124-12 Studies in Fiction

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SPRING 2014, Xavier University
STUDIES IN FICTION: (Engl 124-12), 3 hrs.
TR 11:30-12:45 p.m.

Instructor: Rebecca Todd
Office: Hinkle 206; Office Hours: T 10:45-11:15; TR 1-2:00; R 3:45-4:30; or by appt.
Office Phone: 745-2093; Mailbox: Hinkle Faculty Services, Hinkle Lobby
Email: toddr@xavier.edu (Note that email is probably the least effective way to contact me in the evening or over the weekend. Please call instead—I’ll provide you with a home phone number that you can use for those times. ☺)

Required Texts
Our texts will be provided either electronically, through Blackboard, or in a class handout. If you’re new to Xavier, please make sure that you have access to the Blackboard feature of the portal.

Prerequisite
Successful completion of Engl 101 or Engl 115 or transfer credit

Course Description
This course serves as an introduction to the genre of fiction and, as such, will include both “classic” and lesser-known short stories which represent major literary movements and styles. The depth of our study will come from our focus on these authors’ responses to (among other things) questions of knowledge and self-knowledge. The course is designed to provide opportunities for you to examine the knowledge, beliefs and values which we bring to fiction and to judge how these affect our understanding of the works we read. By analyzing these literary works in very specific ways, you should be able to add to your critical thinking and reading skills, in furtherance of Core Curriculum goals, as well as learning more about this type of literature.

This is not a lecture course; instead, the class will proceed as a discussion, so you will need to be up-to-date with the readings and be prepared to contribute. I have selected works which I feel not only give us a handle on what fiction can be, in its various forms, but which also present attentive readers with plenty of room for questions, comments and debate.

Course Requirements

Quizzes: There will be six quizzes overall; I will drop the lowest quiz grade (12.5% of total).

Two short papers: These two short papers (4-5 pp. typed) are brief responses to some of the works we read. The first one—due Feb 13th—will be about a single author’s work. The second response—due April 10th—will give you the opportunity to discuss one work in relation to critical responses that you discover through research. A sheet of specific guidelines for essays will be distributed later. Writing each of these short papers should help you to prepare for the exams (15% each of total).

(No paper should be merely a transcription of a class discussion or commentary. Any secondary sources you elect to use must be properly credited and cited. All papers must be typed [double-spaced, front side only, stapled, 12 pt. maximum, following MLA format]. Papers are due at the beginning of class, in two forms: first, through Turn It In via a Blackboard link and second, through a hard copy in class, on the day designated; I do not, under normal circumstances, accept late papers or email submissions. In special circumstances, I will accept a late paper but will have to penalize it a letter grade for each calendar day (not class day) it’s late. Please plan accordingly.)
Discussion Questions/Class Participation: At least once during the term each student will be responsible for providing three questions, in written form and on the board, as a starting point for class discussion. Also included in this area are general readiness for discussion, in-class writings, meeting deadlines, group work, etc. (12.5% of total).

Midterm Exam and Final Exam: For both of these exams, you will be expected to respond to essay questions. You can also expect to have to identify passages from our readings and to answer short questions regarding course materials. (Midterm counts for 20% of the total grade; final for 25%).

Some Ground Rules

Attendance: By “attend” I mean not only being physically present but mentally present as well. If you absolutely must miss a class, it is your responsibility to check with other students or with me to keep up with what you have missed so that you are prepared for the next class period. As there will be a number of quizzes and in-class writings, it is clearly to your advantage to attend class meetings, as this work cannot be “made up.” Be advised that five days’ absence will necessitate a total grade reduction of 15% and six days a reduction of 20%. Any more than six days’ absence will preclude your passing the course; you must withdraw or receive an F. If you must miss class due to a university obligation—team sports, for example—please let me know in advance and give me the appropriate paperwork authorizing your absence. I make no other distinction between “excused” and unexcused” absence. (Inability to put your non-class-related electronics away will, of course, result in you being considered absent.) Please note that it is your responsibility, as a college student, to keep track of your absences; I do not necessarily warn students when they have passed a certain benchmark concerning attendance. Habitual tardiness or leaving early will also affect your course grade, as will excessive time out of the room during class.

Conferences: I am not going to require conferences for this course, but I encourage you to come see me or contact me, especially as you begin working on your papers. Please feel free to come by during my office hours, call or set up an appointment with me.

Writing Center

The James A. Glenn Writing Center is located in the Conaton Learning Commons, Room 400 (745-2875). It’s a student-staffed writing center, with tutors available to speak with you about your writing at any stage, from brainstorming for an assignment to polishing up a final draft. For every substantive tutoring session that you have with the Writing Center for this Lit class, you will—besides getting the benefit of having an interested, non-roommate peer look at your work with you!—earn extra credit points on the Class Participation part of the course.

Grading

The grades awarded in the department are A, B, C, D and F (on the 4.0 scale, with pluses and minuses); your course total must equal or exceed 1.0 for a passing grade. The penalties for plagiarism (taking someone else’s ideas or words without providing proper credit) are in accord with those outlined in the Xavier catalog under the heading “Academic Honesty.” At this level, every student is assumed to be familiar with what constitutes plagiarism, and how to avoid it.

All work for this course must be original, completed specifically for this course.

Daily Schedule

(Dates listed are discussion dates, so please have the works read by then)

T 1/14 Introduction to course

R 1/16 Elements of Fiction

Arthur C. Clarke, “The Star” (handout)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author/Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Mary Shelley, “Mortal Immortal”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/28</td>
<td>Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Rappaccini’s Daughter”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>Edgar Allan Poe, “The Cask of Amontillado”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Guy de Maupassant, “The Necklace”</td>
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</tbody>
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| 2/6  | Kate Chopin, “Desiree’s Baby”  
      | Chopin, “The Story of an Hour” |
| 2/11 | Mark Twain, “The War Prayer”  
      | Stephen Crane, “The Open Boat” |
| 2/13 | Essay One is due  
      | Zora Neale Hurston, “Drenched in Light” |
| 2/18 | Zora Neale Hurston, “The Gilded Six-Bits”  
      | Hurston, “Sweat” |
| 2/20 | TBD |
| 2/25 | Review/Project |
| 2/27 | Midterm (in large size blue/green book, in pen) |

(SPRING BREAK—No Class 3/4 -3/6)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author/Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/13</td>
<td>Sherwood Anderson, “Hands”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/18</td>
<td>Willa Cather, “Paul’s Case”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/20</td>
<td>Eudora Welty, “A Worn Path”</td>
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</table>
<pre><code>  | Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find” |
</code></pre>
| 3/27 | Frank O’Connor, “Guests of the Nation”  
      | Yukio Mishima, “Patriotism” |
| 4/1  | Richard Wright, “The Man Who Was Almost a Man”  
      | William Faulkner, “Barn Burning” |
| 4/3  | Andre Dubus, “A Father’s Story” |
| 4/8  | Raymond Carver, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” |
R 4/10  Essay Two is Due
Margaret Atwood, “Happy Endings”
Sandra Cisneros, “Barbie-Q” (1002-03)

T 4/15  ZZ Packer, “Brownies”

(EASTER HOLIDAY—NO CLASS 4/17)

T 4/22  Peter Ho Davies, “What You Know”
TBD


Hanif Kureishi, “My Son the Fanatic”
Tobias Wolff, “Say Yes”

R 5/1  Course Evaluations/Review for Final

**FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, May 6th, 10:30am-12:20pm**. (in large blue/green book, in pen).

*The small print: This is a “working” syllabus, so I reserve the right to make any necessary changes. Minor changes will be announced and/or negotiated in class. Major changes will be made in writing.*