English 201 • The Short Story

Instructor: Jamie Roberts
Office Hours in PAS 1064: Monday 2:00-4:00 P.M. and Tuesday 1:30-3:30 P.M. or by appointment
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Course Overview & Objectives:

The short story is an ancient literary form, one with roots in poetry and world-wide folklore, as well as in the Western literary traditions of the renaissance. Although never completely cut off from these disparate literary roots, the modern short story of the 19th and 20th centuries presents its own ways of communicating varying ideas. Many recognizable formal structures of narrative have had their birth in the short story, while the length of short fiction has made it a form well suited both to established literary media like magazines or books, as well as to small, more experimental publications. Further, from an author's point of view, the short story today provides a unique arena for various kinds of expressions in prose.

In investigating these literary expressions, we will explore the formal elements of short stories and, by extension, of narrative itself. We will also examine ways of reading these fictions that extend beyond the merely formal. In this course we will read many works by many different authors, some of which will probably be familiar to you, while others will, with any luck, surprise and delight. In the hope of introducing you to some of the creative work being accomplished here in Canada, we will conclude the course by examining the work of two Canadian short story writers: Eric McCormack and Barbara Gowdy.

Requirements & Grading:

For this course, there will be two in-class tests (the first is optional), as well as a final essay of 8-10 pages in length, due at the end of the course. In addition, you will be required to bring written questions for discussion to class on the stories we will cover. Grades will be determined in the following manner:

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Texts:


Sept. 19 (Introduction)  
Norton Anthology of Short Fiction:
- "A Passion in the Desert" (51)
- "Young Goodman Brown" (698)
- "The Fall of the House of Usher" & "The Purloined Letter" (1390; 1406)

Sept. 26 (Plot)  
Norton:
- "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (99)
- "The Necklace" (1131)
- "The Rocking Horse Winner" (961)
- "A Rose for Emily" (494)
- "The Story of an Hour" (277)

Oct. 3 (Character)  
Norton:
- "Bartelby the Scrivener" (1139)
- "Paul's Case" (193)
- "Parker's Back" (1293)
- "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" (1694)
- "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" (678)

Oct. 10  
* no class

Oct. 17 (Setting)  
Norton:
- "Hills Like White Elephants" (724)
- "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omeelas" (975)
- "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (286)
- "The Garden Party" (1104)
- "Theft" (1422)

Oct. 24 (Point of View)  
Norton:
- "The Jolly Corner" (759)
- "Where I'm Calling From" (158)
- "The Use of Force" (1672)
- "Everyday Use" (1631)
- "A&P" (1624)

Oct. 31 (Language & Imagery)  
Norton:
- "Kew Gardens" (1687)
- "Patriotism" (1171)
- "The Dead" (805)
- (Test # 1)

Nov. 7 (Experiment)  
Norton:
- "The Metamorphosis" (842)
- "The Babysitter" (372)
- "The Distance of the Moon" (146)
- "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" (108)
- "Signs and Symbols" (1217)

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Nov. 14
Barbara Gowdy
• from *We So Seldom Look On Love*:
  "Body and Soul"
  "Presbyterian Crosswalk"
  "The Two-Headed Man"

Nov. 21
Barbara Gowdy
• from *We So Seldom Look On Love*:
  "Ninety-three Million Miles Away"
  "We So Seldom Look on Love"

Eric McCormack
• from *Inspecting the Vaults*:
  "Inspecting the Vaults"
  "Sad Stories in Patagonia"
  "The Swath"

Nov. 28
Eric McCormack
• from *Inspecting the Vaults*:
  "Festival"
  "No Country for Old Men"
  "A Train of Gardens—Part I: Irenius Flood"
  "A Long Day in the Town"
  "Twins"

Dec. 5
• Eric McCormack (visit)
• (Test #2)