

FICTION

(English 2312)

About the course

Required Texts:

Charters, Ann. *The Story and Its Writer*, 9th edition. Bedford/St. Martins.
Harvey, Michael. *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*. 2nd edition.

About the instructor:

I teach courses in Victorian literature as well as on fiction, poetry, and gender. I have not taught this course in a few years and look forward to re-reading some of my favorite stories and novellas again, as well as learning some new ones along with you.

Aims of the course: to help you learn to fiction with pleasurable understanding, sharpen your responsiveness to language, and improve your ability to write lucid college-level prose.

Description: Good stories entertain, provoke, and amuse us. They move us to laugh, cry, or think. They introduce us to odd, interesting, loveable, and detestable people; to strange, absurd, comic, and tragic situations; and to the meaning in the ordinariness of everyday. Short stories and novellas lend themselves well to a compressed term, and provide good material on which to hone writing skills. This course surveys short fiction in a variety of forms by many authors, with an emphasis on twentieth-century and contemporary fiction.

Benefits of the course:

- Satisfies two University Curriculum Requirements: the University Curriculum pillar Creativity and Aesthetics II, and the W tag (Writing Proficiency).
- Improves your ability to write literate, readable prose
- Provides an opportunity to read fun stuff—and get credit for it!
- Sharpens your responsiveness to language
- Heightens your appreciation of verbal art
- Improves analytical skills and critical thinking
- Engages the imagination
- Promotes empathy by inviting imaginative identification with a range of different kinds of (fictional) people. (See <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/novel-finding-reading-literary-fiction-improves-empathy/>)

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will be able to analyze and construct clear and well-supported interpretations of creative or innovative works. (C & A 2)
2. Students will be able to demonstrate the ways in which creative works reflect values and modes of thought (or ways of knowing) of individuals and/or cultures.
3. Through multiple opportunities supervised and/or directed by a professor, an editor or other authority, students will demonstrate proper use of language through completion of a substantial amount of purposeful writing appropriate for a specific or targeted audience. (Writing)

Grade Breakdown:

4 Papers:	75% of grade
Attendance and Participation:	25% of grade (includes participation in writing workshops, discussions of drafts, and discussions of stories)

Course Calendar

Part 1: Introducing Short Fiction

Note: all page numbers refer to Charters. The material for May 12 is (deliberately) short enough that you may be able to read it in class, but otherwise you are expected to complete the reading before class on the day listed.

Bring Harvey on days when we discuss writing. Always read the headnote about the author, on the page preceding the story; and always bring your book to class!

May 12	Chopin, "The Story of an Hour"; Paley, "A Conversation with My Father" (1097); Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants" (589); Saunders, "Sticks"
May 13	Hawthorn, "Young Goodman Brown"; "Writing about Short Stories" (1702-1709, up to and including "Explication"; Kafka, "A Hunger Artist" (710).

Writing: Paper 1, first draft (2 pages). Bring in three copies (2 pages), on one of the stories from May 12. At least one hour will be devoted to workshopping it so that you can revise it for May 16.

Part 2: Form: Point of View

May 16	<u>Writing: Paper #1 due: final draft (2 pages).</u> Varieties of first-person narrative: Bambara, "The Lesson" (64-69); Joyce, "Araby" (675-679); Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1127-1130)
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May 17 **Varieties of third-person narrative:** Porter (O. Henry), "The Gift of the Magi" (1147-1150); Joyce, "The Dead" (679-706); "Writing about Short Stories" (1709-1714, including the essay exemplifying "analysis."

Writing: Part of class will be devoted to thesis statements and/or drafting a paragraph of paper #2.

May 18 **Writing:** Paper #2 due (4 pages)

Other points of view: Diaz; "How to date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie" (394-396); Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily" (454-460); Woolf, "Kew Gardens" (1364-66); O'Brien: "The Things They Carried" (990-1003).

Part 3: Representative Themes

May 19 **Family:** Kafka, "The Metamorphosis" (716-750); Bechdel, "Old Father, Old Artificer" (103-123); Kincaid, "Girl" (758-759);

Writing: Part of class will be a discussion of one or more papers (all or in part) turned for paper #2.

May 20 **Work:** Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener" (886-912); Proulx, "Job History" (1152-1156); Orozco, "Orientation" (1061-1065); Danticat, "Night Women" (386-388)

Writing: Blue-book essay practice/drafting paper #3

May 23 **Race in America:** Alexie, "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven" (14-19); Chopin, "Désirée's Baby" (284-288); Ellison, "Battle Royal" (281-290)

Writing: Paper# 3 due (4-5 pages)

Part 4: Intertextuality

May 24 Chekov, "The Lady with the Little Dog" (271-282); Oates, "The Lady with the Pet Dog" (964-976); Vladimir Nabokov, "Signs and Symbols" (956-959); Lorrie Moore, "Referential" (920-926)

May 25 Raymond Carver, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" (227-236); Nathan Englander, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank" (430-443)

Writing: blue-book essay practice/drafting paper #4

May 26 William Gass, "A Fugue" (527-28)

Paper: 5-6 pages (comparison of two stories OR extension and revision of earlier paper)

POLICIES

Devices

Studies show that students learn better when they take notes by hand, and that they understand and retain better when they are looking at the printed page than on a screen (especially a small laptop screen or, worse yet, a telephone screen!). Therefore, laptops will be permitted only while we are working on writing. You must purchase hard copy of the book. Used copies will likely be available.

Written Work

You must write all papers to pass the course. Unless cleared with me at least one class in advance, late papers will be penalized one mark (e.g., B to B minus) for each day late, including weekends and holidays. This is the only way to be fair to everyone else.

Papers must be submitted electronically to Canvas *and* turned in as hard copy. I will post to Canvas a document articulating the requirements of the paper as a physical object (e.g., the necessity of staples, page numbers, where your name should appear, etc.)

Citation and Academic Honesty

I enforce the SMU Honor Code strictly. The papers for this course are not research papers. I am well aware that a quick search on the internet may turn up interpretations of many of the texts on our syllabus. These range in quality from very good to completely incompetent. Regardless, you run the risk of plagiarism (intentional or otherwise) if you consult them, so be careful how you use the web while writing papers for this and all courses. Be aware of the difference between using web sources for *information* and using them to provide *interpretation*. (For that reason, avoid sites like Sparknotes. Note that once you consult someone else's interpretation, it can be difficult to think outside of it; it is likely to infect—or infect—your writing whether you intend to use its ideas or not.

Attendance and Participation

Because of the brevity of the term, each class period is the equivalent of 4 classes. Therefore, missing more than one may compromise your grade. I do not keep track of “excused” vs. “unexcused” absences except in the case of university-sanctioned absences. That said, we have a small class; do communicate with me about your absences if you are ill. I drop students who miss two classes in a row without contacting me.

In order to be fully “present” in class, you need to have with you the text that we are discussing—and if it is a file I have posted to Canvas, *you need to print it out*. This is so that you can mark it up and move quickly from one passage to another.

SMU's official policies with regard to attendance apply:

Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the

responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

Classroom citizenship

Kindly do not disrupt class by coming late or leaving early without prior permission, and above all *please do not leave and come back* in the middle of class, except in extraordinary circumstances. These things are distracting and disruptive to others.

Disability Accommodations

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible, present a DASS Accommodation Letter, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.