

English 255: Introduction to Short Story and Novel

Prof. Jon James FD99
Fall On-Campus 1999
English 25501

Texts: Irving Howe, Classics of Modern Fiction
Selected Short Stories (copies provided)

- 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, cinema, 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. Running of the Class: (1) Presentations of key points in literary works and indepth supplements by the instructor. (2) Class discussions of these points and 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 and to a successful completion of written exams and essays. (3) Selective student presentations on or responses to topics or questions approved by the instructor both to encourage student research and to afford an opportunity to the student for effective oral communication.

V. Grading:

25%	Exam #1 (Crane, Welty, Powers, Gordon, Joyce)
25%	Exam #2 (O'Connor, Porter, <u>Displaced Person</u>)
15%	Bellow take-home essay
12%	Marquez essay
23%	--Attendance & class participation/interaction. --Quizzes/in-class responses, journal entries. --Participation on a panel on one of the following authors: Baldwin, Joyce, Crane, Lessing, or McPherson. **Specific instructions on this assignment to be given in class at the appropriate time.

** To do well in this course, class attendance is essential. Three or more unexcused absences will lead to a one letter grade reduction for the course. See attendance policy in General Catalog.

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

VI. Tentative Schedule:

Weeks 1-7	Selected stories by Crane, Welty, Powers, Gordon, Joyce, O'Connor, Porter.
Week 8	Flannery O'Connor, <u>The Displaced Person</u>
Weeks 9-10	Saul Bellow, <u>Seize the Day</u>
Week 11	Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <u>No One Writes to Colonel</u>
Weeks 12-15	James Baldwin, <u>Sonny's Blues</u> ; Joseph Conrad, <u>Secret Sharer</u> ; Doris Lessing, <u>The Antheap</u> ; James McPherson, <u>A Solo Song: For Doc</u> .
Week 16	Final Exam

**Projected exam dates: end of Weeks 4 & 8.

**Bellow essay due end of week 10.

**Marquez essay due end of week 12.

**Panel dates/schedule will be set up later on.

VII. Course Expectations:

1. That the student know all literary terms & theory related to fiction.
2. That the student be able to identify the various technical aspects which make up the specific fiction considered.
3. That the student know well the literal facts (& vocabulary) of the fiction considered.
4. That the student be able to do adequate interpretative analysis of the fiction considered, supporting all analysis with adequate textual support & evidence.
5. That the student be able to share & discuss various views & opinions of the fiction considered with his/her peers.
6. That the student be able to relate various issues brought up by the fiction considered to his/her own personal life.
7. That the student be able to handle successfully an analysis of at least one short novel not covered during class time, making use of appropriate research sources or materials.