2014

124-02 Studies in Fiction

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Studies in Fiction

Fall 2014

ENGL 124-02, MWF 8-8:50am
SMH (Smith Hall) 251
Office Hours: MWF 9am - 10am
or by appointment

Instructor: Dr. Megan Lobinger
Email: lobsingerm@xavier.edu
Office: Hinkle 243
Office Phone: 513-745-3219

Course Texts:
The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human  Jonathan Gottschall
Selected short stories and articles available through Canvas

*Note: In an effort to make this course more affordable, I require only one text to be purchased. I expect you to express your gratitude by always bringing a hard copy of the required documents from Canvas to class.

Course Objectives:

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view – until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”
--To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee

“Fiction is like a spider’s web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible.”
--Virginia Woolf

“If one reads enough books, one has a fighting chance. Or better, one's chances of survival increase with each book one reads.”
--Sherman Alexie

In this course, we will examine fiction from an anthropological perspective, studying the human creature’s irresistible draw to story and fantasy. We will look closely at the methods and strategies authors use to tell stories, and we will discuss and reflect on our own personal, emotional, and intellectual reactions to what we read. The overall course goal will be to better understand our social and personal relationship to fiction, and to develop our own theories as to how fiction can serve our lives.

General Policies:
Participation
This is a discussion-based class. Your active daily participation will be required. Please come to class having carefully read, thoughtfully considered, and thoroughly engaged with the course material.
Attendance
Each student is allowed five total absences. Each absence after five will result in a 5% decrease in a student's final grade.
If you are more than five minutes late for class, you will be counted as tardy. Three tardies equal one absence.
If circumstances arise that make it impossible for you to come to class, please let me know ahead of time.
Late work will not be accepted.

Technology
We move through our lives indelibly connected to technology. Our engagement with our immediate environment suffers daily as a result of our attachment to our various screens. Some studies suggest a direct link between our technology-based consumption of media and an epidemic of attention disorders among young people.

So. I offer you a reprieve. Here, in my class, I will be instituting a No Technology policy*. Allow this to be a gift to your psyche. To spend one hour, twice per week, to see what it feels like to turn everything off.

*On Fridays we will often complete in-class writing exercises. On these days, you may bring a laptop if you choose.

Assignments:

Reading Response Essays
Each week, you will complete a short essay (1 – 2 pages) in which you thoughtfully engage with the covered reading material. About half of these essays will be in response to a specific prompt, and will be completed in class on Fridays. The other half will be open-ended, and will be due at the beginning of class on Friday. These essays will be submitted via Canvas.

Paper #1: Synthesis
For this paper you will choose a specific chapter from The Storytelling Animal to pair with a short story not covered in class. You will write a detailed analysis of your chosen work of fiction incorporating ideas found in the chapter. This paper will be 5-7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, with appropriate spacing and margins. A hard copy of this paper will be turned in during class.

Paper #2: Research
For this paper you will work to develop a topic of interest sparked by any of the variety of fascinating ideas in The Storytelling Animal. You will work to develop a deeper knowledge of your topic by locating at least four outside sources. All of these sources must be reputable and reliable; two of them must be from peer-reviewed journals. Your final paper will be 5-7 pages, typed, double-spaced, with MLA citations and Works Cited page. Note: You will conference with me as you develop your topic, and the drafting process for this paper will include an in-class peer review.
Creative Project: Life Stories
This exciting project will allow you a chance to engage with the course material in an expressive and creative way. No spoilers here. More information to come.

Exams:
You will complete a midterm and a final exam. Each will be in short-answer, essay format. A review session will be held prior to the exam. The schedule for your final exam is as follows:

Wednesday, December 17  8:00am—9:50am

Grading:
Your course grade will be weighted as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Response Essays</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative Project</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Letter grades will follow this scale:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>94-100%</td>
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<td>90-93%</td>
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<td>87-89%</td>
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<td>84-86%</td>
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Americans with Disabilities Act:
Xavier University supports Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which ensure that postsecondary students with disabilities have equal access to all academic programs, physical access to all buildings, facilities, and events, and are not discriminated against on the basis of disability. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability (e.g.: sensory, learning, psychological, medical, mobility) should contact Cassandra Jones at jonesc20@xavier.edu or 513-745-3280 at the Learning Assistance Center located on the Fifth Floor of the Conaton Learning Commons, Room 514, to coordinate reasonable accommodations.
Course Schedule

Week One:
   For Wednesday: “Object Lessons” writing exercise

Wednesday, August 27: Object Lessons. 
   For Friday: Read “How to Fall in Love for Real,” by Kent Shaw (handout). 
   Please bring this handout to class on Friday.

Friday, August 29: TED Talk Elif Shafak. Discussion. In-class writing RRE. 
   For Wednesday: Read Literary Terms essay #1

Week Two:
Monday, Sept. 1: Labor Day. No class.

Wednesday, Sept. 3: Terms and tools. 
   For Friday: Read Literary Terms essay #2

Friday, Sept. 5: Terms and tools. In-class writing RRE. 
   For Monday: Read the preface to The Storytelling Animal & “The Collapse,” by 
   Sarah Strickley

Week Three:
Monday, Sept. 8: TSA 
   For Wednesday: Reread “The Collapse,” bring to class Wednesday

Wednesday, Sept. 10: “The Collapse” 
   For Friday: Complete and upload Reading Response Essay.

Friday, Sept. 12: Small group discussion 
   For Monday: Read Chapter One in TSA, read “How Carlos Webster Changed 
   His Name to Carl and Because a Famous Oklahoma Lawman,” by Elmore 
   Leonard

Week Four:
Monday, Sept. 15: TSA 
   For Wednesday: Everyday Story exercise, reread “Carlos Webster,” bring to 
   class Wednesday

Wednesday, Sept. 17: “Carlos Webster”

Friday, Sept. 19: Everyday Story, In-class writing RRE 
   For Monday: Read Chapter Two in TSA & "Catskin," by Kelly Link
Week Five:
Monday, Sept. 22: TSA
  For Wednesday: Reread “Catskin,” bring to class

Wednesday, Sept. 24: “Catskin”
  For Friday: Read “Storytelling 2.0: When New Narratives Meet Old Brains” (handout), bring to class. Complete and upload RRE

Friday, Sept. 26: Neuroscience, narrative, fairy tales. Paper #1 assigned.
  For Monday: Read Chapter Three in TSA, read “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been,” by Joyce Carol Oates, read “Celia is Back,” by Amy Hempel

Week Six:
Monday, Sept. 29: TSA
  For Wednesday: Reread “Where Are You Going?” & “Celia is Back.”

Wednesday, Oct. 1: “Going?” & “Back”
  For Friday: Complete and upload RRE. Submit topic and brief outline for Paper #1.

Friday, Oct. 3: Small group work on papers.
  For Monday: Complete first draft of Paper #1.

Week Seven:
  For Wednesday: Finish Paper #1.

Wednesday, Oct. 8: Paper # 1 due. Discuss practice test.
  For Monday: Complete Midterm Practice Test.

Friday, Oct. 10: Fall Holiday. No class.

Week Eight:
  For Wednesday: Prepare for Midterm.

Wednesday, Oct. 15: Midterm Exam.
  For Friday: Rest your brain.

Friday, Oct. 17: TED Talk. Discussion. In-class RRE.
  For Monday: Read Chapter Four in TSA. Read “The Things They Carried,” by Tim O’Brien

Week Nine:
Monday, Oct. 20: TSA
  For Wednesday: Reread “Things They Carried”
Wednesday, Oct. 22: “Carried”
   For Friday: RRE Prompt Assignment, upload and bring hard copy to class

Friday, Oct. 24: Small group work
   For Monday: Read Chapter Five in TSA, read “The Harvest,” by Amy Hempel

Week Ten:
Monday, Oct. 27: TSA
   For Wednesday: Reread “The Harvest”

Wednesday, Oct. 29: “Harvest.” Paper #2 assigned
   For Friday: Brainstorm short list of Paper #2 ideas

Friday, Oct. 31: Halloween. Class will meet. 1% extra credit toward your final grade if you come to class in costume. Discuss Paper #2. In-class writing exercise: “Complete the Story.”
   For Monday: Read Chapter Six in TSA, read “People like that Are the Only People Here,” by Lorrie Moore.

Week Eleven:
Monday, Nov. 3: TSA
   For Wednesday: Reread “People”

Wednesday, Nov. 5: “People”
   For Friday: Draft of Paper #2 due.

Friday, Nov. 7: Continue “People.” In-class writing.

Week Twelve:
Monday, Nov. 10: Conferences

Wednesday, Nov. 12: Conferences
   For Friday: Paper #2 due.

Friday, Nov. 14: Paper #2 presentations.
   For Monday: Read Chapter Seven in TSA, read “The Sound of Thunder,” by Ray Bradbury (handout)

Week Thirteen:
Monday, Nov. 17: TSA
   For Wednesday: Reread “Thunder”

Wednesday, Nov. 19: “Thunder”
   For Friday: Complete and upload RRE.
Friday, Nov. 21: In-class reading and group work assignment  
   For Monday: Read Chapter Eight in TSA

Week Fourteen:  
Monday, Nov. 24: TSA. Creative Project Assigned.  
   For Monday: Read Chapter Nine in TSA

Wednesday, Nov. 26: Thanksgiving Holiday. No class.  

Friday, Nov. 28: Thanksgiving Holiday. No class.

Week Fifteen:  
Monday, Dec. 1: TSA. Creative Project Brainstorm  
   For Wednesday: Read Future Stories handout #1

Wednesday, Dec. 3: Future Stories  
   For Friday: Read Future Stories handout #2

Friday, Dec. 5: Future Stories. In-class writing.  
   For Monday: Creative Project Due.

Week Sixteen:  
Monday, Dec. 8: Creative Project brief presentations.  
   For Wednesday: Complete Final Exam practice test.

Wednesday, Dec. 10: Final exam review.  

Friday, Dec. 12: Last class before final. Review and evaluations.

Wednesday, December 17, 8:00am-9:50am  
   Final Exam