Studies in American Literature: The American Short Story

Course Description
This course will consider the development of the short story in America. We will explore texts from the beginning of the 19th century through the 20th century in order to further develop an understanding of the elements and techniques these stories employ. We will also trace how this form has been situated within the context of American culture. Some of the authors we will consider are: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Flannery O’Conner, J.D. Salinger.

Texts
Please see the “Schedule” section regarding the texts that will be required for this course.

Objectives
1. Students will develop an aesthetic appreciation both of the short story as a form.
2. Students will develop an understanding of the short story within the context of the history of American Literature.
3. Students will develop an understanding of the formal elements of the short story.
4. Students will be able to position texts within the context of the major literary movements of American Literature in the 19th and 20th Century.
5. Students will be able to write a critical analysis of short stories, both in isolation and comparatively.
6. Students will be able to discuss critical aspects of the short story.

Requirements
Attendance (5%)
Attendance is simply showing up on time. Attending all classes or discussing with me beforehand one absence will earn you an A, missing one unapproved class will earn you a B, missing two will earn you a C, and missing three or more will earn you an F.
Tardiness is disruptive to class and strongly discouraged. Repeated tardiness will be recorded as an absence.

Participation (15%)
Participation includes reading the selections for class, speaking up in class, being prepared with relevant textual analysis and connections, and taking notes. Listening and speaking are both important forms of participation. Frequent, positive, and thoughtful contributions to class discussion will be positively reflected in your grade.

Response Essays (50%)
In the course of this term, you will be writing response essays as a way to develop your awareness and understanding of the craft of the short story as well as your ability to understand how the crafting of the story was influenced by the time in which the story was written. In each
response, you should aim to offer a thoughtful, informed analysis that brings your own unique perspective to the texts you are discussing. The only sources that should be used for these papers are the primary texts themselves and in-class discussion. Use those discussions to advance your understanding of the text, but do not simply reiterate in your essay what has been said in class.

You must submit one essay per element, for a total of five essays. The deadline for the submission of an essay is the start of class on the last day we are discussing an element. Each essay should be 2-3 pages.

_Extended Analysis Essay (30%)_

This essay is the final project of the semester. For this essay, you must choose one short story and conduct research in order to deepen your understanding of the text. You may choose any story we have read, including any of the stories that you have written about in your response essays. Your objective in this essay is to formulate an interpretation of the story you have chosen that depends upon an analysis of all five of the elements that we have discussed during this course. In other words, you will make an argument about the relationship between the content and the form of a single story.

As this essay must depend upon research, you must demonstrate this research by incorporating a minimum of five reputable sources. Reputable sources include: critical essays, critical books, and _academic_ websites (ie- not personal or commercial websites, blogs, etc). Reference materials—such as dictionaries, encyclopedias and Wikipedia—may be useful in helping you locate sources, but you may not depend upon them in your essay.

We will begin to discuss strategies for conducting research on Monday, July 9 in order to ensure your are familiar with the resources that Drew University has to offer. I will also schedule one-on-one meetings to discuss your final paper to occur during the last two weeks of the course.

The Extended Analysis Essay must be a minimum of 6 pages and no longer than 8 pages.

_Requirements and Assessment of All Writing_

In addition to the specific guidelines described above, all response essays and the extended analysis essay must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Each essay should have a clear, concise, and argumentative thesis.
- Each essay should be intentionally and explicitly structured to advance the understanding of that thesis.
- Each essay must depend upon clear, specific evidence taken from the primary text, as well as secondary sources for the extended analysis essay.
- Each essay must observe practices for the ethical usage of sources by using appropriate framing language to clearly signal the beginning of an instance of source usage and by using the MLA system of parenthetical citations to indicate the end of that instance of source usage as well as a providing a works cited page for any essay that uses sources other than the assigned readings.
- Each essay must be typed in Times New Roman size 12 font, uniformly double-spaced, with 1 inch margins on all sides.
- Each essay must be submitted by the deadline set in the relevant description above. Retro-active extensions will not be granted, though I reserve the right to grant an extension under extenuating circumstances of which I am informed reasonably in advance of a deadline.
Policies

Academic Integrity:

As participants in this class, you are a member of an academic community, and all work in this course must demonstrate ethical practices that reflect this. Drew University’s policies are outlined in the College Standards on Academic Integrity, and you are expected to adhere them. You must do your own work. You must acknowledge the contributions of other texts and individuals to your work. Any student who is in violation of this policy will be referred to the Dean’s Office for further action. The full text of Drew University’s policy can be found at: https://uknow.drew.edu/confluence/display/Handbook/Academic+Integrity

Academic Accommodations:

Should you require academic accommodations, you must file a request with the Office of Disability Services (BC 119B, extension 3962). It is your responsibility to self-identify with the Office of Disability Services and to provide faculty with the appropriate documentation from that office at least one week prior to any request for specific course accommodations. There are no retroactive accommodations.

Respect

You are expected to treat all members of this class with respect and to engage with their ideas in a manner befitting an academic environment—even if you do not agree with them. Respect for others increases the possibility for productive debate and the generation of knowledge and enables us to work together. Disrespect will not be tolerated, and students who behave disrespectfully will be asked to leave the class (disrespect includes sleeping, drumming fingers, rolling eyes, or making comments in response to the ideas of others; speaking rudely; or in any way discouraging others from participation in the class and/or the life of the University).

Schedule

• The course will focus on 5 elements of the short story with the related readings being selected in order to highlight the role of that element. The elements to be pursued, in order of discussion, are:
  o Plot (structure and sequence)
  o Character
  o Point of View (perspective & narrator)
  o Imagery/Symbolism
  o Theme
• These elements will be the explicit focus of 2 classes each with previous readings and elements being drawn upon to enhance discussion as we proceed through the course.
• Readings will predominantly be focused on primary texts but may occasionally also include short secondary texts.
• Readings for each element will be sequenced to further advance understanding of the relationship between the form of the short story and the various literary movements during which the stories were written.
• Readings will work within the following parameters:
  o For Mondays: 2-4 stories/approximately 100 pages
  o For Wednesdays: 1-3 stories/approximately 60 pages.