

San José State University Dept. of English and Comparative Literature
ENGL 176: Evolution of the Short Story
Fall, 2014
Clark Hall #306 – Tues./Thurs. 3:00-4:15pm

Professor: Andrew Altschul
Office: Faculty Offices 214
Telephone: (408) 924-4489
Email: andrew.altschul@sjsu.edu
Office Hours: Tues./Thurs. 4:30-5:30pm

“We are the most successful in art when we approach the nearest
to nature and truth.” – Stephen Crane

“The things that are said in literature are always the same. What is important
is the way they are said.” – Jorge Luis Borges

Course Description

In this class we will read and discuss short stories, with an emphasis on U.S. short fiction from the mid-19th century until today. By studying canonical writers and contemporary innovators, we will explore the formal and thematic evolution of this enduring literary genre; we will also use short fiction as a point of departure for discussing broader changes in Western literature and art over the last two centuries. To the extent that short fiction is often described as a quintessentially American form, we will examine how it addresses persistent questions such as *What is America? Who is American?* and *Who gets to speak for/about America?*

Assigned readings will be heavy. Class meetings will be mostly discussion based, with analysis of specific stories often being led by students. Short papers, one formal presentation, and a final exam will test students on their absorption of the reading and discussions as well as their ability to apply independent analysis to works of short fiction.

English Department Student Learning Objectives [SLO]

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- 1) read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric;
- 2) show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature;
- 3) write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject;
- 4) develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively; and
- 5) articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

Required Texts/Readings

The Story and Its Writer, 8th Edition, Ann Charters, Ed.
Supplementary PDFs (to be distributed by professor)

Requirements and Grading

- Participation (20%). The class will be most enjoyable for you and for me if we can spend most of our time energetically discussing, questioning, and debating the reading and its implications. There are no wrong answers or bad analyses, as long as all comments are made in a spirit of inquiry and mutual respect. You will also be graded on attendance, punctuality, and occasional quizzes. Please see Instructor Policies (below) for additional guidelines for classroom conduct.
- Annotations (30%). Three (3) short (approx. 3pp.), informal responses to an assigned story that pinpoint and discuss a specific passage, event, or technical strategy in the context of concepts discussed in class; accompanied by a copy of the story which you have marked while reading. To be handed in on the day the story is discussed. You will be asked, at least once, to present your findings to the class, either by reading your annotation or summarizing its main points. One annotation due during each of the following periods: 1) Sept. 4-23; 2) Sept. 25-Oct. 14; 3) Oct. 21-Nov. 6.
- Story Presentation (15%). Students will work in pairs, choosing one of the stories assigned between Nov. 13 and Dec. 9, and presenting to the class an analysis of its thematic, aesthetic, and historical relevance. Presentations should be approximately 20 minutes in length.
- Take-Home Final Exam (35%). The format will be two or three essay questions.

Schedule (subject to change)

	<i>All assigned readings found in Charters or (*) provided by instructor</i>
Aug. 26	Course Introduction. Read: Tallent, “No One’s a Mystery”*; Coover, “A Sudden Story”*; Kincaid, “Girl”*
Aug. 28	Classical Short Narratives. Read: Ovid, “Pygmalion”* and “Echo & Narcissus”*; Anonymous, “The Fisherman and the Jinni”*
Sept. 2	Classical Short Narratives (cont’d). Read: Chaucer, “The Wife of Bath’s Tale”*; Grimm Bros., “The Sleeping Beauty”* and “The Maiden without Hands”*
Sept. 4	19th Century Tales. Read: Irving, “Rip Van Winkle”

Sept. 9	19th Century Tales (cont'd). Read: Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"; Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher"
Sept. 11	19th Century Realism Crane, "The Open Boat"; Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"
Sept. 16	Towards Modernism Read: Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener"
Sept. 18	Towards Modernism (cont'd.) Read: Chopin, "The Story of an Hour"; Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"
Sept. 23	Early Modernists: Chekhov Read: Chekhov, "The Lady with the Little Dog" and "The Darling"
Sept. 25	Early Modernists (cont'd.) Read: Mansfield, "The Garden Party"*; Joyce, "Araby"
Sept. 30	Early Modernists (cont'd.) Read: Joyce, "The Dead"
Oct. 2	Early Modernists (cont'd.) Read: Anderson, "Death in the Woods"*; Hurston, "Sweat"
Oct. 7	High Modernists: Hemingway Read: Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants," "Indian Camp"*, and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"*
Oct. 9	High Modernists (cont'd.) Read: Faulkner, "That Evening Sun"; Stein, "The Superstitions of Fred Anneday, Annday, Anday: A Novel of Real Life"*
Oct. 14	High Modernists (cont'd.) Read: Kafka, "The Metamorphosis"
Oct. 16	***NO CLASS***
Oct. 21	The Post-War Generation Updike, "Pigeon Feathers"*; Cheever, "The Swimmer"
Oct. 23	The Post-War Generation (cont'd.) Read: O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"; Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"
Oct. 28	Postmodernists Read: Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths"*; Barthelme, "City Life"*
Oct. 30	Postmodernists (cont'd.) Read: Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse"*
Nov. 4	Postmodernists (cont'd.) Read: García Márquez, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"; Carter, "The Werewolf"
Nov. 6	Contemporary Masters: Carver Read: Carver, "Why Don't You Dance?*" and "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love"
Nov. 11	***VETERANS DAY – NO CLASS***

Nov. 18	Contemporary Masters (cont'd). <i>Student Presentations.</i> Read: Jones, "Old Boys, Old Girls"*; Moore, "How to Become a Writer"
Nov. 20	Contemporary Masters (cont'd). <i>Student Presentations.</i> Read: Erdrich, "The Red Convertible"; Wolff, "Powder"
Nov. 25	Contemporary Masters (cont'd). <i>Student Presentations.</i> Read: Thon, "Necessary Angels"*; Packer, "Brownies"
Nov. 27	***THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS***
Dec. 2	Contemporary Masters (cont'd). <i>Student Presentations.</i> Read: Lahiri, "Interpreter of Maladies"; Phillips, "Blind Girls"*, "Wedding Picture"*, and "What It Takes to Keep a Young Girl Alive"*
Dec. 4	Contemporary Masters (cont'd). <i>Student Presentations.</i> Read: Diaz, "How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie"; Barry, "San Francisco"
Dec. 9	Contemporary Masters (cont'd). <i>Student Presentations.</i> Read: Saunders, "Sea Oak"* ***TAKE-HOME FINAL DISTRIBUTED*** DUE MONDAY, 12/15, 1PM

Readings Calendar

The Center for Literary Arts offers on-campus readings and conversations with writers of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. SJSU events are held in MLK Library, Room 225/229 – most events are free, open to the public, and wheelchair accessible. See www.litart.org for more information. For Stanford events, see creativewriting.stanford.edu/event-list.

September 10 – Khaled Hosseini, 7:30pm, New Student Union (\$10)

September 24 – David Shields (nonfiction), 7pm

September 25 – David Shields in Conversation with Ethan Nosowsky, 1pm

October 1 – Julia Reynolds, 7pm, MLK 5th Floor

October 2 – Dave Eggers (nonfiction/fiction) in Conversation w/ Tobias Wolff, 5:30pm @ Stanford University

October 13 – Allan Gurganus (fiction), 8pm @ Stanford

October 16 – Maggie Nelson (poetry/nonfiction), 7pm

October 28 – Tracy K. Smith: "Imagining the Universe," 6pm @ Stanford Pigott Hall 113

October 29 – Tracy K. Smith (poetry), 7pm

November 12 – Ru Freeman (fiction), 7pm

December 3 – Steinbeck Fellows Cara Bayles, Yalitz Ferreras, and Reese Okyong Kwon, 7pm

Instructor Policies

- Use of cell phones in class for any reason is not allowed. If you use your cell phone in class you will receive a failing grade for the day.
- Use of email, IM, texting, web-surfing, etc. in class are not allowed and will result in a failing grade for the day.
- Assignments turned in up to one week late will receive half-credit. I do not accept assignments more than one week after the due date.
- If you miss a class, *you* are responsible for acquiring notes, handouts, etc. I will have extra copies of handouts in my office, but I will not be available to go over what you missed in the discussion. I strongly recommend finding a partner in the class with whom to share notes in the event of an absence.
- Please see below for the university policy on academic integrity. All cases of suspected plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be pursued. If you submit work that is not your own, you will fail this class.
- You are welcome to email me with questions about the class – however, you should not expect a same-day reply. The best way to contact me is by attending my office hours.
- I do not accept assignments by email under any circumstances. If you are not present in class on the day your work is due, you must make arrangements to have it brought to class, or to my office during office hours.

University Policies

• Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. [Information on adds/drops: http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-298.html](http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-298.html)
[Information about late drops: http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/](http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/) Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

• Academic Integrity

Students should know that the University's Academic Integrity Policy is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University's integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html. Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified.

• Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.