**The American Short Story (LITT 2143)**

Summer Session B 2010

This is a distance-learning course.

This is a Writing Across the Curriculum Course (W2).

Dr. Deborah Gussman

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Blackboard: The American Short Story – LITT-2143-391

**Required text:**

*American Short Stories*, 8th edition. Bert Hitchcock and Margaret Kouidis, eds. Longman, 2008. ISBN-10: 0321484894 [Note: The campus bookstore will be closed for renovation June 7th through June 18th. During this time, textbooks only will be available for purchase in room F028 Monday through Thursday 9 AM to 4 PM.]

**Course description:** This course examines the development of the short story in the United States, with a focus on both formal concerns and thematic issues such as national and individual identity.

# Course Requirements

1. You must attend the three mandatory meetings for this class:

Thursday, June 17, 11:30 - 2:30, F Wing 222

Thursday, July 01, 11:30 - 2:30, F Wing 222

Thursday, July 15, 11:30 - 2:30, F Wing 222

Absence from any of these meetings will result in failure of the course.

1. You must complete all assigned reading and writing assignments, (including weekly discussion on Blackboard, short essays, response essays, and a weblog, explained in detail below), and the cumulative final exam. None of the assigned work for this course is optional. You can expect to spend anywhere from 6-10 hours per week reading and writing for this course. Anything less and you will find it difficult to earn a satisfactory final grade.
2. Required Electronic Literacy: Because this is a “Distance” course which meets primarily online, you must be able to: start and end programs on a Microsoft Windows or Macintosh PC; open, edit, save, and store files; create, send, receive, and read e-mail, including attachments; upload and edit files onto Blackboard, create and update a weblog using the software introduced in the first class. You must have a Stockton College email account in order to participate in this class and on Blackboard. No exceptions. The office of Computer and Telecommunication Services will provide a Stockton email account and support. http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=39&pageID=1.

 We will cover some of this at least once in class.

**Assignments: [[1]](#endnote-1)\***

**1)Blackboard Discussion:** Each week I will post a series of questions on the stories you’ll be reading. You are expected to consider those questions and post **at least one** **substantial** comment (200-300 words), either as a direct response to the questions or as part of the ongoing discussion. (This really depends on when you join in and whether or not what you have to say has already been said.) You must choose a different story than the one you are writing your close reading or response essay on for your discussion post. (In other words, you need to write about no fewer than 2 stories each week.) **Do not** just post without having read what others have had to say on the subject. **Do not** repeat observations or ideas that others have already posted. If someone else has said something you wanted to say, think of ways you might expand on the idea, or respond to a different question. You may also raise other questions or issues that you think are important. Think of your participation here as being part of a dialogue--as our online version of class discussion.

**2)** **Close reading essays and response essays**: You will write 2 close-reading essays on selected stories, and 2 two-page responses. I will be dividing the class into 4 groups. Each week, two groups will have a different pair of stories from which to choose to write an interpretative essay of roughly 900 words (the equivalent of three pages double-spaced, 12 pt. font). The other two groups will choose an essay from one of the two groups and write a response to it of about 600 words. The groups will switch responsibilities each week so that one week you will be responsible for writing an original essay and the next week you will be responsible for writing a response to an essay. You are also responsible for reading ALL of the short stories, and posting the essays and the responses to the essays by the appropriate days (stories and essays by Tues. midnight; responses to essays, Friday noon).

**Format for close reading essays:** After you have read the short stories and any supplemental readings that are assigned each week, write a close reading essay on one of the pair of stories your group has been given. Then, post that essay to the "Close Reading Essay" discussion for that week on Blackboard. Your response should be at least 900 words and should follow this format:

* One paragraph of summary or description of the story. That’s it for summary.
* Several substantive paragraphs of careful analysis in which you a) identify the **theme or main point** of the story and b) show how the writer develops it by examining **at least two** of the following elements: organization and structure, point of view, characterization, setting, or imagery. You will need to use specific quotations and examples from the story in these paragraphs to illustrate your points.
* A concluding paragraph that includes two or three questions that you still have about the story after close reading it, or that your interpretation raises but that you didn’t fully address.

Again, this is due weekly by **Tuesday at midnight** for those in the appropriate group.

### Responses to Close Reading Essays

For your responses to close reading essays, you will need to post a response to someone else's interpretation. After you have read each of the close reading essays for the week, choose the one that interests you and then respond to it by posting another Blackboard entry that is at least 600 words. Post that response in the "Responses to Essays" discussion on Blackboard. Your weekly responses should follow this format:

* One paragraph summarizing the original poster's essay and argument (do not summarize the story again).
* Two or three paragraphs in which you give your own response to the response (do you agree with the interpretation? Why or why not? Do you have an alternative reading of the story, or any of the elements discussed)? You will need to use quotes and specific examples from the story to support and illustrate your ideas.
* A concluding paragraph in which you answer at least one of the questions that the author originally posted, and ask at least one additional question.

Again, this is due weekly by **Friday at noon** for those in the appropriate group.

**3) Short Story Weblog**: For this final project, you will be constructing a weblog that features the components listed below. The first step that you will need to take in completing this assignment is to find a short story by **an American writer** that interests you. You might look in the *American Short Story* anthology at the stories that we aren’t reading for class. You could search for another story by an author that you enjoyed reading, or try just browsing some of the short story collections on the Internet, or in the library, or in a book you have from a previous literature course. After you select your story, you’ll need to post the name of the author and title on Blackboard. Once I have approved your selection, you can begin to construct a website (using a WordPress weblog platform to be introduced in class) around your short story that includes all of the following:

* **Short Story Summary**: Since you cannot assume that readers will have read the short story that your site features, you will need to provide a short summary of your story. This should be roughly a page of typed, double-spaced text and should just give a quick plot overview of your story.
* **Close Reading Essay on your Short Story**: This is the most important part of your website. Building on the kinds of discussions that we have on Blackboard, try to come up with an interpretation of your short story that contributes illuminates the story’s larger meanings and themes. Rather than focusing on two or three plot elements, as you did in your weekly essays, you will need to examine all of them (organization or structure, point of view, characterization, setting, and imagery). This section of your website will be the longest--roughly 4 double-spaced pages or 1200 words. We’ll be discussing and honing close reading skills throughout the course.
* **Author Biography**: Using both Internet and library sources (at least three different sources), construct a short biography of the author of your short story. Include information about the author's other publications and links to those publications if they are available online. This page, like the summary, should be roughly a page in length. Some useful sources for biographical information include the *Biography Reference Bank* and the *Literature Resource Center*, which can be found on-line in the Stockton Library database pages, as well as the *Dictionary of American Biography*, in the Library Reference section. Please use in-text citations for all quotes and paraphrases in this section.
* **Annotated Bibliography**: For this section of your website, you will need to use the *MLA Bibliography*, *Academic Search Complete*, *JSTOR*, and the *Literature Resource Center*, as well as various Internet search engines to find other critiques of your short story. Then, construct a page that both lists those critiques in MLA format and annotates each one (providing a two-sentence summary of the article or webpage). Your page should have a minimum of 6 annotated citations including at least three database items and three web pages that relate to either your short story or to the author. If possible, please include, in addition, a link to an on-line full-text version of your story itself.
* **Weblog Design and Layout**: It is important to make sure that your weblog is user-friendly (ie. the links work, the type is legible). You should also find and include three or more images that relate to your story (these could be author photographs, book covers, pictures of people, places or things mentioned in the story, or more abstract images that relate to the story in some way. A caption for each image explaining what is depicted and why it is relevant to your story is also required. However, as this is a Literature class, you will be graded on the content of your site, not how beautifully it is designed. We will talk about how to create a weblog in our first meeting, and troubleshoot during the second. Remember, content is everything here.

Instructions for creating your weblog will be given in class. The setup page can be found here: http://wp.stockton.edu/wp-signup.php

***Evaluation*:** In arriving at final grades, I will follow this breakdown:

**20% -- Blackboard discussion participation** will be assessed as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Points | Interpretation | Grading Criteria |
| 4 | Excellent (A) | The comment is accurate, original, relevant, teaches us something new, is well-written, free of mechanical errors, and posted on-time. No less than 200 words. Four point comments add substantial teaching presence to the course, and stimulate additional thought about the issue under discussion. |
| 3 | Above Average (B) | The comment lacks at least one of the above qualities, but is above average inquality. A three point comment makes a significant contribution to ourunderstanding of the issue being discussed. |
| 2 | Average (C) | The comment lacks two or three of the required qualities. Comments which arebased upon personal opinion or personal experience often fall within this category. |
| 1 | Minimal (D) | The comment presents little or no new information. However, one point comments may provide important social presence and contribute to a collegial atmosphere. |
| 0 | Unacceptable | The comment adds no value to the discussion |

In general terms, a good discussion response is on-task, actively engaged, cites reading, reflective, and posted on-time. Poor posts are sloppy, careless, rushed, have grammatical and mechanical errors, rehash ideas or information already posted by other students, are factually or logically inaccurate, are too short or non-substantive, and/or are late.

**40% -- Close reading essays and responses to essays** will be graded on an A-F scale. Specific criteria for these essays are described above. In addition to meeting those criteria, essays must use quotations from the stories to illustrate and develop ideas, be free of mechanical and grammatical errors, and be posted on-time.

**20% -- Weblog project** will be graded on an A-F scale, focusing on writing quality, not time and effort expended. Failure to turn in your project on time will reduce your final grade by one letter. The specific criteria for your project will be discussed in class and are listed in the “Assignments” section of the syllabus.

**20% -- Final Exam** will be cumulative and include identifications, short answer, and essay questions. The exam will be given during the final class meeting and cannot be made up.

**Grading Scale:**

100-93: A 82.9-80: B- 69.9-67: D+

92.9-90: A- 79.9-77: C+ 66.9-63: D

89.9-87: B+ 76.9-73: C 62.9-60: D-

86.9-83: B 72.9-70: C- 59.9 & below: F

If you are a Literature major, a final grade of "C" or better is needed for program courses (a "C-" will not fulfill program requirements).

*Other grading policies*:

* Grades will be lowered for late papers unless prior arrangements have been made with me.
* All assignments are required and must be completed in order to earn a passing grade for the course.
* In accordance with the College’s policy, I do not give incomplete grades unless there are extremely serious circumstances, and then, only by prior arrangement.

**Accommodation for Students with Special Needs:** Stockton College complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations should contact the Learning Access Program located in the West Quad Bldg., Suite 110, or by calling 652-4988. More information can be found at http://www2.stockton.edu/wellness/lap.html.

**Academic Honesty**: The Literature program expects students to maintain the highest standard of academic honesty. You should make yourself aware of Richard Stockton College’s Academic Honesty Policy, which can be found in the Student Handbook (<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=67&pageID=2#10>). You should also make yourself familiar with the penalties for violations of the policy and your rights as a student.

Please be aware that plagiarism (one form of academic dishonesty) includes, but may not be limited to: using all or part of a source, either directly or in paraphrase, either intentionally or unintentionally, whether that source is published, or online, or taken from a fellow or former student, *without properly acknowledging that source.*

If you are found to have represented the work or ideas of others as your own, intentionally, or unintentionally, you will face serious consequences, as follows:

1. If this is the first time the student has been found to have  plagiarized, he/she will receive an "F" for that paper or assignment and/or the course.

2. For second offenses of plagiarism, the student will receive an F for the course.

3. Whenever possible, a student who is found to have plagiarized a paper or assignment, in full or in part, should meet with the professor of the class for which the paper is written in order to review and discuss the suspect work.

Additionally, in accordance with [Stockton College policy](http://loki.stockton.edu/~wwwdsess/handbook/bwchap1.htm#acahon), literature faculty will report all instances of plagiarism to the Provost of Academic Affairs. Students may be subject to discipline by the college, such as being placed on academic probation or expelled. If you have a question specific to a paper you are working on, please bring it to my attention. I will be happy to discuss areas of ambiguity that may exist in your mind.

**Email**
Email is the best way to contact me. Please remember to provide a coherent subject line. Also, remember to include your full name in the text of the email.

**Class Schedule (subject to revision)**

Week 1: The 19th century: **Romanticism and Realism**

6/17 **Class meets in F222, 11:30-2:30.** Introduction to the course; historical backgrounds to American short story; discussion of close reading strategies and course assignments; review of required electronic literacies; overview of weblog project.

**Readings for the week:** Section One overview pages 2-17 (everyone); Poe, “The Black Cat”; Hawthorne, “The Birth-Mark” (Groups 1/3); Jewett, “A White Heron”; Chestnutt, “The Passing of Grandison”(Groups 2/4)

Group 1/2 (close reading essays); Group 3/4 (response essays)

Week 2: The 19th Century: **Realism, Regionalism, and Naturalism**

**Readings:** Section One overview pages 17-23 and readings posted on Blackboard

(everyone); James, “The Real Thing”; Freeman, “The Revolt of Mother”;

(Groups 1/3) Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”; Crane, “The Blue Hotel” (Groups 2/4)

Group 1/2 (response essays); Group 3/4 ( close reading essays)

Week 3: **The Early 20th Century**

7/1 **Class meets in F222, 11:30-2:30**. Troubleshooting for weblog projects; discussion of readings and issues; preparation for final exam.

**Readings:** Section Two overview, pages 234-247 (everyone); Hurston, “The Gilded Six-Bits”; Faulkner, “Barn Burning”; (G2/4) Steinbeck, “The Chrysanthemums”; Malamud, “The Magic Barrel” (G 1/3)

Group 1/2 (close reading essays); Group 3/4 (response essays)

Week 4: **The Later Twentieth Century**

**Readings:** Section Three overview, pages 432- 443, Jayne Anne Phillips, “Cheers” 610-611 (everyone); O’Connor, “Revelation”; Updike, “A&P” (G 1/3); Walker, “Nineteen Fifty-five”; O’Brien, “The Things They Carried”(G 2/4),

Group 1/2 (response essays); Group 3/4 (close reading essays)

Week 5: **1990 – present**

**Readings:** Section 4 pages 616-624 (everyone) Eisenberg, “Twilight of the Superheroes,” Alexie, “This is What it Means to Say, Phoenix, Arizona”; Parker, “Hidden Meanings”

7/15 **Class meets in D004 for Final Exam, 11: 30-2:30.** (Please make any necessary job, travel, employment, childcare, etc. arrangements in advance; the exam will be given ONE time only.)

7/16 **Weblog project due by midnight.**

1. \* Acknowledgements: The response assignment and weblog project were adapted from Richard C. Hay’s excellent on-line syllabus: http://www.uwm.edu/~rchay/eng261/syllabus.html.

## Schedule at a Glance

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week of | Read | By Tues | By Thurs (week 1 by Sat 6/19) | By Friday (week 1 by Sun 6/20) |
| 6/13TH 6/17, class orientation11:30-2:30, F222 | Section One, 2-17(everyone) Poe, "The Black Cat"; Hawthorne, “The Birth-Mark” (1/3); Jewett, “A White Heron”; Chesnutt, “The Passing of Grandison”(2/4)  |  | **Group 1/2** - Post Close  Readings (by Sat. 6/19)**Everyone:** Post introductions. | **Everyone: Post 1rst Blackboard****Discussion questions (Sun 6/20)** **Group 3/4**- Post Responses (Sun 6/20) |
| 6/20 | Section one, 17-23 (everyone)James, “The Real Thing”; Freeman,“The Revolt of ‘Mother’”;(1/3) Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper; Crane, “The Blue Hotel,” (2/4) | **Group 3/4**-Post close readings | **Everyone: Post 2nd Blackboard discussion** | **Group 1/2-** Post responses |
| 6/27Thursday, 7/1: Second class meeting, 11:30-2:30 | Section Two, Overview (everyone)Hurston, “The Gilded Six-Bits”; Faulkner, “Barn Burning”; (2/4) Steinbeck, “The Chrysanthemums”; Malamud, “The Magic Barrel”(1/3)  | **Group 1/2** - Post Close  Readings | **Everyone: Post 3rd Blackboard discussion** | **Group 3/4**- Post Responses |
| 7/4 | Section Three, overview , Jayne Anne Phillips, “Cheers” (everyone). O’Connor, “Revelation”; ”; Updike, “A&P” (1/3) Walker, “Nineteen Fifty-five,” O’Brien, “The Things They Carried” ( 2/4) | **Group 3/4**-Post close readings | **Everyone: Post 4th Blackboard discussion** | **Group 1/2-** Post responses |
| 7/11 |  Everyone: Section Four, overview, Eisenberg, “Twilight of the Superheroes,” Alexie, “This is What it Means to Say, Phoenix, Arizona”; Parker, “Hidden Meanings.” **Everyone post 5th Blackboard discussion** |  |  **Class meets for Final Exam 11:30-2:30, F222** | Everyone: **Weblog project due by midnight** |

 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)