

English 104: Introduction to Fiction

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Course Objectives

English 104 introduces students to fiction and its criticism. By reading and writing about several short stories and two novels, students are exposed to a wide survey of narrative prose fiction and hence are encouraged to explore the human experience more fully. Besides focusing on a traditional critical approach (such as plot, characterization, setting, point of view, imagery, theme, and style), this course also introduces students to contemporary theoretical perspectives on fiction as well as considering the adaptation of written stories for film. Students should leave the class with the ability to carefully read and discuss a wide range of stories.

One of the most fundamental distinctions our society makes is between fact and "fiction." In a world full of busy schedules and all kinds of really serious factually based issues, what can be gained by focusing on mere stories that make no empirical truth claims? Perhaps quite a bit, considering the foundational texts of our society (take The Declaration of Independence as just one example) often employ narrative structures; in fact, this is how they generate their powerful force of communal identification. Can one conceptualize the world in non-narrative ways or completely outside of language? Besides establishing social foundations, narratives (especially the ones we'll be discussing in this class) also have the capacity to interrupt more established ways of seeing the world. In learning to read stories in more careful ways, we become better readers of the narrative patterns employed by all kinds of social texts.

Requirements

Texts: *The Art of the Short Story*, Gioia and Gwynn, eds.
Pride and Prejudice, Austen
Einstein's Dreams, Lightman

Assignments: One Analytic Essay (3-5 pages); In-class / Homework
Assignments; Group Project (Creating a Film Treatment); Final Exam

Prerequisite: College level reading and writing skills (WR121 or equivalent) are strongly recommended for success in this course.

Policies and Procedures

Grades: ♦ Participation (Attendance, Class Discussions) 60 points (6 points per week)
 ♦ One Medium-Length Essay (3-5 pages) 100 points
 ♦ Group Project (Film Adaptation) 60 points
 ♦ Final Exam (Take-Home) 100 points
 ♦ Homework / In-class Work 80 points

Total Points Possible=400

Attendance and Class Format: The format of the class is primarily discussion, rather than lecture; therefore, much of what goes on in class cannot be made up. Work that can be made up is available on the class's Moodle website. You can get partial participation points for contacting me about an absence (up to five times). **More than five absences will likely cause you to fail the class because you will have missed in-class activities and essential material difficult to catch up with.** Solid preparation work on your part by reading and being prepared to discuss assigned poems and textbook discussion of terminology will ensure livelier discussions and a more productive use of class time. The exception to this rule is illness. If you are seriously ill, especially with flu symptoms, please do not come to class.

Papers: Essays are due at the beginning of class on the assigned day. **Late papers and assignments will not be accepted if turned in more than a week after original due date.** Papers should be typed, double-spaced, carefully proofread, and include your name, date, class name, essay description, and my name. Please use MLA manuscript formatting conventions. Save **all** work you do for this class. Revisions are almost always appreciated and encouraged, but they should be completed no later than two weeks after being returned. Subsequent versions of essays submitted should include previous versions turned in along with my comments. Papers may be e-mailed to me as an attachment between classes. I can only download attachments in the following formats: *.doc, *.docx, *.rtf, or *.pdf (**not** *.wps format). The textbook has a section on writing about fiction that might be helpful (see pages 863-877).

Grading Criteria: When I read student essays, I look for a number of qualities including unity of purpose, specificity of detail, and coherence of progression. Essays are given a holistic letter grade based on **five criteria: argument, critical reading, organization, audience, and sentence-level writing.** "Argument" includes how effectively the paper presents a thesis and supports it through relevant examples. Students can demonstrate their critical reading skills by how they use details from sources to offer a fresh perspective on the topic that goes beyond a bland summary. The paper's organization into paragraphs should follow from the paper's main purpose (form follows function). Good papers are often an implicit dialogue between an author and reader—a good writer will anticipate how a potential audience will relate to the paper. Students should write using complete sentences that avoid grammatical errors (especially comma splices!), awkward phrasings, and mistakes in punctuation, but beyond that students should cultivate a personal writing style with an interesting variety of sentence and phrase structures.

Grading Scale: Grades are based on a percentage of the 400 total points possible throughout the quarter (see above for how many points any one assignment is worth). 400-360 points (100-90%) = A; 359-320 points (89-80%) = B; 319-280 points (79-70%) = C; 279-240 points (69-60%) = D; fewer than 240 points will result in a failing grade. Incomplete grades are reserved for students who face an emergency situation near the end of the quarter, have completed all assignments except for a few remaining, and the remaining work will need to be completed by the end of the next quarter. This option requires prior approval and instructor and student need to agree in writing to the terms. A Y is an option available for students who have completed less than 30% of the course work. In short, it means I have no basis to assign a grade. This option does have financial aid ramifications but does not affect the student's GPA.

Description of Major Assignments

In-Class Writing: About once a week, you will write for about 20 minutes on a story we will have been reading. I will provide you with a list of topics from which you can choose, but also feel free to write about some other aspect of the stories. Think of this assignment as "focused free writing": I pay more attention to your ability to interact

with the content of a story in an analytic fashion than with your sentence-level writing. 80 points.

Analytical Essay (due 2/20): Students will pick a story of their own choosing and write a substantial essay (3-5 pages) that analyzes some element of the story (such as characterization or setting, etc.). The textbook has a chapter you might find helpful in this regard: pages 863-877. Closer to the due date of the paper, let's brainstorm possible topics together in class. 100 points.

Group Project--Film Adaptation (due 3/04): In small groups, students will pick one of the stories we will have read and imagine how the story could be adapted for film. The inspiration for this assignment comes from a film adaptation we will be watching in class based on Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* (which we will also be reading). The result of the project should be a written short film "treatment" and overall shot summary of two scenes and brief oral presentation to the class. This is intended to be a fun, imaginative project that encourages you to think about the conventions of narrative fiction in another medium, focus intensively on a specific story, and work collaboratively with others. 60 points.

Final Exam (3/19): Exam will contain three parts. Part One will test students on terminology. Part Two will require students to identify and briefly analyze some passages from stories. Part Three will ask students to write a short essay. Students may use books and notes. 100 points.

College Resources: **Computer Lab** in Albany (Forum 204) and Learning Resource Center (WH-222); **Writing Center** in Learning Resource Center in WH-200; **On-Line Writing Lab (OWL)** <http://lbcc.writingcenteronline.net/WCenterWebTools/OWL/owl.php> From initial ideas to final drafts, the LBCC Writing Center can help you take your writing to the next level. Please feel free to drop in during their regular hours to work one-on-one with one of our supportive Writing Assistants. In addition to your draft, please bring your assignment and any questions you have. You may also submit your writing online at lbcc.writingcenteronline.net where you will receive a personalized response within 1-2 business days. For more information, visit us online at <http://www.linnbenton.edu/go/learning-center/writing-help>.

Etiquette: One of the goals of this course is to construct a "discourse community," a space in which students feel comfortable expressing their ideas openly. This means that in class discussions and small group work some basic rules of etiquette should be followed. Avoid talking while someone else is speaking or using cell phones. The LBCC community is enriched by diversity. Everyone has the right to think, learn, and work together in an environment of respect, tolerance, and goodwill. We will work toward creating a community without prejudice, intimidation, or discrimination. (related to Board Policy #1015). LBCC prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, religion, ethnicity, use of native language, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, veteran status, age, or any other status protected under applicable federal, state, or local laws.

Accommodation: Students who may need accommodations due to documented disabilities, who have medical information which the instructor should know, or who need special arrangements in an emergency, should speak with the instructor during the first week of class. If you have not accessed services and think you may need them, please contact Disability Services, 917-4789.

Plagiarism: This college punishes incidents of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is subject to disciplinary action as described in Student Rights and Responsibilities. All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. Students may only seek assistance in writing their papers from authorized sources (me, members of class peer review group, or university-

approved tutorial service). The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. See me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

Tentative Schedule

(Please complete readings and writing assignments before coming to class; page numbers refer to textbook *The Art of the Short Story*)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Writing Assignment</u>
1/07	Week One: Welcome! Introductions; Syllabus; "Art of the Short Story" 3-6; Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" 152, 157-159	
1/09	"Plot" 849-854, 829-830; London, "To Build a Fire" 547-560; "Formalist Criticism" 878-879	ICW #1
1/14	Week Two: Plot /Character Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths" 53-63; Character 854-857; Mason, "Shiloh" 577-589	
1/16	Carver, "Cathedral" 76-87, Munro, "How I Met My Husband" 648-662; Biographical and Historical Criticism 881-882, 884-885	ICW #2
1/21	Week Three: Setting "Setting" 859-860; Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily" 224-225, 238-245	
1/23	García Márquez, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" 287-295; Psychological and Myth Criticism 887-888, 890	ICW #3
1/28	Week Four: Narrative POV "Point of View" 857-858; Mansfield, "The Garden Party" 561, 565-576	
1/30	Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener" 599-627; Sociological and Gender Criticism 892-893, 895; Bennett and Royle "Ideology" (Moodle)	ICW #4
2/04	Week Five: Theme / Style "Theme" 860-861; O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" 677-689, 704-706; "Writing About Fiction" 863-877	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Writing Assignment</u>
2/06	"Style" 861-862; Kafka, "Before the Law" and "The Metamorphosis" 465-501; Reader-Response and Deconstruction 897-898, 899-900; Bennett and Royle, "Figures and Tropes" (Moodle)	ICW #5
2/11	Week Six: Pride and Prejudice Volume One (5-119); "Cultural Studies" 901-902 (in <i>Art of the Short Story</i>); "Reading Long Stories and Novels" (Moodle)	
2/13	Volume Two (119-208)	
2/18	Week Seven: Bride and Prejudice Volume Three (208-329); In-Class Viewing <i>Bride and Prejudice</i>	
2/20	Finish <i>Bride and Prejudice</i>	Analytical Essay Due; ICW #6
2/25	Week Eight: Music and Epiphanies Joyce, "The Dead" 429-430, 434-464	
2/27	Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" 26-52	ICW #7
3/04	Week Nine: Experimental Fiction Atwood, "Happy Endings" 21-25, LeGuin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" 530-536	Group Projects Due
3/06	Woolf, "A Haunted House" 843-846, Barthelme, "The Balloon" (Moodle)	ICW #8
3/11	Week Ten: Einstein's Dreams <i>Einstein's Dreams</i> 3-72	
3/13	<i>Einstein's Dreams</i> , cont. 75-140	
3/17-3/19	Final's Week	Take-Home Final Exam

E-mail all final revisions to me by 5pm, Wednesday, March 19th as an attachment.

Course documents are available on Moodle Website ENG104_DB

Questions to Discuss on First Day of Class (Choose One to Answer for Roll Call)

1. Do you have a favorite story or author? What is it about it or him/her that “interpellates” you as a reader? [Interpellation is a term used by the French philosopher Louis Althusser. He noted how there were aspects of society that call out to us and create us as “subjects”—how we think of ourselves as individuals. He called them Ideological State Apparatuses, and they include such institutions as the family, schools, churches, sports team affiliations, mass media (TV, movies, music, video games, etc.). Stories, too, might serve this purpose.]
2. How do written stories differ from other forms of cultural entertainment (such as video games, sports events, musical concert, films, or other forms of “literature” such as poetry or plays)?
3. Is the meaning of a story primarily with the author, in the text itself, or with a reader? If it’s a complicated interplay between them, choose a specific story to discuss how this play of meaning happens.
4. Can you think of a story that has such a broad range of familiarity in our culture that just a brief reference would be enough that almost anyone would immediately understand your reference? What is it about this story that has made it successful?
5. Consider the following quote from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*: “The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted) and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that, sometimes, are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.” Are your tastes in stories “typical” or more atypical such as Marlow? (Literary fiction—the kind of story that usually gets read in a college class—tends to be more like Marlow’s mode of storytelling.) What are the comparative advantages and disadvantages of either mode of storytelling?
6. What is the value of studying fiction? (or What do hope to get out of this class?)