

ENG 243: The Short Story

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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

COURSE CONTENT

We will pursue three broad areas of interest this term:

Nation: First, we will examine short fiction as an *American* phenomenon. The short story's historical origins 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. To that end, we want to think about short stories as 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

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end 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
- Demonstrate a command of the basic skills of reference and citation

REQUIRED TEXTS

- ENGL 243 individual readings available electronically in Brightspace
- Harvard Guide to Using Sources:
<https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/>
- Style Guide for Grammar, Punctuation, and Mechanics (CUNY Writing Center):
<https://blogs.baruch.cuny.edu/writingcenter/studentresources/writing-guides/#process>

AI Use Not Permitted

In this class, it is essential that all submitted work reflects your own understanding and skills. The use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, or similar technologies is not permitted. This ensures that your submitted work genuinely represents your personal knowledge and capabilities. Any use of AI tools on submitted work in this course will be considered a violation of the university's Academic Requirements in the University Manual (see 8.27.10 – 8.27.22).

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

To successfully complete this course, you will need access to a computer with reliable, high-speed Internet access and appropriate system and software to support the Brightspace learning platform. Typical technical requirements for users are:

Windows 7 (XP or Vista) 64 MB Ram 28.8 kbps modem (56k or higher recommended) SoundCard & Speakers External headphones with built-in microphone Mozilla Firefox 9.0 or higher	Mac OS X or higher 32 MB Ram 28.8 kbps modem (56k or higher recommended) SoundCard & Speakers External headphones with built-in microphone Mozilla Firefox 9.0 or higher; Safari 5.0 or higher
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Also requires Word 2007 (PC) 2011 (MAC) or newer, PowerPoint, Excel, Adobe Flash, and Adobe Acrobat Reader.

BRIGHTSPACE HELP

Here is the link to access Brightspace <https://brightspace.uri.edu> as well as the Brightspace resource page <https://web.uri.edu/brightspace/>.

CLASSROOM PROTOCOL

For this online course, Brightspace is our “classroom.” Please refer to the [Brightspace YouTube video tutorials](#) before you get started and refer back to them as a resource as needed while you complete this course.

In the online learning environment, “attendance” is measured by your PRESENCE in the site as well as your CONTRIBUTIONS to the site. The importance of regular log-ins and active participation cannot be overstated.

COURSE NAVIGATION

The emphasis in this course is on the critical analysis of ideas, group discussion and collaboration, and the application of unfamiliar interpretive skill sets to a diverse body of American short stories. The success of learning in this course requires timely review of course materials and timely, active participation within workshops and discussion forums. The best way to begin this course is to view the START HERE tab, read the syllabus, and course schedule. These items will act as your map to this online course.

MAJOR STUDY UNITS

- Unit I: The Origins of the Form
- Unit II: The Modern Short Story
- Unit III: The Postmodern Short Story

STUDENT PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

The modules for our course begin on Saturday of each week and end on Friday. Although the content and concepts of each module will be related to those of others, the coursework associated with each individual module must be **completed during the week for which it has been assigned**. It is equally important not to go missing from the course at any point of the semester. In short, the best way to achieve a meaningful experience in this course is to commit to an active and steady level of involvement.

In general, you should plan to spend approximately twenty or more hours per week on this course. This number may rise when you are preparing for the Midterm exam or composing a formal essay.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

***All assignments are graded on a traditional letter-grade scale:**

	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-			

**** This course fulfills URI General Education requirements for the learning outcomes of Humanities (A3) and Write Effectively (B1).***

Student Deliverables	Module	Weight
Quizzes (recurring)	1-3	5%
Discussion Forum (recurring)	1-3	10%
Reading Journal (recurring)	1-3	15%
Active Reading	1	15%
Close Reading	2	20%
Midterm exam	2	15%
Final Analytic Essay	3	20%

DESCRIPTIONS OF ASSIGNMENTS

- **Discussion forum:** At the center of our Discussion forums are the Journal responses you will compose in response to our short stories. After submitting your assigned Journal (see below), and then reading *all* the Journals submitted by your classmates, you will single out one of the latter which, in your estimation, contains a critical literary *idea* that warrants scrutiny. Your response is not to take the form of an evaluation (good job, bad job, etc.) of this original Journal entry. Instead, you should think of the response you make in Brightspace's Discussion space as an abbreviated essay of at least two paragraphs in length, in which you further explore the implications of some facet of the analysis your classmate has already begun. My grading criteria for these posts includes the following:
 - **Content:** Your responses should be thoughtful, substantive, and well enough developed to articulate a clear and well-supported claim. Avoid simply agreeing or disagreeing with what someone else wrote; be sure to write at least two paragraphs' worth of commentary.
 - **Evidence:** You will orient your Discussion posts by crediting the classmate who originated the idea that interests you. By contrast, the actual evidence for your response must come directly from our assigned short stories. Use the text that we are reading in common to illustrate the argument that you are making, while taking care to properly cite page or chapter numbers when you include a direct quotation.

- **Style:** Contribute to our Discussion forum using Standard written English. At a minimum, that means correct spelling and grammar, proper punctuation, and the avoidance of digital shorthand.
- **Reading Journal:** The goal of this recurring assignment is twofold. First, we want you to develop a personal stake in the course, guided by the ideas that move you from week to week. Second, we want you to practice setting down these ideas in writing, both to open a channel of communication between us and your classmates and to hone your abilities at critical literary analysis and expression.

Your “journal” entries will run to half a page (single-spaced) in length; you will save these entries as separate PDF files and submit them by the indicated deadline under both the Assignments and Discussions tabs in Brightspace. Although the general topic of your journal entries is indicated in the class schedule that appears at the end of this syllabus (“Setting,” “Plot,” etc.), the precise content of your journal is up to you. What I ask is that you not summarize the storylines of our readings or talk about fictional characters as if they were “real.” Instead, you will adopt an analytical posture, rather than rehearse literary-historical facts or simply describe what you have read. Part of the purpose of these journals is to have you discover on your own terms how to ask the most meaningful kinds of interpretive questions, and then begin to answer them.

- **Active Reading:** a 300-word annotation-driven assessment of an assigned story.
- **Close Reading:** a 600-word analysis of an assigned story, focused on a significant passage from the same.
- **Midterm:** You will take a Midterm exam at the end of the second Unit of the course. This exam will consist of identification questions (in which you identify the title of a given work, along with its author and date of publication) as well as medium-length “thought” questions that ask you to analyze and draw synthesizing connections between our assigned texts.
- **Analytic Essay:** a formal, 1000-word analytical essay on an assigned story.

ATTENDANCE AND OTHER CLASS POLICIES

Please be aware of the following attendance policies for our online course:

- Because we are meeting asynchronously online, we will not take weekends “off,” necessarily, meaning there may be assignments due on Saturday and Sunday.

- Your regular attendance is expected for your success in this course. If you miss more than a few days of engagement, you may well fail the course. This rule applies to all three weeks of the course, including the first and last weeks.
- It is your responsibility to inform me of any temporary absence from our online class. With that said, the above rule applies throughout the semester.
- Your engaged participation is a prerequisite in this course. Online participation may be demonstrated through posting to a discussion board or classroom meeting, completing real-time activities or quizzes, and performing other course-related activities (synchronous or asynchronous).

NETIQUETTE FOR ONLINE COURSE

- Be polite and respectful of one another.
- Avoid personal attacks. Keep dialogue friendly and supportive, even when you disagree or wish to present a controversial idea or response.
- Be careful with the use of humor and sarcasm, which can be easily misinterpreted.
- Be helpful and considerate. Foster community, communication, and collaboration.
- Contribute constructively and completely to each discussion. Avoid short repetitive “I agree” responses, and don’t make everyone else do the work.
- Consider carefully what you write; re-read before sending or posting.
- Remember that e-mail is a permanent record that may be forwarded to others.
- Be brief and succinct. Don’t use up other people’s time or bandwidth.
- Use descriptive subject headings for your postings to the Discussion forum.
- Respect privacy. Don’t forward a personal message without permission.
- Keep responses professional, educational, and pertinent to our course materials.
- Do not send large attachments unless you have been asked to do so.
- Two-word responses (e.g., “I agree,” “Me too,” etc.) do not count as postings.

URI ACADEMIC WRITING STANDARDS

Specific writing standards differ from discipline to discipline, and learning to write persuasively in any genre is a complex process, both individual and social, that takes place over time with continued practice and guidance. Nonetheless, URI has identified

some common assumptions and practices that apply to most academic writing done at the university level. These generally understood elements are articulated here to help you see how you can best express your ideas effectively, regardless of the discipline involved or the particulars of any specific writing assignment.

Venues for writing include e-mail, electronic chat spaces, and interactive blackboards. URI is committed to guaranteeing that students can expect all electronic communication to meet Federal and State regulations concerning harassment or other “hate” speech. Individual integrity and social decency require common courtesies and a mutual understanding that writing—in all its educational configurations—is an attempt to share information, knowledge, opinions, and insights in fruitful ways.

Academic writing (as commonly understood in the university) always aims at correct Standard English grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

The following details are meant to give you accurate, useful, and practical assistance for writing across the curriculum of URI.

Students can assume that successful collegiate writing will generally:

- Delineate the relationships among writer, purpose, and audience by means of a clear focus (thesis statements and critical hypotheses are two examples of such focusing methods, but are by no means the only ones) and a topic that’s managed and developed appropriately for the specific task.
- Display a familiarity with and understanding of the particular discourse styles of the discipline and/or particular assignment.
- Demonstrate the analytical skills of the writer rather than just repeating what others have said by summarizing or paraphrasing
- Substantiate abstractions, judgments, and assertions with evidence specifically applicable for the occasion, such as illustrations, quotations, or relevant data.
- Draw upon contextualized research whenever necessary, properly acknowledging the explicit work or intellectual property of others.
- Require more than one carefully proofread and documented draft, typed or computer printed unless otherwise specified.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses, which are dealt with firmly by the College and University. Scholastic integrity presumes that students are honest in all academic work. **Cheating** is the failure to give credit for work not done independently (i.e., submitting a paper written by someone other than yourself), engaging in unauthorized communication during an examination, or claiming credit for work not done (i.e., falsifying information). **Plagiarism** is the failure to give credit for another person's written or oral statement, thereby falsely presuming that such work is originally and solely your own.

If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, visit the following website: <https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/whatisplagiarism>. Also see the URI Student Handbook and University Manual sections on plagiarism and cheating at <http://web.uri.edu/studentconduct/student-handbook/>.

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student's name on any written work, quiz, or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student's own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student's own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite, and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty:

- Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation;
- Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently;
- Unauthorized possession or access to exams;
- Unauthorized communication during exams;
- Unauthorized use of another's work or preparing work for another student;
- Taking an exam for another student;
- Altering or attempting to alter grades;
- The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams;
- Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references;

- Facilitating or aiding another's academic dishonesty;
- Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the Instructor.

Please take note of the following section from the University Manual:

8.27.17. Instructors shall have the explicit duty to take action in known cases of cheating or plagiarism. The instructor shall have the right to fail a student on the assignment on which the instructor has determined that a student has cheated or plagiarized. The circumstances of this failure shall be reported to the student's academic dean, the instructor's dean, and the Office of Student Life. The student may appeal the matter to the instructor's dean, and the decision by the dean shall be expeditious and final.

Such action will be initiated by the instructor if it is determined that any written assignment is copied or falsified or inappropriately referenced.

Any good writer's handbook as well as reputable online resources will offer help on matters of plagiarism and instruct you on how to acknowledge source material. If you need more help understanding when to cite something or how to indicate your references, PLEASE ASK.

Please note: Students are responsible for being familiar with and adhering to the published "**Community Standards of Behavior: University Policies and Regulations,**" which can be accessed in the **University Student Handbook**.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Office of Disability Services

Americans With Disabilities Act Statement

Any personal learning accommodations that may be needed by a student covered by the "Americans with Disabilities Act" must be made known to the university as soon as possible. This is the student's responsibility. Information about services, academic modifications, and documentation requirements can be obtained from the Office of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity (AAEOD).

<https://web.uri.edu/affirmativeaction/>

Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me early in the semester so that we may work out reasonable accommodations to support your success in this course. Students should also contact Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, 401-874-2098.

From the University Manual: 6.40.10 and 6.40.11 Accommodations for Qualified Students With Disabilities.

Students are expected to notify faculty at the onset of the semester if any special considerations are required in the classroom. If any special considerations are required for examinations, it is expected the student will notify the faculty a week before the examination with the appropriate paperwork.

Uri Online Library Resources

<https://web.uri.edu/library/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Topics Discussed	Course Learning Objectives	Assignments/Deliverables
1	<u>Monday, January 4</u>	Syllabus / Course Overview Course parameters defined	Online Introduction, Discussion, Syllabus Quiz Reading Journal: how to ...
1	<u>Wednesday, January 6</u> Edgar Allan Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841)	Problematize plot as a literary element	Discussion Reading Journal: Plot Quiz
1	<u>Friday, January 8</u> Catharine Maria Sedgwick, "New Year's Day" (1836)	Practice the preliminary rituals of close reading	Active Reading Assignment

Unit II: The Modern Short Story			
2	<u>Monday, January 11</u> William Dean Howells, "Editha" (1905)	Distinguish between the literary elements of character and characterization	Discussion Reading Journal: Characterization
2	<u>Wednesday, January 13</u> Mark Twain, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (1865)	Distinguish between the tale and the telling of the same	Discussion Reading Journal: Dialogue
2	<u>Friday, January 15</u> Sarah Orne Jewett, "A White Heron" (1886)	Perform a preparatory close reading of an extended passage	Close Reading Assignment
Midterm Exam: Tuesday, January 19			
3	<u>Wednesday, January 20</u> Raymond Carver, "Cathedral" (1981)	Conceptualize the narrative potential of the literary vernacular	Discussion
3	<u>Friday, January 22</u> Grace Paley, "A Conversation with My Father" (1994)	Apply the skills of close reading with interpretive purpose, combining argumentation from evidence, discussion, sustained analysis, and synthesis	Analytic Essay Assignment