

# English 132

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Elizabeth Juckett, ENGL 132, Spring 2004, Short Fiction and Novel

ENGLISH 132: SHORT FICTION AND NOVEL

The Forms of Fiction

Instructor: Elizabeth Juckett

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## REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS:

- Lawn, Beverly. 40 Short Stories: A Portable Anthology
  - Monk Kidd, Sue. The Secret Life of Bees.
  - Twain, Mark. HuckleberryFinn.
  - Ellison, Ralph. InvisibleMan.
- An activated MIX email account and the ability to access the internet regularly. Every Friday I'll be using MIX to send you "Weekend Updates" that will remind you about work due the following week. That means you need to activate your MIX e-mail account or get MIX to forward your e-mails to your "regular" account, for example at Hotmail or Juno. Access MIX by going to <http://star.wvu.edu> and then clicking on "WVU STAR web" and then on "WVU STAR system." Then follow the instructions on the screen.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:** This course is designed to introduce you to the short story, novella, and novel and to explore the historical development of these forms, as well as the important differences in voice, style, structure, and effect between stories and novels that treat similar themes. Although selecting texts for this course is very difficult—there are so many stories and novels available to us, so many flavors, textures, sizes and exotic varieties to choose from—Beverly Lawn's anthology of short stories will give us an interesting and representative selection of short fiction to read and analyze. As to our longer fiction, I have decided arbitrarily to focus our reading on three novels that reflect different stages of America's historic struggle with racism, while also representing different moments in the history of the novel form itself and distinctly different levels of difficulty and intellectual complexity. I think you'll agree with me that the unique achievements of these novels becomes more sharply visible in light of their strikingly similar themes, like maturation, alienation, tensions between individuality and community, and the nature and effects of racism.

As to the style and values of this course, my goal is to have informal, friendly, and stimulating classes in which you consistently attain the highest levels of learning and achievement. Thus I will encourage a positive egalitarian classroom atmosphere; our learning environment will support your voices and opinions, hopefully giving us a sense of classroom community. Although the daily atmosphere will be democratic, I reserve the right as your instructor to evaluate your work according to my own semi-perfectionist standards. Therefore, you will need to take the requirements of the class seriously and to prepare your work dutifully, carefully, and as perfectly as you can in order to do well in this class. (If you don't find yourself doing as well as you'd like, please come to see me and discuss how we can work together to improve your performance.) Be aware, too, that you will need to heed the guidelines for attendance and participation; they will be applied strictly. In short, do not think that a relaxed and democratic classroom atmosphere means that I will relax my standards in evaluating your work or your commitment to the class.

#### **CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Commitment to this class, defined by your completion of reading assignments and your willingness to share your responses to them in class, as well as your daily attendance (10 points). As to attendance, any necessary absence from class will be excused, as long as you provide written evidence of the reason for the absence (e.g. a bill from Student Health indicating that you were seen there around class time; a repair bill from a service station proving that your car broke down and you couldn't make it to class; a letter from your advisor explaining that you and other students were participating in an important fieldtrip). Please note: A verbal excuse from you is not sufficient to excuse an absence; nor is an e-mail message from you.

**Unexcused absences** will affect your grade. As the table below shows, your participation in class will offset your absences, depending on how much you share in class every day.

#### **How Your Commitment to Class Grade Will Be Calculated:**

(Maximum = 10 points, plus 1 extra credit point for perfect attendance)

Points available; Number of unexcused absences, with daily, insightful participation; number of unexcused absences, with regular, helpful participation; Number of unexcused absences, with occasional or no participation

11 pts. (+1 extra credit); With 0 absences

10 points; With 1 absence; With 0 absences; With 0 absences

9 points; With 2-3 absences; With 1-2 absences; With 1 absence

8 points; With 4 absences; With 3 absences; With 2 absences  
7 points; With 5 absences; With 4 absences; With 3 absences  
6 points; With 6 absences; With 5 absences; With 4 absences  
5 points; With 7 absences; With 6 absences With 5 absences  
4 points; With 8 absences; With 7 absences; With 6 absences  
3 points; With 9 absences; With 8 absences; With 7 absences  
2 points; With 10 absences; With 9 absences; With 8 absences  
1 points; With 11 absences; With 10 absences; With 9 absences  
0 points; With 12 or more absences; With 11 or more absences; With 10 or more absences

**2. Completion of two unit tests (30 points each).** I'll give you more information on these tests as we get closer to them, but for now, here's a summary of what they will entail: As we conclude our first unit on the elements and forms of fiction, and our second unit on the historical development of these forms, you'll take in-class tests that will evaluate your understanding of what we've learned, as well as your familiarity with the novels and stories read. These tests will be comprised primarily of short answer questions, with one essay question included.

**3. One comparison/contrast essay (30 points),** upon completion of the final unit. I'll give you more information on this paper after spring break, but for now, here's a summary of what you'll be asked to do: After our final unit of study, you'll complete and submit a five-page comparison/contrast essay (double-spaced, with font no larger than 12 pt.) To do this, you will choose a character, event, setting, or image in a story or novel we have read this semester that in some way resonates with you and/or your experience. (The literary work you choose to write on must be from our semester reading list, but it can be from any part of the list.) Then you will write an original essay (no research needed) in which you tell first a little about yourself and your chosen experience/ character/setting/image; then analyze the literary element in your chosen English 132 story that is comparable to your experience; then compare and contrast your experience/character/ setting/image with that of the fictional work. For example, if you were raised in the New England countryside and identify with Sylvia in "A White Heron," you might base your comparison/contrast on this similarity of setting between your own life and the story. Or if you have personally experienced an adventure ilke that of Huck and Jim on their raft, you might base your comparison/contrast on this similarity of experience and focus on plot.

To produce this paper, you'll need to take the following steps: a) Identify any story from our reading list that you want to write about and that contains a character, event, setting, or image with which you connect. b) After carefully re-reading the story you have chosen, explore the differences and similarities between your experience/character/setting/image and the parallel element in the story. c) Read the general guidelines for writing about literature that are distributed with the essay assignment. d) Carefully

read through and make sure you understand the advice on "Writing a Literature Paper," a website sponsored by the University of Michigan's

English department at <http://www.umd.umich.edu/casl/hum/eng/jonsmith/writing.html>. e) Also read the Online Writing Lab guidelines for writing essays on literature at [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl\\_lit.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_lit.html) e) Remember: your purpose in writing this paper should be to find connections between one of the works we've read and your own life and perspective.

### **REQUIREMENTS, POLICIES, AND BITS OF FRIENDLY ADVICE (arranged alphabetically):**

**Attendance: Come to class!** This class will only be profitable to you if you make a serious, mature commitment to it. This means attending class regularly and bringing the relevant text with you. In my classes, bad grades almost invariably correlate with a poor attendance record. For rules on attendance, see "Class Requirements and Assignments," above.

**Cell phone and pager courtesy: Be thoughtful.** While cell phones and pagers make life safer and more convenient for students and teachers alike, they can be disruptive in the classroom. As a courtesy to me and your fellow students, please turn your cell phones and pagers off or use a silent signal while in class.

**Disabilities: Let me know if you have special needs and I will accommodate them.** If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation to participate in this class, please let me know. You should also make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

**Editing: Revise and edit your work carefully before you submit it.** Always, careful editing makes your work more readable. And although your writing and editing competencies will not affect the grades you earn on the tests, they will significantly influence the grade you earn on your required comparison/contrast essay. Evaluating that paper, I will take note of any grammar, diction (meaning "word choice" and "word usage"), punctuation, spelling, and proofreading mistakes I find and subtract points accordingly.

**Emergencies or health crises: Call student life.** If you encounter an emergency situation or serious health problem in the course of the semester—and I sincerely hope you don't—you or your family should immediately contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall (293-5611). The Dean of Student Life will then communicate with me concerning your problem and authorize me to make any necessary arrangements for you to complete this course. Note: please reserve the Dean's services for serious circumstances or emergencies; don't go there for minor problems or everyday excuses.

**Grading criteria: Keep the following standards in mind as you do the required work in English**

**132.** To evaluate your work on Units 1 and 2, your two tests will be assessed according to a 100-point scale, where 90 - 100 constitutes an A, 80 - 89 constitutes a B, and so forth. The grade you earn—say, a 92—will then be transferred to a 30-point scale, since each test is worth 30 points in this class. So a 92% on the test would give you 27.6 points out of the 30 possible.

As to the criteria that will be used to judge your completion of Unit 3, the evaluative criteria for the comparison/contrast essay are listed below. To calculate how many points you've earned on the essay, I'll transfer your earned grade (e.g. 90) to a 30-point scale (where a 90 would become a 27):

**A (90-100) ~ Excellent work.** The essay is clearly organized, with strong evidence supporting the comparison/contrast. The paper requires no substantive and only minor stylistic revisions. Its insight, understanding, and creativity are clearly superior. Details that support the writer's claims are abundant, well-integrated, and convincing.

**B (80-89) ~ Good work.** The essay shows a solid understanding of the chosen work and a good effort to create a connection between it and the writer's life. The paper may be partially incomplete, involve weak evidence (or lack thereof), or demonstrate organizational problems. The details that support the writer's claims may be somewhat superficial or weak. Insights may also be slightly superficial. Some small revisions are required to content and/or to style.

**C (70-79) ~ Satisfactory work.** The essay shows effort by the student, but the demonstrated understanding of the literary work, as well as the comparing/contrasting completed for the essay, are incomplete. The essay may include inappropriate supportive details or a lack of evidence, or it may show significant difficulties with organization. Written work requires significant substantive or stylistic revisions.

**D (60 - 69) ~ Less than average work.** The written assignment shows some lack of effort and engagement with the assignment, or a misunderstanding of the terms of the assignment. The essay lacks substance (analysis, evidence, organization); many substantive and stylistic revisions are necessary.

**F (<60) ~ Inadequate work.** The relevant assignment for the course has not been completed; or written work shows significant lack of effort as well as lack of engagement with the subject matter of the course. Analysis, evidence, and organization are absent from the paper, which needs to be completely reconceived in order to be acceptable.

**Incompletes: Request an incomplete only in the case of end-of-semester catastrophe.** WVU policy does not allow professors to give incompletes to students unless those students have satisfactorily completed almost all the work of the course and are prevented from finishing the course by some kind of

personal catastrophe (e.g. hospitalization, death of a parent). Only under these circumstances, verified by the office of the Dean of Student Life, will I grant you an "I." (See above, "emergencies or health crises.")

**Late work: Show up for tests and complete your work on time.** In this course, all assignments are due on the dates indicated on the syllabus and/or on the assignment sheet. As to the tests: If you cannot be in class on the day of a test, you should contact me ahead of time or as soon as possible to make up the work. If you have a valid reason (i.e. a written excuse) for missing the test, you can make it up without penalty. If you contact me within a week after the test but do not have a valid excuse for missing it, you will still be able to take a make-up test but will face a penalty: one letter grade will be subtracted from your score. As to the paper: If you cannot attend class on the day the paper is due, you should submit it to me in my mailbox the same day. Please note the deadline of Friday, April 30 for all work to be completed in this class. The only exception is the paper due April 30: if necessary, you may ask for an extension on it until Monday, May 2, but you must ask for the extension before class begins on the due-date, and, if you do get an extension, your essay must be submitted no later than 4:45 p.m. Monday, May 2, in my English office mailbox (231 Stansbury) or in my office (350 Stansbury).

**Plagiarism: Don't take the lazy way out.** Talking over your ideas and getting comments on your writing from friends are NOT examples of plagiarism. Copying or paraphrasing a friend's work is. So is taking someone else's published or unpublished words and calling them your own; a synonym is academic dishonesty. This is true whether the text being "borrowed" is from the internet or in hard-copy form. When plagiarism amounts to an attempt to deceive, it has dire consequences, as spelled out in University regulations.

**Questions about grades: Phone or visit, don't e-mail.** Due primarily to confidentiality concerns, I will not respond via email to requests for information about grades, either during the semester or after final course grades have been issued. If you want to discuss any grade with me, please contact me by phone or set up an office appointment.

**Social justice: Let's maintain high standards of respect.** West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I share that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions on how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated. .

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

(All the assignments on this schedule are subject to change, depending on how the semester goes.)

ALL CAPS = Assignment due OR Holiday .

**Week 1 (January 12 - 16)**

Monday: Introductions, buy texts

**Unit 1: The Elements and Characteristics of the Short Story, Novella, and Novel**

Wednesday: Plot: Poe, "Cask of Amontillado," 14

Friday: Setting: Achebe, "Civil Peace," 394

**Week 2 (January 19 - 23)**

Monday: NO SCHOOL—We remember Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Wednesday: Characterization: Oates, "Where Are You Going? Where Have You Been?," 406

Friday: Point of view: Hemingway, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place," 262

**Week 3 (January 26 - 30)**

Monday: Images and symbols: Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," 62

Wednesday: The Novella: Kafka, "Metamorphosis," 156

Friday: The Novella: Kafka, "Metamorphosis," 156

**Week 4 (February 2 -6)**

Monday: The Novel: Monk Kidd, Secret Life of Bees

Wednesday: The Novel: Monk Kidd, Secret Life of Bees 311

Friday: Monk Kidd, Secret Life of Bees

**Week 5 (February 9-13)**

Monday: Monk Kidd, Secret Life of Bees -

Wednesday: Theme: Monk Kidd, Secret Life of Bees

Friday: Monk Kidd, Secret Life of Bees. TEST #1 ON UNIT 1. 311

**Unit 2: Development of the Short Story and Novel****Week 6 (February 16-20)**

Monday: Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown," p. 1

Wednesday: Chopin, "The Story of an Hour," 73

Friday: Twain, Huckleberry Finn

**Week 7 (February 23 - 27\*)**

Monday: Twain, Huckleberry Finn

Wednesday: Twain, Huckleberry Finn

Friday: Twain, Huckleberry Finn

**Week 8 (March 1 - 5)** \*February 27 was the middle of the semester; midterm grades are due March 2.

Monday: Twain, Huckleberry Finn

Wednesday: Twain, Huckleberry Finn -

Friday: Twain, Huckleberry Finn

**Week 9(March 8- 12)**

Monday: Chekhov, "The Lady with the Dog," 76

Wednesday: Joyce, "Araby," 150

Friday: Fitzgerald, "Winter Dreams," 224

**Week 10 (March 13-21)**

HAPPY SPRING BREAK! Try to get a head start on Invisible Man while you're frolicking, please.

**Week 11 (March 22 - 26)**

Monday: Carver, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love," 422

Wednesday: Paley, "A Conversation with my Father," 337

Friday: TEST #2 ON UNIT 2

ESSAY ASSIGNED .

**Unit 3: Variations on our Themes**

**Week 12 (March 29 - April 2)**

Monday: Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener," 21

Wednesday: Orne Jewett, "A White Heron," 55

Friday: Faulkner, "Barn Burning," 245

**Week 13 (April 5 - 9)**

Monday: Ellison, Invisible Man

Wednesday: Ellison, Invisible Man

Friday: NO SCHOOL: EASTER. Read Invisible Man when you have a chance

**Week 14 (April 12 - 16)**

Monday: Ellison, Invisible Man

Wednesday: Ellison, Invisible Man

Friday: Ellison, Invisible Man

**Week 15 (April 19 - 23)**

Monday: Ellison, Invisible Man



Wednesday: Ellison, Invisible Man

Friday: Ellison, Invisible Man

**Week 16 (April 26 - 30)**

Monday: Ellison, Invisible Man

Wednesday: Walker, "Everyday Use," 462

Friday: Jackson, "The Lottery," 328

YOUR ESSAYS ARE DUE TODAY

Please note: No class work will be accepted past this date, Friday, April 30, unless you have been given an extension for the essay. If you have requested an extension, your essay is due no later than Monday at 4:45 p.m. in my English office mailbox (231 Stansbury) or my own office (350 Stansbury).

**FINALS WEEK (May 3 - 7)**

**Monday, 11:30 - 1:30** Graded essays will be returned to you in the Mountainlair lounge. (I'll be sitting near the fireplace.)

**Note:** There is no final exam in this class.