

MASTER SYLLABUS

Introduction to Fiction: Contemporary North American short fiction

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Course description: We will read short stories by U.S. writers primarily from the second half of the 20th century with the following objectives:

- To understand the genre of the short story
- To learn the value of close reading, and to improve close reading skills
- To understand and use discipline-specific terms used in literary and narrative analysis
- To be able to analyze and interpret short fiction
- To respond personally, critically and creatively
- To evaluate critically information obtained
- To write clearly and analytically about these topics

Resources on close reading:

[How to do a close reading](#)

[Dr. McClennen's Close Reading Guide](#)

Course materials: The short stories listed at the end of the syllabus will be available through the library. If you are not comfortable with locating and downloading pdfs through the university library, please take a half hour and ask a librarian to help you through it.

In addition to short stories, there will be additional readings on theory and method. These will also be available as indicated above. There is no text, but you will be required to print out a large number of stories at your own expense.

You will need notebooks for classroom assignments and notes. Laptop computers are allowed in class, but I reserve the right to look over your shoulder to keep temptation at bay.

Expectations:

There will be three stories assigned each week. You must complete all assigned reading and writing assignments. Your class participation is an important part of the learning process, and will count accordingly in the calculation of your grade. There will be:

- Occasional unannounced quizzes to ascertain reading comprehension
- Three close-reading essays on selected stories
- Two two-page responses
- Weekly one-page, double spaced interpretative essays or responses to another student's essay.
- A take-home exam

Format for close reading essays: After you have read the short stories and any supplemental readings that are assigned each week, write a close reading essay on one of the assigned stories. Framework for your response:

- One paragraph of summary or description of the story.
- Close analysis
 1. identify the theme or main point of the story and
 2. show how the writer develops it by examining at least two of the following elements: point of view, characterization, setting, dialog, or imagery. You will need to use specific quotations and examples from the story in these paragraphs to illustrate your points.
- A concluding paragraph that includes two or three questions that you still have about the story after close reading. In addition: any socio-cultural issues relevant to close reading which were difficult for you.

Other readings and resources:

Almond, Steve. [The Bloom is off the Mark](#). MOBYlives. 2003.

Bennet, James. The Work of Art. [The Atlantic Monthly](#). 2011

Charters, Ann. The Story and Its Writer: An Introduction to Short Fiction (most recent edition).

King, Stephen. Herman Wouk is still Alive. [The Atlantic](#). May 2011.

Paul, Richard and Linda Elder. How to Read a Paragraph: [The Art of Close Reading](#). 2006

Purdue online Writing Lab. [Logical Fallacies](#).

Schwarz, Christina. A Close Read: What makes good writing good. [The Atlantic Monthly](#)

[The Ultimate Writer's Guide](#).

[Narrative Magazine](#)

Short stories

I will assign the following week's readings at the end of the week (but not all stories listed here will be assigned). Note: if you are interested in short stories outside of this time period and place, please see the lists of suggestions on the website.

1. Allen, Woody. The Kugelmass Episode. [The New Yorker](#) May 2 1977
2. Atwood, Margaret. Rape Fantasies. [Dancing Girls](#). 1977
3. Baldwin, James. Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone. [McCall's](#). Feb 1967
4. Bambara, Toni Cade. My Man Bovanne. [Gorilla my Love](#). 1972
5. ----- . The Lesson. [Redbook](#). Jan 1973
6. Bausch, Richard. Police Dreams. [Atlantic Monthly](#). 1987
7. ----- . Aren't You Happy for Me? [Harper's](#). June 1993
8. Bloom, Amy. The Story. [A Blind Man Can See How Much I Love You](#). 2006
9. Bradbury, Ray. The Sound of Thunder. [Collier's](#). 1952
10. Cisneros, Sandra. Eyes of Zapata. [Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories](#). 1991
11. Cunningham, Michael. White Angel. [The New Yorker](#). 1988
12. Davis, Lydia. My Mother's Reaction to my Travel Plans. [Varieties of Disturbance](#) 2007

13. Erdrich, Louise. The Fat Man's Race. The New Yorker. November 2008
14. Everett, Percival. The Appropriation of Cultures. Damned if I Do. 2004.
15. Faulkner, William. Spotted Horses. Scribner's. June 1931
16. Hemingway, Ernest. A Clean, Well Lighted Place. Winner Take Nothing. 1933
17. ----- . Hills Like White Elephants. Men without Women. 1927
18. King, Stephen. The Reach. Yankee Nov 1981
19. Le Guin, Ursula K. The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas. New Dimensions 3 1973
20. Lehane, Dennis. Until Gwen. The Atlantic Monthly June 2004
21. Malamud, Bernard. The Magic Barrel. The Paris Review. Winter 1954
22. ----- . The German Refugee, The Saturday Evening Post. Sep 1963
23. Matheson, Richard. Button, Button. Playboy 1970
24. Moody, Rick. Demonology. Demonology: Stories. 2002
25. Moore, Laurie. People Like That Are the Only People Here. The New Yorker January 1997
26. ----- . You're Ugly Too. The New Yorker July 1989
27. Munro, Alice. Spelling, Weekend Magazine. 1978
28. ----- . Friend of My Youth. New Yorker Jan 22 1990
29. O'Brien, Tim. The Things They Carried. Esquire Aug 1986
30. Oates, Joyce Carol. Extenuating Circumstances. Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque. 1994
31. ----- . Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been? Epoch 1966
32. Orner, Peter. The Raft. The Atlantic Monthly. April 2000
33. Orringer, Julie. Isabel Fish. How to Breathe Underwater. 2003
34. Packer, Z.Z. Brownies. Drinking Coffee Elsewhere. 2004
35. Porter, Katherine Anne. The Jilting of Granny Weatherall. Transition. 1930
36. Prose, Francine. An Open Letter to Doctor X. Virginia Quarterly Review. 2006
37. Robison, Mary. Yours. Tell Me. 2002
38. Rosenfeld, Stephanie. Grasp Special Comb. What About the Love Part. 2002
39. Segal, Lore. The reverse bug. Shakespeare's Kitchen. 2007
40. Steinbeck, John. The Chrysanthemums. Harper's. October 1937
41. Updike, John. A & P. New Yorker. July 1961
42. Vonnegut, Kurt. Harrison Bergeron. Fantasy and Science Fiction. Oct 1961
43. ----- . Welcome to the Monkey House. Playboy. 1968
44. Walker, Alice. To Hell with Dying. In Love and Trouble. 1988
45. Weldon, Faye. The City of the Imagination. Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen. 1999
46. Welty, Eudora. Why I Live at the P.O. Atlantic Monthly Apr 1941

Basic terminology

plot	sequence of incidents or events through which an author constructs a story
conflict	a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or wills
protagonist	the central character in a conflict, whether sympathetic or unsympathetic
antagonist	any force arranged against the protagonist- persons things, conventions of society, or the protagonist's own character traits
suspense	quality of a story that makes the readers ask "What's going to happen next?" Includes mystery, dilemma, surprise
indeterminate ending	no definitive conclusion is reached
artistic unity	everything contained in the story is relevant and contributes to the meaning, nothing there for its own sake or excitement
plot manipulations	a turn in the plot that is unjustified by the situation or characters
rising action	the development of a plot in a story that precedes and leads up to the climax
climax	the turning or high point of a plot
falling action	the segment of the plot that comes between the climax and conclusion
characterization	the various literary means by which characters are presented
direct presentation	by exposition or analysis authors tell reader directly what a character is like, or has someone else in the story do so.
indirect presentation	author shows readers a character in action compelling readers to infer what the character is like from what is said or done by the character.
flat character	a character who has only one or two distinguishable moral qualities or personal traits
developing character	a character who during the course of a story undergoes a permanent change in some aspect of moral qualities, personal traits, or outlook
round character	a character with complex and many sided moral qualities and personal traits
static character	a character who is the same sort of person at the end of a story as at the beginning
stock character	a stereotyped character; one whose nature is familiar to us from prototypes in previous fiction
foil character	minor character whose situation or actions parallel those of a major character, by contrast sets off or illuminates the major character; most often the contrast is complimentary to the major character
epiphany	a moment or event in which a character achieves a spiritual insight into life or into his or her own circumstances.
theme	the central idea or unifying generalization implied or stated by a literary work
point of view	the angle of vision from which a story is told
omniscient	the author tells the story using the third person, but the author knows all and is free to tell us anything, including what the characters are thinking or feeling and

	why they act as they do
third person limited	the author tells the story using the third person, but is limited to a complete knowledge of one character in the story and tells us only what that one character thinks, feels, sees, or hears.
first person	the story is told by one of its characters, using the first person
objective	the author tells the story using the third person, but is limited to reporting what the characters say or do; the author does not interpret their behavior or tell us their private thoughts or feelings
