekhov and "Point of View," by Lucia Berlin</p>
Week 4: Oct. 19 <sup>th</sup> – Oct. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	<p>Monday: <i>Narrative Structure: Plot and Suspense</i></p> <p>Wednesday: <i>Richard Wright</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> "Man of All Work," by Richard Wright</p> <p>Friday: <i>Discussing Wright</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> "Man of All Work," by Richard Wright</p>

<p>Week 5: Oct. 26<sup>th</sup> – Oct. 30<sup>th</sup></p>	<p>Monday: <i>The Social Realist Novel – Tillie Olsen’s Yonnondio</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> <i>Yonnondio</i>, chapters 1-4</p> <p>Wednesday: <i>Yonnondio</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> <i>Yonnondio</i>, chapters 5-6.</p> <p>Friday: <i>Yonnondio</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> <i>Yonnondio</i>, chapters 7-8.</p>
<p><b>Second Unit: Unrealism</b></p>	
<p>Week 6: Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Nov. 6<sup>th</sup></p>	<p>Monday: <i>Introduction to the Unreal</i></p> <p>Wednesday: <i>Nikolai Gogol</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> “The Overcoat,” by Nikolai Gogol</p> <p>Friday: <i>Discussing Gogol</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> “The Overcoat,” by Nikolai Gogol</p>
<p><b>Midterm Assignment</b></p>	<p><b>Midterm Paper Due November 8<sup>th</sup> at Midnight.</b></p>
<p>Week 7: Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> – Nov. 13<sup>th</sup></p>	<p>Monday: <i>Refracting Reality</i></p> <p>Wednesday: <i>Jorge Luis Borges and the Unreal</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> “Ultra Manifesto,” and “Funes the Memorious,” by Jorge Luis Borges</p> <p>Friday: <i>Discussing Borges</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> “Ultra Manifesto,” and “Funes the Memorious,” by Jorge Luis Borges</p>
<p>Week 8: Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> – Nov. 20<sup>th</sup></p>	<p>Monday: <i>Speculative Powers of Science Fiction</i></p> <p>Wednesday: <i>Octavia Butler and Ursula Le Guin</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> Octavia Butler’s “Bloodchild” and Ursula Le Guin’s “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas.”</p> <p>Friday: <i>Discussing Butler and L eGuin</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> Octavia Butler’s “Bloodchild” and Ursula Le Guin’s “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas.”</p>



<p>Week 9: Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup> – Nov. 27<sup>th</sup></p>	<p>Monday: <i>Surrealism, Magical Realism, and the Uncanny</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> Stories by Carrington, Kavan, and Xue</p> <p>Wednesday: <i>Leonora Carrington, Anna Kavan, and Can Xue</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> Stories by Carrington, Kavan, and Xue</p> <p>Friday: <i>No Meeting for Thanksgiving Break</i></p>
<p>Week 10: Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> – Dec. 4<sup>th</sup></p>	<p>Monday: <i>The Unrealist Novel: Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> <i>The Metamorphosis</i>, chapter 1</p> <p>Wednesday: <i>Discussing The Metamorphosis</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> <i>The Metamorphosis</i>, chapter 2</p> <p>Friday: <i>Discussing The Metamorphosis</i>  <b>Readings Before the Zoom Meeting:</b> <i>The Metamorphosis</i>, chapter 3</p>
<p><b>Final Assignment</b></p>	<p><b>Final Paper Due December 9<sup>th</sup> at Midnight.</b></p>