2014

124-09 Studies in Fiction

Megan Lobsinger
lobsingerm@xavier.edu

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Studies in Fiction

ENGL 124-029, WF 3-4:15pm  Instructor: Dr. Megan Lobinger
CLC 406  Email: lobsingerm@xavier.edu
Office Hours: MWF 9am - 10am  Office: Hinkle 243
or by appointment  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 four 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 occasion we will be completing in-class writing exercises. On these days, you may bring a laptop to class 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. These essays will be due before the start of class on Fridays, and 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:

Friday, December 19    2-3:50pm

**Grading:**
Your course grade will be weighted as follows:

- Participation and Attendance     10%
- Reading Responses Essays      10%
- Paper #1        20%
- Paper #2        20%
- Creative Project       10%
- Midterm        15%
- Final         15%

Letter grades will follow this scale:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>94-100%</td>
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<td>90-93%</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 Friday: “Object Lessons” writing exercise.

Friday, August 29: TED Talk Elif Shafak. Discussion.
   For Wednesday: Read Literary Terms Essay #1

Week Two:
Wednesday, September 3: Terms and tools.
   For Friday: Read Literary Terms Essay #2

Friday, September 5: Terms and tools.
   For Wednesday: Read Preface to The Storytelling Animal & “The Collapse,” by Sarah Strickley

Week Three:
Wednesday, September 10: TSA
   For Friday: Reread “The Collapse”

Friday, September 12: “The Collapse”
   For Wednesday: Read Chapter One in TSA, read “How Carlos Webster Changed His Name to Carl and Became a Famous Oklahoma Lawman,” by Elmore Leonard

Week Four:
Wednesday, Sept. 17: TSA
   For Friday: Reread “Carlos Webster”

Friday, Sept. 19: “Carlos Webster”
   For Wednesday: Read Chapter Two in TSA, read “Catskin,” by Kelly Link

Week Five:
Wednesday, Sept. 24: TSA
   For Friday: Reread “Catskin,” read “Storytelling 2.0: When New Narratives Meet Old Brains,” (handout), bring to class

   For Wednesday: 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:
Wednesday, Oct. 1: TSA, “Going,” “Celia”
   For Friday: Reread stories, submit topic and brief outline for Paper #1
Friday, Oct. 3: Discussion. Small group work on papers.  
For Wednesday: Complete first draft of Paper #1

*Week Seven:*

Wednesday, Oct. 8: Peer critique Paper #1.

Friday, Oct. 10: No class. Fall Holiday.  
For Wednesday: Paper #1 due. Complete Midterm Practice Test.

*Week Eight:*

Wednesday, Oct. 15: Paper #1 due. In-class work on Midterm practice test. Review.  
For Friday: Study for Midterm

Friday, Oct. 17: Midterm Exam  
For Wednesday: Read Chapter Four in *TSA*, read “The Things They Carried,” by Tim O’Brien

*Week Nine:*

Wednesday, Oct. 22: *TSA*  
For Friday: Reread “Things They Carried”

Friday, Oct. 24: “Carried”  
For Wednesday: Read Chapter Five in *TSA*, read “The Harvest,” by Amy Hempel

*Week Ten:*

For Friday: Reread “Harvest,” 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. “Harvest,” Discuss Paper #2. In-class writing exercise, “Complete the Story”  
For Wednesday: Read Chapter Six in *TSA*, read “People Like That Are the Only People Here,” by Lorrie Moore

*Week Eleven:*

Wednesday, Nov. 5: *TSA* & “People”  
For Friday: Draft of Paper #2 due. Bring two copies.

Friday, Nov. 7: In-class peer review.

*Week Twelve:*

Wednesday, Nov. 12: Conferences

Friday, Nov. 14: Conferences.  
For Wednesday: Paper #2 due. Read Chapter Seven in *TSA*, read “The Sound
of Thunder,” by Ray Bradbury.

Week Thirteen:
Wednesday, Nov. 19: TSA & “Thunder”
For Friday: Reread “Thunder”

Friday, Nov. 21: In-class reading, group work assignment. Creative Project Assigned.
For Wednesday, Dec. 3: Read Chapters Eight & Nine in TSA

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

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

Week Fifteen:
Wednesday, Dec. 3: TSA. Creative Project Brainstorm
For Friday: Read Future Stories handouts #1 & #2

Friday, Dec. 5: Future Stories
For Wednesday: Creative Project Due

Week Sixteen:
Wednesday, Dec. 10: Creative Project Brief Presentations. Final Exam Review.
For Friday: Complete Exam Practice Test

Friday, Dec. 12: Review. Evaluations

Friday, December 19  2-3:50pm  Final Exam