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Office Hours: THH 439 TTh 330-450 and by appt.

GESM 120g
Section 35293R
Fall 2015, TTh 6:30-7:50 PM
Von KleinSmid Center 255

The Secret Life of the Short Story

Students often read short stories in anthologies, where they are presented as if they came into the world fully formed and were immediately acclaimed as timeless works of art. In this class, we read stories as if they were written by actual people who struggled to say what they meant, and then had to struggle to publish their work. We maintain this understanding of the short story as a created object in the “real world” as we explore the formal qualities and aesthetic transformations of the short story in the United States over the past century and a bit.

We read a great variety of stories throughout the rich canon of the twentieth century, from the respectable and canonical to the contemporary and experimental, and from the tiny fable to the novella. Stories will either be written by U. S. Americans or have a substantive impact on American writers and fiction. Students will increase their ability to name and examine the formal elements of short fiction, and to produce reasoned aesthetic analysis. Stories will be placed in the context of their contemporary culture, as reactions to and reflections of prevailing political, religious, and social conditions. Class readings will therefore follow two separate but related chronologies: the aesthetic development of the short story over the twentieth century, as well as developments in American culture. As we read as much for narrative technique as for thematic content—as much from the perspective of the craftsman as from the perspective of a critic—the class includes creative writing exercises. These exercises help students better understand the creative process and become an active participant in the arts, and to allow them to achieve a breadth and depth of understanding of formal elements of fiction as they develop and realize their personal taste and aesthetic.

Textbooks

We will read stories from a classic anthology and a contemporary anthology, as well as a contemporary novella. We will also read a guide to narrative craft:

Janet Burroway and Elizabeth Stuckey-French, eds. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, 9th ed. Assignments will be taken from this edition.

Ann Charters, ed., *The Story and Its Writer*, Compact 8th Ed. Assignments will be taken from this edition.

Laura Furman, ed. *The PEN/O. Henry Prize Stories 2011*

Tao Lin, *Shoplifting from American Apparel*

Please note that computers are not allowed in class, so you will need physical copies of the texts. ISBNs are available on the schedule of classes. Some material will be available on Blackboard, and students should print out these texts.

Stories in Chronological Order

1846 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart"

Naturalism to Modernism: 1890-1940

- 1886 Sara Orne Jewett, "A White Heron" (possibly)
 1891 Ambrose Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"
 1894 Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour"
 1897 Stephen Crane, "The Open Boat" (possibly)
 1906 O. Henry, "The Gift of the Magi"
 1926 Zora Neal Hurston, "Sweat"
 1927 Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants"
 1931 William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily"
 1934 Edith Wharton, "Roman Fever"

Mid-Century: 1940-1965

- 1950 Ray Bradbury, "There Will Come Soft Rains"
 1955 Flannery O'Connor, "Good Country People"
 1957 James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" (possibly)
 1961 John Updike, "A & P"
 1961 Kurt Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron"
 1964 John Cheever, "The Swimmer"

Postmodern: 1966-2000

- 1966 Joyce Carol Oates, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"
 1974 Grace Paley, "A Conversation with My Father"
 1978 Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl"
 1983 Margaret Atwood, "Happy Endings"
 1983 Raymond Carver, "A Small, Good Thing"
 1985 Elizabeth Tallent, "No One's A Mystery"
 1986 Tim O'Brien, "The Things They Carried"
 1986 Ann Beattie, "Snow"
 1989 Amy Tan, "Two Kinds"
 1990 A.M. Homes, "A Real Doll"
 1996 Junot Diaz, "How To Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie"
 1997 Annie Proulx, "Brokeback Mountain"
 1998 Aimee Bender, "The Rememberer"
 1999 Gish Jen, "Who's Irish"
 1999 ZZ Packer, "Brownies"

Contemporary

- 2009 Tao Lin, *Shoplifting from American Apparel*
 2011 *The 2011 PEN/O. Henry Prize Stories*

Course Requirements

- Class attendance and participation. As section will frequently be run as a creative writing workshop, attendance and the timely submission of assignments are essential.
- Two analytical papers, the first focused on technique and the second on the marriage of technique and content.
- In-class midterm and final
- A portfolio of writing exercises that includes a revision and a self-analysis.

Please note that adjustments may be made over the course of the semester to allow for the specific needs of the class. If so, they will be announced.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance and Absence

Students are expected to attend both lecture and section on time, and absences and tardiness will be factored into semester grades. Absences due to religious holidays or illness are excused only if I am notified in advance. An exception will also be made for students who join the class late or otherwise miss the first class.

Five absences is sufficient cause for failing the class. This holds for students who take the class pass/fail. Excessive lateness is equivalent to absence, as is consistently not bringing required books and texts to class.

In all cases, students are responsible for all missed work. I encourage you to exchange contact information with other students and if not, to seek it out through Blackboard.

Electronic Devices

Computers, phones, and other electronic devices may not be used in lecture. Class texts may not be read off of laptops or phones. This rule will be strictly enforced. Those who require their computers for reasons of disability may find directions below.

Exams

There will be a midterm and final. Both ask students to identify formal aspects of particular stories and consider their use in essay form, and to write long essays considering particular stories in the context of the aesthetic conventions of their period, and of the larger cultural context.

Students who require extra accommodations for exams—both the midterm and the final—must arrange these at least two weeks in advance. Informing myself at the start of the semester is not sufficient; you need to confirm your special accommodations within two to three weeks of the exam. I am happy to make special arrangements for you, but I will only do so with appropriate notice. Students must have their letters of verification in hand before making special accommodations. See "Statement for Students with Disabilities," below.

Exercises and Workshop

Writing exercises will be explained in class and due at the next class: If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find and complete the exercise. In turn, students will have their exercises workshopped. When it is your turn to be workshopped, you will bring copies of your exercise for all the students in class. Distributing exercises in class is required, and the failure to do either will be reflected in your grade. While you may have an excuse to miss class, your exercises do not. Exercises that are not distributed in class will not be workshopped.

You should expect some of the workshops to spill over into the next class; I have built time for this in the syllabus. If time allows, we will discuss student exercises that are not in the workshop.

The workshop will be organized as follows:

Group A: _____, _____, _____, _____,

Group B: _____, _____, _____, _____,

Group C: _____, _____, _____, _____,

Group D: _____, _____, _____, _____,

Group E: _____, _____, _____, _____,

Extra Credit

There is none.

Grades

There are 1000 possible points that may be earned in this class, distributed as follows:

Exercises: 100 points

First Paper: 100 points

Midterm: 200 points

Final: 200 points

Final paper: 200 points

Participation: 200 points

Letter grades on papers and assignments will be converted as follows:

A+ = 99 A = 95 A- = 92 B+ = 89 B = 85 B- = 82 C+ = 79 C = 75 C- = 72 D+ = 69 D = 65 F = 0

These will be adjusted by the points possible for each assignment. For an assignment worth 100 points, a B will earn 85 points; for an assignment worth 200 points, 170 points.

Your final numerical scores will be converted to a letter equivalent thus:

A = 94 - 100 A- = 90 - 93.9 B+ = 87 - 89.9 B = 84 - 86.9

B- = 80 - 83.9 C+ = 77 - 79.9 C = 74 - 76.9 C- = 70 - 73.9

D+ = 67 - 69.9 D = 64 - 66.9 D- = 60 - 63.9 F = below 60

Office Hours

My office hours are posted on the first page of the course outline. I hope that you will come by with any general or particular questions about the class. Please feel free. You may make an appointment by email if you want to reserve a specific time, but this is not necessary. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, we will make other arrangements.

Papers and Portfolio

The first paper is a close reading of an element of technique in a short story and should be about three pages long. The final paper is an analysis of a short story that is included in the class textbooks but is not assigned for class. The final paper should consider how the formal aspects of the story contribute to or detract from its overall effect, power, and theme, and should be at least six pages long. All papers should be double-spaced, with 12-pt Times New Roman font and page numbers. MLA format is preferred, with in-text citations.

The portfolio is a compendium of all creative writing exercises and revisions due during the semester, as well as a complete short story of 5-8 pages, and includes a substantial introduction that concerns the formal qualities of the student's work and progress over the semester, as well as a student's understanding of her or his aesthetic "taste."

Late assignments are not accepted as a rule; you are better off turning off an "eh" paper on time than a wonderful paper late. Please read that sentence again. Specifics of when and how papers should be turned in will be announced.

Participation

Class participation is a full fifth of your grade, and students should not expect to do well in class if they do not speak, regardless of the grade they receive on other assignments. Students should expect to speak regularly in class. I will keep track of participation.

If class participation fills you with dread, please come see me. I sympathize. Nonetheless, class participation is an essential skill, and I do require it.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the submission of any material under your own name that you did not create by yourself. Plagiarism is not only poor form but also academically criminal. Passing off someone else's words or ideas as your own is the theft of someone's intellectual property. These are the general rules:

- You must give credit in your paper for ideas that are not your own—whether you directly quote or paraphrase—unless the information is considered common knowledge. Any direct quotes, paraphrases, or summaries, including those found on the internet, including Wikipedia, must be cited.
- A paper you have used for another class anywhere is not eligible for submission, even with minor revisions.

Plagiarism will result in automatic failure of the assignment and possible failure of the course.

Policies and Procedures for the University at Large

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the Department of Public Safety <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu/will> provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible.

Student Behavior: Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.

Syllabus

There are 29 classes over 15 weeks. Please note that the following schedule may and probably will change. You are responsible for keeping track of these changes, which will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard.

There will be some hand-outs, which will be available on Blackboard. As time and opportunity allows, I will make copies for you. Copies will only be available the day they are distributed. If you miss class or otherwise lose your free copy, you will need to print the hand-outs out from Blackboard or make other arrangements.

The Story and Its Writer	SW
O. Henry Prize Stories	OH
Writing Fiction	WF
Hand-out/Download from Blackboard	HO

Week 1

- 8.25 Course Outline
Class Texts
HO Elizabeth Tallent, "No One's A Mystery"
Groups Assigned
- 8.27 Sensory Detail
HO A.M. Homes, "A Real Doll"
WF Chapter 1. For most of the semester, you will have a weekly assignment from WF, due on Monday, that will support our reading.
Exercise 1: Sensory detail assigned.

Week 2

- 9.1 Dramatization
SW Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour"
SW Ambrose Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"
WF Chapter 2, first half
Exercise 1 due. Group A brings copies for the class
- 9.3 SO Judy Doeges, "Melinda"
HO Edith Wharton, "Roman Fever"
Workshop Group A
Exercise 2: Dramatization exercise assigned.

Week 3

- 9.8 Exposition
SW Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery"
WF Chapter 2, second half
Exercise 2 due. Group B brings copies for the class.
- 9.10 SW Tim O'Brien, "The Things They Carried"
SW John Updike "A & P"
Workshop Group B

- Week 4
9.15 Point of View
SW Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart"
Junot Diaz, "How To Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie"
WF Chapter 8, first half
- 9.17 SW William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily"
Zora Neale Hurston, "Sweat"
Paper 1 Assignment Sheet
- Week 5
9.22 More Points of View
Any special arrangements for the midterm must be made or confirmed this week.
OH Jeanine Capó Crucet, "How To Leave Hialeah"
SW Aimee Bender, "The Rememberer"
WF Chapter 8, second half
Discussion of Midterm
Exercise 3: Point-of-view exercise assigned.
- 9.24 OH Brian Evenson, "Windeye"
Exercise 3 due. Group C brings copies for the class.
- Week 6
9.29 Fictional Reality: Sensory Detail, Dramatization, Exposition, Point of View
OH Kenneth Calhoun, "Nightblooming"
Workshop Group C
Paper 1 discussion
- 10.1 No class today, as I will be giving a lecture at SDSU.
Instead, you will turn in paper 1 on-line.
- Week 7
10.6 Plot
SW Guy de Maupassant, "The Necklace"
HO O Henry, "The Gift of the Magi"
- 10.8 Midterm
- Week 8
10.13 The Plot Thickens
SW Joyce Carol Oates, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"
Raymond Carver, "A Small Good Thing"
WF Chapter 7, first half
Exercise 4: Plot assigned
- 10.15 OH Lynn Freed, "Sunshine"
Exercise 4 due. Group D brings copies for class.

- Week 9 Plot and Structure
- 10.20 SW Ray Bradbury, "There Will Come Soft Rains"
OH Helen Simpson, "Diary of an Interesting Year"
Workshop Group D
- 10.22 OH Gish Jen, "Who's Irish"
Popular fiction hand-outs
- Week 10
- 10.27 Popular fiction hand-outs
- 10.29 SW John Cheever, "The Swimmer"
ZZ Packer, "Brownies"
- Week 11 Character and Dialogue
- 11.3 SW Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants"
Kurt Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron"
- 11.5 SW Flannery O'Connor, "Good Country People"
OH Chris Adrian, "The Black Square"
Exercise 5: Character and Dialogue assigned
- Week 12 Politics and the Marketplace
- 11.10 SW Amy Tan, "Two Kinds"
Amy Tan, "In the Canon, for All the Wrong Reasons" (In back of
SW)
WF Chapter 4
Exercise 5 due. Group E brings copies for class. If there is no Group E, then
volunteers.
Paper 2 discussed.
- 11.12 HO Annie Proulx, "Brokeback Mountain"
Annie Proulx on "Brokeback Mountain"
From the *Paris Review* (may be accessed via Blackboard):
<http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5901/the-art-of-fiction-no-199-annie-proulx>
From *The Guardian* (may be accessed via Blackboard):
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/29/annie-proulx-regrets-writing-brokeback-mountain>
Workshop Group E
- Week 13 Style and Metafiction
Special arrangements for the final must be made this week.
- 11.17 SW Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl"
Anne Beattie, "Snow"
Fiction Portfolio and Revision discussed
- 11.19 SW Margaret Atwood, "Happy Endings"
Grace Paley, "A Conversation with My Father"

Week 14

11.24 *Shoplifting from American Apparel*
Discussion of Paper 2

11.26 Thanksgiving Vacation

Week 15

12.1 OH Elizabeth Tallent, "Never Come Back"
Workshop at large. Everyone brings a copy for everyone in the class of a revised exercise.

12.3 Fiction Portfolio due
Workshop at large
Discussion of Final Exam

Final Exam Thursday, December 10 7-9 PM
Paper 2 due at final. You are welcome to turn in paper 2 early.