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ABOUT THIS COURSE

From the course description: ENG 243: The Short Story, 4.0 credits. Critical study of the short story from the early nineteenth century to the present.

This course will provide an introduction to the short story as a genre from the nineteenth century through the present, including instruction in and practice with the skills necessary for the analysis of literature through reading, discussion, and writing.

Course Objectives and Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Discuss and make arguments (both orally and in writing) about literary works with your peers and instructor
- Compose convincing interpretations of literary works and their ideas by applying the skills of close reading, textual analysis, and literary terminology
- Examine human differences and similarities (including language, experience, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender) across historical, social, and cultural boundaries using literature
- Practice and improve writing skills through frequent assignments both formal and informal, submitted to the instructor for regular feedback and/or shared with peers for critical review/response
- Speak effectively through regular required participation and discussion of texts and ideas therein, whether in full-class, individual, or group settings, and whether through informal or formal assignments
- Learn basic skills of reference and citation

* This course fulfills URI General Education requirements for the outcomes of Humanities and Write Effectively.

Grading

* Please note that you must successfully complete all assignments to pass the course.

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class discussion and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Journal</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Active Reading</td>
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<td>Close Reading</td>
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<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Analytic Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
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87-89  B+  77-79  C+  67-69  D+  59 & below  F  
94-100  A  83-86  B  73-76  C  60-66  D  
90-93   A-  80-82  B-  70-72  C-
Course Content

We will pursue three broad areas of interest this term:

**Nation**: First, we will examine short fiction as an American phenomenon. If there’s little about the short story that seems peculiarly “American,” the historical origins of this literary form do coincide with the emergence of the U.S. nation. That nation was politically independent by the end of the eighteenth century. It was equipped to meet its peoples’ unique needs for cultural expression by the early decades of the next century. What those needs were, and how the short story evolved to accommodate them, constitutes just one of our subjects of study.

**Texts & Contexts**: Second, we are concerned as well with both the message and medium of the short story. Stories consist not only of words on a page from which we make meaning; they also involve a tangible medium that extends outside the frame of any given text into an everyday world where paper (not to mention money) changes hands. This coincidence of medium and message goes some way toward reminding us that short stories aren’t simply polished artistic products crafted for our entertainment. They’re meaning-making occasions in which we, as readers, play an instrumental part.

**Genre**: Third, we will examine the American short story as a genre, identifying the formal properties that define this distinctive literary field as we strengthen your capacity for close reading, critical analysis, and purposeful expression. Our sustained engagement with short stories will ideally sharpen your ability to read the wider world.

As we interrogate these topics, our course will unfold in three major units:

- The Origins of the Form
- The Modern Short Story
- The Postmodern Short Story

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

- ENGL 243 individual readings available electronically in Sakai
- Harvard Guide to Using Sources: [https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/](https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/)

**Instructional Methods**:

Class time should enhance the work that you do independently, outside of class. The topical-contextual lectures that we undertake together in class, as well as our focused group discussions and workshops, will only prove productive if you prepare for each of our meetings in advance. Considering, then, the brief format of the short story as a literary form, you will want to read each of our assigned texts not only dutifully but deeply. In fact, you will want to read some or all of our texts multiple times as you work toward a more complete understanding of their arguments and formal complexities. We will dwell together in class on selected texts. But you will also need to undertake close, critical reading on your own.

* To make our time together as meaningful as possible, I ask that you set aside all electronic devices (phones, headphones, laptops, tablets, etc.) for the duration of our classroom meetings. Drinks are fine; food is not.
COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE: I take attendance daily, and we both need you to be here if our course is to succeed. Your absences in any case directly affect your participation grade (see below). To incur two absences will cause you to receive an “F” for participation. To incur three or more absences (for whatever reason) will mean that you fail the course. Note that it is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to find out from a classmate what you have missed when absent. Note, too, that you cannot make up any quizzes or writing assignments that you might miss.

PARTICIPATION: a full 10% of your final grade derives from your daily contributions to class. This means:

1. You must come to class, and you must arrive and leave on time.
2. You will bring a copy of each day’s assigned reading. Otherwise, you will be counted absent.
3. You must demonstrate a positive level of commitment to all aspects of the course. I expect you to make a meaningful contribution to each and every class meeting.
4. Do not just talk; also listen, especially to your classmates. Demonstrating a proper regard for mutual exchange will ensure that we achieve true dialogue.

For my part, I need to set our agenda, and keep class meetings lively, interesting, and edifying. I can only fulfill my responsibilities if you fulfill yours.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All written work that you submit must be your own. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, visit the following Web site: https://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism/what-plagiarism. Also note that, unless I provide specific instructions otherwise, we will not be consulting any sources other than our assigned texts. For your written work, especially, you will want and need to stay away from the World Wide Web, for reasons that should be obvious. The thinking and writing that you do must be yours and yours alone.

DISABILITY NOTICE: If you have a documented disability, please contact me early in the semester so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations to support your success in this course. Also be sure to take advantage of the resources available at Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, (401) 874-2098.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: This schedule is tentative. If we need more time to complete a task or pursue a point of interest, we will do so, within reason. You are responsible for all class meetings and assignments as well as any announced changes.

UNIT I: THE ORIGINS of the FORM

1-2: Course Introduction / (Re)Learning to Read
READING JOURNAL: Where and how to start ...

1-3: Allegories
READING: Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Minister’s Black Veil” (1836)
READING JOURNAL: Setting

1-4: Alibis (online)
READING: Edgar Allan Poe, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841)
READING JOURNAL: Plot
1-7: Active Reading Assignment
READING: Catharine Maria Sedgwick, “New Year’s Day” (1836)

1-8: Double Interpretive Trouble
READING: Herman Melville, “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” (1855)
READING JOURNAL: Tone

UNIT II: THE MODERN SHORT STORY

1-9: American Literary Realism
READING: William Dean Howells, “Editha” (1905)
READING JOURNAL: Characterization

1-10: Tale-Telling
READING: Mark Twain, “The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” (1865)
READING JOURNAL: Dialogue

1-11: Close Reading Assignment (online)
READING: Sarah Orne Jewett, “A White Heron” (1886)

1-14: Local Color / Color Lines
READING: Charles W. Chesnutt, “The Goophered Grapevine” (1887)
READING JOURNAL: Point of View

1-15: Literary Modernism
READING: William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily” (1930)
In-Class Exercise: Narrative Time/Narrative Space
Final Analytic Essay Assigned

1-16: In-Class Midterm Exam

UNIT III: THE POSTMODERN SHORT STORY

1-17 Literary Vernacular
In-Class Exercise: Narrative Voice

1-18: Analytic Essay Assignment (online)
* Final Analytic Essay due (PDF format only) in Sakai drop-box by 6:00 pm