

English 255: Introduction to Short Story and Novel

Spring Day Session Term '98

Instructor: Prof. J. James

Texts: Irving Howe, Classics of Modern Fiction
Selected Short Stories

- I. General Objectives of Literature: Literature holds many values for the student. Concerned with such realities as life, death, love, the problem of good and evil, literature enriches and clarifies life by contributing to an understanding of man's relationship to society, to his physical environment, to his inner self and to God.

Other studies seek similar ends, but in other ways. Perhaps the area peculiar to literature is most accurately conveyed by the concept of the "concrete universal". Philosophy and science abstract truth from experience; literature seizes truth in experience.

A good reader is one who both selects judiciously and reads discriminately. Most students are certain to invest substantial portions of their lives in reading literature as well as in attention to the related arts of the theatre, the motion picture, and others. This means that one of the most important acquisitions possible for a college student is a growing habit of active personal judgment in the selection and appraisal of what he reads and views. He can best initiate himself into a habit of valid and effective judgment by systematic, extensive practice in the critical reading of works of various kinds. The course in literature will provide this practice designed to help the student become a judicious reader of literary form.

- II. Specific Objectives of This Course: English 255 will introduce the student to two of the four literary genres: short story and novel. For each work studied, an attempt will be made to answer two basic questions: what does the work mean and how does the work mean? The what concerns theme or meaning while the how deals with the technical means the writer employs in getting his theme or meaning across to the reader.

Fully appreciating modern short story and novel classics is quite often an acquired taste, so it is hoped that each student will develop a critical judgment in assessing the quality of a work, and to this end, an attempt will be made to discover criteria for evaluating the merit of a short story or a novel.

Finally, it is hoped that students will see the relevancy of modern fiction classics as these works inform students in an in-depth way about themselves and their world (and hopefully students will be motivated enough to read modern fiction classics on their own after they complete this course).

- III. How This Course Is Related to General Objectives of the University:

- (1) To develop in the student approaches to the creative and analytical understanding and appreciation of literature, specifically through the study of modern writers of short story and novel classics in the Western tradition. **
- (2) To open to the student the wealth of man's cultural heritage both artistic and intellectual.
- (3) To encourage a search for truth through literature and to assist the student in forming a value system or a philosophy of life.

IV. Major Assignments: (1) Presentation of key points in literary works & indepth supplements by the instructor. (2) Class discussions of these points & the assigned portions of literary works. Student involvement will be emphasized in all aspects of the learning experience. Obviously, reading of the assigned textual material is essential to a complete understanding of class discussions & to a successful completion of written examinations. (3) Selective student presentations on or responses to topics or questions approved by the instructor both to encourage student research & to afford an opportunity to the student for effective oral communication.

V. Grading:

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| 25% | Exam #1 (Crane, Welty, Powers, Gordon, Joyce) |
| 30% | Exam #2 (O'Connor, Porter, & <u>Displaced Person</u>) |
| 15% | Bellow take-home essay |
| 12% | Marquez take-home essay |
| 18% | Attendance & class participation/interaction |
| | • Short quizzes or in-class responses or journal entries |
| | • Participation in a panel on either Baldwin or Joyce or Lessing or McPherson novella (or submission of written journal entries based on Bellow novella) |

**To do well in this course, class attendance is essential. Three cuts will lower the final grade by one letter. Contact me regarding valid cuts.

**Punctuality, please! Since a few audio tapes or video films will be used in this course, it is necessary to start class right on time. Also, in-class responses will be given at the start of the class period. Lateness will prevent you from getting credit for these responses.

VI. Tentative Schedule:

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| Weeks 1-8 | Selected stories by Crane, Welty, Powers, Gordon, Joyce, O'Connor, Porter. If time allows, a brief introduction to some recent Pacific Island stories selected from the following writers: Ihimaera, Pillai, Hau'ofa, Veramu, Griffen. |
| Week 9-10 | Flannery O'Connor, <u>The Displaced Person</u> |
| Week 11-12 | Saul Bellow, <u>Seize the Day</u> or James Joyce, <u>The Dead</u> |
| Week 13 | Doris Lessing <u>The Antheap</u> or James McPherson, <u>A Solo Song: For Doc</u> or James Baldwin, <u>Sonny's Blues</u> |
| Week 14-15 | Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <u>No One Writes to the Colonel</u> |
| Week 16 | Final Exams |