

# The Short Story:

## The Short Story in A Global Frame

*CMLIT 184 / ENGL 184 (Spring 2017)*

**Class Time:** M/W/F 2:30PM - 3:20PM

**Class Location:** Wartik Lab 105

**Instructor:** Alex Fyfe

**Office Hours:** M 4-5 & R 3-4

**Office Location:** Burrowes 252

**Email:** [acf198@psu.edu](mailto:acf198@psu.edu)

### **Course Description:**

This course explores the ways in which short fictional forms have been used by writers in diverse parts of the world. We will consider questions around why writers use the short form to tell a story, the ways in which political and cultural concerns influence these forms, and how forces of political and cultural domination are expressed or contested in a range of texts. The seven units focus either upon geographical areas—Africa, Asia, England, America—or focus on the evolution of a thematic concern, such as colonialism or postmodernism. In each unit we will consider the circumstances in which the story was produced, its treatment of questions of gender and identity, and the literary techniques deployed by the writers. Students will develop a range of critical reading and writing skills. There will be ample opportunity, both in class and in assignments, to draw comparisons between stories from diverse geographical locations.

### **Learning Goals for this Class:**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Think critically about short stories in their social and political contexts.
- 2) Close-read and analyze short texts
- 3) Learn to construct basic written and oral arguments
- 4) Understand the the role of a short story's formal properties

### **Required Texts:**

- Readings available on CANVAS unless otherwise stated.

### **Assessment:**

- 1) *Attendance, Participation, and Preparation: I expect you to PRINT the reading, and to do it well, every class*—when you read for class I expect you to arrive having not simply scanned the material but having thought about it. You should come to class EVERY TIME with at least one question or comment about the text for the day. In each class I will provide opportunities for you to contribute, most commonly in the form of a class discussion. I expect every student to contribute at least once during each class. You are required to pose at least one question to the group, or comment on another student's question, until everyone has spoken.

- 2) *Formal written responses:* You will turn in 4 formal, written responses to pre-circulated discussion questions. The responses each relate to a particular unit of the course and a list of questions (from which you will choose one) will be provided at the start of that unit. Responses (1 page, single-spaced) will be submitted via CANVAS.
- 3) *Mid-term Exams:* Exams may include a variety of question types, such as: short answers, quote identifications, definitions, passage analysis, and brief essays.
- 4) *Final Paper:* You will write a 6-7 page (double-spaced) paper on a topic of your choice. More information about the final paper will be provided closer to the time.

**Grading:** Your grade will be determined as follows:

- 4 Written Responses (4 items x 5%): **20%**
- Midterm Exams (2 x 15%): **30%**
- Attendance, participation, preparation: **20%**
- Final Research Paper (6-7 pages double spaced): **30%**

*Failure to complete any of these assignments will prevent you from passing the course.*

#### Lateness and Absences:

You get three classes off “free.” Every absence beginning with your third absence will seriously hurt your final grade (by up to 1/3). There are no excused absences unless you need to represent the university in some official way (as an athlete, for instance) or it is a religious holiday for you. Don’t be late to class.

#### Electronic Devices Policy

Using your phone or laptop in class will affect your participation grade.

#### Plagiarism and academic honesty:

If you use someone else’s ideas, whether through direct quotation or paraphrase, you need to say so. Use parenthetical references and a works cited list (as explained in the *MLA Style Guide*, available in the library or at the bookstore) to show your reader where your ideas are coming from. *This course will not require you to do external research to write papers, so avoid the temptation to plagiarize by sticking with the materials we’re reading in class.*

Dishonesty of any other kind will not be tolerated. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Acts of dishonesty will result in academic sanctions and will be reported to the University’s Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

#### Equal access:

Penn State encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability,

performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell me as soon as possible.

## Daily syllabus (tentative)

### Introduction: The Short Story in A Global Frame

- M 1/9 Course Introduction and Overview; Assignments
- W 1/11 “How Short is a Short Story?”; “The Global Short Story”; Maps  
No reading for this class – but come prepared to participate.

### American Gothic

- F 1/13 *Gothic Spaces*  
Read (1) Edgar Allan Poe, “The Pit and the Pendulum”
- M 1/16 NO CLASS – MLK DAY.
- W 1/18 *Dark Domesticity*  
Read: (1) Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher”
- F 1/20 *Ghostly Violence*  
Read: (1) Henry James, “The Romance of Certain Old Clothes”
- M 1/23 *Gruesome Happenings*  
Read: (1) Gertrude Atherton, “The Striding Place”
- W 1/25 *Feminist Gothic*  
Read: (1) Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”

### Late Victorian and Edwardian Society

- F 1/27 *Detection in Victorian London I*  
Read (1) Arthur Conan Doyle, “The Red-Headed League”  
**Response #1 due by or before the start of today’s class.**
- M 1/30 *Detection in Victorian London II*  
Read: (1) Ernest Bramah, “The Coin of Dionysius”
- W 2/1 *Satire in Edwardian England*  
Read: (1) Saki, “Sredni Vashtar”; (2) Saki, “The Bull”
- F 2/3 *Modernism I*  
Read: (1) Virginia Woolf, “The Mark on the Wall”
- M 2/6 *Modernism II*  
Read (1): Virginia Woolf, “The Lady in the Looking Glass”
- W 2/8 *Uncanny Acquaintances*  
Read: (1) Joseph Conrad, “The Secret Sharer”
- F 2/10 **MIDTERM EXAM ONE**

## The Short Story and Empire

- M 2/13      *The Ambiguities of Empire and Race*  
Read: (1) Rudyard Kipling, "His Chance in Life"
- W 2/15      *Writing "The Native"*  
Read: (1) Flora Annie Steel, "The Duties of the Mistress"; (2) Flora Annie Steel, "Bopolûchî"
- F 2/17      *Robert Louis Stevenson*  
Read: (1) Robert Louis Stevenson, "The King of Apemama: The Royal Trader"
- M 2/20      *The Pitfalls of Colonial Capitalism*  
Read: (1) Joseph Conrad, "An Outpost of Progress"
- W 2/22      *Writing as Colonial Subject*  
Read: (1) Cornelia Sorabji, "Love and Death"
- F 2/24      *The Possibilities of Nationalism*  
Read: (1) James Joyce, "Ivy Day in the Committee Room"  
**Response #2 due by or before the start of today's class.**

## Africa

- M 2/27      *Journalism and Resistance*  
Read: (1) Solomon T. Plaatje – One Night with the Fugitives
- W 3/1      *Myths of Origin*  
Read: (1) Selections from *African Myths of Origin*.
- F 3/3      *Ghana*  
Read: (1) Ama Ata Aidoo, "Certain Winds from the South"
- M 3/6      NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
- W 3/8      NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
- F 3/10      NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
- M 3/13      *Resisting Colonialism*  
Read: (1) Ngugi wa Thiongo, "Minutes of Glory"  
**Response #3 due by or before the start of today's class.**
- W 3/15      *A Child's Perception*  
Read: (1) Tayeb Salih, "A Handful of Dates"

F 3/17      *Southern Africa*  
Read: (1) Bessie Head, "Snapshots of a Wedding"; (2) Ahmed Essop, "The Betrayal"

M 3/20      *African Diasporic Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*  
Read: (1) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "Offodile"; (2) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "Apollo"

W 3/22      *Perceiving the World*  
Read: (1) Ben Okri, "Incidents at the Shrine"

F 3/24      **MIDTERM EXAM TWO**

Asia

M 3/27      *Paranoia and Politics*  
Read: (1) Lu Xun, "Diary of a Madman"

W 3/29      *The Specter of Technology*  
Read: (1) Murakami Haruki, "TV People"

F 3/31      *India's Tribal People I*  
Read: (1) Mahasweta Devi, "Douloti the Bountiful" (pp. **TBA**)

M 4/3      *India's Tribal People II*  
Read: (1) Mahasweta Devi, "Douloti the Bountiful" (pp. **TBA**)

W 4/5      *Diasporic Writing*  
Read: (1) Salman Rushdie, "In the South"

F 4/7      *Climate Change and Allegory*  
Arundathi Roy, "The Briefing"

Postmodern Experiments in Form

M 4/10      *The Postmodernist Short Story Cycle I*  
Read: (1) J.G. Ballard, Selections from *The Atrocity Exhibition*  
**Response #4 due by or before the start of today's class.**

W 4/12      *Postmodern Absurdity I*  
Read: (1) Donald Barthelme, "The Glass Mountain" (pp. **TBA**)

F 4/14      *Postmodern Absurdity II*  
Read: (1) Donald Barthelme, "The Glass Mountain" (pp. **TBA**)

M 4/17      *Italo Calvino*  
Read: (1) Italo Calvino, "t-zero"; (2) "The Chase"

- W 4/19      *Borges I*  
Read: (1) Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel"
- F 4/21      *Borges II*  
Read: (1) Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths"
- M 4/24      *The Postmodernist Short Story Cycle II*  
Read: (1) Alice Monro, "Runaway"; (2) Alice Monro, "Chance"
- W 4/26      Wrap-up and final papers workshop.
- F 4/28      Wrap-up and final papers workshop.