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**When and Where?**

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**LECTURES**

CRN: 22202  
Tues/Thurs 2-3:20  
208 Deady Hall

**DISCUSSION SECTIONS**

CRN 27145: Fri 9-9:50  
175 Lillis  
or:  
CRN 27146: Fri 10-10:50  
185 Lillis

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**Who?**

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**Professor Elizabeth Wheeler**

[ewheeler@uoregon.edu](mailto:ewheeler@uoregon.edu)  
541-346-3929  
Office Hours: 238 PLC  
Tuesdays 12-1, Fridays 9:45-11:45  
and by appointment

**Ms. Courtney Floyd**

[cfloyd3@uoregon.edu](mailto:cfloyd3@uoregon.edu)  
(541) 346-0054  
234 PLC

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**What and Why?**

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Why do stories matter? In this class we will read novels of childhood and adolescence, both fantasy and realistic, and compare them to the stories that matter in our own lives and families. The novels come from India, England, South Korea, and the United States. By the end of the course you should be able to break down the fundamental components of fiction and you will have sharpened your writing skills. As a basic introduction to a major genre in the field of literary studies, this course satisfies the university's Group Requirement in the Arts and Letters category. It also counts as a lower-division elective in the new (2016) English major.

Gen Ed: Arts and Letters Group (1); English Major II: Lower-Division Elective

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**REQUIRED BOOKS**

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Neil Gaiman, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*  
Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*  
Kyung-Sook Shin, *I'll Be Right There*  
Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*  
Sherri L. Smith, *Orleans*

Find books at the Duck Store or on reserve at Knight Library. Ebooks, sharing, and other sources are OK, too. There are also two required articles about Sherman Alexie, one on Canvas and one online (see weekly schedule for details).

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**ASSIGNMENTS**

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**25% Assignment I: Mini Essay and Story.** Due Tuesday Week 4.

**30% Assignment II: Essay, 3-4 pages.** Due Tuesday Week 8.

**30% Assignment III: Three Choices:**

**Essay or Fictional Story:** Due Tuesday of Exam Week.

**Improv Team:** Tuesdays Weeks 9 and 10 and rehearsals.

**15% Attendance at lectures and discussion sections and unannounced quizzes.**

See pages 4-7 for guidelines on writing assignments.

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**LEARNING GOALS**

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By the end of this course, the successful student will be able:

1. To understand literary texts and their conventions.
2. To draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their social contexts.
3. To analyze novels formally and critically.
4. To write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose.

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**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

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**Week 1**

Tuesday, Jan 10: Introduction

Thursday, Jan 12: *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, to page 64 (end of Chapter VI)

**Week 2**

Tuesday, Jan 17: *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, to page 122 (end of Ch. X)

Thursday, Jan 19: *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, to end  
Introduction to story circles

**Week 3**

Tuesday, Jan 24: *The Inheritance of Loss*, to page 91 (end of Chapter 14)

Thursday, Jan 26: *The Inheritance of Loss*, to page 171 (end of Chapter 25)

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**Week 4**

Tuesday, Jan 31: **ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE: Mini Essay and Story to Canvas by 2 pm**  
*The Inheritance of Loss*, to page 272 (end of Chapter 38)

Thursday, Feb 2: *The Inheritance of Loss*, to end

**Week 5**

Tuesday, Feb 7: *I'll Be Right There*, to page 106 (right before start of Chapter 4)

Thursday, Feb 9: *I'll Be Right There*, to page 158 (right before start of Chapter 7)

**Week 6**

Tuesday, Feb 14: *I'll Be Right There*, to page 267 (right before start of Chapter 10)

Thursday, Feb 16: *I'll Be Right There*, to end

**Week 7**

Tuesday, Feb 21: Tammy Wahpeconiah, "Navigating the River of the World: Collective Trauma in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*" (Canvas Files)

Sherman Alexie, "Why the Best Kids Books Are Written in Blood"  
<http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2011/06/09/why-the-best-kids-books-are-written-in-blood/>

*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, to page 53

Thursday, Feb 23: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, to page 113

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**Week 8**

Tuesday, Feb 28: **ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE: Essay, 3-4 pages to Canvas by 2 pm**  
*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, to page 178

Thursday, Mar 2: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, to end

**Week 9**

Tuesday, Mar 7: **IMPROV TEAM**  
*Orleans*, to page 99 (end of Chapter 9)

Thursday, Mar 9: *Orleans*, to page 210 (end of Part 2)

## Week 10

Tuesday, Mar 14: IMPROV TEAM  
*Orleans*, to end

Thursday, Mar 16: Conclusions

**ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE: Tuesday, March 21 to Canvas by 2 pm**

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**WRITING ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES**

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***Assignment I: Mini Essay and Story***

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**A. Mini Essay: 1-2 pages.** A miniature version of the kind of essay you'll write in Assignment II. Please follow this recipe:

1. A thesis statement (enthymeme).
2. A transition sentence into your close reading that links it to the thesis statement.
3. A quotation from *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*.
4. A close reading of the quotation, analyzing at least two Building Blocks of Fiction. This close reading provides the evidence for your thesis statement.

Example:

1. In *Exile and Pride*, Eli Clare portrays nature as the only place he found intimacy. By creating contrast, the nature scenes comment on the memoir's larger themes about prejudice.
2. In the forest scenes Clare shows his intimacy with nature by wrapping himself around it.
3. "I had my favorite climbing trees---white fir, grand fir, myrtle. I'd wrap my hands around their branches, skin against bark, and pull my body up, clambering toward the sky, resting in the cradles where branch met trunk." (20)
4. The image of skin sliding against bark portrays Clare's intimacy with nature. Clare's young body clambers and glides, full of freedom and activity. The world outdoors is safe from the labels, cruelties, and restrictions of the human world. The trees are like second parents, "cradling" Clare in a way human society did not.

**B. Story: 1-2 pages.** Write down a story from your own life, or from your family history. At the end of the story, tell why you think this story has lingered in your memory or your family's memory.

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**Assignment II: Essay, 3-4 pages, on *The Inheritance of Loss* or *I'll Be Right There***

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***Expectations for Assignment II***

- 1) Originality.
- 2) Thoughtful, detailed close reading of quotations and visuals.
- 3) A clear, strong enthymeme (AKA: main point, thesis statement).
- 4) Clear linkage of each paragraph to the main point.
- 5) Polished, well-revised prose with no grammatical or spelling errors.

A.) What is this assignment? This paper is a traditional college essay. Each should have an original argument that hangs together well and has a clear main point. There are a million ways to interpret our readings, and we want to know what YOU think. For the readings, the evidence you use to prove your arguments will come from your own close readings of the novels. Every time you make a point about a text, back up that point with a quotation, long or short, and your interpretation of that quotation. Show your readers the connection between the point you are making and the lines you have quoted. Every time you make a point about a scene, take our hands, lead us to the image, and explain to us what you see. This process is called close reading. You can develop your argument out of your close reading, or decide on your topic first and then look for textual and visual examples to prove it. Either way can work. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, with the pages numbered.

B.) How to do a close reading:

Choose a quotation, scene, or set of quotations that catches your imagination and gives you something to say. Sit down to write with the book in front of you. Look at your chosen examples very carefully and thoroughly and write down all the ideas that occur to you. Analyze at least two of the Building Blocks of Fiction. For words, really set your eyes on the page and dig into the meanings. Don't be afraid to "go out on a limb" with your ideas and interpretations. What do you notice first? What do you notice second? Do the two things go together or contradict each other? Look closely at the vocabulary, images, figures of speech, rhythm, and point of view. What is the relationship between what is being said and how it's being said? What is left unsaid? Does the passage appeal to the five senses? What does the passage reveal about the characters? Is there symbolism, or literal language that could be read symbolically? What mood does the passage leave with you? What do the artistic and literary elements teach us about the work as a whole? Could the passage serve as a microcosm of the work as a whole? Include the quotations or passage in your paper, either woven into your commentary, placed before the start of your argument, or between 2 paragraphs of argument. Your essay should have a minimum of one quotation, but a complete argument will probably quote and do close readings of more than one quotation.

C.) Tips on structuring your paper:

1. Originality. It is OK (and more than OK: highly desirable) if you choose a paper topic that others probably won't choose.
2. Your introduction should do 3 things:

- a. Present your thesis statement;
  - b. Briefly introduce your topic;
  - c. Provide a road map for the rest of the paper.
3. Strengthen your thesis statement through attention to counterarguments. Think about possible objections to your argument and respond accordingly.
4. Organization of paragraphs. Each paragraph of your paper should illustrate a different subpoint that supports your main point. If some ideas/sentences just don't seem to fit, cut them out, move them, or make their relevance to the main point clearer. Add a topic sentence to each paragraph, stating the paragraphs's main point and linking this paragraph's point to the main point of the essay. **Each paragraph must have a topic sentence.** Go over the essay carefully, making sure each paragraph connects to the introduction and the other paragraphs. Add connector sentences and expand on your thoughts.
6. No plot summary. Don't summarize the story--you can assume we've read the work and remember what's going on. Organize your essay according to the logic of your argument, not according to the order of the story itself. Instead of summarizing information, substitute a direct quotation from the text combined with your own close reading and interpretation.
7. Revise several times. Reread the draft out loud to yourself. Make a running list of its themes. Identify the essay's key concepts. Make sure the introduction and conclusion refer to all of them. Make sure every paragraph relates to at least one of them. Cut needless words and word repetitions. Break run-on sentences into several smaller thought-clusters. Read your whole paper aloud again and make the prose flow.
8. Spelling and grammar count. Make sure your essay is free of errors. About spelling: Your computer's spellcheck is not sufficient to eliminate spelling errors. Please proofread yourself, too. About grammar: Please look at the Errors in Grammar sheet and your class notes.
9. Correct Quotation. Make sure the quotations are properly punctuated. Long quotes should be indented 1 inch on the left margin with no quote marks around them. Shorter quotes of no more than 4 lines should be integrated with your prose and have quote marks on both ends. For books and articles from our assigned course readings, you don't have to footnote or attach a Work Cited page. Just put page numbers in parentheses after quotations. If you cite sources not included in the assigned course readings, please do add a Works Cited page in MLA style.

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**Assignment III: You Have Three Choices**

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**Choice 1: Essay, 3-4 pages,** on *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* or *Orleans*. Follow the same guidelines as Assignment II, above.

**Choice 2: Write a Fictional Story, 3-4 pages,** copying the style of one of the novels we've read this term. You can combine and ship characters from different novels.

*Expectations for Fictional Story*

- 1) Copying the style of the novelist successfully and thoroughly.
- 2) Writing a compelling, original story.
- 3) Vivid writing: Show, don't tell.
- 4) Polished, well-revised prose with no grammatical or spelling errors.

**Choice 3: Improv Team.** A group of 6-8 students will act out the concepts we've learned in two class presentations. The team meets with Prof. Wheeler to learn the theater techniques.

Presentation 1: Concept Improv. Tuesday, Week 9. Using props we supply, students improvise scenes to illustrate elements from the novels and from the Building Blocks of Fiction. The rest of the class guesses what they're portraying.

Presentation 2: Playback Theater. Tuesday, Week 10. Class members comes up front to tell stories and the improv team acts them out.

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**COURSE POLICIES**

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**Disability:** We are happy to support your success by providing the accommodations you need, even if it's late in the term. Official diagnosis and/or accommodation letter not required. Please let Prof. Wheeler know by email or in person if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. Handy contacts:

Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu).

Counseling Center: 541-346-3230; <http://testing.uoregon.edu>.

**Participation:** This class depends upon your active participation in the classroom. If problems interfere with your work or attendance, please let Prof. Wheeler or Ms. Floyd know immediately. We are no fans of mysterious disappearances.

**Late Paper Policy:** We accept only one late paper per term, so please use this option wisely. "On time" means posted to Canvas Assignments before class begins on the day the paper is due. If you choose to turn in a paper late, you must notify Prof. Wheeler (not Ms. Floyd) ahead of time by phone, email, or in person, before 2 pm the day the paper is due. Late papers are due by 2 pm the day of the following class session, unless you arrange with Prof. Wheeler otherwise. She reserves the right to refuse an unnotified late paper or a second late paper.

**Writing Associates:** Peer tutors available to help students with any aspect of their writing for this course. To make an appointment with a Writing Associate, go to <http://english.uoregon.edu/writingassociates/>

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**Building Blocks of Fiction**

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**Bechdel Test**

Does the story (1) Have at least two women in it? (2) who talk to each other? about (3) something besides a man?

**Characters**

Round or Flat Characters? Flat characters do only one job in the story. We don't dive into their motivations or inner lives. Round characters have more than one element to them. They can be contradictory or paradoxical. Often we have a sense of their inner lives. Sometimes they change and grow in the course of the novel, or reveal more about the person they were all along. "The test of a round character is whether or not it is capable of surprising us in a convincing way." -E.M Forster

What details tell you how the author feels about a character, and/or wants us to feel?

**Conflict**

What does each character want? What stops them from getting it?

Types of Conflict: Person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. forces beyond human control. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDXEsHb2N50>

**Context**

What does the reader need to understand about the politics, culture, and society of the world depicted in order to make sense of the story?

**Dialogue**

How many different voices do we hear in the novel? How do they work together to create tension or build a bigger picture of this world?

**Focalization**

Which character(s) provide the focus, no matter who narrates? Can we separate out the event that is happening from the attitude of the character who sees the event?

**Magical Realism**

"Magical realism combines realism and the fantastic in such a way that magical elements grow organically out of the reality portrayed." -Wendy B. Faris

**Metaphor, Symbolism, and Imagery**

Does the writing appeal to the five senses? Does it make pictures in your head? Are there symbolic as well as literal meanings?



**Narration**

Is the storytelling in first, second, or third person?

Is the voice comic, tense, comforting, serious, satirical, melancholy?

Is there more than one narrator? Do we see the same events from different points of view?

Who is the narrator? Is the narrator a character in the story or not? Is the narrator omniscient (all-knowing)? Unreliable? Do we know anything about the narrator (their gender, for instance)? Does the narrator state or suggest opinions on the characters or society?

Where is the narrator, if anywhere? “That we accept...this imaginary space from which someone who is no one addresses us, is at the very least a significant achievement in our modern capacity for alienation.” —John Brekman

**Oral Culture in Literature**

How does the novel draw on—or differ from—the stories we tell in everyday life? Does it use folklore or myth?

**Time**

Does the novel take place in chronological order? Does it begin in medias res (Latin for “in the middle of things”), plopping us right into the action? Are there flashbacks?

**Plot**

Common elements: Exposition, Inciting Incident, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, Moment of Final Suspense, and Resolution.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOgPEesvoG0>

How do we figure out cause and effect?

Do new events in the story make us reevaluate what happened before?

How much closure do we get from the ending?

“Plot is time made human.”-Paul Ricoeur

**Speculative and Science Fiction**

Extrapolation: Takes our current world and asks, “What would happen in the future if we kept on this way?”

Cognitive Estrangement: By creating a world different from yet similar to our own, science fiction allows readers to see the world around them in a new light.

**Theme**

Is the story trying to raise issues, teach, or comment on something? Readers may learn something different or feel something different from the things the characters learn and feel.

**World Building**

What elements make the setting feel like a real place, even if it doesn't really exist?