

English 132

Lynn Shelly, English 132, Fall 2006

Short Story and Novel

English 132

CRN 84304, Section 006

11:30-12:20 349 BUE

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Introduction

Fiction can be powerful stuff. With some fiction, the prose goes to work on you from the very first page. It transports you, transfuses you, and even transforms you. With other fiction, you may be unmoved until you have dug deeper, your appreciation the result of prolonged reflection and re-consideration. Even texts you don't enjoy can be sources of illumination when you ask the right questions.

This semester we will read and discuss a wide range of stories and novels in order to better understand how fiction works. Each individual's response will be taken seriously as we work to enhance our collective understanding of the texts themselves as well as fiction in general. Although the class is relatively large, we will operate on a discussion basis, with opportunities for everyone to ask questions and voice ideas.

Some of the texts we read may engage you right away; others you will have to learn to appreciate. I encourage you to use your own life experience as a means to better understand the texts you are reading and, at the same time, to use your reading as a means to better understand your own life and the world you live in. As you become both a more careful and a more analytic reader, you may find that your tolerance and appreciation of fiction that is puzzling or ambiguous increases. You may find meaning and significance in unexpected places. I hope you will come to class ready to share your reading experiences with me and with each other, but also ready to challenge one another. In that way, our classroom can become a dynamic place where everyone teaches and everyone learns.

Our Texts

DiYanni, Robert. *Fiction: An Introduction*.

Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*.

Roth, Philip. *The Plot Against America*.

Rhys, Jean. *The Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Writing to Learn

Writing is one of the key ways that a student enhances his or her own learning. Thus in this class you will write frequently about the texts that are assigned. Often I will begin class by asking you to write for approximately fifteen minutes about what you have read. These short assignments will be relatively open-ended and will give you a chance to gather your thoughts in preparation for discussion. The short writing assignments will be unannounced and cannot be made up.

In addition, there will be 2 essay exams during the semester. The exams will engage you in more wide-ranging and in-depth consideration of the texts for the course, asking you to put into practice the strategies for responding to stories and novels discussed in class.

Homework and Participation

In this class, learning is assumed to be an active process. If you are not reading, writing, attending and participating, you are not learning. To help you prepare for class, I will make homework assignments to accompany your reading. The homework assignment may or may not anticipate the in-class writing assignment. Class discussion, however, will begin with the homework assignment. I will randomly call on one member of the class to start us off in our discussion and another member of the class to re-cap for us when we come to the end. There may be days when I will ask for volunteers to start or re-cap. In any case, make sure you come prepared to discuss not just the homework but all of the assigned material.

Special Needs: If you have a documented learning disability, hearing or vision problems, or any other special need that might affect your performance or participation in class, please be sure to talk with me. Also, be aware of the support services available to you through Disability Services (293-6700).

Our Classroom Community

I see our class as a community. Because we are a community, we each have an ethical obligation not only to ourselves but to the others in the class. I am sure that you do not need to

be told that you are obliged to treat each other with courtesy, to speak respectfully and to listen attentively. But you are obligated in other ways as well:

- You are obligated to attend. We need everyone to be here every day. If you arrive late, you disrupt the class and show disrespect to those who arrive on time.
- You are obligated to come prepared. It is unethical to depend on others to do the work while you sit back and reap the fruits of their labors.
- You are obligated to contribute. We need to hear multiple viewpoints, not just the viewpoints of a few.
- You are obligated to bring your own copy of the text with you so that you can participate fully in discussions. The first time you forget your book, I will remind you of your obligation, but if it happens again, I will ask you to leave.

Grades

I will grade using a point system.

In-class writing: 40 points. Each in-class writing will be graded on a scale of 1-4.

Exams: 40 points. Each exam will be worth up to 20 points.

Participation : 20 points. Absences and lack of preparation subtract from participation points.

Active and thoughtful participation adds points.

Regular attendance (defined as maintaining a 90% attendance rate) is required in order to receive a passing grade.