

The American Short Story (LITT 2143)

Richard Stockton College

Fall 2011

MWF 9:55-11:10

E 210 (upper level of Library)

Dr. Deborah Gussman

Office: F137

Office Hours: MWF 1:00-2:00 pm and by appointment

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Required texts:

American Short Stories, 8th edition. Bert Hitchcock and Margaret Kouidis, eds. Longman, 2008. ISBN-10: 0321484894.

A Writer's Reference, 6th edition. Diana Hacker, ed. Bedford/St. Martin's. (You may use a different handbook as long as it includes the most current version of the MLA guidelines, which were revised in 2010).

Course description and goals: 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. The course is also intended to develop your critical vocabulary for discussing literary texts, and to strengthen your skills in writing and literary analysis.

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

This course meets the American Literature and Literary Interpretation requirements for LITT majors.

How to succeed in this class:

Simple. Complete all of the reading and writing assignments by the date due. Come to every class, on time, and pay attention. Participate meaningfully in class discussion. Check Blackboard regularly for course updates. Communicate with me as soon as possible if you are experiencing difficulty with reading or writing assignments, or the class in general. Do this outside of class, preferably during my office hours, or by email.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and participation: You are expected to attend class having completed the assigned reading and/or writing, and to be prepared to discuss the texts and your own work. I am serious about this: reading, writing about, and discussing literature is the point of this class. Regular attendance is expected in this course and it counts. More than 4 absences and your grade will drop one mark; more than 5 and it will drop two marks; more than 7 and you will not pass.

For obvious reasons, please silence cell phones and do not text message, check email, listen to music, or surf the web during class.

2. Weekly Homework (30%):

Two times per week you will write a developed paragraph about the assigned story for that day. [You may choose which stories/days to post, but you are still responsible for reading all of the assigned work!] This paragraph will be posted on Blackboard in the discussion area for that story at least 30 minutes before class. The discussion will be turned off prior to class, so late responses will not be accepted.

Homework Format*

The subject line of your homework should be the title of the short story you wrote about and the prompt number you used (e.g. Sonny's Blues #4). You are expected to do your own analysis of the story and express your own idea related to the prompt. Your homework requires no research. If you choose to integrate research to enhance your original idea, you must (of course) cite your sources. Aim for a compact answer of around 200 words. Introductions and plot summaries are unnecessary filler. Longer, more elaborate answers won't raise your grade, so don't stress yourself attempting to write a brilliant essay. I'm looking for quality concise thinking. One way to approach your homework is to ask yourself what meaning you experienced from reading the story. For more tips, read the handouts provided on Blackboard.

Choose whichever of these universal prompts you prefer each time. From time to time, I will provide additional prompts on Blackboard for you to choose from as well.

Prompts

1. The prompt posted on Blackboard.
2. Comment on a specific line of dialogue a character says and how it affects another character. (The effect should be big.)
3. Show how the first and last sentences/paragraphs relate.
4. Explain how this story is related to another story we've already read. "Related" may be thematic or structural. For example, you could compare or contrast two camera-eye pov stories (structural) or two coming of age stories (thematic). While noting that two stories mention a chocolate chip cookie would not be acceptable, you might make a thematic case for comparing two "bad mother" stories.
5. Explain how the story fits a classification such as romanticism, realism, modernism, postmodernism, etc. Wait until we have reviewed these terms before attempting this prompt, please.
6. Explain why I might have scheduled selected stories on the same day.
7. Explain the relationship between the setting and the meaning of the story.
8. Describe a character's epiphany (life-changing insight).
9. Explain how a decision one character makes affects the outcome of the story. (Be specific.)
10. Analyze a moment of irony in the story.

Homework will be assessed as follows:

Points	Interpretation	Grading Criteria
4	Excellent (A)	The paragraph 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 paragraphs add substantial teaching presence to the course, and stimulate additional thought about the story under discussion.
3	Above Average (B)	The paragraph lacks at least one of the above qualities, but is above average in quality. A three point paragraph makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the story being discussed.
2	Average (C)	The paragraph lacks two or three of the required qualities. Paragraphs which are based upon personal opinion or personal experience often fall within this category.
1	Minimal (D)	The paragraph presents little or no new information, and/or is riddled with errors that interfere with the reader's comprehension. However, one point paragraphs may provide important social presence and contribute to a collegial atmosphere.
0	Unacceptable	The paragraph adds no value to the discussion of the story.

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

The purpose of this homework is (1) to prove that you have carefully read and analyzed the stories, (2) to practice finding something to say about fiction that will prepare you for your essays and exams, and (3) to serve as a basis of class discussion.

3. Three (3) close reading papers (approx. 100 words each). Additional instructions will be posted on Blackboard. 35%

4. Short story weblog: 25%

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 shorter 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 computer lab session, 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>

5. Final examination on terms, concepts, classifications: 10%

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://inraweb.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](#), 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)

Note: All readings are in Hitchcock and Koudis, *American Short Stories*, unless indicated otherwise in parenthesis.

Introductions and overviews

Wednesday, 9/7: Introduction to the course, review of syllabus and assignments

Friday, 9/9

Historical backgrounds for the American short story

Read: The First Century, 1820—1910, pages 1-24 and

“A Short History of the Short Story”

<http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/2006/07/william-boyd-short-history-of-the-short-story/>

or

<http://www.theshortstory.org.uk/downloads/boyd.pdf>

Look at Paulding, “A Ramble in the Woods” in *Knickerbocker* (in class)

Monday, 9/12

Literary terms and close reading assessment

Wednesday, 9/14

Introduction to close reading. Read: Kate Chopin, "The Kiss" (on Blackboard).

The Rise of Romanticism: 1820-1865

Friday, 9/16

Read: Washington Irving, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"

First homework paragraph due (everyone).

Monday, 9/19

Read: Catharine Maria Sedgwick, "Cacoethes Scribendi" (posted on Blackboard)

Wednesday, 9/21

Read: Nathaniel Hawthorne "The Birth-mark" 46 and Lydia Maria Child, "Slavery's Pleasant Home" (Blackboard)

Friday, 9/23

Read: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Black Cat" and Thomas Bangs Thorpe, "A Piano in 'Arkansaw'"

Monday, 9/26

Read: Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener"

Assign Paper #1

Realism, Regionalism, Local Color, and Naturalism: 1865-1910

Wednesday, 9/28

Read: Henry James, "The Real Thing"

Friday, 9/30

Read: Charles Chesnutt, "The Passing of Grandison" and Ambrose Bierce, "The Coup de Grâce"

Monday, 10/3

Read: Sarah Orne Jewett, "A White Heron" and Mary Wilkins Freeman, "The Revolt of 'Mother'"

Wednesday, 10/ 5

Read: Stephen Crane, "The Blue Hotel"

Friday, 10/7

Class meets in computer lab for weblog assignment

Paper #1 due in class.

Monday, 10/10

Read: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Sherwood Anderson, "The Egg"

Wednesday, 10/12

Read: Edith Wharton, "The Other Two" and Willa Cather, "Paul's Case"

The Earlier 20th Century: Modernism, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Postwar Period, 1910-1950

Friday, 10/14

Read: William Carlos Williams, "The Use of Force" and Katherine Ann Porter, "The Grave"

Monday, 10/17

Read: William Faulkner, "Barn Burning"

Assign Paper #2

Wednesday, 10/19

Read: Zora Neale Hurston, "The Gilded Six-Bits" and Langston Hughes, "Thank You, Ma'm"

Friday, 10/21

Class meets in computer lab for weblog assignment: All projects must be approved by this date.

Monday, 10/24 [class cancelled]

[Tuesday, 10/25 – Preceptorial advising day]

Wednesday, 10/26

Read: Richard Wright, "Big Boy Leaves Home"

Friday, 10/28

Read: John Steinbeck, "The Chrysanthemums" and Bernard Malamud, "The Magic Barrel"

Monday, 10/31, Eudora Welty, "Petrified Man" and John Cheever, "The Swimmer"

Wednesday, 11/2 – Preceptorial advising day (no class).

Paper #2 due on Blackboard by midnight.

Later 20th century and the postmodern: 1950-1990

Friday, 11/4

Read: James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"

Assign Paper #3

Monday, 11/7

Read: Flannery O'Connor, "Revelation" and Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"

Wednesday, 11/9

Read: John Updike, "A&P" and Raymond Carver, "Boxes"

Friday, 11/11

Read: Joyce Carol Oates, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" and Toni Cade Bambara, "A Girl's Story"

Monday, 11/14

Read: Bobbie Ann Mason, "Shiloh" and Alice Walker, "Nineteen Fifty-five"

Wednesday, 11/16

Read: Donald Barthelme, "The School" and Charles Baxter, "Gryphon"

Friday, 11/18

Read: Tim O'Brien, "The Things They Carried" and Jayne Anne Phillips, "Cheers"

The New Millennium: 1990--

Monday, 11/21

Michael Parker, "Hidden Meanings"

Paper #3 due in class.

****Wednesday, November 23 thru Sunday, November 27: Thanksgiving Break—Enjoy!****

Monday, 11/28

Literary terms and close reading assessment, in class.

Wednesday, 11/30

Read: Deborah Eisenberg, "Twilight of the Superheroes"

Friday, 12/2

Read: Louise Erdrich, "Fleur" and Sherman Alexie, "This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona"

Monday, 11/5

Read: Helena Maria Viramontes, "The Cariboo Cafe" and Jhumpa Lahiri, "This Blessed House"

Wednesday, 11/7: Final Exam, in class

Friday, 12/9 Weblog Project due by midnight.

*I am indebted to Prof. Sara Backer for this assignment.
<<http://faculty.uml.edu/sbacker/42.212/classwork.html>>