

**Policy Statement and Syllabus
English 5307
Spring 2023**

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Required Text

- Charters, Ann. *The American Short Story and Its Writer*

Course Expectations

This is an intensive, graduate-level reading and writing course that examines and discusses the advent of the short story in American letters. We will trace the development of the short story as it reflects and informs an also ever-developing American culture; in doing so, we will uncover the complexities inherent in this particularly American art form. To this end, we will determine how, indeed, authorship and its surrounding and informing culture developed a genre by carefully historically tracing individual writers of short stories as they wrote their own world-views, thus helping us to develop our own.

English 5307 is focused on achieving key expectations including the following:

1. To improve writing using documented methodologies;
2. To apply documented methodologies to the critical examination of canonical literature;
3. To increase confidence in the student's ability to teach literary analysis and writing in their professional lives.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to improve your knowledge of American literature through a close consideration of the history of the American short story genre. The course will help you to improve your literacy through close readings, and it will aid your abilities to analyze and discuss your ideas about what you read. The course will also help develop your abilities to write clearly and concisely about and/or in the vein of what you read, especially in terms of higher analytic

reactions. The course will help you to take part in a wider discussion of American letters, furthering your ability to also instruct future students in the advent of an American art form.

At the end of this course the students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe the history of the American short story;
2. Describe how to use the writers' short story techniques to understand the significance of short literature;
3. Describe how to apply techniques and methodologies to create successful class discussions and class writings;
4. Describe the foundations of the short story and identify several masters of the short story form;
5. Discuss how the masters' own discussion of the writing craft can serve as openings for thoughtful and successful composition and revisions;
6. Establish pedagogical approaches to the topic for future use in professional lives, particularly education and/or writing.

Course Requirements

Assignments require:

- substantial individual readings from the text;
- substantial writings in both journal form and long essay and/or creative form;
- detailed discussion boards;
- subjective testing.

In addition to the reading and writing assignments, coursework will consist of in-class discussions via discussion boards based on your understanding of what we read. You will be expected to keep up with the reading assignments and then to freely discuss the reading assignments with your instructor and peers. You must complete satisfactory work and actively participate in class to complete English 5307; therefore, consistent online attendance is required for you to pass this course. An online course is not an independent study—at your own pace. This course expects students to log onto the course and to participate consistently in order to succeed. The entire course will only run smoothly if all students participate equally.

First Class and Beyond:

Once the course is made available, I will post opening/welcoming remarks and suggestions for getting started in the course. On subsequent days, please check announcements for instructions on lectures and answers to class questions, which will also be posted consistently (i.e. Monday-Friday). I will be “off-line” on the weekends, which will begin by 12 p.m. Fridays and continue until 9 a.m. Mondays.

Coursework:

****Please note that you should write attached assignments in Microsoft Word or a pdf to insure we may all utilize them. If you have technical problems or questions, support**

information is available on the main Blackboard pages. Blackboard does not work successfully via the Explorer browser.**

Major Assignments: Students are responsible for all assignments in this course and must satisfactorily complete all major assignments in English 5307 to receive a passing grade.

Major Assignment	% of Final Grade
Course Journal	20%
Primary Source Analysis	20%
Research Assignment	30%
Final Examination	10%
Discussion Boards	20%
Total Points	100%

The vast majority of this course will be completed via the writing and “discussion” of both short fiction and theoretical readings. We will read and write about selections from the required text for the course. You are expected to participate fully in a completely engaged manner and will be held accountable for your participation, both in formal and informal forums, throughout the completion of the session’s work. All of your participation must be thoughtful, sincere, and tactful. In the pursuit of these goals, we will write one brief, primary-source analytic essay and one long-form essay (i.e. a researched essay on short fiction). You will also complete a course notebook that will hold course materials generated this semester. The course notebook will consist of only assigned writings in the form of “elements.” You will participate in directed discussion boards, which will answer and/or bounce off discussion prompts as listed in the syllabus. These also serve as the class participation component of the course, as they mirror the reading schedule. Discussion boards will largely influence the course grade. Finally, you will turn in a final examination in essay form, which pulls together the work from the semester.

****I expect your coursework to mirror the time you would take with this course if it were an onsite course. Thus, you should spend approximately three hours a week working on this course, with additional time for formal reading and writing assignments determined by your personal pace.**

Detailed Assignment Description:

Discussion Boards—The discussion boards allow us to speak to one another. Think of the discussion boards as the “cyber” equivalent of sitting in a seminar room with one another and talking about our readings, writings, thoughts and reactions to the coursework. The first discussion boards will ask you to do just this. Please answer in detailed manners, using examples and analysis of the why and how of your answers. The posts must be at minimum approximately three hundred words. Responses to posts should be approximately one hundred words. The discussion boards will improve our teaching and practice of methodologies of fiction and theories on and about fiction through improved abilities to articulate your growing knowledge-base and expertise in the field of American literature. Please remember that these are formal, graded essays that will be assessed for correctness.

Readings—The readings for the course involve two valuable types of writing: (1) short fiction by masters of American fiction writing and (2) theoretical and personal essays about fiction writing and the writing life by many of those same writers and/or scholars of those writers. Thus, we will be able to read great and varied examples of fiction as a way to model techniques while also glimpsing the craft of writing via those masters' “real” lives. This allows us to increase confidence in our writing and analytic abilities as a way into our writing and ultimate teaching of writing. Reading about writers alongside their writings also brings us closer to the world of the American short story. Writing never occurs in a vacuum; it informs and is informed by its surrounding cultures. The readings will highlight this crucial fact.

Primary Source Analysis—The primary source essay is simply a reader-response essay. It is an analysis or close reading of one short story from the first half of the session. The intent of the assignment is for you to develop your own analyses and approaches to what you read and to be able to fully communicate them in a detailed manner. The essay will be typed, in Times New Roman font, double-spaced, 3-5 pages in length, and utilize MLA style.

Research Assignment—This assignment gives you two choices. You may either write a primary/secondary research topic examining culture and its impact on, result of, or place within short fiction (from this semester), layering in research to the primary-source essay, or you may choose to write a completely new essay that departs from the first assignment. Either choice will be formatted and utilize the MLA, be typed, double-spaced, in Times New Roman, and be 15-20 pages in length (not counting bibliographic pages).

Course Journal—The course journal will consist of prompts which ask you to journal about what you read, analyze techniques authors use when writing short fiction, or to expand your own ideas for course writings. The goals of journal exercises are to facilitate clear understanding of the American short story as well as develop your abilities to write freely and with confidence. Obviously, the responses are as valuable as the effort put into them. Please feel free to use any of the notebook exercises as inspirations for further, more formal assignments—they are meant to be such. I will evaluate your effort on these exercises once, at the end of the course. It will be turned in as a single Word attachment. But please write the exercises as they are due—this will maximize their success for your endeavors. Each entry should be a minimum of 300 words. The precise prompts are listed in the syllabus per class week.

Final Examination—The final examination will pull together the key ideas and aspects of the advent of the short story in American literature. That is, I will ask you to write fully-developed essays that explore key concepts and personal analyses of the session's work. The goal of this assignment is to apply our discussions and growing skills in analysis of the short story, the readings of such, and the cultural and historical impact of the short story in America. It will also measure your ability to pull together the session's significant ideas comprehensively and clearly.

Late Work: All major assignments and/or projects, etc. are due on the dates assigned by midnight, unless otherwise noted. You are responsible for all assignments in this course and must complete all required work in English 5307 to receive a passing grade.

Late assignments will receive a full letter grade deduction for being late. This means, if you turn in your assignment late and it receives a B, it will automatically be reduced to a C.

Attendance: As this is a web-format literature course, consistent participation is absolutely necessary. Remaining current with the course schedule and taking part during the expected due dates will not only keep you personally engaged, but also will ensure that other participants of the course can benefit from your thoughts, ideas, and reactions toward the reading and writing assignments. *If you miss due dates, I will not expect others in the class to consider your work in arrears. Late work will result in an automatic ten points being taken off your grade; thus, if you received a B on an assignment, it will be reduced to a C. I do not accept any late work for this course after the final exam period has ended.*

****Please note that this course is an online format which necessitates that students complete discussion boards and major assignments on the day on which the assignments are made. Thus, discussion boards must be posted by midnight on Tuesdays and responses be posted by midnight on Thursdays. This will insure that the course's discussions move forward timely and with minimum inconvenience to your fellow students. I will shut down the discussion board after the due date and time. Thus, if you miss the assignment, you will not be able to make it up and will lose the credit.**

Grading Scale:

Percentages and Grade Equivalents:

A= 90-100% B=80-89% C=70-79% D=60-69% F=59% or below

The Writing Center: The Writing Center is an academic support service available to all Sul Ross students. I strongly encourage you to make the center an integral part of your writing process by visiting the tutors frequently during the semester. The benefits of such visits are readily apparent in your work. The center is located via Blackboard Organizations. Consider becoming a part of this vital team at Sul Ross (email me for more information!).

Disabilities Statement: Persons with disabilities that may warrant academic accommodations should contact me as soon as possible so that we may make arrangements to ensure the most hospitable and enhancing (cyber) learning environment as possible.

Academic Ethics: It is the responsibility of students and instructors to help maintain scholastic integrity at the University by refusing to participate in or tolerate scholastic dishonesty. Any student who represents someone else's work as his or her own will automatically receive a zero for that assignment, which will likely result in a failure for the course. Plagiarism can be purposeful or inadvertent, but either results in an unacceptable and unethical academic performance. Plagiarism will most likely result in a failure for the course.

A Writer's Reference: I strongly recommend all students and instructors of writing and literature own and utilize Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*. It is a sound, credible, and particularly usable stylebook.

Syllabus

Date	Assignment	Comments
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Week One **Read Course Introduction

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*:

- *Introduction: "Some Precursors of the American Short Story" and "Early 19th Century, 1819-1860."
- *author introductions
- *Irving: "Rip Van Winkle"
- *Hawthorne: "The Minister's Back Veil"
- *Poe: "The Fall of the House of Usher"
"Review of Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales*"

Discussion Board 1: Introduce yourself to the class--discuss your professional life, your reading and writing life, your personal bio as appropriate. Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 1: Discuss the techniques and features which Irving, Hawthorne, and Poe share in their short fiction. What aspects of these stories are tale-inspired? What aspects forecast the modern short story form, which will develop from tales?

**Check Announcements!!

Week Two

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*:

- *author introductions
- *"Late Nineteenth Century: 1861-1899"
- *Melville: "Bartleby, the Scrivener"
- *Twain: "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County"
"How to Tell a Story"
- *Harte: "The Luck of Roaring Camp"
"The Rise of the Short Story"
- *Cable: "Belles Demoiselles Plantation"

Discussion Board 2: In his career, Poe (along with Hawthorne, Irving, Twain, etc.) sought to create the American literary tradition as unique from European via fiction and criticism. Discuss how writers we have read thus far indeed move from a modeling after their European counterparts to create an entirely American literature. Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 2: In Melville, we begin to see a writer preoccupied with the individual struggle in America, as well as a deconstructing of the American psyche. Past writers had criticized aspects of culture and society, but Melville charts new waters. Discuss your reading of Melville and what you feel he sought to achieve in his writing.

*Check Announcements!!

Week Three

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*: read author introductions

*Gilman: "The Yellow Wallpaper"
"Undergoing the Cure for Nervous Prostration"

*Jewett: "The Queen's Twin"

*Chopin: "Athénaïse"
"On Certain Brisk, Bright Days"

*Chesnutt: "The Wife of His Youth"

*Crane: "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky"

Discussion Board 3: Using any of the writers we have read thus far, discuss how short stories serve as cultural and social critiques of their times (e.g. Hawthorne criticized Puritanism and scientific inquiry via his writings). Use three writers. Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 3: Apply what Gilman and Harte had to say about their writing lives to their own fictional writings--look for clues, either experiential or technical, to their development of short fiction via their critical (i.e. essay) writings.

**Check Announcements!!

Week Four

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*:

- *author introductions
- "Early Twentieth Century: 1900-1940"
- *Henry: "The Duplicity of Hargraves"
- *Cather: "A Wagner Matinée"

Discussion Board 4: Discuss the rise of the female voice in the American short story via the women we have read thus far. Do you find these voices and techniques unique from their male counterparts? How or how not? Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 4: Discuss (explicate) one story we have read in terms of each of the techniques of fiction discussed in lecture 2.

**Check Announcements!!

Week Five *Read Primary Source Analysis Essay Assignment

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*:

- *author introductions
- *James: "The Jolly Corner"
- *Anderson: "Hands"
"Form, Not Plot, in the Short Story"
- *Glaspell: "A Jury of Her Peers"

Discussion Board 5: Discuss the differences between analysis and summary in criticism. Discuss your own chosen subject for the primary-source analysis essay, why you chose it, what you hope to uncover. Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 5: Discuss and explore your ideas for the primary source essay. Explore your analysis in a freewrite; outline the essay.

**Check Announcements!!

Week Six

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*:

- *author introductions
- *Fitzgerald: "Winter Dreams"
- *Toomer: "Blood-Burning Moon"
- *Parker: "You Were Perfectly Fine"
- "The Short Story, through a Couple of the Ages"
- *Hemingway: "Soldier's Home"
- *Porter: "He"

Discussion Board 6: : As short fiction moves into the 20th Century, what sensibilities and/or artistic aspects change, shift, or develop in the pieces we are reading? Use examples in the discussion. Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 6: Write a first draft of essay; comment on ideas for revisions.

**Check Announcements!!

Week Seven

***Primary Source Analytic Essay Due!**

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*:

- *author introductions
- *Faulkner: "Spotted Horses"
- *Welty: "The Sense of Place in Faulkner's 'Spotted Horses'"
- *Steinbeck: "The Snake"
- *Wright: "The Man Who Was Almost a Man"
- *Hurston: "The Gilded Six-Bits"
"What White Publishers Won't Print"

Discussion Board 7: Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright approached the African-American experience from vastly different angles, and both are considered integral pre-Civil Rights

Movement voices. Discuss each writer's approach and how they serve as important cultural criticisms and agents for change--in tandem and despite one another. Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 7: Dorothy Parker writes a criticism in "The Short Story Through a Couple of the Ages," which first appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1927. Pick a story we have read thus far (perhaps one you enjoyed less than others) and write a New Yorker-style review of it, taking care to closely analyze and provide discussion and examples.

**Check Announcements!!

Week Eight

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer:*

- *author introductions
- "Mid-Twentieth Century: 1941-1965"
- *McCullers: "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud."
- *Thurber: "A Catbird Seat"
- *Brookes: "We're the only colored people here"
- *Cheever: "The Enormous Radio"
- *Baldwin: "Sonny's Blues"
"Autobiographical Notes"

Discussion Board 8: Discuss some mid-twentieth century literary developments you notice or the period introduction cites as they manifest in at least two of the stories you read this week. Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 8: Explore the morays that much of the fiction we are embarking upon explore--many of which were taboo just a few decades before (i.e. drugs, alcoholism, adultery). How are certain subjects treated as opposed to in earlier periods?

**Check Announcements!!

Week Nine

Read Assignment for Research Essay

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*:

- *author introductions
- *Gordon: "The Petrified Woman"
- *Jackson: "The Lottery"
"The Morning of June 28, 1948, and
'The Lottery'"
- *Olsen: "I Stand Here Ironing"
- *Vonnegut: "Harrison Bergeron"

Discussion Board 9: Discuss how point of view (person and tense) affects your readings of stories. Be specific in citing examples from pieces we have read. Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 9: "The Lottery" and "A Jury of Her Peers" both also enjoy great fame as plays. What fictional aspects make both of these short stories dramatically and "visually" appealing (i.e. why do you think they made successful plays)?

Week Ten

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*:

- * author introductions
- *Taylor: "Promise of Rain"
- *O'Connor: "Everything That Rises Must
Converge"
"Some Aspects of the Grotesque in
Sothern Fiction"
- "Late Twentieth Century: 1966-Present"
- *Welty: "Where Is the Voice Coming From?"
- *Gass: "In the Heart of the Heart of the Country"
"From the Preface to 'In the Heart of the
Heart of the Country'"

Discussion Board 10: The grotesque character is not a technique created by O'Connor; in fact, Sherwood Anderson coined the term, "grotesque" decades before her seminal article. Of course, we can easily argue that the grotesque character has always existed in literature. Explore the grotesque character--its meaning and significance--citing any of the short stories we have read. Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 10: Explore your ideas for the research essay discussing the critical approach you are planning, the works which will be examine in great detail. Make a calendar plan for completion.

Week Eleven

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*: read author introductions

- *Barth: "Title"
"It's a Short Story"
- *Barthelme: "The Police Band"
- *Oates: "How I Contemplated the World from the
Detroit House of Corrections and
Began My Life Over Again"
- *Carver: "Are These Actual Miles?"
"Creative Writing 101"
- *Walker: "Everyday Use"
"Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale
and a Partisan View"

Discussion Board 11: Discuss the shift to a more contemporary world-view in the stories we have been lately reading. How are the short stories beginning to deconstruct our notion of the golden age of American post-WWII exuberance? Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 11: An annotated bibliography is simply a bibliographical entry with a following either summary or critical rendering of the source's meaning. Take either one of the articles we read from the text or one of the articles you are utilizing in the research project and write a summary annotation of it (the summary annotation means that you only summarize the main focus, the points, the approaches of the article; the critical annotation would then assess the success of the article—but presupposes our expertise in the field on the part of the annotator). Use the MLA as your style for the bibliographic entry.

Week Twelve

****Research Essay Due**

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*:

- *author introductions
- *Silko: "Yellow Woman"
- *Updike: "Separating"

"Twisted Apples: On *Winesburg, Ohio*"
*Mukherjee: "The Tenant"

*Mason: "Big Bertha Stories"
"On Tim O'Brien's 'The Things They Carried'"

*O'Brien: "The Things They Carried"

Discussion Board 12: Explore at least three characters, their effects on the thematic meanings of the stories and the techniques writers utilize in creating them. Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 12: Write a post-script to the writing process for the research/creative project. What worked well in terms of the writing process? What did not work well? What about the project pleases you? What less-than-pleases?

Week Thirteen

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*: read author introductions

*Beattie: "Second Question"
"Where Characters Come From"

*Wideman: "newborn thrown in trash and dies"

*Alexie: "The Only Traffic Signal on the
Reservation Doesn't Flash Red
Anymore"

*Moore: "Four Calling Birds, Three French Hens"

*Viramontes: "Miss Clairol"

Discussion Board 13: What techniques and/or aspects of fiction "show up" (i.e. develop, manifest) in contemporary short fiction--as different and new from their precursors. Discuss why you feel new ground is broken, either culturally, technically, artistically. Where do you feel short fiction is moving now? Feel free to cite your own personal readings outside the course, if you are an avid reader of contemporary short fiction. Or, do you agree with those critics who claim the short story is "dying?" Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 13: In her fiction, Eudora Welty makes us uncomfortable by the very real voice she creates in "Where Is this Voice Coming From?" Discuss the importance of using voice or other techniques in short fiction to not only entertain but, also, to potentially make crucial socio-cultural points. What is the responsibility of the fiction writer to do more than simply entertain? What is the difference between narrative voice and authorial voice?

Week Fourteen

Read Final Examination Assignment
Journals Due!

Read: *The American Short Story and Its Writer*:

- * author introductions
- *Baxter: "Saul and Patsy Are in Labor"
- *Proulx: "The Bunchgrass Edge of the World"
- *Chang: "Water Names"

Discussion Board 14: As we read well into the Twentieth Century, we enjoy a much larger variety of cultural voices. How does this expand our notion of American culture, of the short story? Do these voices add to style, form, and techniques for the genre? How? Respond to 2 posts!

Journal Element 14: Discuss how writers "writing on writing" illuminates short fiction reading and/or writing (either critical or creative), heightens the appreciation of the art form--or how it fails to accomplish this.

Journal Element 15: Write me a farewell. Please let me know what your plans are for the future, especially in terms of scholarship, teaching, writing.

Week Fifteen

Final Examination Due

Discussion Board 15: For our last discussion board, discuss which chronological movement (e.g. the late Twentieth Century) you enjoyed the most this semester. Why? Talk about the movements' effects on you, their artistic techniques, the writers, the socio-cultural impacts and/or influences. Respond to 2 posts!

**Check Announcements!