

## THE PULSE OF SHORT FICTION TODAY

### Hybrid Format

**HSS 404, Spring 2024**

**Office: 413 Cullimore Hall**

**Hours: Mon., 1:00 - 2:00, & by appointment**

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**Course Digital Venue, Canvas Conferencing System**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course considers the literary genre of the modern short story with particular attention to recently written American work that, arguably, reflects shifting cultural practices. The course will first consider the genre across time and geography starting in the earlier twentieth century and moving forward to more recent decades, and then concentrate on contemporary published short fiction. This recent work especially may raise issues having to do with genre and the question of what exactly a short story in our time is, also related literary genres like memoir, voiced nonfiction, creative nonfiction, and literary journalism--all within a view of the short fiction work as a key to understanding contemporary culture.

The HSS senior seminar, is meant to be the culmination of the undergraduate experience in the humanities and social sciences. Characterized by its sophistication of inquiry, the Seminar is to be an in-depth experience within a particular area of focus dependent upon an instructor's intellectual or artistic specialization or area of expertise. The Seminar inquiry is characterized by its ongoing exchange among participants meant to foster nuanced critical thinking and discussion, as well as adept writing.

Prerequisites: HUM 102; and one from among HUM 211, HUM 212 and Hist 213 or their equivalents, all with a grade of C or better; completion of either the Lit/Hist/Phil/STS or the Open Elective in Humanities and Social Science, with a grade of C or better.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course students should be able to: demonstrate critical thinking within a narrowly focused subject area through both oral and written communication; develop in-depth, focused, polemical, researched writing with full documentation of sources; write argument-based essays in response to thematic questions; and, explain the dynamic of news media within a free society.

## COURSE TEXTS

See the names of the literary works in the course schedule (below). All assigned stories will be available inside the course homepage in Canvas. Various other short readings are also to be found at the course homepage in Canvas.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Oral/Visual Reports, one a group report on a weekly assignment, the other an individual report on the term paper project.
- Weekly Canvas postings (one original of 100 to 150 words, another 50 to 100-word response to someone else's post).
- A two-staged research project culminating in a researched and fully-cited term paper (see writing and documentation guidelines above, listed with the course readings):
  - Stage One: a Term Paper Announcement (see below<sup>^</sup>) consisting of a Working Title, a one-sentence Thesis Statement (one sentence only, though the sentence can be long and multi-claused and may use one semicolon), a detailed, step-by-step Description of your future paper's Writing Strategy (i.e. how you will prove your thesis, not a summary of what will be in your paper), and a Bibliography (in MLA format--see the link to documentation guides above) of at least three secondary sources, one of which must be a hard-copy source (for the purposes of this assignment assigned readings, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and textbooks will not be considered as counting toward the requisite minimum number of secondary sources, although they can be used in your term paper project);
  - Stage Two: a 1500 to 3000-word, fully-documented, original and critical, discursive, polemical (please look up this word if you don't really know what it means) and otherwise argumentative essay that must include at least some detailed analysis of the artifacts being discussed (see below<sup>^^</sup>), along with a bibliography of all sources (the bibliography will not be considered part of word count). The term paper topic is open (though the topic must have something to do with the subject of this course) but must be approved ahead of time by the instructor. The Term Paper is credited when preceded by the Term Paper Announcement.
- Final examination, comprehensive, essay in format, open-book. *Failure to submit the final exam will result in the papers that are part of the term paper project being disqualified.*

Weekly Canvas posts should be single-spaced but otherwise must also be spell-

checked and to the best of one's ability grammar-checked, and must be in standard English and adhere to standard formal writing protocols.

As regards all writing submitted in this course, please keep the following in mind. If on occasion use is made of the ideas or words of someone else in one's writing, then the source(s) of those ideas and/or words must be cited; that is, when appropriate, papers must be fully documented in MLA format (you must cite sources--using footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical documentation, which include specific page numbers keyed to particular passages in your text, and complete bibliographical information). **WRITTEN TEXTS NOT MEETING ALL OF THESE REQUIREMENTS WILL NOT BE READ AND WILL NOT RECEIVE CREDIT.**

N.B. Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity whose policy can be found

at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at [dos@njit.edu](mailto:dos@njit.edu).

Papers must be submitted to the instructor via Canvas, as Word or Word-compatible files. Do not submit anything as a PDF.

N.B.: *Failure to participate in class discussions (especially online) at a minimally acceptable level will result in disqualification of end-of-term assignments such as the term paper and final exam*; such disqualification must inevitably spell failure in the course. In order to pass this course a student should be consistently active in weekly class work starting from the beginning of the course term. Furthermore, only three unexcused absences will be allowed; more than these will mean automatic course failure.

## **COURSE GRADE**

Final Examination, 30%; Midterm Exam 5% (higher final exam grade count for both)  
Term Paper, 10%

Term Paper Announcement, 5%  
Class Participation online (initial, originating posts - graded weekly), 15%  
Class Participation online (responses to classmates' posts), 10%  
Follow-up Questions or Comments, 5%  
Portfolio of Eight Best Posts online, 5%  
Group Reports, 10%  
Individual Report, 5% (highest report grade counts for all three reports)  
Extra credit project, 10%

Final Examination, 30%; Midterm Exam 5% (if final exam grade is higher than the midterm grade then the final grade will count for both) Term Paper, 10% Term Paper Announcement, 5% Class Participation online (initial, originating posts - graded weekly), 15% Class Participation online (responses to classmates' posts), 10% Follow-up Questions or Comments, 5% Portfolio of Eight Best Posts online, 5% Group Reports, 10% (higher grade for the two reports counts for both) Individual Report, 5% Extra credit project, 10%

## **COURSE SCHEDULE\***

Week 1: Introduction to the course.

Week 2: Hemingway, "Big Two-Hearted River"; Ellison, "Battle Royal."

Week 3: Jackson, "The Lottery"; O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find."

Week 4: Paley, "A Conversation with My Father"; Carver, "Neighbors."

Week 5: Morrison, "Recitatif"; Erdrich, "The Red Convertible."

Week 6: Midterm Exam

Week 7: Williams, "Escapes"; Trask, "Putting Out the Sun."

Week 8: Lahiri, "Interpreter of Maladies"; Wallace, "Good People."

Week 9: Willis, "Tara White"; Ng, "Girls, at Play."

Week 10: Darraj, "Chasing Valentino"; Englander, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank."

Week 11: Simmons, "Little America." Shaik, "Bird Whistle."

Week 12: Diaz, "The Cheater's Guide"; Vossoughi, "The Vine."

Week 13: Faison, "Do Sum Sum"; Loonam, "The Assistant."

Week 14: REPORTS ON RESEARCH PAPER PROJECTS.

*\* See due dates and details of assignments at course homepage in Canvas.*

