2014

205-17 Literature and the Moral Imagination: The Human Need for Narrative

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**Literature and the Moral Imagination ENGL 205: The Human Need for Narrative**  
Spring Semester 2014  
Instructor: Anne McCarty  
Office: Hinkle 218 Office Phone: 745-3034  
Office Hours: 11:30-2:15 T/TH and after 5:30 by appointment  
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**Required Texts:**

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved.*  
Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild.*

**Course Description:**

This course is designed to be an introduction to literature with a focus on the short story and the novel. We will be reading book-length works as well as a combination of short stories and critical essays. This course allows students to study elements of fiction, to interpret selected texts, to consider viewpoints of literary critics, and to form and support critical arguments, both informally in class discussion and formally in essays. The course aims to enhance the student’s ability to enjoy and interpret the works we read. This course will operate as a discussion rather than a lecture—so students will need to keep up with the reading and come to class prepared to contribute.

The theme for this course is the The Human Need for Narrative. Human beings are storytellers: storytelling is a part of all cultures. To what purposes do we shape narrative, and how do our narratives shape us? In what ways do we use stories to create our identities? How do we employ narrative as we attempt to understand, cope with, and modify our past, present, and future? Are stories used to escape or to explore the world outside the text? What do our stories reveal about our fears, desires, and values? We will look at ourselves as consumers and producers of stories. Near the end of the semester, we will tell some of our own stories in our creative projects.

**Prerequisites:**

The prerequisite for this course is either English 115 (Rhetoric), or English 101 (English Composition). Papers must meet the standards of English Composition. I encourage students to make use of the Writing Center for assistance in writing the two required papers. I am also available for reviewing rough drafts and discussing ideas. Please come see me during my office hours, or set up a time that works for you.
**Attendance:**

If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to check with another student to keep up with what you have missed. As there are quizzes almost daily, it is to a student’s advantage to attend class meetings.

You will sign an attendance sheet each day. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to check with another student to keep up with what you have missed. All absences are equal: there are no excused or unexcused absences. Still, it is considerate to let me know, when possible, if you will be absent. Three absences will not affect your grade directly, but any missed class work cannot be made up. After the third absence, the final course grade will be lowered by half a grade per absence. On the sixth absence, you will need to drop the course or receive an F. (Sleeping or texting counts as an absence. Tardiness and leaving class early may be counted as absences.) I will pass out an attendance sheet every day—if you forget to sign in, you will be counted as absent. Attendance in class is very important, as the class is less of a lecture and more of a writing workshop. No incompletes will be given.

**Grading:**

**Daily Quizzes and in-class writings on assigned reading, other assignments= 12%**

Quizzes and prompts for in-class writing will be given at the beginning of class and will cover the assigned reading for that day. They will not be made up for any reason—if you come to class late, you will not be able to make up the quiz. I will, however, drop the lowest quiz grade. The questions will test your comprehension of the text and to ensure you have done the reading.

**Midterm Exam= 20%**

**Final Exam= 20%**

**First Paper=20%**

**Second Paper=20%**

**Creative Project= 8%**

I do not, under normal circumstances, accept late papers. Under special circumstances, I will take papers late, with a grade penalty.

Participation in class discussion and attendance will be considered in borderline grade cases at the end of the term.
**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the use of words or ideas as if they were your own. The university considers this a serious offense, and penalties for plagiarism, which would include failure of the course, are outlined in the Xavier catalog under the heading Academic Honesty. If you have any questions, please ask me. In your papers, any ideas brought up in class may be included, but don’t turn in a paper that is merely a transcription of your class notes. All work for this class must be original and completed specifically for this course.

**T 1/14:** Hand out syllabus. Course Introduction.

**TH 1/16:** “Owl Creek Bridge” Ambrose Bierce

**T 1/21:** “Sonny’s Blues” James Baldwin

**TH 1/23:** “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” Sherman Alexie

**T 1/28:** *Beloved* Chapters 1-6, pages 1-75

**TH 1/30:** *Beloved* Chapters 7-11, pages 76-138

**T 2/4:** *Beloved* Chapters 12-18, pages 139-195

**TH 2/6:** *Beloved* Chapters 19-23, pages 199-256

**T 2/11:** *Beloved* Chapters 24-28, pages 257-324

**TH 2/13:** “The Witch’s Husband” Judith Ortiz Cofer

**T 2/18:** “The Things They Carried” Tim O’Brien

**TH 2/20:** “The Shawl” Cynthia Ozick

**T 2/25:** “Cathedral” Raymond Carver

**TH 2/27:** “What We Talk About When We Talk about Love” Raymond Carver
No Class: Spring Break 3/3-3/7

T 3/11: *Into the Wild*

TH 3/13: *Into the Wild*

T 3/18: *Into the Wild* Jon


T 3/25: “Two Questions” Lynda Barry


TH 4/3: flash fiction selections

T 4/8: “CivilWarLand in Bad Decline” George Saunders

TH 4/10: “Tenth of November” George Saunders

T 4/15: “The Semplica-Girl Diaries” George Saunders

TH 4/17: *No class: Easter Break.*

T 4/22: Creative Projects

TH 4/24: Creative Projects

T 4/29: Creative Projects

TH 5/1: Last Day of Class. Evaluations.