

English 255: Short Story and Novel

Fall 2004

Professor J. James

Office: Henry Hall 206K (735-4711 Extension 683)

Office Hours: MWF 12:00-12:50
TTh 3:30-4:30

English 255: Introduction to Short Story and Novel

Texts: Irving Howe, Classics of Modern Fiction & Saul Bellow's Seize the Day
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 Introductory material on craft of fiction. Short stories by Crane, Welty, Powers, & Joyce.
- 25% Exam #2 Short stories by Porter & Fuentes. O'Connor's The Displaced Person.
- 27% Exam #3 Novels by Bellow, Baldwin, Lessing, & Marquez.
- 23% Class participation & interaction: quizzes, inclass commentaries or responses, journal entries, group debates.

Participation on a panel on one of the following novelists: Baldwin, Lessing, Marquez (maybe Tolstoy). Panels will give their presentations during the last two or three weeks of the term. Specific instructions on this assignment will be given in class at the appropriate time.

****Roll will be taken each class. To do well in this course, class attendance is essential. See the Chaminade attendance policy: three unexcused absences in a course can lead to a one letter grade reduction for the final course grade. Contact me regarding valid absences.**

**** As university-level students, you are expected to be punctual & to bring the necessary stories & materials to class and to exhibit appropriate university behavior during class time.**

**** Note that a large part of the final course grade will be based upon inclass responses, both written & oral. Also, there will be a number of journal entries due this term (some inclass & some done at home). My submission deadline policy on out-of-class entries will be spelled out clearly in class.**

VI. Schedule:

- Weeks 1-6 Introductory material on craft of fiction. Crane, Welty, Powers, & Joyce stories.
- Weeks 7-9 Porter & Fuentes stories/Flannery O'Connor's The Displaced Person.
- Weeks 10-11 Saul Bellow's Seize the Day.
- Weeks 12-15 James Baldwin's Sonny's Blues, Doris Lessing's The Antheap, Gabriel Marquez's No One Writes to the Colonel & maybe Leo Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Ilvch.

****Projected exam dates:**

Exam #1: End of week 5 or week 6

Exam #2: End of week 9 or week 10

Exam #3: Take-home part of the final exam due at the end of week 15 & inclass part to be taken at the scheduled exam day/time in week 16.

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.