ENGLISH 201 - THE SHORT STORY

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Room: HH 150
Instructor: Gail Corning
Office: HH228C
Contact: gcorning@watarts; or x 3886 (during office hours); or leave a note in my mailbox in the English Department mailroom (HH 229); or leave a message with Ilona Haus, Undergraduate Secretary (HH270, x 2634).
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 - 11:20 a.m. or by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A poem by Leslie Marmon Silko that begins her novel, Ceremony, captures the essence of stories:

I will tell you something about stories,
   [he said]
They aren't just entertainment.
   Don't be fooled.
They are all we have, you see,
   all we have to fight off
   illness and death.

You don't have anything
if you don't have the stories...

Storytelling is an ancient art with roots in poetry and folklore; stories are the social and linguistic act of making meaning, the act through which we define ourselves and our society, the way we hold ourselves together. Stories, or fragments of stories, surround us--those we tell about ourselves and others, and those told to or about us--stories about our own lives, the lives of our families, our communities, our world. How do we make sense of and respond to the stories that touch and shape us, the stories that we see or hear or read? What emotions do they arouse and why? How do they affirm or negate us and others as human beings? What myths, values, beliefs--that is, what ideologies influence or underlie these stories?

This term, we will attempt to understand the ways in which stories act upon us. To do this, we will use the conventional vocabularies associated with the short story form and also question the usefulness of those vocabularies by adding to them terms from narrative theory. To frame our discussions, we will begin by considering the history of the short story form. We will continue, through close reading, writing, and class discussion, to examine the stories themselves. How do the authors construct or "represent" a world through language? How successful and convincing are they?

The course will include lectures, but will be mostly student-centred, with small- and large-group discussions, and small-group presentations.
COURSE GOALS:

You will have the opportunity

1. to enhance your reading skills and your enjoyment of short fiction;
2. to articulate your responses to stories using your own words and those of the analytic vocabularies studied;
3. to plan and lead classroom discussions in focused analyses of assigned stories;
4. to write brief responses to assigned stories;
5. to participate in collaborative writing and assessment;
6. to write a critical essay on one or two stories.

COURSE TEXTS:


On reserve at the Dana Porter Library you'll find:

Rooke, Constance. *The Clear Path: A Guide to Writing English Essays.* Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1995. This is a little book (116 pp) which can give you a big advantage in planning and writing your essay. Read in particular Rooke's chapters "Advice on Essay Writing" (1-24), "Sample Essay" (25-54), and "Handling Quotations and Documentation" (66-77); use the glossary and the guides to grammar and punctuation to ensure your writing agrees with current convention.

The following two books are also on reserve; I've excerpted from them sections you'll find in your course reader, but for any of you who wishes to read further, consult:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. *Group presentation* 15%
   You will, in pairs, plan a presentation and lead class discussion on a story you choose from the course list. We will discuss details of the presentation format and evaluation criteria in class.

2. *Written story responses* 20%
   You will respond in writing to two stories. I will provide you with the format for your responses; each will be due at the beginning of the class for which each story is scheduled.

3. *Essay* 35%
   You will write a 1250-1500 word essay that critically examines some aspect of a story or stories we have read. We will discuss this assignment in detail in our fifth class.

4. *Final exam* 30%
   You will help write the questions for the final exam.

**NOTE:** Because this course will depend for its success on your contribution to the quality of our classroom community, I reserve the right to elevate your grade slightly in appreciation for your active, thoughtful, and informed participation.
English 201 Schedule - Fall 1996

Always check this schedule in advance to make certain you're prepared: read what's required and/or bring to class work that's required.

Sept. 10 Introduction

12 Guest lecture/workshop by Mary-Eileen McClear, Storyteller
   (You'll sign up for one presentation in this class period. Come to class having
   scanned the stories listed below; choose two or three in case you don't get your
   first choice.)

17 Class storytelling

CONFLICT, PLOT, UNITY: Constructing "story"

Read (From course reader):
   Scholes, *et al*., pp 1-10; 17-18
   Stone, *et al*., pp 5-11; 15-17
   Bohner, pp 1-3; 8

Read (From Norton):
   Cassill, 1627-37

19 Poe "The Fall of the House of Usher"

24 Chopin "The Story of an Hour"

26 Wharton "The Quicksand"

CHARACTER: Constructing agents

Read (From course reader):
   Scholes, pp 10-11
   Stone, pp 19-21
   Bohner, pp 3-4

Oct. 1 Melville "Bartleby the Scrivener"

3 Read:
   Rooke, pp 1-4
   Crane "The Open Boat"; Thesis statements

8 Read:
   Rooke, pp 4-16
   Collaborative writing/editing of thesis statements

10 Wright "The Man Who Was Almost A Man"
Finished thesis statements, rough outline/plan for essay due; peer review
Finish reading the assigned sections of Rouke before beginning to write your essay.

SETTING: Constructing scene
Read (From course reader):
Scholes, pp 40-42
Stone, pp 18-19
Bohner, pp 4-5

Joyce
"Araby"

Silko
"Storyteller"

LeGuin
"The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas"

POINT OF VIEW: Constructing identification
Read (From course reader):
Scholes, pp 13-17
Stone, pp 11-14
Bohner, pp 5-7

Hemingway
"Hills Like White Elephants"

Welty
"Why I Live At The P.O."

Erdrich
"Matchimanito"

SYMBOL/IMAGE: Constructing agency
Read (From course reader):
Stone, pp 21-22
Bohner, pp 7-8

Reread:
Rouke, pp 16-24 and revise your draft before handing in your finished essay.

Ellison
"King Of The Bingo Game"

O'Connor
"Everything That Rises Must Converge"

O'Brien
"The Things They Carried"

THEME: Constructing thesis
Read (From course reader):
Scholes, pp 11-13
Stone, pp 22-23
Bohner, p 4

19 Faulkner "Barn Burning"

21 Gilman "The Yellow Wallpaper"

26 Bambara "The Lesson"

MEANING and DISRUPTION: Constructing construction

Read (From course reader):
Scholes, 40-42
Stone, pp 2-4
Hutcheon

28 Coover "The Babysitter"
Design exam questions

Dec. 3 Tie up loose ends; discuss final exam