

# English 233

Rebecca Skidmore Biggio, ENGL 233, Fall 2006, Introduction to the Short Story

## **English 233: Introduction to the Short Story**

Fall 2006, section 01

MWF 1:30-2:20, 46A Stansbury

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Office hours: Monday 12:00-1:00 (and by appointment)

## **Course goals**

English 233 is designed as an introduction to the short story. Expect to read quite a few short stories—at least one for each class meeting. Exposure to the many variations of the short story is certainly one of our goals, and we will achieve this by reading chronologically a sampling of short stories dating from the mid-nineteenth century to the near present. We will also strive to balance variety with depth, discussing at length and in detail each of the stories we read. In order to explore the relationships between craft, content, and context, we will pay attention to elements of fiction (like narrative voice, point of view, plot, setting, tone, character, and structure) as well as to literary styles, historical moments, authorial contexts, and reoccurring themes. Overall, our primary goal for this course is to learn to speak and write knowledgably about important short stories and about important short story writers.

## **Required Text**

Charters, Ann. *The Story and Its Writer: An Introduction to Short Fiction*. 6th edition.

## **Course Requirements**

### **Exams - 65%**

Two in-class exams (20% each) and a final exam (25%) arranged by the University will ask you to analyze passages from the texts we have read, write brief essay responses, and/or respond to short-answer questions. I reserve the right to give essay exams as well. Exams will be based on both readings and in-class discussion/lecture. We will talk more about each exam as it approaches.

### **Quizzes - 20%**

Throughout the semester there will be frequent, unannounced quizzes on the assigned reading. Expect question and answer format, but also assume that quizzes may take an alternative form,

such as a writing exercise or short take-home assignment. You may not make up these quizzes if you are late or absent. However, in figuring your final grade I will drop your lowest score.

### **Reading Responses - 15%**

Over the course of the semester you will write two formal responses to assigned readings of your choice. Reading responses are designed to give you a chance to think about the texts before we discuss them in class, so your responses will be due on the first day we discuss a story. I will not accept late responses.

Reading responses should show an understanding of and an engagement with key course concepts as they emerge in our discussions. For instance, your response might focus on plot, character, narrative voice, point of view, or structure within a particular work. You may also consider specific themes, make connections between two related works, or focus on an author's interaction with the cultural context in which she is writing. Keep in mind that this is only a partial list and not meant to limit your creativity. Each response should include a clear thesis statement followed by a well-organized argument and evidence to support your thesis. Your responses should not consist of plot summaries or opinions not backed up by evidence from the text. Responses should be a minimum of two double-spaced typed pages. Policies and Procedures

### **Participation and Attendance**

Regular attendance and active participation are both assumed and essential to your success in this course. Participation includes coming to class on time and having done the required reading, bringing your book to every class, taking active part in class discussions and activities, asking questions, and contributing your knowledge and insight. If you must miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for contacting a fellow student in order to find out what happened in class and if changes were made to the syllabus or assignment schedule. You are responsible for all assignments due in the next class.

### **Classroom Environment**

You are expected to come to class prepared and on time and to be courteous to me and to your fellow students. If you must be late on a rare occasion, please take your seat quietly and speak to me after class if you have questions or concerns. Please turn off cell phones when you come into the classroom. If you have an emergency and need to leave your phone on, please speak to me before class.

### **Social Justice**

I support WVU's commitment to social justice and will work to create a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. I welcome suggestions for furthering such an environment. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please speak

with me early in the semester and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

### **Honor Code**

I do not tolerate academic dishonesty of any kind, including cheating and plagiarism. Any work you submit must be your own. Forms of plagiarism include misrepresenting another's work as your own, whether in part or whole; submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without the written consent of all instructors concerned; and interfering with another's work. In addition, any words, ideas, or data that you borrow from another source (individual, website, published text) must be properly documented. It is your responsibility to learn the rules and conventions of citing sources in your academic work. If you have questions about academic citation, see me in office hours or ask in class. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses. Clear cases will result in an unforgivable F for the course and appropriate academic discipline.

### **Quality of work**

If your writing suffers from serious grammatical errors, the best grade you will be able to earn on your individual assignments and for the course is a C-. If you would like help with grammar or with your writing in general, or if you want to build on your strengths, please visit the WVU Writing Center in 44 Stansbury Hall. For an appointment, call 293-3107 ext. 33400, or stop by 44 Stansbury to see if tutors are available.

### **Office Hours**

My office hours are Monday, 12:00-1:00. Office hours provide us with an opportunity to talk one on one. You may drop in during this time, or you may make an appointment with me to talk about any questions or concerns you may have about your progress in the course. I'd be happy to talk with you via email as well, and you can expect that I will respond to you within 48 hours Monday through Friday.

### **Email**

This class requires you to actively check your MIX account. You may receive important information via email, including emergency cancellations, course materials, and/or other important information. After week 1, there will be no acceptable excuse as to why you do not receive email communications.

### **Course Schedule**

Schedule is tentative and subject to change. You are responsible for knowing and for keeping up with any changes. If needed, I will revise and distribute an updated schedule around midterm.

The schedule shows work due for any particular day. Be sure to have the reading done before the date it appears on the schedule so that we can talk about it in class. Expect to read not only the

stories listed on the syllabus, but also the author's headnotes on the pages preceding each story and some additional contextual readings that I will assign throughout the semester.

### **Week 1**

Mon 8/21 Introductions and course overview; buy books

Wed 8/23 Reading, writing, and talking about short stories

Fri 8/25 Nathaniel Hawthorne "Young Goodman Brown" (1835) p. 663 "The Elements of Fiction" p. 1739

- Last day to register

### **Week 2**

Mon 8/28 Edgar Allan Poe "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) p. 1206; "The Importance of the Single Effect in a Prose Tale" p. 1692

Wed 8/30 Edgar Allan Poe "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846) p. 1188; "The Question of Poe's Narrators in 'The Tell-Tale Heart' and 'The Cask of Amontillado'" p. 1701

Fri 9/1 Herman Melville "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853) p.977; "A Deconstructive Reading of Melville's 'Bartleby, the Scrivener'" p. 1537

### **Week 3**

Mon 9/4 Labor Day Recess

Wed 9/6 Mark Twain "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (1865) p. 333

Fri 9/8 Guy de Maupassant "The Necklace" (1884) p. 523; "The Writer's Goal" p. 1533

### **Week 4**

Mon 9/11 Sarah Orne Jewett "A White Heron" (1886) p. 729; "Looking Back on Girlhood" p. 1513

Wed 9/13 Charlotte Perkins Gilman "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) p. 576; "Undergoing the Cure for Nervous Prostration" p. 1496; "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" p. 1498

Fri 9/15 Kate Chopin "Desiree's Baby" (1892) p. 322; "How I Stumbled upon Maupassant" p. 1474

### **Week 5**

Mon 9/18 Kate Chopin “The Story of An Hour” (1894) p. 326

Wed 9/20 Charles Chesnutt “The Wife of His Youth” (1898) p. 312

Fri 9/22 Anton Chekhov “The Darling” (1899) p. 289; “Chekhov’s Intent in ‘The Darling’” p. 1642; “Plot and Character in Chekhov’s ‘The Darling’” p. 1645

### **Week 6**

Mon 9/25 Prep for Exam 1

Wed 9/27 Exam 1

Fri 9/29 Willa Cather “Paul’s Case” (1905) p. 263

### **Week 7**

Mon 10/2 Jean Toomer “Blood Burning Moon” (1923) p. 1335

Wed 10/4 Zora Neale Hurston “Sweat” (1926) p. 664; “How It Feels to Be Colored Me” p. 1648

Fri 10/6 Ernest Hemingway “Hills Like White Elephants” (1927) p. 647

- Mid-semester

### **Week 8**

Mon 10/9 William Faulkner “A Rose for Emily” (1931) p. 484; “The Meaning of ‘A Rose for Emily’” p. 1490

Wed 10/11 Shirley Jackson “The Lottery” (1948) p. 693; “The Morning of June 28, 1948, and ‘The Lottery’” p. 1506

Fri 10/13 Ralph Ellison “Battle Royal” (1952) p. 464; Reading Response #1 due on or before

### **Week 9**

Mon 10/16 Flannery O’Connor “Good Country People” (1955) p. 1128; “Writing Short Stories” p. 1666

Wed 10/18 Flannery O’Connor “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” (1955) p. 1142; “A Reasonable Use of the Unreasonable” p. 1671

Fri 10/20 James Baldwin “Sonny’s Blues” (1957) p. 84; “Autobiographical Notes” p. 1459

### **Week 10**

Mon 10/23 Richard Wright “The Man Who Was Almost A Man” (1961) p. 1427; “Reading Fiction” p. 1597

Wed 10/25 Kurt Vonnegut Jr. “Harrison Bergeron” (1961) p. 1354

Fri 10/27 Catch-up and Prep for Exam 2

- Last day to drop a class

### **Week 11**

Mon 10/30 Exam 2

Wed 11/1 Chinua Achebe “Civil Peace” (1971) p. 10; “An Image of Africa in Conrad’s ‘Heart of Darkness’” p. 1447

Fri 11/3 Toni Cade Bambara “The Lesson” (1972) p. 108

### **Week 12**

Mon 11/6 Alice Walker “Everyday Use” (1973) p. 1360

Wed 11/8 Grace Paley “A Conversation with My Father” (1974) p. 1177

Fri 11/10 Leslie Marmon Silko “Yellow Woman” (1974) p. 1241; “Whirlwind Man Steals Yellow Woman” p. 1452; “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective” p. 1575

### **Week 13**

Mon 11/13 Margaret Atwood “Rape Fantasies” (1977) p. 71

Wed 11/15 Woody Allen “The Kugelmass Episode” (1977) p. 21

Fri 11/17 Jamaica Kincaid “Girl” (1978) p. 839; “On ‘Girl’” p. 1518; Reading Response #2 due on or before

### **Week 14**

11/20-11/24 **Thanksgiving Recess**

### **Week 15**

Mon 11/27 Bobbie Ann Mason “Shiloh” (1982) p. 954

Wed 11/29 Tobias Wolff “The Rich Brother” (1985) p. 1407; “On ‘The Rich Brother’” p. 1595

Fri 12/1 Tim O'Brien "The Things They Carried" (1986) p. 1102; "Alpha Company" p. 1551

**Week 16**

Mon 12/4 Edwidge Danticat "Night Women" (1991) p. 424

Wed 12/6 Dorothy Allison "River of Names" (1994) p. 39

Fri 12/8 Catch-up and review

**Week 17**

Finals

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 12, 3-5 pm in our regular classroom. Please note that the final exam is scheduled by the university. I can not change it or make exceptions.

You must be in class to turn in all work. I will not accept late work or emailed submissions.